

SPICA
P U B L I S H I N G



FIELD MANUAL

Foreven
FREE SECTOR

TRAVELLER
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FIELD MANUAL

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FIELD MANUAL

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SPICA
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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THIS BOOK

Field Manual is the first of *Spica Publishing's* *Forever Sector* books.

This book looks at the mercenary and the mercenary units operating inside and outside of the Third Imperium. Its primary focus is on the units of mercenaries rather than the mercenary as an individual. No attempt is made to examine the regular military forces of the Third Imperium or their more common planetary and system counterparts, nor of the smaller units such as the Ducal Household military units. These are a different case entirely and their tactics, organisation and mission all drastically differ from that of the mercenary.

This book is intended to provide a different outlook and a new perspective. It reflects a side of mercenaries seldom portrayed, not as romantic soldiers of fortune, but an accurate view based on the real article of today and history: individuals with as many reasons for doing what they do as there are soldiers.

Mercenaries are not glamorous. They are jaded, gritty hardened soldiers in a career that is more unforgiving than even the regular service, and where the old ones are either *very lucky* or *very good*. It is a career in which they all have one thing in common: they have only their skills to rely upon.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

To run this adventure with the current edition of *Traveller* rules from *Mongoose Publishing*, you will require at least the *Traveller Core Rulebook* from *Mongoose Publishing*, at least two six-sided dice, and some pens/pencils and paper or a computer.

References to Other Books: References to specific pages in other *Traveller* books and products are shown as the page number followed by a code for the relevant book, both in italics, thus: 28 *TMB* or (28 *TMB*).

ADDITIONAL USEFUL MATERIALS

In addition, Referees and players may find it useful to have copies of the following *Traveller* books to hand:

From *Mongoose Publishing*:

- *Traveller Book 1: Mercenary (MER)*.
- *Traveller Book 2: High Guard (HG)*.
- *Traveller Supplement 4: Central Supply Catalogue (CSC)*.
- *Traveller Supplement 6: Military Vehicles (MV)*.
- *Traveller Supplement 7: Traders & Gunboats (TGB)*.

From *Spica Publishing*:

- *Career Book 1 (CB1)*.
- *Career Book 2 (CB2)*.
- *Nemesis Class Pursuit Ship (NEM)*.
- *Allies, Contacts, Enemies and Rivals (ACER)*.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Bryan Gibson is a freelance artist, disabled veteran and occasional martial arts enthusiast. Formerly a member of the US Air Force and US Army, he has served as a sniper, cavalry scout, artillery forward observer and military policeman. His military service took him all over the world, where he developed a taste for diverse cultures, martial arts, languages and arts.

Following military service, Bryan became a freelance artist. His first commission was for *Game Designers Workshop (GDW)*. Since then he has worked on all *Traveller* products, providing art, conceptual designs and illustrations for nearly thirty years. Other GDW work includes *Space 1889*, *Twilight 2000*, *2300 AD* and *Traveller*. He has also worked for *FASA*, *Relentless Publishing*, *Imperium Games*, *Last Unicorn*, *Paramount Pictures*, *Agents of Gaming*, *TSR* and *Wizards of the Coast* as well as doing conceptual design work for the movie industry and stage production.

An avid re-enactor, Bryan is a member of the Society for Creative Anachronism and has been active in US Civil War re-enactment. An epileptic as the result of wounds received in military service, he is also active in Disabled American Veterans. Lately his epilepsy and a neurological disorder have slowed his artistic output. Moving to writing, Bryan is looking forward to breaking new creative ground.

DANIEL W. HAMMERSLEY was born in 1962 and began playing *Traveller* in 1981 in his sophomore year at college, where he majored in history. He married six years later and joined the US Army infantry in 1990. He has over twenty years of service, and over six years in four deployments into combat theatres. He began writing for *Traveller* in 1999 for *Avenger Enterprises* using the *nom de plume* 'Liam Devlin', and has contributed one sourcebook and five adventure modules to the *Traveller TNE: 1248* line. Now divorced, Daniel is in his sixth term in the US Army in the role of a Cadre-Instructor, teaching Close Quarters Combat, and Urban Operations (Dismounted). Daniel relaxes as a middle-ages re-enactor in medieval infantry fighting in the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA, Inc.) and homebrews his own mead wines, his other outdoor hobby of 29 years.

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A BAD THING IN A SMALL PACKAGE

'Tango One Niner Five, this is Angels Two...I am inbound hot, where do ya want it?' The radio shrieked in my ear as the dropshuttle came into commo range.

'Angels Two, I am six hundred meters to the left flank of the LZ, below the ridge...drop your load on the flat area directly south my position...good cover there. Be advised, the enemy has armor near there, so watch your ass!'

'Roger that, ETA ten minutes, out.'

I listened for the whine of the shuttle engines as my recon squad hung out nervously in the cover provided by the outbuildings. We had been hired to hit this little piece of shit starport, at best a C class, ...hell, I don't know why. The captain took the contract, the soldiers' council approved it (like I got a vote!) and the Ell Tee gave me an order. Coulda stayed Imperial for all the options I got, but sergeants in Merrick's Rangers don't make command decisions; we just go and kick the hell outta the objective. Being a Merc is remarkably like the army sometimes. If this op went off well, maybe I could wrangle a peachy success bonus.

The orders were simple enough: recce the starport, set up an LZ and drop in a couple of platoons of troops and 'engage in maximum property damage while avoiding loss of life.' Now what shithead came up with that? Rules of engagement in a Merc unit can be really frustrating sometimes...I figured from the mission profile that we were on a corporate op, those guys are all about making a mess and ruining some other guys bank book. I shifted my harness, checked my ACR again, and rolled my head, popping my neck.

'Hey sarge, those maggots are bringing up that RV, do ya think they're onto us?' Corporal Billji was prone at the crest of the ridge overlooking the starport, which was little more than a big open field of tarmac with about a dozen hangers and cargo warehouses. He refocused the field glasses. 'Yup. Movin' onto the field over by that dinky-assed terminal, and rollin' to the north. Not too quick, though...guess they ain't in a hurry.'

I moved up beside him and took the glasses. The starport was a minimal installation, little more than a big open field of tarmac with about a dozen hangers and cargo warehouses laid out in a bowl pattern. A typical Imperial circle, probably laid out by the Scout Service way back when ... The valley was only a couple of clicks across, and heavily wooded on all the port's perimeters. The buildings were all concentrated to the northeast, with a terminal of sorts by the head of the major road – major by local standards anyway, it still looked like a bloody goat path to me – which ran due west from the port.

There were only two starships in, a two hundred ton Free Trader like about a million others, and a Baracca-Technum Lines six hundred ton freighter. At the briefing it was made clear that we were to steer clear of the ships, our objective was to level the buildings. Made me wonder who was paying the ticket. We had taken cover in a clump of outbuildings; shacks, really- investigation by Billji and Trooper Holt showed them to be full of tractors and field equipment including a big honkin' snowplow. Winters here must be a bitch, although it seemed comfortable enough now. Couldn't have been more than, oh, like twenty, twenty-five tops.

I watched the RV doodle around a bit. Billji was right - didn't seem like they were goin' anywhere, just tooling around. It was a small armoured car; no great shakes by Imperial standards, but armour is armour....You learn to respect that after a couple of brushes with it, as a bulletproof vehicle will humble you in a hurry if you underestimate it. I knew a buncha guys in the Army thought that battle dress was all that, and that Tech 12 weren't shit, but ya know what? Anything with armour enough to keep out the wind has, in my experience, one thing in common...the means to shoot up someone else's armour. Way I figure it, everybody that armors up a vehicle just can't wait to hang some kind of gun, or missile, or bigass slingshot, something to throw at the other armored vehicle, and I am here to tell ya, a lot of greenies don't come back when they think BD will stop a missile meant to take out a tank.

This one was a little six-wheeled job, probably light skinned and had a small turret topside with a...what the hell?

'Hey, does that look like a missile launcher to you, Bil?'

'Don't think so, it's way too small, but I ain't sure...why not ask Rourke? He's a weapons nut.'

'Cause he's a scrawny pain in my ass and he's been buckin' for my job, Bil....' Rourke was a former marine officer that wound up in stockade for poppin' a colonel in a brawl, and got slung out on a dishonourable. Naturally, Merrick hired the prick. Good soldier, but like any jarhead, he was a hyper aggressive bugger and he was all over me for the platoon. Still, Billji was right - Rourke had commanded a weapons company, and if anybody had an idea of what that thing was, he would. 'Tell him to get up here on the bounce; the shuttle will be here in about two minutes.'

Sure enough, he came up right quick, and smirking to boot. Billji handed him the glasses and he scoped out the RV.

'Well, sergeant, what we have here is an Instellarms Forager scout car, six wheel drive, three man crew. One gunner, commander and a driver. They have a cover on the turret, hmmm...did you guys see anyone get in or out, troops or like that?' I shook my head as he scrutinised the vehicle as it ambled around the airfield.

'That thing doesn't have the power for an energy weapon, and ordinarily has a troop compartment unless they mount something heavy. I think from the profile though...' He squinted into the glasses and concentrated. 'Uh huh, there's the designator, and the periscope...sarge, that's a Hyperion Mark 18a2 rocket launcher....Obsolete, but it still packs a punch. Problem is, there's no telling what's in it.'

'What's that supposed to mean?' I said, exasperated.

Rourke looked at me over the field glasses. 'What it means is, the Hyperion launchers are a multi task weapons system, they're designed to fire about a dozen different munitions, and I mean a lot of different stuff. AP, antitank, you name it.'

I could tell by his look just then that the same thought crossed both our minds.

'Let me guess, anti aircraft too, right?' He nodded at that.

'Sarge, if they deploy when the shuttle gets here...' Just then, we could hear the engines as the dropshuttle came into view, not three clicks out.

'Shit, boys, we gotta take that RV out, let's hustle!' Rivalries forgotten, Rourke took team two as I moved in with team one....we had no more than minutes to cross three hundred meters of field and blow away the RV before they nailed our shuttle and the platoon of men aboard.

No doubt about it, I thought as we moved in onto the field...I need a raise.

BACKGROUND

Welcome to the life of the mercenary in the Third Imperium.

The mercenary has been a feature of the military since man or alien picked up a stick in anger. All human cultures have had mercenaries of a sort, and most alien ones as well; in times past the Aslan clans traded military prowess for goods to the condottieri of humanity. The most notable exception are the K'kree, as the herd mentality seems to preclude the concept as such. Xenanthropologists speculate that this is a uniquely vegetarian phenomena, as every omnivorous or carnivorous sophont species seems to exhibit an understanding of the concept of the paid mercenary.

The Third Imperium is no exception to this. In fact, its situation seems ideally suited to the existence of mercenaries with TLs of varying types, interstellar travel and shifting political priorities leading to a vast array of opportunities for the freelance soldier or unit, and the advent of the post Fourth Frontier War era has merely added fuel to the fire.

WHAT IS A 'MERCENARY'?

A mercenary (or Merc) is different from a regular soldier in a number of subtle but important ways, and it all falls on the nature of their profession. A mercenary is, in the strictest sense, an independent soldier who works for hire, either for a unit or organisation, or on his own 'hook' or contract. He does not work for any government service or regular army, and has the distinction of being neither governed by nor obligated to follow the usually accepted rules of warfare or the rules of engagement. Many consider mercenaries to be, at best, well-trained thugs, but as a rule they are at minimum professional soldiers in the truest sense.

The mercenary as an individual is a markedly different sort of fellow from the usual regular soldier; his military skills notwithstanding he must also have street smarts, excellent survival skills and a sense of danger. The Merc is generally much more independent than his regular counterpart, routinely going on his own initiative and is extremely self-motivated. They are not angels; the life of the individual Merc is one of much peril on a daily basis and paranoia is considered a necessary and accepted professional trait.

Mercs can be cold, calculating, emotional, idealistic, and some are outright psychotic but all are to a man utterly pragmatic, as anything less is soon weeded out. Mercs are generally jaded individuals, and as a whole are by definition hardened combat veterans. As a result most Merc units will field a high quality of soldier. Gender is less of an issue than it might seem, for in the Imperium and beyond such roles have become no more important to the mercenary than a question of sharing sanitary facilities and a CO or grunt is as likely to be a woman as a man. Gender is never a consideration beyond cultural differences; in the field the real consideration is capability.

Added to this is the legal view of the mercenary trade, for as it grew from an occasional use of freelance soldiers on worlds to a huge business over sectors throughout the galaxy it has become an industry in its own right. Governments, planetary economies, trade and commerce all now recognise the mercenary trade as a viable industry with its own military industrial complex: Instellarms, LIC is only one of several megacorps that relies not on government contracts but on the patronage of the Merc industry for its financial survival.

These companies not only have the Merc industry as valued customers but the business supports virtual arms races, provides a proving ground in combat for new weapons technologies (one Merc unit took in a complete small arms issue of a new model ACR, free of charge, on the proviso that they use the weapons for one year in action thereby providing invaluable data on the weapons overall design and performance.) and is a constant source of revenue. Small arms, missile and ECM technologies, medicine, and any number of other industries are impacted directly or indirectly by the mercenary industry.

The old adage seems to hold true: war is indeed good for business.

LEGALITIES

Those seriously wishing to look at mercenaries must first examine them not as soldiers, but as a legal entity. This is because the Merc does not have either the cachet of the regular soldier, nor the legal rights of one - that is to say, the *legal protections* of the regular soldier. Any regular soldier is in the civil sense an *extra-legal entity*; depending upon the government or army, he is above the law.

This is not to say he is ungoverned, quite the contrary, he is frequently more constrained by laws and regulations within whatever military law his service follows or maintains. However he is generally legally beyond the reach of any civil law. The military authority he acts under is not derived from civil authority, as the military are traditionally seen as an entirely separate domain from civil law.

Not so the mercenary. He is often not merely under the auspices of civil law but is also directly subject to it. In many star systems and under Imperial law, which does have some civil provisions, his actions as a Merc may fall under what are sometimes termed the 'mayhem statutes'. These cover assaults, murders and other violent acts putting him legally in the same class as the common criminal. He is classed, therefore as a *legal entity*.

The Merc unit is in the same fix as the vast majority of units are in some fashion or other incorporated as licensed corporations. This sometimes leads to the embarrassing circumstances of Mercs fulfilling their contract, and 'winning the war' as it were, only to find themselves bankrupted and disbanded when they are engaged in lawsuits for such civil offences as collateral damage and wrongful deaths incurred in the undertaking of their various missions.

Although this may seem facetious it should be remembered that while the individual has little civil recourse in any lawsuit, practically speaking, when they fall afoul of a Merc operation, the legal clout any sector sized corporation or megacorp can muster is another matter entirely.

Other elements come into play as well, as most mercenary companies (that is, companies in the commercial sense) generally operate by means of contracts (or ticket) and as a result incur an array of obligations contractually. Naturally, no unit operates without some form of legal department nor do they last long without one.

All contracts are invariably rigidly structured and rigorously examined. Negotiations are fierce and every last clause is considered. The most contested are the clauses for reparations due in the event of collateral damage and the repatriation bond, followed closely by the sections regarding objectives and responsibilities.

The Merc ticket has two facets, and both are worth attention: the *unit ticket*, and the *personal ticket*. The Unit ticket is the contract that the unit or a body of troops will operate under. Barring elements unique to the trade, it is not very different from any other commercial contract. The individual contract is another matter entirely, and is what most distinguishes the Merc from regular troops.

Reparation/collateral damage clauses are the major sticking points and for most Merc units are the primary focus of any rules of engagement for the duration of the contract. Required as a matter of commercial law under Imperial Edict 701801 all Merc companies must 'either provide for or be prepared to provide for any or all reparations to victims affected by any or all collateral damages unless otherwise waived or covered by other involved parties.'

This was never intended as a protection for either the Merc units or their contractors, or even the victims of any collateral damages. Rather it is a very straightforward and extremely effective economic control preventing either casual usage of mercenary forces or their proliferation through ensuring that they cannot afford to be too indiscriminate in their use of force. This law has been responsible for the recent proliferation of 'verbal tickets' as discussed later, providing a deniable operation.

This is not as effective as it seems, but is a legal fiction which has the virtue of muddying the legal waters to the degree that pursuit of such contracts is pointless.

Repatriation clauses are the other legal issues of note, allowing for a bond to be placed by the contractor that allows the unit assured transportation home in the event of failure or success. Typically, it provides for the unit personnel individually, a practice engendered by the bitter experiences of units that were eliminated en masse in an 'accident'. (It is not unknown for employers to remove the difficulties of paying units by conveniently having them killed off by covert means.)

The individual ticket is the personal contract that the individual soldier operates by, and is recruited to sign. As such, these issues are addressed in the mercenary life section.

ECONOMICS

The Merc unit must also operate under a constraint that the regulars seldom concern themselves about: money. While governments have the comfort of tax bases and generous defence budgets, Merc units suffer all the woes of any business. From the expected expenses of transportation, medical requirements and weapons procurement and personnel payroll, Merc units have all manner of other considerations they must account for.

The unit must be based somewhere; so land must be purchased or leased, taxes paid to whatever host country or government they are based in, insurance against a bewildering variety of things, and even the mundane issues of advertising and recruitment. All of this has to be paid for somehow, and it all costs credits.

The majority of Merc units are chartered as a *Limited Liability Corporation* (or LLC), protecting their personnel and assets from the failure of the company should the accounts go into the red. Very few will carry a charter under a 'blind' or shell company, as this puts them squarely in the sights of the Imperial Exchequer, leaving them open to direct Imperial control via the purse strings.

MILITARY REALITIES

As a basic tenet, mercenaries face a number of quandaries, especially regarding the tactical issues concerning the economies of their business. While they must, by definition, engage the enemy they risk their most expensive asset: their troops and equipment. A tactical analysis that allows maneuver and envelopment is preferable to assault, as the simple expenditure of resources can break any unit financially and logistically, yet therein lies the paradox: Merc organisations cannot be too conservative, lest the objective go untaken, but must also not be reckless in their approaches. Governments may spend troops, vehicles and equipment; Mercs have no such luxury.

Merc units will often engage in a dance of maneuver, counterattack and shifting of control of terrain, and will avoid prolonged battle whenever possible. However, as a rule it is held that attack is preferable to allowing oneself to be subjected to attrition; that control of supply lines is preferable to rapid advance; and that the securing of real estate is preferable to occupation.

Any Merc unit must have a base to operate from, and some have permanent quarters and cantonments. Regimental sized outfits often have permanent quarters, either owned outright or on a long-term commercial lease, while smaller units make do with rented lands. Ranges, quartering and training all require some form of real estate and when a unit has a permanent residence, dependents must be provided for as well.

Economically, this can be a good and bad thing: like any military base they can bring revenue to the area in services and trade, but conversely the nature of that revenue has its downsides. Brothels and clubs will sprout up (soldiers will be soldiers, after all) and the locals may not be entirely appreciative of these benefits. Land taxes come into play, and some governments are not above holding units hostage to their bases in the form of taxed revenues, fines and eminent domain issues.

POLITICAL ELEMENT

It is worth noting that the political element is often a factor in mercenary operations. Many governments, both great and small, perceive Merc units as the perfect solution - a deniable secondary force. With payments made under the table; hidden assets; and convoluted bank transactions that may well hide an employer who operates behind second parties and agents, for many governments Merc units are the ideal political tool for projecting force without getting their hands dirty.

For the Merc unit in question, this sort of situation has a host of factors to consider: on the one hand, such clients are often lucrative, paying top credits. On the other hand, as a result of the employer not wanting to be seen publicly using armed force, they may regard the Merc unit a disposable asset. The smarter unit commanders therefore treat such clients very cautiously.

The Imperium itself isn't above using of mercenaries in this fashion, especially in cases where they would prefer a discreet use of force to a blatantly direct intervention. As such interventions are diplomatically onerous to explain away, mercs are often the perfect answer. The Imperium pays well, but the deed is usually managed covertly, frequently via a noble who acts on the Emperor's behalf.

Other units are cat's-paws, perhaps directly or indirectly subsidised by governments and used as tools of force projection. A prime example of such a unit is Keenan's Dragoons, operating in Urnian Subsector. Used ostensibly as a 'foreign legion' by the government of Quintus they are in actuality a military force used to enforce and defend Quintus' interests in many areas where the state cannot directly utilise the Quintus Federal Armed Services.

Mercenaries are often used to support Client States and other such governments - again, not a practice unique to the Imperium - providing not only a stiffening to a weak country's or system's military, but oftentimes a subtle and discreet piece of insurance to enforce the patron's wishes. Should the supported government stray, the threat of an internally placed force not beholden to the locals can be a very effective threat to ensure the patron government's wishes are met.

This is almost always done with the collusion of the mercs, if for no other reason than the attendant risks in such endeavors require they be cognizant of the situation.

TICKETS

The Ticket is mercenary parlance for the contract, the binding agreement under which the individual mercenary or mercenary unit operates. While the contract might appear a straightforward document, military and mercenary contracts have evolved a very specific form and accepted type, just as have admiralty and commercial contracts.

While the contract might appear a straightforward document, military and mercenary contracts have evolved a very specific form and accepted type, just as have admiralty and commercial contracts. There are in fact a number of legal corporations that make a specialty of legal representation for Merc units or of addressing matters of mercenary contract law, and all are well known within the industry.

SUCCESS ONLY

The Success Only Ticket is really self-explanatory. Simply put, if the unit blows the mission, or fails to meet the mission parameters or achieve the objectives, they don't get paid. Most units that take on this type of contract are spec-ops outfits (this contract is ideally suited for the one-off mission) and the Merc units lean heavily on their legal department - and you can rely that they will sharply negotiate and enumerate their responsibilities!

While often the most lucrative of tickets, because when they wrap the job the unit can anticipate a healthy lump sum payment, Success Only tickets also tend to be some of the most risky - after all, if the unit blows the mission they are not going to see one credit. Moreover, the unit will eat the costs out of pocket as well and in this case not only fail to profit but may well be in debt afterwards to boot. It's common, but hardly universal, for a unit to receive an initial payment of 'earnest' money to seed the operation, but until completion all expenses are out of the unit's pocket.

PROVISIONAL

The so-called Provisional Ticket is an example of the vagaries of the legal aspects of the military consultation business. The Provisional ticket is based on a number of legal provisions or specified circumstances and is usually tortuously negotiated. It is the contract that most often leads to the most bizarre of rules of engagement or circumstances of deployment and is generally very nebulous in nature.

The contract outlines various provisos and conditions to be met by the unit, and most units avoid them whenever possible, as they are generally written to both favour the contractor and to offer an excuse to legally deny payment. The contract may, for example, require a unit to occupy an area - but only if the enemy assaults a specific position, and then hold it for two days, no more; then the unit will be required to move to another objective, unless a specific event occurs in which case the unit must follow a different enumerated response and so on, ad infinitum.

VERBAL

The Verbal Ticket is simply a word of mouth contract, a practice more common with smaller outfits and with clients seeking deniability. The contract has a legal standing, assuming there are witnesses - recordings are better, of course - but there is no paper or electronic trail. This is the contract familiar to most Travellers. The jobs are usually quasi legal at best, are deniable and are often referred by word of mouth. This is where a Merc's reputation most comes into play.

Such jobs are almost always one offs, and the pay is usually in advance. The classic and most common example is the snatch job, or hostage recovery, particularly when the client is trying to avoid undue attention of either criminal elements or the authorities. clients may range from private individuals to megacorps, but all have one thing in common: such contracts by their nature imply high risk, and most veteran Mercs consider them very carefully before accepting such jobs.

OBJECTIVE

The Objective Ticket refers to a ticket that enumerates specific objectives and, unlike the provisional ticket, is much less onerous. In basic form, it simply lists what the basic objectives or targets of the mission or campaign are, and is the type of ticket most commonly seen in trade wars.

A mission statement for such a contract might state that the unit is to attack and secure a specific company's ship, or destroy their cargo or handling equipment; and that the unit is to in no way interfere in other commercial matters and to avoid collateral damages. The contract will state specific objectives and deadlines and will usually pay an incremented amount to the unit as each objective is accomplished, usually in the form of a bonus.

GOVERNMENTAL

The Governmental Ticket is any contract offered by a planetary, or interstellar polity government, or a subsector or sector authority. States within a balkanised system are not usually regarded as such, as they tend to be comparatively small potatoes. These contracts are much coveted for the simple reason that a government is most likely to be able to afford to pay upon completion, and seldom quibbles on minutiae. The contract most sought after is the occasional Imperial bid for services.

Security of payment is solid, as most governments have sufficient credit to ensure a unit is well looked after. Governments are also more likely to offer long-term contracts and generally can offer the most generous terms.

MERCENARY UNIT ORGANISATION

Organisation of a mercenary unit generally follows that of its regular counterpart, for the obvious reasons that such is a proven and effective method of conducting war, and most units are conservative about such things. However, there are some interesting variations. Starting at the upper echelons, the first major difference is the size of the unit overall: very, very few Merc units are larger than regimental strength and are far more commonly battalion sized.

While there are several multi regimental outfits, they are rare and generally operate under special circumstances, such as the three regiments of Mercs maintained by the Duke of Glimmerdrift in a Huscarl-style unit. These regiments serve as a politically expedient and sometimes disposable military force but are certainly amongst the exception. Simply put, anything larger than a regiment creates enough of a logistical impact that most units cannot feasibly afford to field a larger unit without cutting too deeply into their profit margins.

There are a number of brigade sized units in the Imperium, but they are all so heavily controlled by their reliance of sponsorship by outside clients and funding, and so closely monitored by the Imperium, and so seldom operate in an independent way that they are able to be called Merc units only in that they aren't owned by a government. Any unit of such a size as these can quite readily have a planetary scale impact, especially on lower tech level worlds. Such units have liaisons permanently attached and are tracked to such a degree that they become in fact private armies.



MERCENARY LIFE

Life in a Mercenary unit is dramatically different from regular military service, particularly in day-to-day life. Most Merc outfits have a rather *laissez faire* approach to some things that most regulars would consider *de rigueur*: very little day to day 'Mickey Mouse'; that is, no barracks inspections, orderly duties and base detail that are the bane of most regulars. Conversely, they engage in (as a rule) far more field training, practical exercises and classroom time.

Physical training is never neglected with field marches, calisthenics and field exercises considered the norm. Whereas governmental services engage in various degrees of training and different specialties, Merc units focus their training on more pragmatic lines. Although some Merc units field superior troops to the Imperium on an individual basis, their training methods are often brutal.

The ideal that any Merc outfit seeks is combat readiness combined with practical capability, hence the preponderance of classes and technical schools - in the interests of self sufficiency most Merc units cross train all personnel in as many skills as they can manage. Live fire exercises are not at all uncommon, and casualties in training are considered a necessary and acceptable risk.

Regular armies often recruit raw troops, training their recruits into their jobs. Merc units do this as well but, more often, they will recruit veterans from the regular services. As a rule, Mercenary units are considerably less picky about the type of men they recruit; whereas the governmental services might not recruit criminals, or persons of questionable backgrounds, most Merc units have no such scruples, preferring blooded troops, such as street gangers and the like, so as to ensure a high degree of 'resolution' or aggression in combat. As a result the individual troopers are much 'rougher' than their regular counterparts and Merc outfits handle them accordingly.

Merc units generally place a high value on individual marksmanship and commonly award bonuses to high qualifiers. Merc medics and medical personnel are at a premium as well, and a medic is always welcome in ranks. Merc medics always train with their units, and are assigned great latitude to ensure the health of their squads; as a result Merc units seldom have sick calls as such.

The squad medics will attend to their troops and treat all simple medical matters, from inoculations and minor diagnoses to minor injuries and wounds. Doctors are readily available and will come into play when needed, but the squad medic will initially treat anything they are able to.

Barracks life is by regular standards fairly easy, and if one chooses to hire 'local help' then the NCOs don't seem to mind, so long as the place is maintained. (And many often do, it is common practice to have a barracks maid, who is paid by the squad to tend to the menial tasks of cleanup, boots and laundry and so forth.

They are often lavishly gifted and squads can be quite territorial and protective towards a good 'foot girl' or 'house mouse', and they will often never consider the treatment towards her that they routinely inflict on their doxies. Most quarters are bay style, usually housing one squad each, but they are generally more comfortable than their regular counterparts, with attached kitchens and dayrooms.

Another departure are the squad armouries. It is a common practice among Merc units to maintain armouries for each individual squad, and each squad typically has one trooper trained as an armourer in it. For reasons of discipline, the armouries are generally weapons only; munitions are kept under strict control and only issued as needed. Squads are encouraged to eat and train together in the interests of unit cohesion.

A CASE OF THIEVERY

'Look, there are as many different ways of dealin' with things as there are troops, and I gotta tell ya, you might be surprised at how things sort out. See, I did fifteen in the Duke's Huscarles and ten here in the Regiment, so I ain't some child and you gotta keep the respect of the guys in yer squad, and when I joined up with this outfit, well, they was rough, bud!

See, there was this big guy, real bruiser, came in from some other crew, got hired on with a whole bunch of greeners, all of 'em new, see? Never did no military. The whole bunch of em' off the street, some real toughs, and they got barracked up with a couple of Merc vets. Well, so here he goes, throwing his weight around, pinchin' stuff in the barracks, noshin' on guys pogeys bait an' generally being the badass. Well, he nails this fella's pay, see; a Merc guy called Dushkin, and I am figuring on squalls bigtime, but no, he lets it go. Everyone knew the Big Fella was the thief, him and a buncha greens went on the town with it.

So, comes the evenin' an' they come in sotzed like lords, and hit the racks. Next thing ya know, sweet as can be, the two vets tie everybody up in their racks, and Dushkin beats this big feller up somethin' terrible, I mean just hurt him some kinda bad. Used a damn riot baton! Didn't break any bones, but he sorta softened the guy up real good, that feller was something that ya didn't want to see...ugly. Took his time doing it too...

So anyways, he gets done with this, and the big feller is way past yellin' and is cryin' like a baby, and Dushkin leans down and tells him that if he even thinks something is stolen, he will look this feller up and do it all over again...didn't care if it was him or if he knew who did, he would just be the guy he could count on finding, so he was relyin' on him to see it never happened again. All the greens are listenin' with every ear, and Dushkin's buddy with a SMG didn't hurt their attention none.

Well, Stoddard and me are keepin' an eye on alla this, and so I send him for the Doc, and I just sorta keep my council. Medic said that Big Fella does a week a light duty, and he'll be ok, but he was real unpretty for a long time after that. Humble, too.

Dushkin? Hell, him I made a squad leader, I liked his style. Lt. Dushkin now, runs Echo Company. Strange, never seems any barracks theft in his crowd.'

**Regimental First Sergeant Vilar Rennyi,
Tydall's Military Consultants**

Mercenary units also tend to take a more casual attitude to personal weapons: in barracks, in training or chow hall, almost every Merc carries a personal weapon of some sort, a practice no regular unit would tolerate. Merc units would never think to disarm their people, although they have certain unwritten protocols.

For example, none except unit vets may carry a weapon, making the privilege not merely a status symbol but also keeping them out of the hands of unknown quantities such as excitable recruits. Horseplay with weapons is brutally and immediately dealt with - the usual penalty being shot on the spot by any NCO or officer who catches the offender. This is indicative of the typical Merc unit attitude towards discipline: direct, brutal and swift.

Most outfits will tolerate behaviour that a regular unit would imprison a soldier for, whereas other actions are harshly dealt with by any standards. Fighting is accepted, for example, so long as it is relatively non-lethal, on the theory that the troops are supposed to be aggressive. The usual criteria is that injuries should not preclude one from performing ones duty.

Drunkenness is also not an issue, provided one is fit for duty. Reporting to duty intoxicated is harshly punished, but off duty behavior is something most officers won't concern themselves with, so barracks drunks are not uncommon. Discipline is generally left to the NCOs and platoon leaders, and the squads are expected to sort out their own differences. Where most regular units try to weld cohesion by assigning like-minded individuals and allowing the NCOs to intervene, Merc units take the dog eat dog theory to heart and one sinks or swims in their own squad.

Strangely, bullies do not do well, often dealt with by the squad as a whole, and if persons are completely unable to mesh they are either cashiered outright or assigned tasks more suited to them. Merc units have many lone wolves that never mesh in regular services, and talent always finds its niche.

Intervention by the NCO or officers is generally avoided, and with good reason: a Merc sergeant major is more likely to draw pistol and shoot a difficult soldier on the spot than he is to 'waste his time', and officers are generally less forgiving. Extreme behavior of this sort is the primary difference in Merc discipline over that of the regulars.

In one Merc unit, Lee's Heavy Infantry Regiment, one training officer routinely shot and wounded in the leg any trooper that fell asleep or neglected to pay attention in his training classes with the full approval of the unit CO - naturally his troops afforded him their undivided attention. Most recruits are directed to the clause in their contract relieving them of either liability or recourse in submitting to it. Some units apply the lash, but most eschew the practice as humiliating, preferring the deterrent of more lethal methods. Lesser offences are punished by reduction of privilege (the first being the privilege of bearing personal arms), the forced march with heavy pack, hard labor or withheld pay, the usual policy being to not remove the soldier from duty where he is needed.

If persistent, an offender is more likely to 'be fired', which entails confiscation of all unit goods and being put off the unit property with no pay. Harsh it may be, but the average unit is surprisingly fair, and most Merc commanders feel that if things come to such a pass then the officer is at fault.

Offences that can result in this extreme approach are strangely at odds with most regular units: as stated previously, drinking and fighting are basically ignored, financial habits are of no concern, and most off duty behavior is tolerated. The major exception is that of the barracks thief - when caught, assuming the squad has not already dealt with him, the usual response is to hold unit parade, display the miscreant and divide his kit and possessions amongst the victims and his squad.

The thief is then locked in barracks with the squad for fifteen minutes in which anything short of murder goes, whereupon he is whipped to the camp gates, with only the clothes on his back and his boots. This may not always pertain, as many units have more creative approaches.

Those offences that garner the negative attention are the duty related ones: reporting unfit for duty, failure to perform duty and similar infractions are dealt with enthusiastically, and field discipline can result in lethal consequences. In the more extreme or combat oriented units a common punishment for sleeping on post is the immediate execution of the offender, plus a member of his squad chosen at random, on the theory that it prevents the squad members from 'covering' for one another. It is extremely effective.

It is worth noting that while the vast majority of units do not go to these extremes, being generally answerable to Imperial law, the casual shooting is by far the exception rather than the rule. While the field discipline is harsh by most Imperial standards, the truly difficult trooper is more likely to be put out of the unit outright. The primary times when such measures do come into play are when a trooper is 'endangering' or putting his mates in a position of danger or harm, and even Imperial law allows for stern measures in a combat environment. These measures may not necessarily always be followed but make no mistake: all units pointedly ensure that all their personnel are aware that these measures are an option.

Needless to say, the usual mercenary approach to leadership is equally unorthodox and direct. Mercenary units are always led from the front. Most units consider the ideal officer to display charisma, tactical aptitude, an ability to operate within a budget and a keen awareness of the unique requirements of a Merc unit. All of the qualities of a regular officer come into play, with the added qualities of a certain degree of ruthlessness. As a rule, most commanders consider an officer to be most effective when he has the respect of his men, along with a healthy dose of fear.

Rewards are also handled differently. Most Mercenary units attach little or no importance to medals and such: although they award them as visible tokens they are always accompanied by more tangible rewards such as bonuses in pay and privileges. Promotion is *always* on merit and the average unit much prefers promotion from within.

Mercenary soldiers are well taken care of. Financial officers attend to pay and credit as well as housing. All medical needs are also attended to. Most Merc outfits prefer to hire single personnel, however when they do hire those with dependents, they tend to look after them lavishly, recognising the benefits, on a practical level, of family ties that can enhance unit loyalty.

Among the criminal element they frequently exist side by side with, Mercs enjoy a certain reputation on the street as most criminals regard them as being in the same class as the professional killer or 'cleaner'. They are generally considered a bad choice to cross, and some supplement their income by working with syndicates in extortion rackets and strong-arm enterprises. Within mercenary circles, these are known as 'bricks' and are regarded with disdain as being sorts that cannot cut it as soldiers. (Oddly, the occasional assassination is not regarded negatively.)

Mercs have a strong sense of belonging in their professional community, and reputation is important. Success is the great equaliser, whereas a Merc with a reputation for blowing jobs finds himself labelled a *crueh haas*: Old Vilani for an insurance scam artist who fakes injuries, implying a 'professional loser'; a term of much derision. A Merc officer who has the benefit of a solid record of successes will find a ready supply of troops eager to join, whereas one who is less than stellar might be lucky to enlist as a private.

They have a largely unwritten, universally recognised and observed code of protocols, which will immediately mark any not of their fraternity. The Merc never dallies with another's partner (or whatever, Mercs can be very open minded when it suits them), and it is the height of bad form to inquire too closely as to another's current contracts. They are often openly discussed, but when the subject is dropped, it remains dropped, and none think the worse of a Merc who permanently ends a conversation that is pressed.

Mercs prize their privacy; it is a foolish person indeed who ignores this trait. Mercs display a rigid sense of courtesy, and have a special brand of 'informal' custom. One is generally recognised by their rank, if known, and most Mercs will make a point of taking umbrage at the lack of politeness in an encounter. This is not merely a matter of respect but of 'face', as one cannot afford a display of perceived weakness to potential troops or employers. Tolerating such behavior is generally perceived in the community as a sign of the 'lightweight' or a person of little confidence.

Merc units are usually racially segregated, especially the larger ones, not out of a sense of sophont prejudice, but for practical purposes. The logistical nightmares of housing multiple species, their medical requirements and simple sanitary facilities are compounded by the more obvious problems of command style and necessities engendered in weapons fit and equipment as well.

By way of example, to the cost of an already difficult logistics issue of weapons equipment and maintenance for human troops add the additional requirement of a second line of training and maintenance for Vargr model weapons, which use a different sighting package to accommodate their physical differences. The additional cost and complication very quickly begins to negatively impact on the unit's performance. Merc units with mixed troops are smaller outfits and they are the exception.

Mercenary troops are all cognisant of their individual contracts, or personal tickets, and they have rights and privileges enumerated by these contracts that are both unique and specific to the mercenary trade. This also harkens to some of the leadership issues of the Merc unit, as most individual Merc contracts and specifically those that most units apply to their recruits allow the soldiers' rights that regulars would never dream of.

EXCERPTS FROM TYPICAL MERCENARY CONTRACTS

As an exercise for students, these are parts of the standard contracts used by mercenary units, groups and individuals and, while the wording may vary slightly, these clauses are the standard that our interns are expected to follow.

Repatriation Clause

That all individual soldiers shall be provided repatriation to a reasonable point of return, that point being in an area outside of the then active area of hostilities, and that said repatriation will be provided as a integral portion of hire.

It is not to be regarded as a benefit, bonus or portion of pay, nor is it to be in any way applied to any element of said soldiers upkeep or equipment. It is to be a separate service and is active upon those circumstances as enumerated in the following paragraphs and clauses, **Options and Circumstances of Repatriation**.

Options of Departure, Said Departure Being Secondary to and/or Prior to Completion of Contract

That the soldier or individual contracted has the right, at the soldier's sole discretion, to prematurely terminate said contract, under the following circumstances. The circumstances are as enumerated:

1. *Lack of confidence in mission:* to include that the apparent mission is of sufficient danger or is of such apparent high likelihood of failure that imminent casualties will occur, said casualties being sufficiently deleterious as to preclude mission completion.
2. *Lack of confidence in contract/contractor:* to include circumstances in which said contract has been breached, either substantially or in spirit, said contractor failing to fulfill contracted obligations. (These include but are not restricted to: failure to provide adequate medical care or evacuation or facilities, failure to provide remuneration, failure to provide repatriation, and failure to resupply).
3. *Lack of confidence in command:* to include said command failing to provide sufficient planning, contact, consultation or utilization of resources. Also, should command prove sufficiently deleterious in method, planning, execution or negligent in exercising said command's duties, and this may also be applied to said command's disregard of elements applied in Clause 1 or 2.

These circumstances are inclusive, and in any other aspect the contract is in all ways binding and under the force of civil law, and that said circumstances must be met, or be proved to be sufficiently of legitimate concern that failure to act on said circumstances puts the soldier in sufficient concern of danger that other options are not applicable or possible.

The soldier, upon invoking clauses may demand, activate, or otherwise exercise his rights regarding repatriation, and is entitled to all pays and benefits per mustering out up to, but not later than, the point of contract termination. The soldier is not entitled to severances, bonus pays nor is he entitled to any further benefit, although he is entitled to restitution of any property, real or otherwise, lost in the performance of said contract.

This clause may not be exercised in circumstances other than the following: that the soldier is not at the time of consideration in combat, action or movement.

For the purposes of this clause, combat is defined as being engaged in actual hostilities, action as being in a state of preparation for combat or immediate mission execution, and movement as being in a state of transport away from base, as in a ship in movement or in the act of vehicular transportation. Ships in jump are not considered in movement, but may fall under considerations of action if imminent combat is anticipated upon departure from jump space.

From the Legal Interns Handbook 'Freelance Military Consultations: Contracts'

**Vilanissi, Demara, Bervoliz and Tennant
Military Solicitors at Law**

On the matter of soldier's rights, mercenary contracts generally follow an accepted standard, and even if they do not have a legal standard or a set form, the usually accepted strictures have become common and expected practise within the industry. A contract without these clauses will be treated with outright disdain by all but the greenest trooper.

Traditionally, one of the first items of concern for a Mercenary unit is the generally accepted practice, in all but the very largest units, of the Mercs voting for their officers. Surprisingly, troops don't usually vote an easy officer into a position of command; rather they tend to vote on past performance. Here the officer's reputation, charisma and standing are of serious concern: a winner or a 'lucky' officer will invariably get the nod, especially if the Mercs are being paid on a success only basis. Their tendency to win, pull off ops with minimal casualties and ensure the troops are paid is all a consideration.

Troops will consider three qualities in any officer, and these are always addressed in the contracts: confidence in command, confidence in planning, and chance of success. These considerations are most evident in those larger units that have a soldiers' council.

Of course, not all ops are organised by contract, and often the only 'contract' is a tacit agreement between the participants. In fact, some large-scale ops have been organised and run with no paper being touched at all.

Most travellers have at some point taken on work for a client or patron, this informal approach is one of the basic elements of the traveller's profession.

A meeting with casual discussion and the gathering of associates mirrors the way Mercs handle such small jobs. The Merc approach is to discuss the job at hand, and vote the leaders into position, and while this usually means that the officer organising the job is the de facto leader, this does not always hold true.

A known incompetent or an officer with bad luck may well have to scrape the bottom of the barrel indeed to find troops, whereas a well reputed officer might just have to put the 'word' out to have quality troops flock to his call.

In larger and more established units, the command structure always has a 'soldiers' council' in which the members include not only the staff officers and unit commanders, but also representatives of the unit's enlisted personnel. In regimental units, this is generally the individual companies first sergeant, in smaller units, such as battalions, the sergeant major.

The council will also include a representative for the dependent's interests, usually elected by the spouses. In all staff decisions the sergeant major is there to represent the enlisted interest, and the enlisted representative will generally be at any planning sessions and always at any contract negotiations.

Unlike regular units, the soldiers' council decides the contracts, terms, and missions, and approves the planning, especially if interplanetary movement is required. At issue are matters such as budget, dependents concerns, the nature of the mission, the chances of success, and a host of other items. The council may well deny any proposed contracts. The wise CO listens to his council, but once the decisions are made the CO is the sole arbiter of authority.

The sergeant major of the mercenary unit has all the responsibilities of any in his position, plus one other. He or she is the representative of what in other circumstances could be termed a union, of sorts: the interests of the enlisted ranks are far more democratically addressed than in a regular unit. This is not to say that discipline is non-existent, far from it. As we have seen, the brutal and harsh discipline common in Merc units is not only accepted, but is almost anticipated. A soft unit is considered to be a poor fighting outfit, and few Mercs are interested in being in a 'slack' unit. However, it would be safe to say that enlisted men have voted out unpopular or ineffective officers, and no Mercenary unit's staff ever disregards the enlisted ranks' concerns in mission procurement.

Smaller units are less formal but follow similar procedures, and even at battalion level either recruit into an established unit or form up with the usual elections. Small units formed for the short haul, such as one or two 'jobs' are especially likely to follow this model. The officer setting up the mission will find his charisma and record under close scrutiny, and most old-timers will not hesitate to ask direct and telling questions. A ticket, once taken, is a very binding contract, even if only secured by a handshake, and the Merc who backs out without a very good reason is in for a world of hurt when word gets out.

But, and this is an important thing to note: a Merc *may* indeed back away, under certain circumstances.

From council to individuals, there are three questions most Mercs will investigate, which are also directly related to the leading of the outfit. These are confidence in planning, confidence of success, and confidence in command.

A MERCENARY GLOSSARY

Brick: a mercenary who works as a strong arm, or thug. Not at all complimentary.

Butcher: a less than complimentary Merc term for a doctor.

Chalk: a fire team of four men.

Crueh hass: Old Vilani for an insurance scam artist who fakes injuries, implying a 'professional loser,' and is a term of much derision used towards Mercs with a reputation for blowing missions.

Mengele: the common mercenary term for doctor, typified by the generally poor quality of military doctors in the field. Usually, a doctor not attached to the unit.

Milspec: military specification, but in common usage, it also denotes a 'squared away' soldier, 'he was a milspec guy.'

Pill: a round of caseless ammunition. A box of pills denotes a magazine of ammunition.

Ripper: a chaingun or minigun.

Slug: any form of slow transport, trucks being a good example.

Spike: a surgical strike, a precise shot or action: 'He spiked the guy in the head'.

Spud: hand grenade.

Spudgun: grenade launcher.

Stick: a squad.

Strac: an ancient Solomani soldier's acronym: Strong, Tough, Ready Around the Clock. Considered a note of praise or distinction: 'that's one strac troop!'

Surt: orbital bombardment with energy weapons (Solomani usage).

Swag: loot.

Thor: orbital bombardment with kinetic weapons.

Toad: a supply troop.

Uptight: a squared away troop, also common in StarMerc use, all seals and hatches secured, 'uptight'.

Zit: antipersonnel mine.

EQUIPAGE ELEMENTS UNIQUE TO A MERCENARY UNIT

WEAPONS

Nothing is truer than the statement 'a soldier's life depends on his rifle' and for Mercs, weapons are a part of their trade. Most units will use basic weapons, with a preference for slug throwers: gauss rifles, or the lower tech Advanced Combat Rifle. Most eschew a general issue of energy weapons for reasons of reliability and performance, although this does not hold true in the heavy weapons elements. The usual criteria for a Merc weapon are reliability, ruggedness and expense. Equally of concern are availability of parts, magazine life and commonality, and ready availability of ammunition.

Heavy weapons receive the same considerations, and expendable munitions (missiles are a good example) are regarded with an eagle eye toward performance and cost. Most units field to a fairly level and uniform standard and generally fall in around TL 11 to 13 in the interests of being effective on the ground. Combat environment suits are standard issue, and all outfits will attempt to technologically trump their opponent, regular or Merc, when the opportunity arises. Countermeasures and combat electronics are all considered, with an emphasis on communications.

WEAPONS & IMPERIAL LAW

Among other things, Imperial law predicates what weapons Merc units may deploy, and while there are wide latitudes, weaponry is strictly controlled. By Imperial law, no Merc unit may deploy weapons of mass destruction - this includes biotoxins, war gases and all forms of military chemical warfare, but not non-lethal forms, such as tear gas or sleep agents.

Nuclear weapons are stringently controlled, and while tacnukes, with licensing and oversights, have been used, these are so rare as to be non-existent. The only real exception is the use of nuclear warheads by Star Mercs. Long a standard in space warfare, these weapons are allowed only through strict licensing and approvals, and then only in a ship-to-ship role. Use against habitats, stations and surface or sub-surface installations is strictly forbidden.

Merc units are not allowed use of Imperial standard weaponry, although they often try to match Imperial specifications, and may not use any distinctive features of Imperial uniform or configuration. Merc units are also restricted to no more than TL 13 equipment, and although they may exceed this standard with licensing, they are closely watched: the Imperium has no intention of allowing a mercenary force an evenly matched capability.

Outside the Imperium no such restrictions apply, and many mercenary units that operate in the non aligned regions may well often exceed even the highest TL rated governments in their area.

TRANSPORT & COMMUNICATIONS

Two things unique to Merc units that really distinguish them from regulars are the lengths they are willing to go to secure transportation, and their concern with communications.

While some units have organic transportation, which in this case means access to a starship or spacecraft suitable for moving the unit, most do not. Maintaining any kind of spacecraft is hideously expensive and, as a planet is a big place, there are units that never need to travel offplanet to keep contracts. Of those that do, unless there is a constant need to travel between systems, most simply hire or contract ships for the purpose.

The reason for this is really rather simple - all units want to be able to go home. Whether or not they require transportation to a mission, no unit wants to undertake a ticket where they don't have assured repatriation, whether upon mission completion or for a quick bug out. Units that fail to secure some form of transportation, especially in cases where the employer reneges or the mission is blown so badly they must 'bail hot', can be decimated on the ground as the opposition hunts them down.

Merc stories of disastrous tickets gone south, where the employers were removed in failed coups, killed or disabled in battle, or simply abandoned the mercs to their fate, are apocryphal and often true. But all feature a common element: *how to get home*. A unit without its own ships may devote up to half the ticket's proceeds, if necessary, to ensure that there is a ride waiting for them if something goes awry.

Those units that can afford them, maintain vessels with certain desirable features – they will either be specifically purpose built for, or modified to, the Mercs preferred configurations, most of which are predictable. Mercs tend to prefer vessels that are atmospheric operations capable, and able to land and take off on any terrain. A low jump vessel is less an issue than one that has long maneuver legs – quick out the gate in normal space operations always gets the nod in these cases.

Other traits are common – all Merc units follow the philosophy that when in doubt, more armour is good, and more firepower is best. This is not simply for the obvious reasons of warfare, but because Mercs will generally use their vessels as space to ground transport and, once landed and deploying their troops, either as ground support platforms or as impromptu firebases ... In this way they not only command terrain but can often isolate the enemy, such as landing a vessel in a city square – here the enemy is suddenly presented with an urban combat scenario and an enemy strongpoint literally in their front yard. Common in attack and hold scenarios, this tactic is especially effective when the vessel is fitted for the mission with energy and bay weapons capable of engaging ground and air targets.

The second point of difference between Regular units and Mercenaries is the Mercs' concern about communications. Merc units tend to rely on dispersed communications, using multiple command posts and comms centers tied in a fluid network. Networking will be on a squad level tiered all the way up the chain of command, but unlike regular units with a primary command and control authority or center, Merc units use their networks simply to maintain appraisal. Individual units will have far more autonomy, and any centralised command is more a concession to overall communications than a single command figure once the op has begun.

Merc units willingly expend massive amounts of their budget on new and better comms gear, command infrastructure and overall intelligence assets. UAVs, satellites and long range comms all receive due attention, and if the choice for the mission must be made, transport and comms is budgeted before weapons and vehicles.

IMPERIAL RULES OF WAR

Most Merc units will abide by the Imperial Rules of War, or the Conventions as insiders call them. There is no mercenaries' code, no 'honour of the soldier', and anyone voicing such an opinion to a pro will find himself either laughed at or told to make tracks in a very definite way. Such things are the imaginings of the media and the holo vid industry and such comments do not produce feelings of patience among the real Mercs.

Granted, there are a series of unwritten protocols that they all follow, as previously mentioned, and it is the protocols pertaining to the field of battle that will now be considered. As one might expect, they are firmly grounded in reality and are pragmatic in nature - there is little place for altruists in the mercenary trades.

Firstly, all Merc units are required by their charters to abide by the Rules of War, and most do so scrupulously. However, the Rules are in place for the benefit of the Empire and not the military businessman, and even the most exemplary units will slip by a regulation or two when it suits them. This is most commonly in the areas of weapons procurement, importation, and use, and specialised equipment. Virtually every unit in the Imperium, protestations to the contrary, 'cooks the books' and hides a credit here and a credit there as, after all, licenses cost money. Mercs are no different from any other corporation and avoid every tax they can.

Needless to say, regarding weapons use, some are less well thought of than others: while weapons of mass destruction, chemical weapons and such will undoubtedly bring the Empire into the fray in a hurry (even the hint of a possibility has been known to do it) in many cases it is all a matter of scale. As an example, let us suppose that a unit uses a nerve toxin on a point target while assaulting that objective, clearing out the opposition with minimal casualties and no collateral damage and in a sharply contained area. While a complaint might be made, the Imperial Liaisons who investigate will consider a host of issues: was the target military? Was there any collateral damage or civilian casualties? Was the usage appropriate to tech level and did the opposing force have the capability to decontaminate the affected area? Was medical response hindered?

If the answers indicate a small damage/impact assessment, the unit can certainly expect fines and censure, but hardly the overwhelming slap of an outfit that used such weapons more indiscriminately, just as a judge might worry about the felonies rather than the misdemeanors in his court. The Imperium is large, and larger issues are given greater weight. This should not imply that the Imperium ignores such things, far from it! Rather, the matter is always given a realistic approach, for the Empire's resources, while enormous, are often spread thin.

Needless to say, any Merc worth his salt knows this, and all units dance the fine edge of the law.

The Imperial Rules of War fill several volumes, and are some several thousands of pages in length, but this is deceptive: for all their length the Rules are quite vague and mostly what specifics they enumerate are only 'clarifications' and do not really impact the core Rules at all. It has been a long-standing complaint that although the Rules are several books in length, the requisite rules that apply would hardly fill a pamphlet. Literally everything else is, really, just legal vapor designed to allow the Imperial authorities to interpret the rules as they see fit.

Some of the more pertinent Rules are:

The War Shall Be Just: While the Imperium will apply this clause to planetary and system governments, there is not a Merc in known space that doesn't scoff at this stricture for the simple reason that from the Merc point of view it is utterly pointless. On the scale that most Mercs operate at, this clause has little meaning except where they are part of a larger military force. In such cases most Mercs take the cynical but realistic approach of at least attempting to give lip service to the rule. But during an independent op, or with any unit deploying at less than regimental strength, unless they work very hard at it they simply will not come to notice of Imperial authorities in such a case. This rule is where the clients and governmental forces will trip up, taking the Mercs down with them, but the fact of the matter is that most Merc units do not have the ability to be nasty enough on such a scale for it to matter.

This is not to say that Merc units go unmonitored: it is these instances where the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) can be a real thorn in a unit's side, as this clause provides a justifiable reason to go snooping. A MoJ fishing expedition is something no Merc outfit wants, as even the most circumspect unit will have some dirt to find, and the MoJ are past masters at digging up the most embarrassing things.

The War Shall Not Interrupt Free Trade: This clause, unlike the previous one, is one that Merc units will obey to the letter, and they monitor themselves very closely. Interruption of trade is something that the Imperium takes a deep interest in, and it usually has a negative impact on any entities contravening the law. The popularity of using Mercs in corporate wars (which, for some units, are their most lucrative tickets) means that this is where operational practise rubs up against the sharp edge of the law.

Trade war generally comprises a wide variety of missions and objectives, none of which can be construed as either healthy for good business or for trade. An example of this is the militarised security force - even the necessity of the rigmarole attached to patrols, security checks, passenger response and posted security forces means that cargo and passengers will travel less smoothly, costs will increase and starport traffic will slow. This is precisely the series of events that will bring a unit under intense scrutiny by Imperial Officials for any infraction.

As a result, when engaged in a Trade War most units protect themselves in the contract stage, enumerating in detail their responsibilities, objectives, special circumstances and so forth. This is also where the sometimes outrageous, sometimes puzzling, and almost always deeply irritating rules of engagement derive from - showing disregard for such rules will result in censure, fine or cancellation of ticket.

This last is almost never done, but is one of the swords the Imperium hangs over the heads of intractable units, as cancellation of ticket means that the unit suffers breach of contract litigation, loss of pay, and sometimes even enforced transport off-world - and no unit wants to have to activate repatriation bonds over such an issue.

The cost to a unit's reputation is not insignificant, either-megacorps are notoriously fussy about whom they hire, and an Imperial-enforced ticket cancellation is a black mark against a unit indicating that it is 'unreliable'.

The Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction Against Civilian Targets is Forbidden: This rule is, as most Mercs would term it, a real 'no-brainer', for the basic reason that most Merc units do not use nuclear weapons. Again, the reasons are largely self-explanatory - either the expense, as nuclear weapons, even tacnukes, are hideously expensive, or the exposure. Any time nukes come into play; on a political, practical or tactical perspective the game gets very ugly indeed.

There are unwritten rules as well, and no Merc with an ounce of brains forgets them. A unit never attacks another unit's dependents or base. Doing so makes one's own base vulnerable, and that is something Mercs will go to extraordinary lengths to avoid.

When possible Mercs avoid making war on civilians, and while some units are less scrupulous than others, a unit gaining such a reputation can find itself out of work in a hurry.

A Merc unit will *never* tolerate a client that reneges as a matter of form, lest they be seen as 'soft', the theory being once it is apparent that a unit can be taken advantage of they will be victimised again. Merc units are notorious in this respect and apocryphal stories abound (and a surprising number of them are entirely true) of the lengths a unit will go to seek retribution.

Mercs in such instances do not believe in legal recourse and lawsuits; occupation by force and scorched earth are the preferred methods and Merc units are known to recover their pay and expenses by either changing sides in a conflict or simply attacking and looting their employer. Their reputation for brutality in such instances is well earned, and few are the clients that welsh on a deal.

MERCENARY UNIT TYPES

For any conceivable mission that needs to be done, odds are there is a Merc unit that can do it; some are specialists whereas other units make their reputations as all around contractors. But, in the broadest sense, there are only so many types of units, and these are generally classified by the types of mission they fulfil. They are as follows:

Strikers units are the grunts, the straight legs, the infantry units that are the backbone of the military. Striker units generally do all the missions one would need infantry for, primarily the assault of objectives and the occupation thereof. They are usually the largest of the Merc units, many of regimental size, and a larger number of battalion strength.

Most field the best equipment they can, but all suffer the same constraint: budget. Striker units suffer the most from budget woes, fielding the best equipment they can. Budget constraints mean that they can seldom afford protracted engagements unless the client is prepared to manage the ruinous cash flow attached to any striker operation. Any campaign is invariably a long one, as all typically require the unit to occupy and hold the objective after taking it.

Most critics tend to forget that, unlike government troops, which have the luxury of a tax base and government logistics, the Merc Strikers have only their organic assets and cash flow, and a far from bottomless bank balance. This means most striker outfits are conservative in their tactics, cautious in their approach and generally operate under the most draconian of terms: loss of too many men or too much equipment has broken more than one unit before.

WITHIN THE RULES.

It is worth noting that good tactics are not merely an issue of what we commonly think of as a military approach; in the general sense that is too inflexible - rather it is the innovative commander who is most successful. Sometimes the Rules can be manipulated to good effect.

In 1079, here in Regina subsector, there were two primary governments on Ruie engaged in a war. Most of the political specifics of this conflict are irrelevant here, but it is the circumstances we wish to examine ... you see, the offending government, a smaller one called Wellstadt, had a wealth of mineral resources and was attempting to establish a case for recognition by the neighbouring system government of Regina. Regina was preparing military and economic aid under a trade agreement, while the aggressor (the Rendai Consulate, I believe) was attempting to gain control of Wellstadt's rich oilfields and lanthanum deposits. The whole issue was one of timing, as the Regian government was some weeks away from mobilizing to occupy the fields. Wellstadt had hired a Merc unit to hold the line, as it were, as the whole point of their agreement rested on the fact that they had no real military capacity to speak of and they had to buy that time. The much more militarily effective Consulate was pressing them very hard with superior force because, naturally, if they could take down the Wellstadt government then the trade agreement was moot.

The Merc commander was an original thinker of the first order, however, and obtained off-planet a fair amount of a tailored nerve gas. While it was in common use in other parts of the Imperium as a particularly effective riot agent, it had no real debilitating effects. The symptoms, on the other hand, greatly resemble the more common war gases to the uninitiated.

The Merc commander staged a spectacular airborne assault on a number of targets in Rendai City, including Government House, the Parliament and their primary military spaceport, and in so doing dropped a fair amount of antitoxin kits in those places as well. The Rendai Government went ballistic, of course, and sent a complaint to the commanding officer of a passing Imperial Navy task force that was travelling through Ruie system on another deployment. Naturally, the Admiral intervened, calling a general cease-fire on Imperial Orders, and began an investigation amongst protests from the Mercs, Wellstadt, and the inevitable foot dragging one would expect from such reprobates.

However, not everything was so cut and dried.

By legal delaying tactics, carefully scripted lack of cooperation and judicious splitting of hairs, the investigation naturally took some weeks. Do you see the beauty of it?

The governmental centres of any warring faction, while civilian in nature, are nonetheless valid military targets under the Rules of War (although it takes some digging to find that statute, it is there ... Page 1093, paragraph 81 to 106) and while the use of war gases is proscribed, riot agents are not. The Admiral also stated that the intention of deleterious harm was avoided as the Mercs had provided ample antitoxin in the civilian sector, and so the collateral damage clauses were not in effect either. So, in the end, he ruled that the Mercs were within the Rules, and he soon enough departed. Alas for the Rendai, though - as the investigation was ending, a large fleet from Regina jumped into the Ruie system, and while everything was drawing to a close, they quietly landed a sizable force, much more technologically capable than the Rendai army could realistically take on. To top it off, Rendai got a hefty diplomatic black mark from the Imperium for a false alarm.

Now, my guess is that Merc commander knew damn well that task force was coming through there then, probably to the hour. The way I hear it through the grapevine is although they got saddled with a fairly stiff fine from the Ministry of Justice for being a nuisance and skating the finer points, word has it that the bonuses they got from Wellstadt more than made up the difference, and you have to admit they upheld their contract.

So, banking on the inexperience of the Rendai armies with such things, good intel, and a well thought out plan, they not only succeeded, but also pulled off the entire operation with practically no casualties and under budget to boot.

Now that, my friends, is the way to win a war.

**General Alan Reisemar, Imperial Army (ret)
Roundtable on the Imperial Rules of War, 1102
Imperial Officers War College, Regina**

As a result, Striker units tend to put a high value on Intel and planning. They routinely engage in policing actions, assault, and patrolling operations. They may have an organic spec-op capability, and usually have their own medical infrastructure, legal apparatus and organic transportation and maintenance assets such as combat engineers, mechanics and technical personnel. Several of the larger units have armour assets as well, but less than one might think as the Imperium maintains a close watch on those that do. Most Strikers are literally armies for hire, and can fulfil nearly any contract. Some of the older units - several regimental and larger enterprises - have been in existence for several centuries and have their own traditions and histories, and their uniforms and insignia are as recognisable as any Imperial regiment.

CAVALRY

Cavalry are Merc units that rely on their armour, their vehicles and guns, for effect and, just like their regular military counterparts; they live for their armour. In the current day and age, any unit that has its own organic assets (and most of them do) will have grav capability, although some still field GEV or tracked armour. The preferred choice is universally grav as the only real way to stay competitive in the field. These units will also field a sister complement of mechanised infantry, as the adage of the infantry screen and armour still holds true, but the unit's focus is entirely on armoured operations, rather than infantry oriented.

RANGERS

Rangers, on the other hand, are dedicated special warfare units. Usually operating in units of up to company strength, they specialise in all the various special warfare missions, from hostage rescue to spoiling raids to irregular operations. The troops are high morale and are generally hired from the elite services; there are always plenty of soldiers who get out of the regular military and then have difficulty fitting into civilian life, and the Rangers units are always willing to take them on.

Ranger units frequently suffer high casualty rates as their missions are, by their very nature, high risk with a narrow margin for error.

A Ranger troop is typified by their attitude, quality of training and the fact that they are usually revoltingly physically fit. Their training is of the highest standard, and the majority of Ranger units will only hire combat veterans. They all have a justifiable reputation for toughness, but they also suffer from a certain degree of ruthlessness. Ranger units, when gone bad, are the ones most likely to commit atrocities and engage in collateral damage to the point that some are little better than terrorists for hire.

Ranger units are invariably the best equipped with state of the art gear and weapons, and they allocate enormous budget expenditures to Intel; no Ranger unit worth doing business with ever trusts a client's Intel; no ranger unit worth doing business with ever trusts a client's Intel. They generally plan their own missions, and usually operate on a 'assign the objective, leave the job to us' sort of theory. As a result, unlike most other units, rangers typically operate on success only tickets.

PRIVATE MILITARY COMPANIES

Para 1 - Private Military Companies have always been a fixture in the Imperium to some degree, their popularity and effectiveness generally being influenced by the political climate of their region. These are mercenary units that operate in a corporate environment, and are distinguished from their counterparts by being lighter in equipment and more specific in mission. Their missions will include resource protection; security of facilities and their principles; as well as maintaining shipboard security. In many respects their operations resemble that of military police, and PMCs are often used in just that manner, as private police, a legal fiction allowing them unlimited freedom within the boundaries of their operational zone.

Private Military Companies operate within strictly defined sets of mission parameters, and often operate in conjunction with local police forces. Rules of engagement may be much stricter, or less strict, than for other Merc units but the key here is that PMCs operate under a corporate umbrella and therefore have at least their parent corporation's oversight to contend with.

Private Military Companies often have a poor reputation as cowboys and bully-boys. Some are very professional, cleanly run operations, while others are unabashedly used by corporations and megacorps as thugs, strike-breakers and brute force to enforce company policies and rules. Usually lightly equipped by Merc standards, PMCs rely on corporate support for facilities and transportation. They are literally hired guns.

CADRE

Cadre are those units that specialise in training indigenous units and personnel. However this is too narrow a definition to really explain what the cadre does. Cadre also serve as advisors, going into the battlefield to train in battle operations, bolstering native troops and serving as officers or NCOs in an army otherwise lacking in either leadership or expertise. They frequently operate specialised equipment and some units make a very comfortable living providing technical services. An example of a Cadre is Haruhmii's Military Technical Services, a regiment sized outfit with no combat troops, beyond a security element, that trains and operates high tech ECM, ranging radars, satellite communications and all sorts of high tech equipment. They don't deploy in the field, but rather train transitioning systems in new and cutting edge technologically advanced military gear, their best customers being those low tech systems that are building up their technical capability.

As a rule, cadre units will not necessarily have their own transportation assets, but will rely on commercial carriers for their mobility. They are generally focused on providing services that others cannot, and as a result, more so than any other rely on the expertise of their personnel for their livelihood. As such their personnel are their most expensive assets. Compared to other Merc units they may well be very lightly equipped as their usual role is to train the indigenous troops on previously purchased assets that will remain in the client's home system. The Cadre merely provides the expertise.

GARRISON

Garrison units are the units (and there are a good many of them) that have discovered the good pay and relatively low risk of the garrison ticket and have found their niche in the market. As a result they are the outfits that specialise in security, containment, military police functions and riot control duties. They seldom maintain their own organic transport for the simple reason that it is a pointless expense. As a rule the client provides all transport and this includes armour, gross transport and billeting. Most garrison units really only provide manpower and officers, and the client provides all facilities.

The Garrison unit will always provide its own weapons and technical staff, and most maintain their own medical staff as well to ensure standards. They are most commonly seen on extended tickets, usually at a flat rate, and are considered by most other Mercs as second-rate troops. While this does not always hold true, the fact remains that they are usually the laxest, least trained and generally most ineffective in combat Merc units working today.

STARMERCS

StarMercs are specialist units that concentrate on space borne and starship operations. They are the 'navy' of mercenary forces, operating and crewing their own craft, and undertaking space oriented missions such as strike, patrol, interdiction and blockade. The vessels that these units use can range from up-gunned freighters, to mission-modified Broadsword class cruisers, to mission specific and purpose built craft in excess of kilotons. They are viewed as being anywhere from professional naval forces to little more than privateers or pirates, depending on the unit's reputation.

Notably, StarMerc outfits have the highest overhead costs of any Merc unit, bar none, and as a result are always 'hungry'. The StarMerc unit generally seeks cascade missions or is in negotiation on a constant basis and will typically book an engagement months in advance. Inevitably, they will be seeking the next job even as they are in the course of fulfilling a current contract. This does have its downside, however, as this practise (one that virtually all StarMercs have in common) is one of the reasons for the widespread belief that they are generally less loyal to their contractors than they might be.

For StarMercs, there is another unique element to consider - any StarMerc outfit will, in the course of negotiations, pay close attention to their rights regarding salvage and prizes. While most Merc units aren't above a bit of looting, for the StarMerc it is a vital element of their pay conditions. A captured ship can be worth millions in salvage and more than one StarMerc outfit has expanded its fleet through captured vessels. These Mercs fall under the watchful eye of the Imperial Navy, and as a result they are also more closely monitored than most other sorts of units. This is largely due to the unit's capability to directly impact trade and commerce and as a result they are the units most likely to run afoul of the Imperial Liaisons and the Rules of War.

PARAS

Paras are units that engage in airborne (parachute) or orbital drop (drop or jump troop) assault missions. There are also Para units that engage in grav assault using grav belts or even grav augmented battle dress. These Para units are still quite rare, as the expense of such equipment tends to encourage most outfits to use lower tech, and therefore, cheaper alternatives.

Those units that do engage in the higher tech approaches, however, can be decisive in engagements. They are considered specialised units, and are superior at capturing and holding an objective for a short time, for fast movement and for their ability to suddenly appear in the unlikelyst of places. Typically, they are more heavily armed than infantry, but are otherwise lightly equipped. Due to the nature of their missions, they suffer all the vulnerabilities of their regular counterparts.

AIR

Air units are those rare Merc units that deploy pilots and craft capable of engaging in Close Orbit And Airspace Command (COAAC) missions and, after StarMercs, are the most expensive units to operate. Typified by their aerospace assets (almost all air units maintain their own aircraft), they tend to appear in lower tech systems, generally as a rented air force.

Almost all Air Units operate either aerospace or interface fighters, as space operations are the purview of the StarMerc, and they can be a very real force to be reckoned with in the lower tech brushfire wars that they generally appear in. As a matter of course, all Air units include their own maintenance personnel on their rosters, but it is not uncommon to find pilots working on their own aircraft in the smaller outfits.

SUPPORT/REAR ECHELON SPECIALISTS

Need a logistics command? Do you have a military force of soldiers, but no infrastructure? Support/Rear Echelon Specialists will run your war for you. From the supply side of things to logistical management to basic accounting, this unit is the one to tend to these issues. It is the most underrated of Merc units, yet is the most profitable, and is the one unit that almost never takes the field.

Composed of quartermaster's specialists, acquisitions experts, buyers and accountants, one of these rare units can set up and equip a client's war. Cooking the books is their primary job, and while uncommon, there is still demand for their services. Most Mercs disdain the 'toads' as not really being soldiers, but this unit almost always operates under budget, on time, and at a profit.



MERCENARY UNITS

Below are four examples of mercenary units, each of which includes a unit history, description of weapons, organisation, deployment, tactical doctrine and some famous (or infamous!) non-player characters from each unit.

MERRICK'S RANGERS

A battalion strength unit with its own transport assets, Merrick's Rangers is a unit specialising in spec ops missions of all sorts but which has made its reputation on the 'gray' side of the Merc trade. Deniability has been the Rangers' forte, and they have worked for clients as diverse as megacorps, individuals and criminal syndicates, a client book that has not endeared them to the Ministry of Justice.

The unit is not truly a battalion, as the organisation is non-standard. Merrick's fields one company of Rangers, one company of support, one company of weapons/special troops (more in TO and E) and one company of dedicated aerospace/grav troops.

Merrick's Rangers musters a total strength of 547 troops. Of these, 220 are combat effectives, with the remainder being 310 support, medical, and technical personnel and 17 officers.

UNIT HISTORY

Merrick's Rangers was formed in 1086, originally as a company sized unit. Over the years, the unit grew in strength through lucrative contracts, and managed to provide themselves with some space borne capability through the judicious theft of vessels 'lost to enemy action'. The Rangers are past masters of the fast raid, the spoiling mission and point assault, and are best known for their expertise at their two bread and butter missions: the snatch and the recce. They routinely take hire with any that can pay their price, and they are best known for their results oriented approach. This is a unit that willingly gets its hands dirty, and everyone in the business knows it.

Since the onset of the Fourth Frontier War, Merrick's Rangers have made both friends and enemies (depending upon who you talk to) in and out of the trade, and have of late taken more work in the private sector than most other such outfits. They remain busy, as they have proven to be both reliable and able to provide that most desirable of services, deniable operations. They currently operate extensively on the Imperial border, favoring jobs along the lucrative trade routes and across the frontier into Foreven Sector where Ministry of Justice oversight is limited as they are conveniently out of Imperial jurisdiction. Given their preferred means of operation, this has become nigh on a necessity!

EQUIPMENT

The Rangers are kitted out to an eclectic standard, and gear up according to specific mission requirements, but their small size allows them wide latitude. As a general rule, they field at Tech 13, equipped with anything from gauss rifles to SMGs to sidearms at that level. Specialised troops can field with a variety of weapons, from the snipers with their gauss and laser weapons to the combat armoured assault specialists.

They can, when needed on a case-by-case basis, field troops equipped to TL 14, as they maintain a very high standard of training. Though, as a rule, they do not keep such assets on hand and instead purchase them as required, later liquidating them (often at a tidy profit and generally on the gray market).

The weapons company maintains heavy gauss weapons, and 40 mm, 62 mm and 80 mm mortars; but the preferred heavy weapon is a variety of missiles and high-energy weapons. The focus is on reliability and ruggedness and the weapons company routinely roll their inventory over.

The only real uniformity of weapons is a unit preference for the Instellarms M246A1 ACR/GL for its reliability, its relative ready availability and its use of Imperial standard ammo. Sidearms are generally personally purchased.

The Rangers operate a number of grav vehicles; six G-carriers and a large number of civilian vehicles – the latter are typically stolen, or salvaged and repaired, to be later abandoned.

They operate three spacecraft, all capable of Jump 3: a Merc cruiser of standard configuration called *Gremlin's Castle*, a 200 ton trader that has seen better days called *Hera's Dream*, and a 400 ton freighter they changed the name and registry of so often that within the unit it is only known as 'the other ship'.

The unit also maintains five assault shuttles; four being operational and the fifth being the resident hanger queen until they manage to offload it along the way.

ORGANISATION

Merrick's Rangers is organised as four companies. Alpha and Bravo companies contain the combat troops: Alpha is comprised of strikers and Bravo Company the weapons company. Bravo is also home to the scout/sniper squad and the intrusion squads.

Charlie Company is the support company, and is home to the computer/Intel specialists, along with comms and medical. This company is over strength as it also contains the technicians and financial team.

Delta is the transport company, maintaining the g-carriers and other vehicles and transport assets but not the spacecraft. The starships are all independently crewed and maintained as a separate corporate entity, which provides the legal fiction that the ships are not connected to the Rangers. As part of their operations, the Rangers 'hire out' their passage on a mission-by-mission basis. This provides the ships with a clean paper trail. Practically speaking this fools nobody, but it is a legal loophole the Rangers have found useful on more than one occasion. This is one reason why the Rangers seldom sweat repatriations, and it also saves them reliance on outside sources for transport.

DEPLOYMENT

Befitting the eclectic nature of their contracts, Merrick's Rangers hire out at any strength from a squad to a company, although their usual practice is to field a platoon in strength with whatever support is needed. They will take on any mission they have the capability to manage, although they never serve as StarMercs nor do they take on garrison or cadre tickets. They are exclusively a spec ops outfit.

TACTICAL DOCTRINE

Strictly speaking, the Rangers have none; they operate on a mission-to-mission basis. As a rule, however, there are commonalities in their approach. They are known to be highly adaptable and are proponents of unconventional tactics; the unit's planning staff is highly innovative and the focus is, generally speaking, on results rather than methodology - if it works then by definition it's a good tactic. They are not above breaking the law and will bend it at any opportunity. This practice has placed them under MoJ and Imperial scrutiny more than once for near misses on the Rules of War. Although the Rangers have yet pulled a stunt resulting in action regarding their license, they continue to push their luck. It is this willingness to flout the rules that gets them contracts others will not take, and gets them a black mark in most of their counterpart's books.

All contracts are heavily and ruthlessly negotiated, and they seldom commit them to paper. Thus far only one client has reneged, and the inevitable response from the Rangers gained them a certain notoriety.

FAMOUS OR INFAMOUS NPCs

COLONEL ARNULD MERRICK

A career Merc officer, Arnuld Merrick first made his reputation as a corporate soldier in the Ling Standard Security Forces, heading up the Rhylanor subsector Special Services unit. He left under questionable circumstances in favor of the more lucrative mercenary trade. He has a surprising array of both underworld contacts as well as Noble friends; his reputation is one of results, discretion and willingness to get the job done. His unit does not come cheaply, and they work on a cash only basis. Merrick is a hard-bitten cynic, and is devious and resourceful. He leads from the front and his officers are expected to do likewise. He has absolutely no respect for conventional thinking and is both direct and to the point in all of his dealings. He is a harsh disciplinarian, but only in the operational aspects of his job; he is not a martinet. Uniform standards are not a concern of his, nor what most outfits would consider routine.

Merrick is known for a willingness to hire anyone, provided they are capable. Past records or blemishes are of little concern to him so long as the trooper works well within the unit. Merrick's only standard and criteria is competence. He has a low tolerance, however, for loose talkers, and any who either break security or jeopardise a mission are in for a very rough time.

Currently Merrick's reputation is much like that of his unit: although amongst his peers there is a professional courtesy and recognition of his successes, many in trade detest his leanings toward the criminal element and regard him as a black sheep of sorts. Merrick's Rangers have had a run-in with Keenan's Star Dragoons, stealing a client out from under their noses and wounding several Dragoons troopers in the process. While the Rangers paid the Star Dragoons reparations under the table, the Dragoons were left with considerable egg on their faces and to this day the Dragoons have kept that grudge going. Although Merrick and Colonel Keenan-Rodrigues regarded the incident as merely an accident of business, there is no love lost between them either, and when they occasionally meet, both must work hard to maintain an air of strained civility in their business dealings.

MASTER SERGEANT ROGER KENDALL

Company Alpha Striker, Battalion First Sergeant

A tired old campaigner, Kendall is the lead sergeant of his unit for a reason - as Mercs go, he is a soldier's soldier. He leads from the front, is first in and last out. He eats and sleeps with his men, and is also the single meanest son of a bitch in the outfit. Kendall takes nothing for granted and is jaded as only a twenty-five year Merc can be. Hired into the outfit in the first year, he has been with it ever since, and while he does not consider Merrick a friend; they have a professional regard for one another.

Kendall's current nemesis is the First Sergeant of Bravo Company, 1st platoon, Staff Sergeant Rourke, who is seen as his future replacement. Rourke has gained no points with Kendall as he is ambitious and a former officer, and as rivals they enjoy a relationship based on mutual hatred. They routinely snipe at one another but, as both are consummate leaders, they never show their acrimony in front of the men. In private, however, they have been known to come to blows, and their respective NCO staffers dread their periodic meetings at Sergeants' call.

STAFF SERGEANT MARTIN FRANCIS ROURKE

Company Bravo Heavy Weapons, Platoon Sergeant

After assaulting a Senior Officer for actions involving a 'friendly-fire' incident where fatalities were involved, Rourke was blamed for the lives lost and discharged under 'other than Honourable conditions'. The colonel in question went free even though he was the one who issued the orders that caused the casualties. Now serving in Merrick's Rangers as a weapons platoon sergeant, Rourke has been in that unit for not quite a year.

Viewed as a 'weapons' nut' by his peers, Rourke keeps abreast of the latest weapons in use, how they're used, and who makes them. He is ambitious, and is wary of getting 'left out to dry'. With a wry sense of dark humor, he prefers to use his wits rather than his fists, but is no shirker in a scrap. He is also a firm believer in maximum concentrated firepower against the opposition. He has the unenviable reputation for being a bastard when it comes to weapon's cleanliness in his platoon. Off duty, he keeps to himself and has few 'friends' amongst the other NCOs.

Seen as one of the 'Old School' types, Rourke displays all the characteristics of an Imperial officer and his bearing is as ingrained as only a career officer's can be. Consequently, he often runs into trouble with his officers and fellow NCOs in Merrick's Rangers, as his current position grates on him. He reads, and frequently quotes Shakespeare. Amongst the NCOs in the Rangers he is a contrast in command styles, for while Master Sergeant Kendall is easy going in many respects, Rourke is regarded as a martinet. In their own companies, however, both command the respect and loyalty of their men, and the rivalry between both companies is fierce.

ZIMMERMANN'S FALLSCHIRMJAEGER

UNIT HISTORY

Founded in 1100, *Zimmermann's Fallschirmjaeger* is an example of the unusual breed of Striker-style units operating just over the Imperial border in Urnian Subsector. The unit was raised up as an Airborne Infantry outfit (or Paras, since they deploy via parachute or para-wing gliders) on the balkanised Imperial client world of Novotny (2938/Urnian-P/Foreven). They are a comparatively young and lightly armed outfit when juxtaposed against one with a long standing tradition and an equipment dense arsenal, such as Keenan's Star Dragoons Regiment, but already they have established a reputation for élan and daring in the five years since their foundation.

Emil Zimmermann, a former Imperial Marine Drop Trooper and Fourth Frontier War veteran, had not started off as a mercenary. With his mustering out funds, he and a few friends from the service had formed a TL 10 Drop-Capsule club on Novotny in 1089.

Life-changing events can however, turn the course of a man's life, and even a nation, History teaches. An Ine-Givar sponsored separatist movement, active amongst the four major nations on Novotny, had been protesting against encroaching Imperial influence in local politics. Their protests turned violent when the largest state's acceptance of Imperial client status became public knowledge in early 1099. The Anti-Imperial Separatists (AIS) began a bloody campaign of escalating terror bombings in the state of Thuringa, which culminated in late 1099 when they seized the Nostrom Nuclear Power Plant that lay upriver from the nation's capital of 12 million citizens. The AIS terrorists threatened to destroy the fission power plant, placing the lives of all those in the capital in jeopardy, if their demands were not met. Thuringa's small ground-based armed forces sealed off the plant, and a stalemate ensued.

Zimmermann, a native of Emape (0103/Five Sisters-M/Spinward Marches) offered the Thuringa government the services of two dozen of his club members - all former Drop troopers - when the crisis began, and was refused. After the AIS executed six of the Nuclear Plant's employees on nationwide TV, the government relented, and gave Zimmermann and his club members the green light. With four days of preparation and rehearsals already completed, Zimmermann and his fellow veteran Drop-chute enthusiasts executed a precision drop on a moonless overcast night - on the eighth day of the siege - and liberated the power plant while eliminating the terrorists. Minimum collateral damage was inflicted and, of the sixteen remaining hostages, only three sustained minor wounds. The daring rescue operation paid Zimmermann, and his associates, dividends and caused him to formally apply for a mercenary license soon afterwards. Zimmermann's Fallschirmjaeger was officially 'stood-up' as a Paras outfit in the spring of 1100.

The Fallschirmjaeger have been involved in several brushfire wars, three evacuation of civilian personnel rescue ops, and numerous hostage rescue tickets since 1100 throughout Foreven Sector's Delta Quadrant. They have also undertaken at least two known rescue ops in the Non-aligned worlds of the Five Sisters subsector of the Spinward Marches.

Zimmermann's outfit stands at the approximate strength of three companies of Airborne-Orbital drop troops, some 330 combat personnel, with 165 Support and Logistics personnel at their Drop-Club business and training base on Novotny. Ever the entrepreneur, Zimmermann has opened a paintball gun range on the adjoining property, complete with mock up starships, and villages.

EQUIPMENT

Being Paras, and essentially Light Airborne Infantry, the Fallschirmjaeger generally operate on worlds with breathable atmospheres. The unit is equipped with sturdy, but functional, TL 7 to TL 9 sniper rifles, ACRs, grenade launchers, light machineguns, and light man-portable mortars, and a mix of disposable and reusable Anti-tank weapons. The entire outfit wears the TL 10 Combat Environment Suit (CES), with TL 10 Reflec bodysuits underneath for the occasional laser bearing foe, and a TL 9 Light Infantryman's ceramic helmet.

All of the combat troops in the Fallschirmjaeger are experienced High Altitude Low Opening (HALO) parachutists and two thirds of them are experienced using the motorised Tech 8 Para-wing. Due to the expense of Drop-Capsules and training-time, only a third of the troopers are Drop-Capsule rated for meteoric assault purposes.

Zimmermann's Fallschirmjaeger own two small starships, an armed 200 ton Tech 11 Far Trader (Jump-2, 2G) named the *Monte de Grasso*, and an armed 400 ton Tech 10 Subsidised Freighter (Jump-1, 1G) named the *Eben Emael*. The Drop-Club remains their home base on Novotny, and contains a privately owned D-class Downport for the unit's two starships, and three unarmed 20 dton Tech 9 Ship's Launches (1G). The *Monte Grasso* has one modification: a belly hatch Drop Capsule launcher for 36 capsules, enough to deploy a single platoon into action at a pass. The unit also owns one Tech 12 survey drone for aerial reconnaissance photography.

ORGANISATION

The Fallschirmjaeger are organised as a light battalion of under 500 personnel, with three companies of combat troops - Alpha, Bravo and Charlie Flights - plus support personnel. The first company, Alpha Flight, consists of 110 Drop-Capsule Assault troops; while the second and third companies, Bravo Flight and Charlie Flight respectively, are two 110-man companies of Paras. Each company consists of three platoons of 36 personnel (30 enlisted troopers, six NCO's), one senior NCO and one Officer.

The *Monte de Grasso* and *Eben Emael* are each crewed and operated by 20 personnel, former members of the outfit who, for medical reasons, can no longer 'jump-in'. The remaining personnel of the outfit are the Riggers of the outfit's parachutes and Para-wings (25 personnel); Starship mechanics and Downport operators (some 100 personnel); and 25 dependants (spouses and children).

DEPLOYMENT

In the past five years, the Fallschirmjaeger's Tickets have seen them deploy as small as a platoon to the full light battalion. Where a ballistic entry into a battle space demands boots on the ground quick, fast, and in a hurry, where a target area must be seized and held, or hostages rescued, the Fallschirmjaeger have been available for just such operations. Being Light Infantry, most of their target objectives are to be held secure for a limited period of time, as they do not deploy for long-term conflicts as a general rule.

TACTICAL DOCTRINE

For platoon-sized tickets, the Fallschirmjaeger deploy with the smaller 200 ton *Monte de Grasso*, for company sized tickets, they use both vessels. When not engaged on a ticket, these vessels undertake speculative trade runs in the Urnian Main, and across the nearby Imperial border. Tactically, the outfit prefers reconnaissance runs from orbit, at the very least, over their target area and makes heavy use of Orbital satellite photography prior to 'jumping in'.

FAMOUS OR INFAMOUS NPCs

COLONEL EMIL ZIMMERMANN

Colonel Zimmermann, a skilled entrepreneurial soldier of fortune is, at heart, an adrenalin-junky. At age 42, he still jumps with his troops four times a month between tickets. Zimmermann includes his three company commanding officers when negotiating tickets for the unit, as he feels four heads are wiser than one when searching out the contracts for loopholes and pitfalls. Unlike other special ops units, such as Merrick's Rangers, Zimmermann prefers not to seek contracts with the criminal elements of the private sector, leaving that clientele for them. Whether this is an issue of morality, of unit reputation, or merely personal preference, Colonel Zimmermann declines offers from known interstellar criminal syndicates.

MASTER SERGEANT RUSSO OHARA

Master Sergeant Ohara is the senior NCO of Alpha Flight, and has been with the outfit since it was 'stood-up' in 1100. He has over 1000 hours of Airtime in Drop Capsules and HALO jumps and, next to Colonel Zimmermann, no one is more technically proficient in Airborne/Orbital Insertion operations in the unit. Ohara is an experienced mercenary, having served prior terms in Cadre and Striker outfits before finding his niche with the Fallschirmjaegers.

Russo Ohara hails from the mid-tech Imperial world of Wonstar (0508/Five Sisters-M/Spinward Marches), and, at the age of 44, is the oldest soldier in the outfit. As a professional soldier, and experienced Instructor, he enjoys the complete confidence of Colonel Zimmermann and has been entrusted with the training regimen between tickets to keep the troops in peak condition.

FLIGHT CAPTAIN KIKKO NIIDERSII

Flight Captain Niidersii is a dually qualified Drop-Capsule chutist and Starship Pilot and, more uniquely, one of eighteen women in the outfit. Niidersii, however, joined the unit not from being an adrenalin junky - though her ability to fly Nap-of-the Earth (NOE) to discreet high orbit for HALO drops under and out of radar range makes her an invaluable asset - but to leave a troubled past behind on her homeworld of Rhyllanor (0306/Rhyllanor-H/Spinward Marches). Born the daughter of a Solomani-Yakuza Crime lord's eldest daughter and a Vilani Syndicate (VGB) enforcer, Niidersii at the age of 18 fled the 'who's-side-are-you-on?' question by joining the Imperial Marines under an assumed name.

After two terms as a Marine Assault Trooper with cross training as a Navy Pilot, members of her mother's family discovered her new identity. Niidersii opted not to re-enlist, cashed out, and took up piloting a grey trader across the Imperial border into Foreven, where she wound up, several ships later, on Novotny, piloting spacecraft for Zimmermann's Drop-Club. Here at least she has earned her keep, and her place, without questions of loyalty, or parentage to haunt her.

KEENAN'S STAR DRAGONS

UNIT HISTORY

Keenan's Star Dragons is a Brigade-sized mercenary outfit, based on Quintus (2537/Urnian-P/Foreven), which has carved out a niche market in Starport Security in the Delta Quadrant of Foreven Sector. The Brigade takes its name from its founder, General Hiram Augustus Keenan, a loyalist of the Quintus Planetary Army during a tumultuous period in 985 when Quintus was Balkanised into two major states. The political movement to consolidate the two juxtaposing nation states and unite the world brought about a revolutionary war, during which control over the world's two dirtside and solitary orbital Highport became a critical issue. A third party, however, decided neither side had the legitimate needs of the population at heart. This radical pro-isolationist faction decided to seize and destroy both Orbital and dirtside Starports during a powerful uprising of the citizenry. The end result of course, would have plunged Quintus into anarchy and slow starvation.

Retired Ground Defence Forces Brigadier General Keenan recruited the Star Dragons from former soldiers and Starport Police Security personnel who had been laid off during the strikes and riots preceding the revolutionary war. Keenan's Dragons then 'borrowed' four Baraccal-Technum LIC Large Freighters (44, 45 TGB) for transport and secured the Highport. Turning about in what looked like a retreat-withdrawal, the Dragons landed and seized both Downports after two brief but bloody battles with the rebel forces later the same day. Their daring and initiative allowed those forces for planetary unity the opportunity of victory.

The Brigade has seen action on several Non-aligned Balkanised bridge worlds in the Urnian and Newkyrk subsectors in the years following the Quintusian War of Consolidation of 985 to 986. Not all missions were done in the name of conquest and territorial acquisition; many were fought simply to preserve law and order on turbulent, astrographically strategic worlds to keep the lifeblood of interstellar trade flowing. The Dragons' reputation for neutrality and for maintaining security over those facilities in their care has gained the unit several long-term contracts throughout the Delta Quadrant. The Star Dragons eventually purchased their formerly 'borrowed' freighters from Baraccal-Technum LIC, and these are used to this day to ferry replacements and supplies to elements of the Brigade deployed offworld, as well as to ferry freight between Quintus and the Urnian Main.

There have been clashes in recent years with mercenary elements, like Merrick's Rangers, on several Balkanised worlds. In one case, Merrick's Rangers were exiting off planet in great haste at the end of an operation when they hijacked one of the Dragons' freighters. Since then, the Star Dragons have taken to employing Star Merc escorts from such units as the Dark Angels, LLC to ensure safe passage for their vital supply linkage.

EQUIPMENT

Keenan's Star Dragoons are equipped to a Tech Level 12 Standard in personal armour (TL 12 combat armour, & TL 12 Vacc Suit with PLSS for Orbital Highport duty). Personal firearms vary from ACR's and Automatic Slug Pistols to Laser and Gauss rifles and pistols as local supplies and atmospheres on client worlds vary. Keenan's Star Dragoons also come equipped with TL 8 through TL 12 Air Defense Artillery (ADA) and ground and orbital assets. For communications equipment, the Regiment has wisely invested in Darrian-built TL 13 or better EMP-proofed comms and sensors for all their personnel and vehicles.

The Brigade's vehicles vary; tough, sturdy TL 8 up-armoured ground wheeled trucks for water poor worlds with atmospheres; heavily armed TL 8 Hovercraft for water worlds; and Plasma gun armed TL 12 Grav Tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers for hostile and vacuum worlds. The Brigade also owns 50% shares in twelve Imperial-built TL 12 Large Freighters (2kton, Jump-3/Maneuver 1G). The freighters are flagged on Quintus, where the Brigade also maintains the crews of their 'Transport Squadron'. These vessels are named simply 'Wagon-Train 1' through 'Wagon-Train 12.' The Brigade also maintains for each of its twelve COACC Companies a total of twenty-four 90 ton TL 12 Assault Shuttles, one hundred and forty-four 20 ton TL 11 fixed pulse laser equipped Space Interceptors, seventy-two TL 11 Orbital Defense System (ODS) missile battery platforms, and twenty-four TL 11 50 ton Modular Cutters.

ORGANISATION

The Brigade maintains its recruiting base on its homeworld of Quintus, and remains to this day separate from the Planetary Defense forces, keeping its status as a mercenary brigade of some five regiments. Each regiment consists of three battalions, and each battalion is subdivided into four 'line' companies of 110 personnel, and an overall Command and Control Headquarters 'Company' of 150 personnel.

The 4th Regiment maintains the coveted postings downside and at the Highport facilities on the Homeworld. The 5th Regiment is the training regiment, and is also based in the Quintus System. 5th Regiment is under strength compared to the 'Line' Regiments, maintaining 850 personnel as trainers and instructors. The 1st, 2nd and Third Regiments are the deployable elements of the Brigade.

A 'Line Battalion' consists of two Companies of Infantry (Alpha and Bravo Companies respectively); one Close Orbital Air Command & Control (COACC) company (Charlie Company); one Ground Vehicle company (Delta Company); and one Headquarters-Service & Support Company (Medical personnel, Armourers, Mechanics, ADA crews, and Command Staff). Specific unit designations run as follows: 1st Regiment, 1st Battalion, Alpha (A) Company, 1st Platoon, and 1st Squad. As the Brigade recruits exclusively from Quintus, it maintains itself as a Paramilitary Business entity there for tax, licensing, and insurance purposes.

DEPLOYMENT

The Dragoons are deployed in Battalion-sized elements in their garrison tickets. The Brigade prefers Balkanised worlds with multiple Downports, or smaller mid-population worlds with a single port. On worlds with a single large Downport, or both High and Downports, the Star Dragoons usually deploy an entire Battalion at each port. Ammunition, Chow, and Quarters are client supplied as a general rule of their tickets, with Hostile and Vacuum worlds requiring the higher technology end of things.

Currently in 1105, the Brigade has the 1st Regiment, 1st Battalion deployed on Tralsend (3236/Newkyrk-O/Foreven); the 1st Regiment, 2nd Battalion at Tango Station (0206/Urnian-P/Foreven); and the Third Battalion posted at Ronin's Gate (2632/Urnian-P/Foreven). The entire 2nd Regiments' three battalions are deployed to three of the five Downports on balkanised Crannog (0102/Urnian-P/Foreven). The Third Regiment's 1st Battalion is currently deployed to Jipango (2838/Urnian-P/Foreven); its 2nd Battalion is deployed to one of two Downports on balkanised Wycliff (2938/Urnian-P/Foreven); and its Third Battalion is deployed to one of four Downports on Novotny (3037/Urnian-P/Foreven) in the nation state of Freislund.

TACTICAL DOCTRINE

Keenan's Star Dragoon's come from a very thin atmosphere world, and as such are a cut above most troops education-wise, all of them being trained in Survival and Vacc Suit - huge advantages that they capitalise on in their trade and training. Coming from a mid Law Level world like Quintus, they can provide the client with the same level of Law and Order or less as the client world demands. The Star Dragoons maintain security within the Starport's environs downside and ADA coverage to Low Orbit; on Orbital ports their defense umbrella extends out to 10 kilo-klicks (10,000 Km) with their ADA assets. Their COACC Assets are staged on the Starport proper (Downside or orbital) for rapid response and engagement opportunities, as well as customs and inspection checks.

The Star Dragoons also enjoy favourable client status with the Imperial Megacorporations of Instellarms, LIC for purchases of their personal firearms, armour, ADA and Space missiles, and vehicles in bulk sales; and with Ling Standard Products, LIC for their space borne vehicles and modular-cutter spacecraft. That being said, Keenan's Star Dragoons are a political player in the Delta Quadrant and with the subsidy and support of their homeworld, Quintus, they are an undeniable power projection platform for foreign policy in the arena of Interstellar Trade and commerce there.

FAMOUS OR INFAMOUS NPCs

COLONEL VALENTINA KEENAN-RODRIGUES

Colonel Keenan-Rodrigues is the twelfth Star Dragoons commanding officer and CEO in their 120-year history. She is the great-great granddaughter of the Brigade's Founder, Hiram Augustus Keenan, and namesake of his Rhylander-born wife, Valentina Rodrigues, a former regional Manager for Baraccal-Technum LLC. Like previous commanding officers of the Brigade, Valentina was born on Quintus, is a graduate of both the military and business academies there, and rose through the ranks of the Star Dragoons to her present station. Her quarrel with Colonel Arnuld Merrick over their respective mercenary units 'mixing it up' recently, while seen as an accident of their mutual trade, has set an arctic air of strained civility to any public meetings between the two commanders since that time.

Colonel Keenan-Rodrigues is an able and charismatic leader and negotiator of her outfit's tickets. She invests heavily in training time and personal equipment for her unit from their profits. As her predecessors have done, she prefers hiring former military personnel from Quintus, and is seen as more than a little hide-bound to traditional doctrine and tactics by others in the trade.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JON EDWYRD LLEWELLYN

Formerly the Commanding Officer of Third Regiment, Third Battalion, of the Star Dragoons Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel Llewellyn is unlikely to advance in rank after he refused to give the 'shoot-down' order during the recent incident with Merrick's Rangers wherein one of the Regiment's four multi-mega credit transports was hijacked. Llewellyn is a former Quintusian Star Marine with several successful Anti-piracy campaigns behind him, and finished his first term as a senior officer in the Star Dragoons. While his decision of prudence was later validated with the negotiated return of the vessel 'Wagon-Train-3' intact, the lives of his troops who were killed in the incident was a bitter balance sheet to juggle, and was seen by the less thoughtful of his peers and superiors as indecision. He has been relegated back to Quintus to command the 5th Training Regiment for the time being.

Llewellyn, unlike other officers in the Brigade, was a former NCO before his battlefield commission in the Star Marines. He has had numerous run-ins with Colonel Keenan-Rodrigues, but his reputation with his troops, as well as his tactical ability and sound business acumen have kept him from being relieved. Placed where he is now - in command of the Training Regiment - he is in a much better position to affect the changes that he feels the Brigade needs for when next they encounter an outfit like Merrick's Rangers.

DARK ANGELS, LLC

UNIT HISTORY

The Dark Angels Star Merc Company was founded principally by four enterprising and decorated Imperial veterans of the Fourth Frontier War in 1090: former Imperial Navy Commander Sir Derik Trajan Harris, former Imperial Navy Lieutenant Commander Nadia Alisha Kiishinkhuum, former Imperial Marine Major Robert Hugh Gravis, and former Navy Engineer Master Chief Lincoln Jefferson Vasques - all four of whom had served upon the same 3kton Imperial Destroyer, the ISS *Bright Sword*.

Though the *Bright Sword* was decommissioned for scrap after the Battle of Two Suns, her former officers and some of her ratings chose to keep her name 'alive'. Pooling their resources, contacts and Ship's Shares they began with refurbishing an auctioned-off 400 ton TL 14 *Gazelle*-class Close Escort on Emape (0103/Five Sisters-M/Spinward Marches), which they renamed *Bright Sword*.

The Dark Angels found ready employ in escorting Imperial freight into District 268, and the Five Sisters subsectors, and worked in some anti-piracy tickets along the way. One successful anti-piracy ticket in the Walston system (0302/District 268-N/Spinward Marches) led to the unit's expansion with two prizes seized - an upgraded 400 ton *Buccaneer*-class Corsair with a magnetically grappled brace of 20 ton Space Fighters, and a 150 ton *Frontiersman*-class Modular Scout Ship equipped with a Long Range Sensor Module.

With multi-ship capability, the Dark Angels found further employment as Convoy Escorts and on planetary interdiction jobs as well. Former Major Gravis raised a platoon of troops for 'dirtside' operations, thus adding a further potential revenue stream for this job-hungry outfit. By 1100 they had prospered enough to even take on distant salvage jobs, buying a used 1,200 ton *Labourer*-class Salvage Hauler starship.

With this, their fourth vessel, they began a series of tickets for the Darrian Confederation, several of which saw them clashing with the Sword Worlds Confederate Navy over former wrecks in the Entrope system (0710/Querion-I/Spinward Marches).

These tickets for the Darrians paid extremely well, but due to political tensions from being an Imperial licensed and bonded mercenary company operating in Sword World claimed space, the Dark Angels moved where obliged to move on. Shifting their area of operations Spinward and rimward, they returned to their founding world of Emape in 1101, richer again with their fifth vessel, a 2,000 ton Modular Clipper.

The hard won success the Dark Angels aided their recruitment of crews for their additional ships, and in 1102 Emape became their informal base of operations, complete with all of their dependents. Sir Harris invested some of their gains from the Darrians in a trio of 100 ton TL 13 *Rumblefish*-class gunships, making the modular Clipper into a poor-man's Battletender. Being atmospheric capable the *Rumblefish* increased the unit's ability to interdict for potential clients as well as provide air support for their own dirtside ops.

Fortunes rise and fall as with all things in the mercenary trade and in late 1104 the Dark Angels hit a rough patch of luck. While working an interdiction/anti-smuggling ticket in the Ocheate system (0807/Five-Sisters-M/Spinward Marches) at the rimward end of the Five-Sisters Subsector, the operation went disastrously south and they lost their bond, being unable to complete the ticket.

With his never-say-die attitude, Star Merc Commodore Harris aboard the *Bright Sword*, led his ships back to Emape as fast as they could jump, outrunning the Imperial Bond Holder's agents. At Emape, with the aid of the two larger vessels, the Dark Angels packed up their base, their modular housing, and all of their dependents, and crossed the Imperial Frontier, rather than face confiscation and bankruptcy court.

Currently the Dark Angels Star Mercs have 135 combat effectives in Ships' Crews spread across 5 starships, 3 Gunships, 14 Space Fighters, 1 Assault Shuttle, 3 Ship's Boats, and 2 Modular Cutters. They are also ferrying the modular quarters for their 675 dependents, and former members.

EQUIPMENT

Acquired over their fifteen-year history, the Dark Angels Star Merc Company's vessels are a motley collection. First and foremost is the 400 ton TL 14 *Gazelle*-class Close Escort *'Bright Sword'*, whose only modification is an upgrade of her dual turrets with triple-armed turrets: Two with dual missiles, and a single sandcaster; and two with dual pulse lasers and a single sandcaster. The *'Bright Sword'* carries a 20-ton Ship's Boat the crew has named *'Dagger'*, in a streamlined external docking cradle.

The Type-P *Buccaneer*-class Corsair, captured by the outfit in Walston system, was renamed the *'Sabakakrazny'*. Her former piratical gunrunning owners had already fairly heavily modified her drives, with a TL 12 Jump-3 drive installed to match her 3G Maneuver drive. Fuel bunkering had been increased to 156 tons as well, which reduced her aft-loading cargo bay to 100 tons, and a TL 12 Transponder Changer, holding up to 4 identities, had also been installed. Besides upgrading her avionics, comms and sensor suite to TL 13, the Dark Angels had also upgraded her triple laser turrets with TL 13 weapons and fire control.

Two 20 ton TL 11 10G capable Assault Fighters, named Fang-1 and Fang-2 respectively, are carried in streamlined external cradles slung beneath the *'Sabakakrazny'*, while a single 90 ton TL 11 Assault Shuttle, that the troops have named *'Fire-Drake'*, is carried internally. The 4G capable *'Fire-Drake'*, is able to carry 24 troops for boarding actions or planetary troop deployment.

The 150-ton *Frontiersman*-class Modular Scout now has two additional 50-ton modules: a Passenger Module with a capacity for 9 High Passengers or 18 Middle Passengers; and a Cargo module that can carry 46 tons of cargo. This rugged, versatile vessel has been renamed *'Orion's Eye'* and it carries an enclosed Air/raft for 'away' missions.

The 1,200 ton *Labourer*-Class Salvage Hauler *'John Henry'*, has had the least modifications of the Dark Angels 'fleet' and, per design, doubles as a modular freight hauler for bulk containerised cargoes not needing internal power between tickets. The old Jump-2 drive has been swapped out for a TL 12 Jump-3 drive, and the consequential increase in fuel bunkering has reduced the ship's internal cargo space to 250 tons.

The *John Henry* also doubles as the outfit's interstellar tow truck, salvaging any vessel too damaged to jump away. The *John Henry's* external grapples can grasp three 2,000-ton masses, but has no external docking clamps. The salvage hauler's subcraft complement consists of one 20 ton Ship's Boat, and one 50 ton Modular Cutter, named by the crew *'Little Socket'* and *'Big Spanner'*.

The *'Hornet's Nest'*, the fifth vessel of the Dark Angels Star Merc Company, is a 2,000 ton Modular Clipper, upgraded to Jump-3 for sparser subsectors. This reduces her modular cargo space to 700 tons, while increasing her fuel bunkering to 670 tons.

Major Lincoln Vasques has modified the *'Hornet's Nest'* into a makeshift Battletender, with three 100 ton docking clamps and hatches for the outfit's trio of 100-ton Darrian-built *Rumblefish* TL 13 gunships. *Hornet's Nest* also carries two 100-ton hangar modules, each packing six, single-seat 10 ton *Interceptor* Mk III TL 11 12G capable Space Fighters named simply *Hornet-1* to *Hornet-6*, and *Wasp-1* to *Wasp-6*. The two hanger modules also contain double-bunked quarters for the Space Fighter crews.

The rest of the subcraft complement of this converted warship includes an internally carried 20-ton Ship's Boat and a 50-ton Modular Cutter. Additionally, the *Hornet's Nest* carries a 100-ton missile module and a 100-ton passenger module. The missile module is divided into two missile bays, each with its gunnery station. Each missile bay packs 168 ship-to-ship missiles. The passenger module contains an additional 20 staterooms, and 26 lowberths.

Aboard ship the crewmen of the outfit tend to be equipped semi-homogenously in TL 11 Boarding Vacc suits. Personal firearms tend toward laser carbines and laser pistols. The Away Team Mercs aboard ship have TL 12 Combat Armour, and pack TL 9 ACRs equipped with Grenade Launchers, Gauss rifles, and an assortment of disposable TL 8 rocket-propelled Anti-Vehicular weapons, depending upon the ticket's requirements.

The 675 men, women, and children dependents of the Dark Angels all possess TL 8 Vacc suits and not one of them carries anything less than a survival short blade. For firearms, the 13 mm pump shotgun is the weapon of choice for self-defense aboard ship, along with an eclectic assortment of CO2 gas cartridge powered crossbows, grapnel guns, and Belter's Boarding Axes.

ORGANISATION

The Dark Angels Star Merc Company is organised along Naval & Marine unit lines, the founding members are now the Captains of four of the five vessels.

- Senior most is Commodore Sir Derik Trajan Harris, aboard the 400 ton *Gazelle*-class CE '*Bright Sword*' with a crew consisting of 1 Pilot/Executive Officer, 1 Astrogator, 3 Engineers, 1 Medic, 1 Steward, 2 Flight Crew, 4 Gunners/Ship's Troops.
- Ship's Captain Nadia Alisha Kiishinkhuum commands the 2,000 ton Modular Clipper-Battletender '*Hornet's Nest*' with a crew consisting of her Executive Officer, 2 Pilots, 1 Astrogator, 4 Engineers, 4 Mechanics, 1 Medic, 25 Flight Crew, 21 Gunners/Ship's Troops, and 2 Stewards.
- Star Merc Colonel Robert Hugh Gravis pilots and commands the upgraded 400 ton Corsair '*Sabakakrazny*' with a double-bunked crew of 1 Astrogator, 3 Engineers, 1 Medic/Steward, 4 Flight Crew/Ship's Troops, 4 Gunners/Ship's Troops, and bunked in three 8-man billet rooms 24 Away Team Ship's troops.
- Ship's Captain Lincoln Jefferson Vasques commands the 1,200 ton *Labourer*-class Salvage Hauler '*John Henry*' and leads a crew of 1 Pilot, 1 Astrogator, 3 Engineers, 4 Flight Crew, 1 Medic, 1 Steward, and 4 Gunners/Ship's Troops.
- Ship's Captain Ghaerrek Nine-Claws, a wily Vagr Scrounger-Merchant, who commands and pilots the 150 ton *Frontiersman*-class modular scout '*Orion's Eye*' and its crew of 1 Astrogator, 1 Engineer, 1 Medic/Steward, and 1 Gunner/Ship's Troop.

DEPLOYMENT

The starships of the Dark Angels Star Merc Company are always on the move, always looking to the next two to three tickets ahead, based on the monthly wear and tear and expense of even peaceful operations.

The unit's latest handicap is one that long-standing units have when required to relocate: what to do with the Mercs dependents. Given their current semi-nomadic status, the nearly 700 dependents of the unit's personnel travel with the unit until a safe location can be located. Then, their modular housing can be unloaded from the Salvage-Hauler '*John Henry*' which will remain in-system with them.

The Dark Angels' smallest vessel, '*Orion's Eye*' is usually the fleet's harbinger, picking its way across a subsector as a small packet freighter, and bringing word back to the rest of the outfit as fast as it may of a prospective ticket and patron. If negotiations proceed, and the ticket involves a planetary-bound job, then *Orion's Eye* is reconfigured with its Long Range Sensor module and is sent to do the reconnaissance.

For Convoy Escort tickets, the size of the Convoy, and the value of its cargo is the measure how many vessels that the Dark Angels negotiate to bring along. Convoys of two or three ships merit the presence of at least the *Bright Sword* and the *Orion's Eye*; convoys of four or more ships merit the presence of the *Hornet's Nest* and all but the *John Henry* in escort.

For Q-Ship anti-piracy tickets, the *Sabakakrazny*, *Bright Sword*, and *Hornet's Nest* work in conjunction. Generally, the larger vessel poses as a modular freighter just lagging along, with the 400-ton Corsair as a smaller cargo vessel travelling companion. The *Gazelle*-CE shadows the pair in passive 'doggo' mode. Interdiction tickets usually call for the deployment of the *Hornet's Nest*, and at least one of the two faster 400-ton escorts.

TACTICAL DOCTRINE

As Star Merc outfits go, success is the best payday every time. A convoy that gets from its home system to its destination intact is the best ticket to be had.

The tickets that involve the most risk to the ships and crews pay better, but can be far more costly in potential damage to their vessels. Consequently, when the Dark Angels are obliged to engage a hostile force in space or on the ground they tend to approach the problem with speed, surprise, and violence of action. Ambushes tend to be their forté.

Once the enemy has been identified or fixed, overwhelming firepower and speed are applied to reduce their immediate potential to inflict damage back upon the unit's starships. Dark Angels ground operations tend to receive an over abundance of air support, a force multiplier Commodore Sir Derik and Colonel Gravis have no compunction using to win the day against superior numbers.

FAMOUS OR INFAMOUS NPCs

COMMODORE SIR DERIK TRAJAN HARRIS

Sir Derik is the leadership genius behind the Dark Angel Star Merc Company's success. As a Commander in the Imperial Navy during the Fourth Frontier War, Harris won his Knighthood screening his commanding Admiral's Flagship at the Battle of Two Suns. Heroically keeping his 3,000-ton Destroyer ISS *Bright Sword* in the line, even though the *Bright Sword* was being pounded to pieces by enemy fire, he continued to engage until he had to be medically evacuated from the bridge.

After his medical discharge from the Imperial navy, many of his former crewmates, also decorated in battle, followed him. In light of continued Zhodani and Outworld Coalition commerce raiding in the post-war years, he and his friends chose to form a Star Merc company that would stand in the way of such havoc. Harris recruits from Imperial worlds or from human Client States, as well as amongst Imperial Vargr. He expects those who serve aboard his ships, under the command of his trusted officers, to be team players and to be adaptive to sudden changes, either in the midst of battle or in peacetime.

Harris is a fierce contract negotiator, especially for survivors' benefits, something his subordinates have not failed to notice. Though outwardly blunt and gruff, he is always looking out for his personnel, something that he accepts readily as his due responsibility as their commander. Professionally, his is one of the larger Star Merc outfits operating over the Imperial border, and lately Sir Derik has been looking for a more permanent homeport for his vessels, his Mercs, and their families.

A tall, wiry man, Sir Derik has more than his fair share of gray hair and 'laugh-lines' of care on his saturnine face, and at 52 he smiles less often than he used to. While as a native-born of Rhyllanorian (0306/Rhyllanor/Spinward Marches), he is pro-Imperialist, oddly enough, Sir Derik is not rabidly anti-Zhodani; rather he respects his enemies' capabilities and he makes his plans accordingly.

Among his mercenary peers, Sir Derik is a man of his word once it has been given, and he has the gift of never forgetting a face, a good deal or a favour. His reputation for repaying debts, no matter how steep, is a byword in mercenary circles. The darker side of which is equally true, as the Pirates and Raiders he and his unit hunt down can attest to.

SHIP'S CAPTAIN NADIA ALISHA KIISHINKHUUM

Nadia served as Sir Harris' tactical Officer and XO aboard the ISS *Bright Sword* at the Battle of Two Suns. She is a tall, raven-haired, slender woman from a very traditional old money Vilani family on Trin (0805/Trin's Veil/Spinward Marches). Though she is two years Sir Derik's senior, she appears to be a decade and a half younger than him.

Militarily speaking, she is the Yin to Harris' Yang, and has served him well as a ruthless and shrewd battle space commander, both then and now. Where Sir Derik is hot-tempered, blunt and short with words, Nadia is eloquent, loquacious, and coldly diplomatic. Together, they make a formidable team, and continued this relationship with marriage. If the Dark Angels liken Sir Derik to a grumpy, battle-scarred, gruff old bear, then Nadia is their alpha she-wolf. Nadia and Sir Derik have two boys and a girl together, all of whom reside amongst the unit's dependents. The eldest is fifteen and is an apprenticed salvager. For personal security reasons their marriage is not publicly known beyond the command staff.

STAR MERC COLONEL ROBERT HUGH GRAVIS

Robert Hugh Gravis is a naturalised Imperial citizen from the client world of Collace (0407/District 268/Spinward Marches), and went through college on an OCSA scholarship. After graduating with honors, he took service with the Imperial Marines where he met Sir Derik as his ship's Captain. He served with him on the *Bright Sword* during the Fourth Frontier War.

In the Dark Angels, all ship boarding and groundside operations fall under Colonel Gravis' purview. Gravis is a bald (by choice), cigar chewing, 48 year old, nearly two-meter tall giant of a man and, like Sir Derik, is a man of few words but a great many expletives, in several languages.

Gravis is a small unit tactical genius, and has been a close friend of Sir Derik since their first ticket. Unlike his close friends, Sir Derik and Nadia Kiishinkhuum, Gravis is married to a non-combatant and has six children, all of them boys.

SHIP'S CAPTAIN LINCOLN JEFFERSON VASQUES

Former Master Chief Vasques is the fourth of the principle former crewmembers of the ISS *Bright Sword*, and was her chief engineer.

Now the Ship's Captain of the Salvage Hauler '*John Henry*', Vasques continues his 'miracle-worker' reputation keeping the Dark Angels vessels running, as well as playing ferryman for the numerous 30 ton modular cutter living quarters modules that house the outfit's families. These modules, when assembled, make a poor-man's space station amassing some 3,000 tons in displacement.

Vasques is a dark skinned, perennially cheerful, ethnic Solomani-African-Portuguese Starjack who was raised on Jewell (0306/Jewell/Spinward Marches) in one of its less than salubrious neighbourhoods. Despite low birth, through skill and education he has risen to his present position with the Dark Angels. In the chain of command, Vasques is in charge of logistical support and the recruitment and training of engineers for their small 'fleet'. Unlike the other chief officers he is unmarried, but has adopted two male children whose parents were killed on a ticket. They work aboard the '*John Henry*' as assistants to the Steward and himself.

SHIP'S CAPTAIN GHAERREKH 'NINE-CLAWS'

Nine-Claws is the only non-military veteran among the Ships Captains, and is an imposing 2-meter tall, black furred, well-dressed Urzaeng Vargr Scrounger-Merchant.

Ghaerrekh's nickname derives from his maimed right hand, the result of a long ago charisma-challenge duel that he won. Nine-Claws joined the outfit after the Dark Angels' victory in the Walston system in District 268 subsector yielded them two additional ships (the *Orion's Eye*, and the *Sabakakrazny*) by boldly offering his services as a Scout, merchant and broker. He has since sniffed out many prospective tickets, scouted every system ahead of the unit's movements, and ferried the command element to ticket negotiations without fail. As a Vargr, this is his new pack, and he views Captain Vasques as a long-lost brother.

Oddly, Nine-Claws never carries a firearm, but this is not due to his handicap or fear of bloodshed. Nine-Claws is a deadly close-in melee fighter and is extremely skilled with short and long blades.

RELATED READING MATERIAL

Anyone playing a mercenary, especially in *Traveller*, may find enjoyment and inspiration in the following films and novels. Although not all are SF, they do concern themselves with mercenaries in the modern era.

BOOKS

The Prince of Mercenaries by Jerry Pournelle. Compiled as a single book by Baen, *The Prince of Mercenaries* is a compilation of *The Prince of Mercenaries*, *West of Honor*, *Falkenberg's Legion* and *Go tell the Spartans*, all of which have appeared as individual novels and all of which are a good read.

Hammers Slammers by David Drake. An excellent and gritty series of stories over several books, *Hammers Slammers* draws heavily on Drake's own wartime experiences. A fine example of a mercenary cavalry unit.

The Dogs of War by Frederick Forsythe. Although dated, (it was written in the late 1960s) it is, nonetheless, an outstanding book and a good read. It shows not only the mindset and mentality of Mercs, but also a glimpse of the Merc culture of the time and details the setup of an operation that the Mercs are hired to undertake. Based on Forsythe's experiences and interviews with mercenaries of the day, it is both informative and entertaining.

MOVIES

The Dogs of War: The film based on the book by the same name by Frederick Forsythe, and in some ways inferior, it does however give a good look into the mentality of Mercs and their operation. Look for good performances by Christopher Walken and Tom Berenger.

Proof of Life: While it is really about the travails of a wife of a kidnapped man played by David Morse, this film with Meg Ryan and Russell Crowe isn't just a decent film, it has a very realistic (in terms of what real Mercs are like) take on the classic snatch job, where they recover the hostages. A great illustration that Mercs aren't always thugs and criminals, we see them pull off the Op with professionalism and panache. An excellent example of a small unit Merc Op.

The Wild Geese: While idealised, this is a fine film of a Merc outfit from client to recruiting to deployment to screwing by the client to getting out of the hot water... and so on! Made in the mid 1960s, this is a good, entertaining film. A company of Mercs in action and a good example of the common take on Mercs in game. The film stars Richard Burton, Richard Harris, Roger Moore and Hardy Kruger.



A GLIMPSE OF FOREVEN

URNIAN (SUBSECTOR P, FOREVEN SECTOR)

Welcome to Urnian Subsector in the delta quadrant of Foreven Sector. Spinward of Five Sisters subsector in the Spinward March, Urnian is a bustling region of space with twenty-seven systems, all of which are inhabited. While you, the reader, can anticipate more of this exciting new sector to be explored in the future, here we can offer you a brief overview and a sample adventure set on Kumorii in the Urnian Subsector. Kumorii is a small backwater system with its own historical baggage and issues. It is only one of a number of such worlds in the Urnian Subsector and Mains. Enjoy!

ASTROGRAPHY & TRADE

The Urnian Subsector contains a total of twenty-seven systems, of which seventeen form the centralised Urnian Main. The Urnian Main is the richest cluster of worlds in Delta Quadrant of Foreven Sector. Urnian Subsector is blessed with fifteen life friendly worlds: ten are 'Garden' worlds - of which eight of these on the Urnian Main; three are water poor worlds - two of these on the Urnian Main; there is one true desert world and one true water world - both on the Urnian Main.

The Urnian Main is a major economic and astrographically strategic constellation of worlds that lies just over the spinward border of the Third Imperium's Five Sisters Subsector (Subsector M, Spinward Marches Sector). There are two notable Imperial ports of entry into Urnian Subsector at Emape (0103/Five Sisters-M) and Raweh (0109/Five Sisters-M). Trade from Urnian also routes through Raweh into Menorial Subsector of the Trojan Reaches to rimward - trailing, accessing a trade route to Strend (0505/Menorial-A) and its worlds, and then further rimward to the coreward worlds of the Florian League at Halka (0510/Menorial-A). Other routes run rimward into Marrakesh Subsector (Subsector D, The Beyond Sector) from Nada Zee and Kumorii in Urnian Subsector, and feed into the vast Marrakesh Main that runs coreward to rimward through it.

The dominant polity in the Urnian Subsector is the powerfully influential Urnian Stellar Thearchy, comprising the coreward bulk of the Main and numbering some twelve systems. A brisk trade in high technology items flows outbound from the Darrian worlds down through the coreward-trailing edge of the Reidain subsector (Subsector L, Foreven) and across the Urnian Gulf through the Urnian Stellar Thearchy to points beyond in Foreven Sector, and elsewhere.

Imperial trade into Foreven crosses at Jump-2 from Emape to Koenigstein (3134); and by Jump-3 from Raweh to Novotny (3037). Trade Spinward bound to and from Pandajir (Subsector K, Foreven Sector) subsector departs/arrives at the Urnian Stellar Thearchy via the port world of Cassia (2833) by Jump-2 to the Non-aligned world of Ronin's Gate (2632) and trade into Newkyrk (Subsector O, Foreven Sector) subsector from the Urnian Stellar Thearchy port world of Novo Sumatra (2736) by Jump-2 via the single world state of Quintus (2537).

QUADRANT & SUBSECTOR HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The Zhodani Consulate began its interstellar expansion around -5000. By -1000, the Consulate had its rimward borders well established in Iakr, or Foreven sector, occupying Subsectors A-D, F, G, and H.

The Zhodani had explored the sector and had established contacts with various minor sentient races, including the Inanye in Urnian Subsector. As the Inanye were not a psionically gifted race, the Zhodani placed no great emphasis on them and shifted their exploratory missions to trailing towards Gvurrdon, Provence, and Corridor sectors. There in the latter, they met and traded with the Vilani First Imperium around -2000.

The great Vilani First Imperium crumbled before the advance of the upstart Solomani from Terra (Sol) in -2204, who formed a Second Imperium that lasted nearly 500 years until -1776 when it collapsed due to financial instability. Before all interstellar traffic between Terra and the former Vilani worlds ceased altogether in 'The Long Night' (-1776 to 0), a far-sighted mercantile Terran company, the Itzin Corporation, left Terra for the Spinward March region in -1513, and settled on the Darrian homeworld in -1511.

Nearly on the heels of the Itzin fleet came the first wave of Humaniti to settle in Delta Quadrant of Foreven Sector. This wave of settlers consisted of the remaining working vessels of the Solomani 'Corridor' Fleet, numbering some 100 warships, and half again in civilian vessels for their dependents.

After years on reduced pay as the Second Imperium's financial crisis deepened, and unwilling to relocate back to Vland Sector, they abandoned their base on Kaasu (1209/Durima (B)/Corridor Sector) in -1508, four years after the Itzin fleet had passed through. Fleet Admiral Jean Reymont, and Vice Admirals Viktoria Cassia and Yusuf Urnian, along with Captains Sergei Okhtamsk, Correnz Dryden and Calvyn Uhlari, planned on never returning to Imperial Space.

As they left the crumbling Second Imperium's borders, and knowing that they would be literally starting from scratch, they raided several agricultural and non industrial worlds, taking with them TL 9 knowledge and materials to sustain themselves in the unknown. Due to the state of repair as well as the slower speed of their civilian Jump-2 bulk transports, they arrived at Urnian Subsector of Foreven in -1506, settling initially upon Cassia (2833), Reymont (2834), Urnian (2835), and Calvyn (2935). On Reymont they encountered the Inanye who were already organised as a TL 8 society.

The former Solomani military leaders mothballed their surviving TL 12 warships in orbit and began exploitation of the Inanye as they strove to re-assemble a baseline TL 9 infrastructure for themselves.

Settlement of the Urnian Main continued two decades later when the military junta decided to transplant the Inanye as labour to Novo Sumatra (2736), Neu Dansk (2937), Novotny (3037), Wycliff (2938), and Jipango (2838) to assist and enhance their colonial efforts there.

Over the next two centuries, the mutinous fleet's junta gave way to a self-perpetuating human oligarchy ruling over both Humans and Inanye. Carefully using their husbanded technology and selectively cannibalising their mouth-balled vessels, the Urnian Star Union regained TL 10 in -920, and the capability for building new ships when Urnian's A-class starport was completed. The core worlds of the Urnian Star Union reached TL 11 by -765 and exploration of the rest of the subsector outside the Urnian Main began to slowly get underway.

By the time the next wave of Humaniti arrived in the region in -340, Urnian itself had achieved TL 13, while seven member worlds of the Star Union had reached TL 12. This second wave of explorer/settlers followed the trail blazed a century earlier by the founders of the Sword Worlds in the Spinward Marches and, unlike the Urnians, were more organised for colonisation, and ready to establish a new home.

Comprising two distinct ethnic groups, Indian-Micronesians and South Americans, this expedition from The Old Earth Union pushed past the spinwards-rimwards end of the Sword Worlds in -341 and headed into Foreven, arriving in early -340 only to discover the high technology Urnian Star Union.

Conflict broke out as the newcomers began dropping colonists off on the more lightly populated worlds of the subsector, resulting in immediate balkanisation. The rest of the newcomers pushed on into Pandajir and Newkyrk subsectors further to spinward. The more entrenched governments of the Urnian Star Union's worlds managed to integrate the newcomers well, but their colonies found themselves overwhelmed and under equipped to deal with the mass-immigration suddenly on their doorsteps.

The cost of the various ground wars that followed caused the Urnian Star Union to cut its losses, and in -315 it withdrew its sovereignty over the worlds outside the Urnian Subsector.

In -185 the now twelve system strong Urnian Star Union reformed itself as the Urnian Federated Worlds, and made contact with the Zhodani Consulate corewards of them in Reidain (Subsector L, Foreven Sector) subsector. Although leery of their larger neighbour, trade with the TL 14 Consulate was preferable to war or embargoes, and the technology driven Urnians chose the former not the latter where trade was concerned, achieving TL 14 on Reymont, Urnian, and Calvyn by -50.

In 157, contact was made with the Third Imperium, as Imperial Interstellar Scout Service vessels, ranging ahead of Imperial expansion into the Spinward March encountered Urnian traders moving to trailing. Contact with the Darrians followed in 165, and the Sword Worlds in 168 and trade links were quickly established. During this period, a third wave of colonists and fortune seekers began entered Foreven from the Third Imperium, pre-dating the haphazard colonisation of District 267 (Five Sisters) in 534.

Direct trade with Third Imperium did not properly commence until the Five Sisters (Subsector M, Spinward March) Subsector was formerly established in 740 during the reign of Emperor Paulo I.

With the Imperial settlers came Solomani-ethnic groups, Vilani, and Mixed Vilani settlers and workers, and their cultures and religions. Prominent amongst the religious groups were the adherents of a pantheistic evangelical sect of the Church of Stellar Divinity-Enlightened (CoSD-E).

During the First Frontier War (589-604) between the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate - led Outworld Coalition; the Urnian Federated Worlds remained steadfastly neutral. In the midst of the cross-border commerce raiding, the Federated Worlds shrewdly established contacts with Strend in Menorial (Subsector A, Trojan Reach Sector) subsector, and with the worlds of the Florian League.

This not only turned out to be prudent, but the investment paved the way for Urnian's technological advances to reach TL 14 even as the Second Frontier War (615-620) began. In the aftermath of the second war, Urnian planners and researches predicted that the Zhodani - Imperial conflict would be a reoccurring event. The UFW, therefore, in 650 began a Naval base construction programme to defend the Federated Worlds from commerce raiders. Urnian achieved TL 15 in 742, even as commerce with the Imperium began to expand out of the Five Sisters Subsector with Tukera Lines, LIC, McClellan Factors, LIC and Baraccai Technum, LIC's freighters crossing into Foreven in earnest.

During the 11th Century, a religious revolution took place on several worlds along the Urnian Main. The Church of Stellar Divinity-Enlightened (CoSD-E) becoming a political force to be reckoned with and in 1057 came to power on Urnian, Reymont, and Calvyn. With a vision for the future and of the Divine beyond the empty promises of lives spent grubbing for credits in trade as a interstellar cross roads state, this new evangelism spread to other worlds in the Federation, increasing in popularity as it swept across the coreward half of the Urnian Main. On the eve of the Fourth Frontier War (1082-1084), the stagnating Urnian Federated Worlds reformed yet again, this time calling itself the Urnian Stellar Thearchy.

While this political movement changed the governments of Reymont, Urnian and Calvyn, it wisely left the entrenched bureaucracies of the other member systems, and their tightly controlled colonial non-industrial worlds, alone. This changed nothing as far as the Inanye were concerned, as they were still regarded as second-class citizens, with the exception that immigration off world became easier with the Thearchy's blessings. The first such 'voluntary migration' of Inanye was in 1088 with a large group being 'resettled' on Kumorii (2940).

The Urnian Stellar Thearchy remained true to its word and steadfastly neutral during the Fourth Frontier War. With its defensive non-jump capable fleet, commerce raiders from all sides were kept from violating the Thearchy's space lanes. In the years following the Fourth Frontier War the Thearchy has re-evaluated its trading policies with the Darrians on a theological basis. This is because the Darrian 'Star killer' weapon had once 'killed', or 'mortally attacked', a Star God, a blasphemous crime in the theology of the Church of Stellar Divinity-Enlightened.

Trade relations with the Darrians took a turn for the worse with the theologically troubling announcement that the Darrians possessed more 'Star Killers' and would not hesitate to use them if they were to come under attack. The Urnian Stellar Thearchy modified its boycott of Darrian goods following this announcement, forbidding their import but still permitting these goods to pass through their systems unhindered, collecting their usual Starport revenues as before. Increasing the Thearchy's high technology exports to the Sword Worlds, and the Imperial frontier worlds of the Five Sisters has helped offset the loss of tax revenue. Trade with the Zhodani Consulate out of the Reidain (Subsector L) subsector coreward continues, even though the Thearchy appears to be increasingly following the hard anti-psionic line of the Third Imperium.

Since the late 900's various unity movements have formed on former Urnian Federated Worlds left balkanised by the waves of mass immigration over the centuries. Quintus (2537), a marginally inhabitable water poor world, was settled by the Urnian Star Union at about the time it reached TL 11 in late -765. Even as terraforming efforts got underway, the discovery of large lanthanum and rare earth deposits encouraged, first, industrialisation and then the construction of starship production facilities.

An A class Starport was completed on Quintus in -655, an astonishing one hundred and ten years after the founding of the colony, and its presence began to steadily bolster the Quintians' efforts to terraform their trace atmosphere to a thin, breathable one. This immense project was financed by the sale of newly built TL 11 spacecraft and starships. The newcomer wave from the Old Earth Union of early -340's set this project back, as Quintus was 'squatted on' by a portion of the colonial fleet seeking repairs and refit, and many stayed after their vessels were made ready for the next push forward into Newkyrk and Pandajir subsectors. This caused two states to develop side-by-side on the main world in competition for resources and trade.

Additional waves of settlers continued to arrive on Quintus over the centuries, particularly from the Imperium since 500. In 985, a civil war for control of the entire planetary system broke out between the two main states while, unbeknownst to them, an isolationist element sought to close the world off and seize both Downports, and the sole Highport.

When the Isolationists threatened to destroy all three starports with nuclear devices, both warring factions were paralysed with indecision as to which port to move on and save first, whilst simultaneously trying to evacuate millions of people dwelling in nearby arcologies endangered by the blast. Into this crisis stepped retired Planetary Ground Defence Forces Brigadier General Hiram Augustus Keenan. Having raised a unit of mercenaries from the ranks of former soldiers and laid off Starport Security personnel, Hiram's Dragoons, as they were then called, seized four Imperial transports and used them to liberate all three Starports in a single day, signalling the end of the civil war. Since unification in 986 Quintus has become a major player in the subsector, utilising Keenan's heavily subsidised mercenary outfit to offer TL 12 Starport defense and operations garrison tickets.

This style of foreign policy has allowed Quintus' Federal Republic to influence and control other worlds and trade routes, without having to conquer and settle them, and check the expansion of the Urnian Thearchy in the Main. In the Urnian Subsector, Quintus controls and operates the Starports at Tango Station (2634) and Ronin's Gate (2632), three of five star ports on the balkanised world of Crannog (0102), the Downport on Jipango (2838), one of two Downports on Wycliff (2938), one of four on Novotny (3037) and the Downport on Tralsend (0806) in Newkyrk (Subsector O) subsector to spinward. Quintus' government watches the expansionist encroachment of the Urnian Stellar Thearchy with caution, and is a political foil against them regionally.

IMPERIAL PRESENCE

An Imperial presence in Urnian Subsector was established prior to the Third Frontier war when Nephys (2731) and Gefallen (3131) were granted client state status. These systems supported the earlier Imperial client states of Alenzer (0809) and Raschev (0810/Reidain-L/Foreven) in Reidain (Subsector L, Foreven Sector) subsector. At Nephys both a Naval and Scout base were established - ostensibly as a way station for Convoy escorts heading spinward-corewards into Pandajir (Subsector K, Foreven Sector) Subsector, while a Scout Base was built at Gefallen.

In reality, these two moves supported the Imperial Navy's far-flung efforts to keep an eye on the Zhodani Consulate's Reidain Subsector outpost worlds and their fleet movements. Gefallen's position also allows the Imperium to monitor trade traffic coming up the Garoo (0110/Daryen-I/Spinward Marches) arm of the Great Spinward Main towards the Darrian Worlds, and further out to the Sword Worlds. Oddly enough, the Zhodani made no move to attack these Imperial bases during the Third, or the Fourth, Frontier Wars, leading Imperial Naval Intelligence Officers to wonder if they were ignored as being of no consequence.

More recently, the 1099 referendum on becoming an Imperial client state, held by the four nation-states of Thuringa, Freislund, Nordrum, and Seaxe on the troubled world of Novotny (3037), exposed an Ine-Givar style separatist movement that had heretofore been absent from the political scene across the Imperial border in Urnian. The violence and protest bombings during the referendum in the nation of Thuringa culminated in a mercenary-backed rescue of a planetary fission power plant seized by terrorists. Over night, popular opinion swung away from the separatist-terrorist faction and towards accepting Imperial client status.

Despite the defeat of the terrorists, the other three nations on Novotny withdrew their support for Thuringa's position. Novotny remains an open-port treaty world to the current day, despite Urnian Thearchy and Imperial wooing.

Imperial client status is currently being sought by Crannog (2532), as the Inanye transplanted there are demanding recognition as a sentient race, with equal access to space. They are no longer content to be treated as second-class repressed citizens like their brethren on Reymont (2834) and elsewhere within the Thearchy. Quintus favors this move as, with Crannog gaining Imperial client status, this would allow the free passage of trade spinward-corewards to Pandajir (Subsector K) subsector, and permit Quintus to recall an entire regiment of their state-sponsored mercenaries who currently garrisoning various ports on Crannog.

THE INANYE

The Inanye are an aquatic Minor Race encountered almost exclusively in Urnian Subsector. Evolving from bottom dwelling omnivorous hunter/scavengers, the Inanye prefer warm, shallow waters, usually to depths of less than 100 meters.

Numbering in the several billions subsector wide, the Inanye are notable for their tech level, having achieved TL 8 prior to human contact and colonisation in -1506.

First contact was made on Reymont, their home world, and the Inanye quickly spread to Jipango, Novo Sumatra, Neu Dansk, Novotny, and Wycliff. Over the centuries since first contact, they have been gradually dispersed even further to the point they can be found on almost any world in Urnian subsector that has a substantial hydrosphere.

Physically the Inanye are strange looking creatures, sharing common features with arthropods, reptiles and mammals. They have an exoskeleton and chitinous carapace, yet also have an internal structure reminiscent of an endoskeleton. They possess gills and are predominantly aquatic, yet also have lung-like organs and can live out of water for a considerable time. They are long, thin creatures measuring (on average) between 2.5 and 3 meters from tip to tail and, when adult, weigh around 45 kilograms.

Their heads are long, flat and armoured like the rest of their body with an chitinous exoskeleton. The head is complex, and resembles the flattened head of a prawn with several antenna used to taste the water as well as fan-like antennae that serve as hearing organs. In the front of the head are two sets of eyes, a smaller pair used for close vision, and a second, larger pair, set slightly further back and used for distance viewing. Both sets of eyes produce binocular vision, and the smaller set can protrude on short eyestalks to examine objects of particular interest to the Inanye.



The mouth has several external pedipalps, and there is a set of small appendages at the base of the head used to manipulate food. These can also be used to manipulate objects and controls, and are frequently employed in that manner – however they can't hold a substantial weight.

Inanye have five pairs of limbs. A dexterous forward pair, with three mutually opposed digits, is used for all gross and fine manipulation the Inanye engages in. The two middle pairs function as legs, with webbed two-fingered 'feet' (similar to those of a horseshoe crab), while the two rearmost pairs of limbs are flippers used to propel the creature through the water.

The Inanye's long body ends in a tail like appendage equipped with fins used to move underwater. Usually they move quite sedately but they can be quick and agile swimmers when they choose to be.

Inanye are easily as intelligent as humans, though their appearance and inability to readily communicate has hindered relationships between the two species. Although possessing a Tech Level of 8 when first encountered by Humaniti 2500 years ago, human contact and interference stabilised their development and stagnated their cultural growth.

Inanye technological expertise was, however, robust and mature, especially in the chemical, biochemical and materials technologies fields. They had mastered surface and sub-surface water travel, flight, and maintained extensive aerial cities. These floating metropolises not only rose hundreds of feet high, like artificial islands, but extended hundreds of feet below as well. Humans referred to the floating cities as 'bergs' and they were typically placed over the territory of the city clan.

Each city was an independent state ruled by a clan of related individuals. Inanye are aggressively territorial, guarding their cities and their surrounding territories with vigor. These territorial regions support the clan and, depending on the size of the clan, can be as small as a few square kilometres, or vast areas, thousands of kilometres in size, and can include aquaculture and fishing grounds, and mineral and natural resources. Naturally as clans grew, they required more territory to support themselves and brisk wars were fought. A component of Inanye culture is the complex webwork of alliances, trade agreements, diplomatic manoeuvrings and a bewildering array of treaties among the various clans.

Spawning grounds, however, are not considered territory of any one clan but instead are held as holy ground – here all the clans of an adjacent region come together, scattering eggs randomly and so insuring genetic diversity.

Inanye reproduction is a simple affair – the mothers offload eggs in the spawning grounds and then the males fertilise vast tracts openly – any tads that hatch are not regarded Inanye at this point, but instead as little more than animals, and are left to their own devices and the vagaries of predators and the environment.

Inanye reproduction is simple: the mothers scatter eggs on the spawning grounds and the males fertilise vast tracts openly. Any tads that hatch are regarded as little more than animals and are left to the vagaries of predators and the environment.

Once a year the Inanye collect all the tads that have shed their tails and grown all their limbs, and who have reached five years of age. These tads are gathered randomly by a set number of the clans whose territories adjoin the spawning ground, and then raised as the clan's children. Elite priests of the 'Ocean Mother' oversee the process and endeavor is to ensure that the tads are distributed fairly amongst the clans.

Oceans are relatively fragile environments and, early on, the inadvisability of waging war in habitable areas was recognised. Warfare amongst the Inanye became both highly ritualised and very brutal and Warzones, specifically set aside for the purpose of waging inter-clan wars, were routinely established well away from their living areas.

Several aspects of Inanye culture tend to revolt or confuse Humaniti, not least being their funeral rites. When an Inanye dies, its body is taken by the clan and becomes the centre of an elaborate feast, all clan members consuming something of the deceased with great pomp and ceremony.

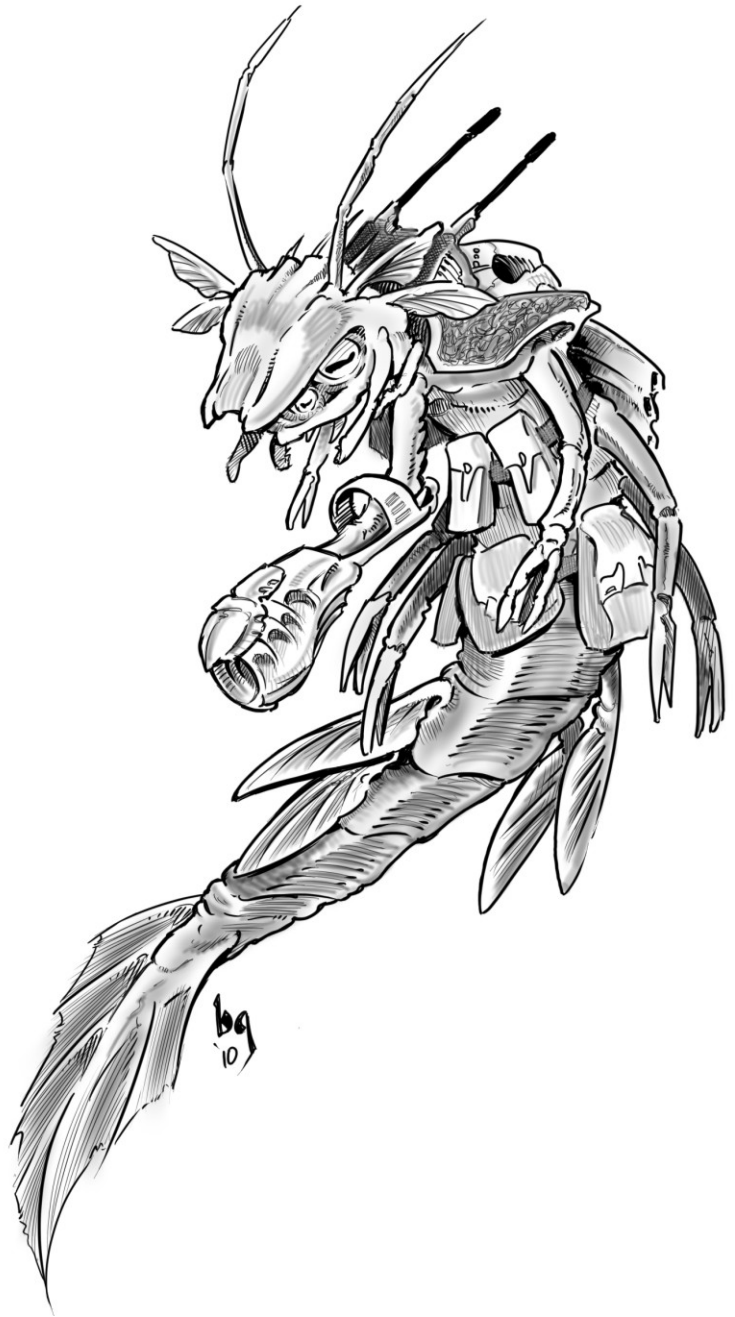
To be so honoured is a great distinction, while an Inanye that transgresses cultural norms or was of low repute or an outcast might have its body discarded unceremoniously to the ocean, never to nourish its clan as is really appropriate. Needless to say, when the Inanye attempt to bestow this great honour upon a human, it is often not well received by the human's family or companions.

Inanye enjoy live food, and while they frequently eat prepared meals, they consider the finest culinary experience to include live portions. Most humans find Inanye fine dining a stressful experience. Inanye are active participants in cultural activities – music, stories and other arts all enjoy a high regard barring one – they have no concept of make-believe. They understand the concept of lies, but fiction is beyond them.

The Inanye possessed a highly effective military within their environment until contact with the Urnian Star Union. First contact was initially peaceful, but human expansion into their territories, invasion of their spawning grounds and pollutants being dumped into the oceans forced the Inanye to retaliate. Sadly for the Inanye, they were totally unprepared for the huge technological advantage the humans enjoyed, and in less than 20 years they were utterly defeated and their military forces were totally dismantled.

The Urnian Star Union then systematically disrupted their culture, transplanting Inanye via forced relocation to other worlds in the Main. Clans were split up, alliances sundered and their vast cities were sunk, forcing them to start anew every generation or so, until now the Inanye are a disadvantaged species.

Regarded as second-class citizens (at best) and as a pestiferous alien presence at worst, the oppressed Inanye struggle to maintain what little cultural identity they have left.



URNIAN SUBSECTOR

SUBSECTOR DATA

The following core data is the minimum that would be publicly available to player characters. This information would also be included in astrogators' star charts and in starship Jump plotting computer software.

SYSTEMS & ALLEGIANCE

Urnian subsector contains 27 star systems, of which two are Client State (Cs) of the Third Imperium, 12 belong to the Urnian Theocracy (Ut) systems and 13 are non-aligned (Na) systems.

STARPORTS

Class A starports are located at Quintus (2537), Reymont (2834), the subsector capital of Urnian (2835) and Calvyn (2935). **Class B** starports are located at Crannog (2532), Nepthys (2731), Uhlari (2934), Wycliff (2938), Dryden (3034) and Koenigstein (3134). **Class C** starports are located at Tango Station (2634), Novo Sumatra (2736), Cassia (2833), Jipango (2838), Neu Dansk (2937), Novotny (3037) and Therae (3232). **Class D** starports are located at Ronin's Gate (2632), Nada Zee (0310), Kumorii (2940), Gefallen (3131) and Big Rock (3238). **Class E** starports are located at Amok (0309), Okhtamsk (2836), Eiselheim (3035), Correnz (3135) and Nonaym (3236).

There are no Class X starports in the subsector.

POPULATION

The most highly populated systems are Quintus (2537) with a population of approximately three billion and Urnian (2835) with a population of approximately six billion.

The total population of the subsector is approximately 12,255,543,500 sophonts.

TECHNOLOGY LEVELS

The highest Tech Level (TL) in the subsector is TL 15 (F) at the subsector capital Urnian (2835). The lowest TL in the subsector is TL 5 at Amok (2739) and Nonaym (3236).

TRAVEL ZONES

Crannog (2532), Wycliff (2938) and Novotny (3037) are classified as Amber Zone systems by the Travellers' Aid Society and travellers should exercise caution.

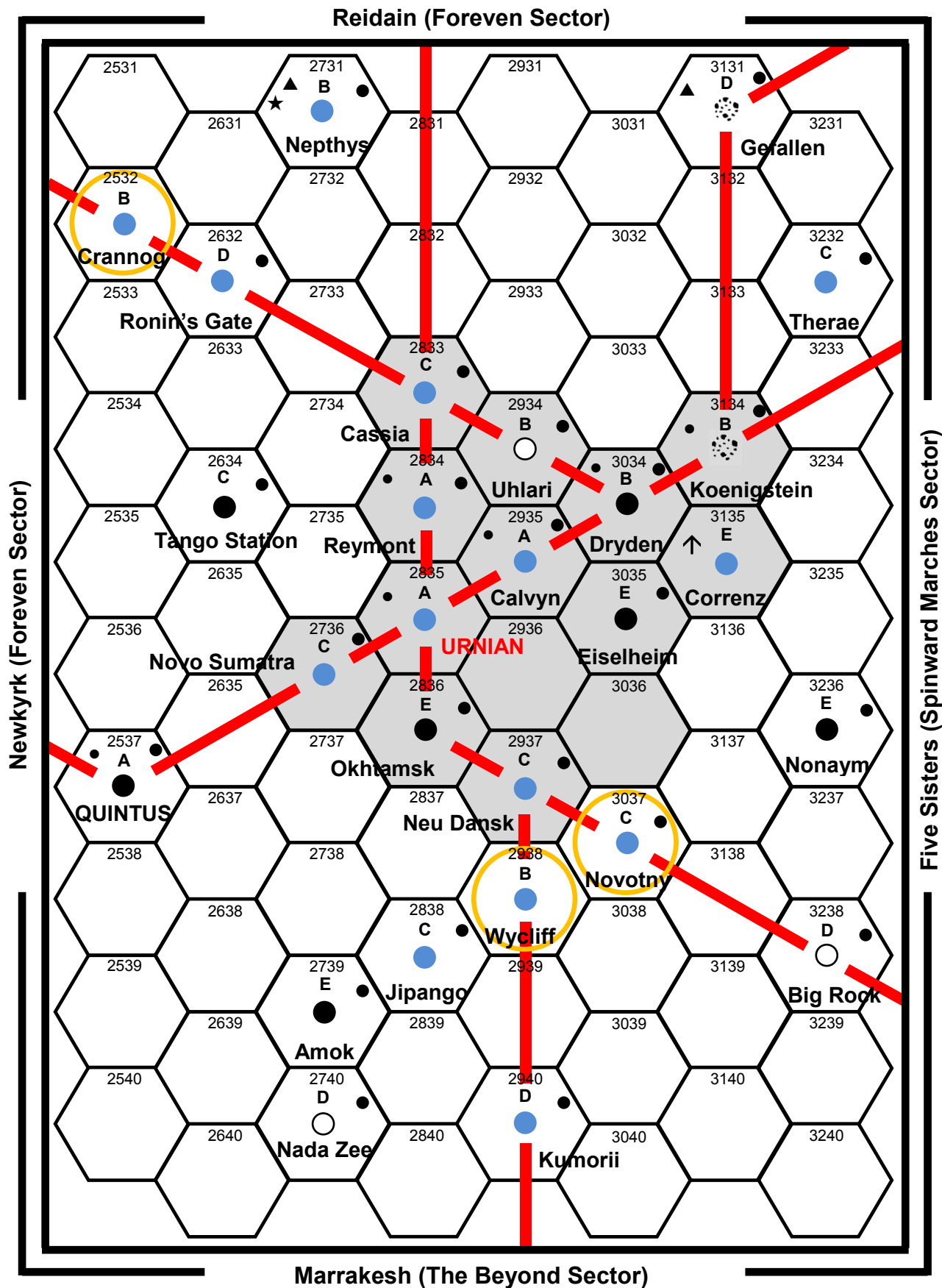
GAS GIANTS

Of the subsector's 23 systems, gas giants are **not present** at Crannog (2532), Urnian (2835), Wycliff (2938) and Correnz (3135).

All other systems in the subsector contain at least one gas giant that can be skimmed for unrefined fuel. This fuel must then be refined by a starship's onboard fuel processors before use.

Name	Hex UWP	B	Trade Codes	Z	G	AI
Crannog	2532 B678774-A		Ag Ga	A		Na
QUINTUS	2537 A733987-C	J	Hi Ht In Po		G	Na
Ronin's Gate	2632 D5A5311-9		FI Lo Ni		G	Na
Tango Station	2634 C401366-9		Ic Lo Ni Op Va		G	Na
Nepthys	2731 B6A8552-D	A	FI Ht Ni		G	Cs
Novo Sumatra	2736 C597697-C		Ag Ga Ht Ni		G	Ut
Amok	2739 E643774-5		Lt Po		G	Na
Nada Zee	2740 D200220-9		Lo Ni Va		G	Na
Cassia	2833 C6787C7-C		Ag Ga Ht		G	Ut
Reymont	2834 A9888D9-E	J	Ga Ht Ri		G	Ut
URNIAN	2835 A8679D9-F	J	Cp Ga Hi Ht			Ut
Okhtamsk	2836 E50146A-9		Ic Ni Op Va		G	Ut
Jipango	2838 C786883-8		Ga Ri		G	Na
Uhlari	2934 B880798-B		De Ri		G	Ut
Calvyn	2935 A89A8D9-E	J	Ht Wa		G	Ut
Neu Dansk	2937 C688797-C		Ag Ga Ht		G	Ut
Wycliff	2938 B646774-B		Ag Ga	A		Na
Kumorii	2940 D664875-6		Ga Ri		G	Na
Dryden	3034 B743697-D	J	Ht Ni Po		G	Ut
Eiselheim	3035 E50236A-9		Ic Lo Ni Op Va		G	Ut
Novotny	3037 C556772-A		Ag Ga Ni	A	G	Na
Gefallen	3131 D000233-A	S	As Lo Ni		G	Cs
Koenigstein	3134 B000697-D	J	As Ht Ni		G	Ut
Correnz	3135 EAB436A-9	P	FI Lo Ni Op			Ut
Therae	3232 C6A7411-8		FI Ni		G	Na
Nonaym	3236 E543522-5		Lt Ni Po		G	Na
Big Rock	3238 D100320-9		Lo Ni Va		G	Na

URNIAN SUBSECTOR MAP



FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It is snowing, as it usually does at this latitude on Kumorii. The air is chill in Kumorii Down starport on the outskirts of Giidersi City. The brisk wind whips coats and umbrellas as people walk through the streets of the busy city. In the last decade, this city has grown to over a million people in the down port alone. The down port is a symbol of Cellier's prosperity, a city teeming with people grown from a snowbound wilderness.

This hub of commerce is home to interstellar shipping lines and subsector spanning commercial interests. By Imperial standards, this is a backwater Class D starport, yet here on the border of Imperial space, and on Kumorii in particular, it is quite a cosmopolitan place. I wander the streets, blowing on my hands and noting my surroundings. I look like any other travelling salesman, and I have the brochures in my briefcase to prove it: a small but energetic distribution company looking for interesting appliances to move and sell off world. There are plenty of small-scale electronics manufacturing companies here looking for new markets and I am on the hunt for something. My head is crammed with sales statistics, trade routes, and marketable bottom line percentages and a ton of other shit I really have no idea about. Nevertheless, if I am picked up, I can drown you in quarterly projections for the latest portable household fry grill.

Yeah, right, and if I get my hands on whatever chucklehead in S2 came up with this cover I will go ballistic on him in milliseconds. His sense of humour is vile.

Still, it's all about numbers. See, ordinarily I'm a recon scout with the Unit S2, Intelligence, and I'm here on a preliminary recce of the place, looking into rumours that there is a Client who has a ticket for the Outfit. And, like anything else, we always send in teams to get the lie of the land, look over the political situation, check out the locals, and generally scrounge around for data we can use to find work. Hell, you would be amazed at what a decent analyst can get from a local newsfeed!

The city and the country here, Cellier Free States, is a clean-cut place. Oh, it's no Imperial centre but, as countries on out of the way planets go, it's nice. Planets are big places – something a traveller can forget – and there are all sorts of things we can do here. Like any country, Cellier Free States, or CFS, has a lot to recommend it. The people seem to have a decent standard of living, although that was no more universal than anywhere else. It also has a seamier side, for just as Giidersi City is the local government's capital and seat of law and order, so too it's the headquarters for darker and less legal enterprises. The VGB or the Vilani crime bureaus (the Vilani iteration of organised crime, and like all things Vilani, it's very organised) are well represented, along with gangs, smuggling rings, and all the lesser forms of crime that seems to follow human endeavour.

It wasn't all bad. More than once, the unit had gotten work through VGB contacts, and I was once on an op where we had to extract on a drug smuggler's ride. Not exactly our finest hour. These were not people you want thinking you owe them a favour.

The streets of Kumorii Down are busy, bustling at all hours, and this afternoon is no exception. People arriving at the concourse find themselves in a warm environment, and the weather is held at bay by glassteel windows that line the buildings' outer walls. On the lower levels are restaurants, cafes, and a large mall. Upscale restaurants, shops, and tourist traps abound and the place is bright with light. I look around and spot my local contact; I wave him over.

As we take the escalators and gravchutes, the lower concourse leads to a tube way. Here the maglev leaves every ten minutes for Giidersi City proper, a short twenty minute ride away, while the main doors open onto the streets of the Startown. Unlike most star towns, it is seedy but the slush of snow and grime from incessant ground cars and trucks give it a grubby air, as gravcars and flits whine overhead, thick as flies. My contact yammers about how the place is pretty rough-cut, since the locals don't really regard off planet commerce as a viable deal. Kumorii is way off the Mains, so they don't get much in the way of tourists. I note that freight and commercial traffic is heavy. Whatever they may lack in casual visitors, business seems brisk.

The Starport shows it too, being a depressingly commercial operation. It has none of the glitzy tech and flash of an Imperial port. Starport or not, it reminds me of one of those aggressively bland airports you're always encountering, all plastic, and phony shine covering the rust and grime of the working sections. The only Imperial concession I saw was the standard groundside Orbital Ground Control beacons and control towers guiding vessels into the landing pits.

Having passed customs, the crowd is a mixed bag of humans, Vilani and only occasionally a Vargr. Aliens seem to be in short supply around here, and I made a mental note that Sergeant Gurrvedarg would stand out. Along the ceiling large holodisplays blare, showing off electronic wares, holos of advertisements, and store signage.

Along one side of the concourse is a long, low alley – 'Starjack's Alley'. This short street within the concourse houses rows of dingy bars, catering to the Starjacks and Travellers. It leads to the outside. A rougher crowd peoples it and cheap diners are interspersed with pawnshops, slop shops selling all sorts of used goods and repair shops that service everything from electronics to vacc suits to weapons. I knew I could find practically anything here that anyone could imagine, and maybe even some things one might not.

I check my thumbwatch, and talk to my contact as we wander over to a neon and holo bedecked grub shop so we could meet the Client's rep. Just another day in the life of a spook for the unit. The corner newsstand doubles as a kaffe shop, so I sit down, and order a cup of sludge and what the menu board proclaims as the daily 'special'. I look around, checking my exits. In this neighbourhood, the police patrol in pairs.

Oh yeah, this is my kinda place.

A CHANGE OF MANAGEMENT

A Change of Management is a mercenary adventure intended for use in any SF game, although in this instance it has been provided for the Traveller system. Set in Foreven Sector, the adventure can be played by 2 to 10 players, plus the Referee. All necessary material is provided, including detailed descriptions of Non Player Characters and significant personalities, as well as the general situation the players and the Merc unit in question will find themselves in.

Additionally, the players and Referee will find another facet of this adventure rewarding – a detailed planetary setting, suitable for many adventures beyond the current scenario. Not all need be military ones, either. Criminal enterprises? Certainly! Traveller adventures of daring do? Absolutely! Smuggling, saving the day, political machinations – there is ample information provided to play any such adventure and, perhaps, even a setting that the players characters may call home, with all that implies.

We hope that this adventure and its contents will not only be enjoyable in and of itself but be useful again and again, providing the players with something we think has been missing up until now – meaty supplements that are useful for more than a few simple sessions.

The adventure, **A Change of Management**, is presented in a series of blocks, to facilitate the Referee's use of the material as well as to provide a sense of outline. Naturally, the Referee may mix and match or omit as he sees fit. The adventure can be, and is intended to be, used with any of the Merc units included in the book or, alternatively, with a group of player travellers, although they would be at a handicap considering the adventure pretty much will demand a substantial unit to pull off. However, a Referee may mine the data diligently – side adventures are also possible.

THE PITCH

The Mercs employ a 'face' or 'fixer', whose job is to scout out potential mission opportunities. This fellow is usually an officer, or perhaps a long serving but field retired member of the unit. He's usually very streetwise, maintains a wealth of contacts and operates via the owning officers or the intelligence section. As such, this is a character best played by one of the players.

The Mercs contact a fellow who the face has arranged a meeting with. The contact is acting as an agent for Jayhawk Enterprises, a well-known gray shade operator who brokers contracts for all manner of Merc operations in Foreven. This sort of contact or Agenting Company is not at all unusual in Mercenary circles where a cutout can often be useful, especially if a client is operating with a degree of secrecy. While they operate on the edge of the law, in Foreven Agenting Companies have little to fear from Imperial oversight.

These third party negotiators working for Jayhawk would have a good reputation for discretion and therefore they find fertile ground for their services. It would be entirely likely that the PC unit will have used their services before.

The client's agent outlines the proposal as follows:

For some years a charismatic dictator has run the government of Feldemaine on the balkanised world of Kumorii (Urnian 2940). Feldemaine is a mid-sized country with a modest population.

The dictator, Harold Vendersiidiika, has maintained the government as something of a family operation for about four decades. On the whole he has been a fairly benign and competent (if strict) leader, and he has enjoyed considerable public support. While personal freedoms in Feldemaine may not be the highest, his regime has proved relatively unobtrusive and non-repressive. His domestic policies have allowed for a good (if not spectacular) standard of living, he has maintained a sound economic policy and the population enjoys good medical care and education.

Feldemaine has extensive aquaculture as well as heavy industrial capability and, despite its low Tech Level, exports a large number of products, thus ensuring a solid balance of payments and a stable currency. Local exports consist largely of agricultural/aquacultural products to neighbouring countries, while heavy manufactured goods as well as consumer products are shipped off planet. As dictators go, Vendersiidiika is not an altogether bad one, and if there are those who have chafed at his governance, he has never closed off emigration and so malcontents are allowed to simply leave. Generally speaking, he is a dictator who, if he seems a singular creature, isn't so bad as to justify deposing him.

However, in the last two years, Vendersiidiika's health has suddenly deteriorated. Even with excellent medical care, he has grown progressively weaker. The client implies that there are questions as to just how this might have occurred, given his previous good health. This is a matter of concern, as he has two sons, Hendersaan (aged 42) and Julian (aged 33), both born of Guenivale (his previous wife) who died 12 years ago of natural causes. Vendersiidiika also has a daughter, Jeritta (age 22), born of his wife Keriin. Keriin died in an air/raft accident two years ago under mysterious circumstances. In spite of an exhaustive investigation her death remains unsolved.

Herein, the client says, lies the tale: for while Hendersaan is a well-known playboy and seldom on planet, his brother Julian is well known to be both ambitious and ruthless. Well educated and experienced in both business and government he would seem the perfect choice to succeed his father, but while he has been acting in his father's stead, policies have tightened, the borders have closed and personal freedoms have been reduced to a mere shadow of even their restricted former selves. And thus the little dictatorship has grown into a full-blown police state.

As his grip on the government has tightened over the last two years, Julian's newly formed secret police have proven both brutal and efficient. Anyone openly opposing his rule has tended to disappear, or be locked away indefinitely – it is the same old story that the Mercs have seen so often repeated on backwater worlds, especially worlds off the beaten track, or too small, or simply not important enough to rate intervention by their neighbours.

At considerable danger to themselves, a large number of local politicians and other influential citizens have hatched a plan to replace Julian. While his brother Hendersaan is out system (and frankly, while the plotters suspect he has been paid handsomely by his brother to stay away, they concede that he was never seen as having any aptitude to rule in any case) and is not readily available, Julian's half sister, Jeritta, is in the nearby Darrian States finishing her college studies. While there was never any love lost between Jeritta and Julian, she had always been a darling of the people, and her humanitarian efforts, as well as her education in politics and government, make her a natural choice for replacing Julian.

Constitutionally, she is eligible to take her father's place as Dictator. Any other alternatives to the Vendersiidiika family are at best muddled. Jeritta is popular with her people, is seen as benign, and has proved to have a good head on her shoulders. However, the trick will be keeping it there.

Julian is no fool, and has been aware for sometime of the underground movement against him. While many have been rounded up in purges, the conspiracy has continued, only driven deeper. Now, the conspirators believe that their time is at hand.

THE TICKET

The conspirators' intent: to stage a coup in Feldemaine, replacing Julian with Jeritta. The mission is for three months, starting at mission execution. The objectives are as follows:

1. Capture and hold the capital, Julianus – formerly Hadleyburg, defending it against the Feldemaine Army. The Feldemaine Army numbers less than a regiment of regulars and Militia combined. Of this army, only a battalion is currently active, with the rest not ordinarily posted nor armed but subject to recall.
2. Seize Julian, alive or dead, at all cost. If dead, he must be proved deceased by irrefutable means, or the body must be provided for examination.
3. Provide security for, and ensure the safe arrival of, Jeritta to head the new government, and to establish security for her regime until the country can be stabilised. The client assures the Mercs of Jeritta's popular support, but the first thirty days will be crucial to establishing her position as the new head of government.

The conspirators' will provide support for the Mercs as required in terms of additional manpower by means of local aid, perhaps by recruiting the militia.

The regular army is generally loyal to the government rather than any particular leader, after being heavily purged by Julian. The surviving senior officers are deeply suspicious of each other and cooperate reluctantly.

The Feldemaine Army fields three battalions of mechanized infantry, armed to a TL 6 standard, with specialist units fielding at TL 8. There are two companies of high quality troops, loyal to Julian, who are equipped with off planet gear, ACRs and soft armours, to TL 12, as well as nearly a division of Julian's secret police, the Bureau of Feldemaine State Security.

The client will point out that, despite their numbers, nearly half of the BFSS are functionaries and office workers and are, at best, armed only with pistols. The other half, the Operations Branch of the BFSS, he will admit are more dangerous, but are trained as police and thugs and have minimal, if any, real military experience or training. The primary criterion for membership of the Operations Branch is political reliability and a certain strong-arm aptitude. The BFSS has neither heavy weapons nor vehicles, although Julian's Loyalists do have two heavy tanks and a platoon of armour, consisting mostly of wheeled AFVs.

The three battalions of the Feldemaine Army are organized as mechanised Infantry with light armour support, fielding two companies of tanks. Again, of these units, only one battalion is active. The other two battalions being garrisoned, and both are heavily watched by Julian's political officers, which hobble them in most respects.

The insurgents can supply two battalions of troops, all on planet and in country. The battalions have a ready supply of TL 6 assault rifles, provided by the insurgents, a few heavy weapons, and some vehicular support consisting mainly armed trucks. They have no heavy armour or armoured vehicles. They are enthusiastic, but all are untrained.

Jeritta is an attractive 22-year-old, slight of build, and with her father's features. She has a self-assurance and self-confidence that creates a natural sense of charisma about her. Even though she has survived two assassination attempts, all of her extensive education and training is in civil government. In military matters, she knows her limitations and will not, and cannot, assist. Her only leadership role will be in taking the reins of government, once control of the state is secured, not before.

The operation will pay MCr 9.5 per month, with mission duration being anticipated at three months, plus a bonus of MCr 12 at the end of the op. Transport is arranged and will be provided, and the estimated kick-off is in three weeks. Transportation time will not be counted against mission time; Mission time begins upon entry in system (If the unit has its own transport, it can be disregard the transport arrangements).

The client indicates that a full briefing is being prepared and will be provided along with maps and all other necessary information. He regards the Mercs closely:

'Well, sirs, are you interested?'

INTELLIGENCE

Kumorii 2940 D664875-6 Urnian-P/Foreven

Even with a population of some 900 million persons, Kumorii's Class D starport and non-aligned status has ensured that it is treated as a backwater planet. The bulk of the population live on the four main continents, with the remainder spread over the spray of island nations scattered across the temperate southern hemisphere. The population is almost entirely human and of Solomani and Vilani extraction – few Vargr or other aliens live here, although a random few can be encountered.

There is a sizeable population of Inanye on Kumorii, however, as Kumorii was one of the systems that the early Urnian Star Union used as a forced resettlement destination. In the last thirty years or so, their numbers have been swelled by a fresh influx of refugees as the Urnian Stellar Thearchy has forcibly transplanted further Inanye populations in an effort to rid the Thearchy of the 'pestilent alien presence'. Given the Inanye's natural sense of territoriality, the new refugees are not viewed favourably at all by the established aquatic residents.

Until the advent of the current wave of refugees from the Urnian Stellar Thearchy, Inanye and humans had lived on Kumorii in some degree of peace. As they had no common interest beyond trade, the Inanye had little involvement in human affairs and so escaped the brushfire wars between the various human nations. A significant population of Inanye dwell along the coasts of Demaine, and Demaine's continental shelf supports the largest number of Inanye communities. Other communities are scattered throughout the oceans.

With the arrival of the new refugees, however, things have changed. For a species that does not routinely share or play well together, the sudden population influx has aggravated already existing tensions amongst the hyper territorial Inanye. As the new refugees began to seek their own territories and spawning grounds, a series of conflicts broke out between them and the established settlements. Given the evacuation of the Lake Renko population to the main seas on the coast on Liminaru, tensions remain high.

Both humans and Inanye maintain numerous underwater enclaves in the shallow seas of Kumorii. In fact, the casual visitor to Kumorii is easily fooled into believing that the planet's hydrosphere is much greater than its listed 40 percent, as its seas are extensive - however they are all quite shallow and are usually no more than one hundred meters deep as a rule.

Kumorii is classified as having a D-class starport - in reality there are nearly twenty, but the vast majority consist of no more than a fueling facility and a large expanse of tarmac, with only a minimal Ground Control facility and a warehouse complex. Generally they are shipping points for outbound freight pickup, much as one might imagine a railroad siding - and have about as many facilities. The only true Starport on planet, in the full sense of the word, is in the capital of Cellier Free State, a local 'superpower'. Kumorii Downs sports a simple terminal as well as an advanced imported TL 10 Ground Control System. It is the only Starport geared to handle passengers, and an off planet passenger liner arrives here every two weeks, on a regular route in-sector to Urnian Prime and thence to Darrian.

There is a Highport, if one stretches the definition. Primarily an orbital facility supporting Near Orbit Traffic Control, it is privately owned by Neuhauser Lines, the freight consortium that, incidentally, runs the only passenger service available in system. There are no refueling facilities at the Highport, although there is a Traveller News Service stringer stationed there.

Kumorii is a garden planet, which is TL 6 overall, and is rich in natural resources. It has a Standard atmosphere, and the human inhabitants have found that the indigenous life forms are both digestible and non competitive. This has made Kumorii a popular place for retiring adventurers and for those wanting a chance to own a bit of land, as there is plenty to go around. There is also extensive aquaculture and agriculture, and the planet is completely self-sufficient in foodstuffs. Kumorii has a brisk export trade, generally consumer goods and other low-tech commodities. If someone in the Urnian subsector buys a cheap toaster or such small appliance, it's a fair bet that it will bear the Kumorii Trade Authority seal on it.

Politically, Kumorii is a Balkanised world with eight small governments, scattered across four continents, all competing with one another. There have been no major wars, although within the last century some short-lived brushfire type conflicts have been enthusiastically fought. Imperial Analysts have compared Kumorii to the early 'Banana Republics' (a term lost to antiquity) but the third world comparison is apt. Off world tech is available, and off planet speculators do well importing high technology, with both consumer goods and medical tech being especially desirable.

All countries on Kumorii field their own military forces, and although there are no space forces beyond a CFS presence (five cutters and an armed shuttle, all purchased outsystem, which are mostly used to maintain a primitive planetary satcom network), all maintain TL 6 armies, bolstered with spotty higher tech capability. All countries maintain air forces, mostly of the turboprop variety, except Cellier Free State which fields two squadrons of TL 6 jet aircraft. There is extensive water traffic, as heavy freight is preferentially moved by ship. Railroads, where in place, see heavy use as well.

The small country of Feldemaine did have an air force, the Feldemaine Army Air Arm. It consisted of 23 transports of the four-engine variety (equivalent to the C130 Hercules); 12 twin-engine turbo prop fighter-bombers; and some 320 personnel. However, the Julian disbanded this force last year.

The Feldemaine Air Marshal, Gennis Denerissi, was a career officer. Educated on Mora, and a former member of Imperial COACC forces, he moved to Feldemaine 25 years ago, when career opportunities were better and command positions more available. He was a charismatic and popular commander who was responsible for forming the Army Air Arm and, nearly single handedly, educated its current crop of officers and pilots.

Air Marshal Denerissi loudly opposed Julian's new rule, and he is now a political prisoner. His small Air Arm officer corps, either fled to avoid the purge that followed his arrest, or were killed or imprisoned. As a result, the only really qualified pilots were removed from the equation and the air force remains grounded until Julian replaces them. The aircraft remain secured in their hangers at the main field in Julianus (formerly Hadleyburg) the capital of Feldemaine.



With only one coastline, but several rivers, all of Feldemaine's wet navy assets are of the cutter or gunboat variety. Although nothing of note by any real standards, this force is considered sufficient for Border Protection, Customs Control and Search and Rescue.

There are two Starports in Feldemaine, but in reality this is gilding the lily a little as they are best described as landing points. The Starport in Julianus uses the bay as the primary landing point. It has a minimal passenger terminal, much on the order of a bus station, for those who might want to take a berth on one of the freighters that land here. Ships using the starport refuel from the bay, as there is no refined fuel available. There is a large warehousing complex, as this is a freight transshipment point.

The other starport is upcountry in the 'bush' (local slang for the interior hinterland, which is still only sparsely populated) and features a large expanse of poorly maintained tarmac, a number of dilapidated sheds, and a small mess hall. The starport was once owned by a logging company that shipped exotic woods off planet, until the bottom fell out of the market. Until recently it had been used by a shipload of Travellers operating a 200 tonner called the *Gloryhole* to smuggle drugs in system.

Although the drug smugglers were caught, they made a getaway about eight months ago, shooting up a fair number of the constabulary in the process. Since then, a small, platoon-sized unit of Feldemaine Army troops has garrisoned the starport and patrols the region. Regarded as a punitive posting (none believe the *Gloryhole* would be dumb enough to return to the field, but stranger things have happened), the platoon is manned by stockade rejects or, more recently, by those who have evinced the ire of their political officers.

Currently the population of Feldemaine is in a state of restless political unease. While Julian has never been popular, he has managed to secure the country with a vice-like grip. The general citizen is closely watched, with private possession of firearms strictly forbidden and punishable with a lengthy prison term, if the culprit is lucky. Curfews are in place, and the economy, while stable, has recently been suffering from inflation.

Julian and his regime have not proved popular with the neighbouring states of Uteguya to the north, and Liminariu to the west. Both regard him as a random variable in an otherwise fragile diplomatic equation, and as such have not been overly friendly. Since Julian has closed the borders of Feldemaine, commerce has suffered and both neighbours are watching developments.

The client assures the Mercs that, through contacts they have clandestinely established with both countries, they believe neither country will intervene in Feldemaine as long as any fighting there is contained. So long as their borders are not violated, they will stand aside, but incursions will not be tolerated.

For obvious reasons, the client wishes that a definite set of rules of engagement be established - there is to be minimal collateral damage, and minimal impact to non-combatants.

The client understands full well that in practical terms there is no ideal; however, he also points out that this is their home and there is no need to destroy the house, as it were.

The unit will provide Security for Jeritta from her departure from Darrian until she arrives on Kumorii. There have been assassination attempts, and the client says that his people's assets are drained - he has only ten men on hand to insure her safety, and they are stretched beyond their limit.

FURTHER INTELLIGENCE

The following is intelligence the players can discern for themselves - if they have any sense they would do their own scouting mission prior to the op. If they do so, they will find this info easy enough to come by. To gather this information would require a minimum deployment of a scout section for one week to gather Intel, obtain humint and local threat analysis. The scouts aren't simply the recon unit for the outfit - in Merc operations the recon platoon/company is also very likely to operate as spies.

Obviously, much of what they gather by way of information depends entirely on their due diligence and the Referee is invited to cull, withhold or add what information their efforts justify.

Neuhauser Shipping

Neuhauser Shipping Lines is a small consortium operating a shipping operation through the subsector. Operating about a dozen subsidised freighters and several owner-operator run ships all over the subsector, the Neuhauser corporate logo (a sailing ship on a stylised starry ocean) is a common sight on many of the lesser travelled worlds. They visit most of them regularly if infrequently, some no more than four times a year, some more often if the business warrants it.

Neuhauser Shipping owns the Kumorii Highport (which is more of a way station than a true Highport) and uses it as an orbital fueling platform. There are no provisions or facilities, as found at other high ports. The only accommodation facilities are the tiny TAS hostel and crew quarters for the forty-strong station crew.

While the client has made arrangements for transport through other means, Neuhauser actually treats Kumorii as a regular service stop, and puts a ship there on an average of every three weeks or so.

Neuhauser does visit the smaller ports on Kumorii, but these are really little more than cargo drop off and pickup points with minimal, if any, refuelling capability and no facilities resembling a real starport - think more on the order of railroad sidings at a factory. As a result, while the smaller ports are visited, it is only sporadically -if there is no cargo ready, they only land at the D class port in Cellier.

Since the incident with the smugglers, Independent shippers visiting Feldemaine have been few and far between, more at Feldemaine's wish than otherwise.

For this reason, the client has arranged inbound transport via one of Neuhauser Shipping's regular freighter runs. As Neuhauser operates a bulk freighter on the route, such a vessel making routine stops is unlikely to arouse suspicion, given their usual cargo deliveries. This regular ship movement should provide the perfect cover to offload troops while maintaining mission secrecy. If the players suspect that Neuhauser is complicit in the coup, they could be right. Diligent questioning and use of Streetwise skills in the mission kick-off system will reveal that Neuhauser Shipping is keen to expand its market share on Kumorii, and so has a vested interest in assisting a change of regime in Feldemaine.

Clarification: The client's contracted transports are J4 capable, and can make the pickup and insertion from a number of systems around Kumorii, allowing the PCs some latitude as to their kickoff and deployment. The transports are bulk freighters, modified to carry live cargo, and will serve as rather Spartan troop transports. A smaller 200 ton free trader will carry the unit's officers and more volatile cargo, so as not to arouse undue curiosity.

The client has provided a fair amount of intelligence for the unit, but really, any unit worth its salt will do its own reconnaissance of the theatre and planet. Should they opt to do so, the following information may be gleaned.

Human Intel

The following Intel is provided by the unit's scout section for the players to use, assuming they reconnoitre the mission system.

Intel Report 002

Time in field: 48 hours.

Subject: Initial evaluation and threat analysis of target area: Feldemaine.

Team inserted at the Starport located in Giidersi City, capital of Celier Free States and made rendezvous with client contact without incident. Team rested 8 hours while making arrangements for transport and insertion into Feldemaine as per OpOrd. Team operated in Cellier Free States for one week, and proceeded to Liminariu via private rented transport and rail transportation. Inserted into Feldemaine under the cover of travelling workers subcontracting construction.

Team undertook detailed evaluation while in transit. Overview in this report will be followed with more detailed and complete current data via burst and secured transmission per previously arranged contact times upon mother unit's arrival.

Current Political/Military Situation, Cellier Free States: Overview.

Command is advised that of the three main countries besides Feldemaine on the large continent, Cellier is perhaps the largest in population base as well as in both industrial capacity and overall Tech Level. Current political situation is of note as Cellier Free States (CFS) is a republic - this year is an election year, and several candidates are vying for lesser offices, although the position of Prime Minister is not up for election for another two years.

As a result, foreign policy is of particular interest. CFS has upon research proved to actively involve itself in foreign policy and maintains extensive trade with its eastern neighbour Liminariu, though much less with the less developed Uteguya.

For all that Kumorii is a backwater, Quintus has far flung interests - Quintus diplomats have been actively courting Cellier Free States for treaty rights to establish a naval base within their borders. This is primarily part of the Quintus Federal Republic's ongoing efforts to secure a solid foothold in the rimward region of the subsector. In usual practice the Quintus naval assets routinely roam and base in treaty ports and Quintus has been negotiating for some time now with the CFS to secure space for Quintus Federal Navy operations. The CFS has been seeking advancement of their own naval and space assets in return and a prime point in the negotiations has been discussions concerning the construction of a proper highport, although Quintus has made no serious offer on that score as yet.

NOTE TO COMMAND: The three countries of Feldemaine, Liminariu and Uteguya are what may be regarded as 'developing' nations, both in their overall standard of living and capacity, as well as in their political stability.

Demaine, while a large island, has a small population consisting almost entirely of Inanye. It has been engaged in a series of brushfire wars over resources in the local ocean area. This is not anticipated to be a factor in the operation.

The CFS is fully TL 6 and is to all intents and purposes a local superpower, as is the Keringuusa Republic, (KR). Both are major military powers and have extensive networks of allies. However, neither is expansionistic, although they both aggressively defend their borders.

CFS operates an effective jet powered air force and has limited naval assets.

Currently, the political climate precludes CFS involvement in the Feldemaine region, as it is generally regarded as too distant from CFS to be an issue. Statements from Government house, as well as assets contacted covertly, support this position. There are indications that CFS assets are watching political developments in Feldemaine closely, though.

Overall Climate: In CFS, the weather ranges from temperate to cool in the northern latitudes, and CFS is generally cool even in the summer months. Snow is common, and the coastlines receive considerably above average precipitation.

Transportation: CFS has an extensive and well maintained privately owned rail network and the vast bulk of heavy freight is transported via this system. Roadways are extensive and well maintained. They see considerable traffic and are capable of sustaining heavy vehicles. There are a fair number of airfields plus several 'tarmac' star ports, though the only true star port boasting proper facilities is in Giidersi City. Public transport is common, again via private company operation, and all major cities boast mass transit systems.

Analysis: With insufficient data to draw hard conclusions at this time regarding CFS intentions, research and trend analysis of internal factors permits the following speculations to be drawn:

1. CFS policy in external affairs has been to engage in trade and aggressive market economy tactics but very little military involvement - trend analysis concludes that unless CFS interests are directly involved, or its borders invaded, CFS will not intervene or support any action regarding Feldemaine.
2. CFS has previously involved itself in political affairs outside its borders via diplomatic functions and interventions. Trend analysis leads this officer to believe that the CFS, if it does involve itself, would pursue this avenue. However, political events (election year, several incumbents and a series of platforms all stressing less aggressive foreign policy) internal to CFS indicate that this is highly unlikely unless the operation spills over into CFS territory.
3. **NOTE TO COMMAND:** this current policy on the part of CFS may persuade it to function as a neutral state, especially as it has the only realistically feasible down port.
4. A Quintun consulate is located in Giidersi City, the capital of CFS. It is poorly manned and is more of the order of an economic affairs office. However, light contact indicates that it may prove a point of interference. The Charge d'affaires is a career bureaucrat slated for retirement in two years and has a history of marginal performance; however the Quintun Military Liaison is a young, ambitious, Navy Commander, and has twice bypassed chain of command to flag incidents in other countries. As a result his credibility may be marginal, but this officer believes that he may prove to be difficult should questions of conduct arise, given Quintus' interests in the region.
5. CFS military is almost exclusively TL 6, and while they field a formidable force in-country, they rely extensively on locally produced armaments. They have a stiffening of imported offworld higher tech military gear, but this seems almost exclusively to be in the area of communications and control and so is not commonly encountered in the field.

Current Political/Military Situation, Liminariu: Overview.

Liminariu is a socialised Representative Monarchy. Based on six founding families, acting as a stump government through nepotism, it has developed into a, at best, moderately effective nobility. Each family controls a province and effectively governs it as a personal fief. Thus while politically stable, Liminariu tends to be economically weak as the local nobles appear very fractious. Industrial capacity is fairly light with the bulk of the Liminariu economy based on agrarian products; Liminariu is in fact a breadbasket state for the continent and does considerable trade with both CFS and Feldemaine, supplying each with nearly 60% of their grain and other agricultural product requirements.

NOTE TO COMMAND: while CFS is unlikely to involve itself in matters regarding Feldemaine, it would certainly react were Liminariu threatened, as Liminariu is a major food supplier to CFS. To ensure the stability of its grain shipments, CFS has traditionally supported the government of the Families in Liminariu against both external and internal threats and opposition.

In southern Liminariu two shallow inland salt seas connect to the ocean via a large waterway. There is a significant population of humans and Inanye living in water-based cities in the inland seas, and both seas have been heavily developed for aquacultured. Also noteworthy is a large population, numbering in the several tens of thousands, of Inanye refugees from Feldemaine. The refugees fled from the bay-based aquadomes in Feldemaine before they were secured during Julian's rise to power. Many of the refugees still have relatives in that country and harbor a strong resentment towards Julian's regime.

Liminariu is on the whole a TL 5 country, with about half its population operating at TL 4. The bulk of the population is concentrated in three urban centres on the coasts of the inland seas, while the balance are settled in small villages scattered across the various provinces.

Liminariu has no effective military to speak of – each of the Families maintains its own private army and secures its own province. All the Families use their military forces as police as well. Most forces are equipped to no better than TL 5, and almost all small arms at that tech level. This is a factor that Julian of Feldemaine is aware of. Refer to further notes below. Trend analysis based on Humint, observation and populace contact indicates that the Families squabble among themselves almost constantly. The populace, as a whole, regard the Families as non-entities, and are mostly content to pay their taxes while trying to avoid getting caught up in inter-Family feuds.

Of late, disaffection with the government has been on the rise, fuelled by threats from Feldemaine and a serious case of neglect of their subjects by several of the ruling nobles. As a result this officer cannot regard Liminariu as particularly stable, but given the overall lack of either leadership or military capability, the regime is of no real threat to the operation.

Climate: Climate: Liminariu has several climatic zones, but is predominately warm and humid. There is extensive ground cover, and temperature ranges are moderate. Precipitation is also moderate, with the heaviest rainfall being on the inner plains.

Transportation: The road network in Liminariu is extensive; however beyond the major highways, they are often poorly serviced as the local nobles are expected to maintain them at their expense. As a result, roads can range in quality from quite good to nearly impassable. There is a well-maintained rail network across the country but, as all lines are privately owned by companies from neighbouring CFS, services, apart from heavy freight, are limited. Airfields are numerous if rudimentary, and there are a large number of private aircraft, mainly used for crop dusting.



Analysis: Data indicates some interesting points of note for command, which are enumerated here. Liminariu could prove a significant variable in operational considerations depending upon operations flow.

1. Due to the divided nature of Liminariu's leadership, Liminariu is unlikely to intervene in the operation unless the unit crosses its borders. At that point the Nobles of those provinces would react. They are unpredictable, so their actions would as likely be predicated by self-interest as by military issues.
2. Julian has, on several occasions, intimated that had he the opportunity he would occupy Liminariu to secure Feldemaine's primary food supply, something Feldemaine is certainly capable of doing. Thus far his ambitions has been stymied by the CFS, who have made it plain that were he to do so they would intervene militarily. As a result Feldemaine has not moved on Liminariu, but Intel, Humint and research point to a heavy concentration of Feldemainean troops along the Liminariu border. This has resulted in considerable tension in this area with incidents as recently as four weeks ago. As a result of this, Liminariu has a military presence on alert along this border as well, although they are much outclassed by Feldemaine forces in equipment and quality. This officer speculates that only CFS involvement has prevented cross-border incidents from escalating.
3. Refugee Inanye are a very real presence in Liminariu, and have been vocal in local affairs regarding Feldemaine. While they have little political power, their current numbers and presence in the Liminariu labor force has lent them much more impact than they have enjoyed in the past. The client has maintained a number of contacts in this community, and many still remain in touch with relatives in Feldemaine. It should be noted that the refugees travel extensively underwater via the submersibles they escaped from the bay-based aquadomes in. To date, Feldemaine naval forces have proved largely ineffectual in monitoring Inanye movements in spite of this being the primary reason for building up their small navy.

Current Political/Military Situation, Uteguya: Overview.

Uteguya is a large, heavily forested country, boasting a mountain range and with a comparatively small population base. The team did not travel through this region, but research and contact information has yielded the following:

Legally, Uteguya is a loose confederation of villages and towns, all acting as tiny city-states. Representatives of each village and town meet yearly in a national congress to debate and decide on matters of law and policy.

The country is effectively run by a commissioner, and what government there is is focused on medical clinics, road and transportation maintenance, and the like.

There is only a small police force, while the entire country is evidently Law Level 2 or 3. The citizenry are all proudly, and highly, individualistic.

Heavy industry is nonexistent in any real sense in Uteguya, most of the country's wealth is derived from mineral resources obtained by either sink or strip mining. The principle resources being exploited include petrochemicals, coal, and extensive copper and iron ore deposits.

Uteguya has virtually no military at all; small militias act for common defence, but indications are that they number less than a battalion. However, nearly every citizen goes armed as a matter of routine. Although Julian of Feldemaine has made political statements indicating he could expand into Uteguya, the only attempt to do so was aborted. Uteguya may have no military presence, but six months of ongoing guerrilla style attacks eventually forced Feldemaine to withdraw, and Julian has not indicated any further desire to expand northward, in spite of the mineral wealth over the border.

The climate in Uteguya is bitterly cold as a rule and heavy precipitation is common. In winter, heavy snows and ice routinely make the roads impassable. There is one rail line that services all the mines, but most heavy transport is via truck. Barring the one highway, the roads are uniformly bad and the highway, itself, is in need of extensive repair.

Analysis: The team was unable to make any qualitative analysis of the situation in Uteguya, as we did not go there. However, this officer feels that Uteguya will not affect operational issues at all.

Current Political/Military Situation, Feldemaine: Overview.

The Feldemaine Government has already been examined in this report, however ground based Humint and follow up, as well as trend analysis based on findings here have yielded interesting results.

Currently, the average Feldemaine citizen is very aware of the tensions on the Liminariu border, however the local Government-controlled news service has spun this situation as aggression on the part of the Liminariu Families. This version of events is relatively credible, as a similar situation has occurred in the past, though not in recent years. Public opinion is mixed, but heavily in support of securing the border.

Julian has just completed a purge following an abortive and very poorly executed assassination attempt, just prior to this team's arrival in Feldemaine. Whether the client's forces instigated this attempt on his life, or whether private concerns have taken action is unknown at this time and the team will investigate further. The resulting security sweep of dissident factions has resulted in a large number of individuals being arrested or detained. To the team's knowledge, Julian's internal police have rolled up two of the client's cells in the process and captured elements of a third; this third element was of the nature of a by-catch, rather than intentional, and the detained members may still affect their release directly if they are not found out.

Indications are that this type of purge has become something of a routine matter, with both the police and BFSS forces moving quickly and smoothly to round up suspects.

All land border entry points are patrolled, with checkpoints manned by BFSS personnel at every road crossing the border. All border patrols are equipped with small arms and soft skinned transport. Although the checkpoints are of solid construction, none seem bunkered and no heavy weapons are emplaced. BFSS patrols run frequent sorties along the borders, as well as conducting random, yet regular, identity checks on the citizenry in the streets. The frequency of this low-level police harassment is such that the populace views it as commonplace.

Lake Renko is a large, relatively shallow body of fresh water, lying on the Feldemaine/Uteguaya border. Due to its size and location, communities on its coast are difficult to secure and it is perhaps the most porous point in all the land borders. There is also a deserted Inanye settlement in the depths of the lake. When Julian rose to power he immediately alienated the Inanye with several new policies, not least restricting their lucrative local trade in fish. The Inanye protested, and when that failed they began an ongoing, if ill-conceived, campaign of sabotage, petty vandalism and clumsy terrorism aimed at the government's shore facilities.

This campaign proved sufficiently onerous that the Feldemaine Army took action but being ill equipped for aquatic warfare in any real sense they found the operation continually frustrating. Finally, following a string of Inanye victories, the Feldemaine Army depth charged their settlement in the lake. The Inanye were driven out of Lake Renko, fleeing up river into Uteguaya or into the northern oceans on the coasts of the CFS. The lake settlement was abandoned, and gunboats now patrol the lake. These small gunboats are operated by the BFSS and are locally reputed to fire on any craft with little or no provocation. This has resulted in the previously prevalent fresh water aquaculture being abandoned and falling into disrepair, while fishing boats are now rarely seen on the lake. This has caused significant local hardship on both sides of the border, and cross-border incidents are becoming more common.

Strong checkpoints, always garrisoned by BFSS personnel, are in place at both points where Intercountry (IC) 8 crosses the Liminariu border, while all secondary roads are patrolled by local BFSS detachments. There are similar checkpoints where IC 5 and 7 cross the Uteguaya border but, compared to the ongoing state of tension at the Liminariu crossing and the long history of low action on this border, the Uteguaya checkpoints are notably more lax.

NOTE: Feldemaine has no railway system of its own, having never laid any track nor invested in rail companies. The nearest railhead is the spur at Tillman in Liminariu. Feldemaine has, instead always depended heavily on truck and heavy vehicle transport and, as a result, its intercountry roads are very well maintained and in excellent repair all year round.

Feldemaine has several ports, either on the Gulf of Julianis, including the capital of Julianus, or along the coastlines, and much heavy freight is managed via waterways or coastal shipping. While Feldemaine has no real navy presence beyond a few wet cutters and gunboats, as mentioned earlier, several fishing fleets as well as a number of commercial freighters operate from these ports.

Offshore, there are two large communities of Inanye as well as a spawning ground. With the attacks on their Lake Renko cousins, the community in the Gulf of Julianus has begun a low-key resistance movement.

In reality, the movement is less about resistance and more about annoyance – the Inanye are not prepared for a serious conflict and recognise that the Feldemaine government, and not humans as a whole, is the source of the current troubles. Traditionally, the Inanye have enjoyed a congenial relationship with the local fishing community, and a healthy trade with them.

Currently, the Inanye are carrying out a small operation funnelling defectors out of Feldemaine. Periodically, they engage in sabotage operations against Feldemaine port assets, but these are more on the order of harassment than a real threat.

The dual purpose airfield adjacent to Military Base 06 at Julianus was formerly used as a military field as well as a commercial one. The military aircraft have since been shifted to MB 07 and all commercial flights are routed into this airfield exclusively. The only military aircraft currently operating here is a Life Flight, operating two rescue helicopters from the nearby hospital, and a BFSS detachment operating two transport helos. Three small two-seater police helicopters are also based here. Only the BFSS transport copters are armed, with flex guns at the doors.

There is considerable tension in government circles at present as the rebels engage in light actions, most to little effect. Political dissension is acted upon swiftly and harshly punished. As a consequence, the team has remained under close cover.

There is a pervasive military presence in Feldemaine, but the regulars are less in evidence than initially expected. The tense situation along the Liminariu border has drawn much of those forces there. As a result, BFSS paramilitaries are the most usually encountered armed force. BFSS maintains a presence at all transportation hubs, and routinely patrols the streets. All personnel are armed; usually with small arms ranging from pistols to the more common SMG. Each BFSS station maintains a small armoury, and we believe they contain ammo stores, firearms, grenades, as well as riot gear. Although we have obtained no data as to heavy weapons, it seems doubtful that BFSS routinely keep any to hand. 20 to 50 personnel typically man the small stations, called precincts. This is deemed sufficient to cover all three shifts a day.

Major BFSS stations in the major population centres are a different matter again, and can be anticipated as having at least a platoon of Special Police per station. While ordinarily tasked as riot suppression, they are also SWAT trained, and the Main stations always have at last two armoured cars armed with LMG or turret-mounted riot suppression weapons (water cannon and gas dispensers). The armouries of these major stations can be expected to include heavy weapons in addition to the ordinary precinct fit-out, and there are usually 20 to 100 personnel based there, as well.

The major military bases at MB 06 and MB 07 are permanent regular garrisons. Although they are usually only garrisoned by a company, they have the capacity to support up to a battalion, so most of the barracking and facilities lay idle most of the year.

The regular Army's armoured units are based in MB 06 and MB 07, however, all armour at MB 07 was, as of this writing, on the move to be deployed at MB 01 and MB 02, with two platoons being assigned to each base. They are operating TL 6 tracked armour and each has a company of infantry in TL 6 AFVs with them. However, these are not true AFVs, but armoured halftracks, but all mount a heavy weapon.

MB 06 has a company of regulars, but the base is shared by Julian's personal force. Also, national HQ for the BFSS is based here as well, and includes a large prison facility. As a result, this base is perhaps the most active of them all.

Television and communications are government owned and sponsored, and there are government radio stations in every major city. However, there are only three government TV stations, run in Julianus, Wilton Marsh and Heritia. These TV stations rely on satellite uplinks for their broadcast, using leased time on a private geosynchronous satellite owned by a combine based in CFS. There is a fourth station in Andilet, but it has not yet been put into operation. Data suggests that there is a complete compliment of personnel and equipment in place at present, even though it is scheduled to go on air in 9 weeks time.

THE MISSION AND ITS CONCLUSION

And there you have it. This adventure has been deliberately left open ended for maximum flexibility; with the information to hand the Referee can spin the tale as he sees fit, but we don't offer a plot or specific chain of events. As with any mission, the possibilities are too vast to explore here. Let the players have their heads, and almost anything can happen. However, here are a few points to consider:

Communications is Key: If the players fail to secure the communications and local media stations as well as the military channels, Julian may well rally troops and sound enough alarms to raise his army – and the PCs' troubles will just have become that much greater.

Julian Escapes: Two factors arise in this case: either Julian, in escaping, rallies his forces (meaning he will be significantly more dangerous), or he may very well go underground himself, forming his own counter resistance and insurgency. Should he escape, the coup may still be successful, but with him alive he will still cause all manner of grief for the clients. clients have been known to be unsatisfied with this sort of result and refuse to pay.

Mission Success: The PCs may find themselves with more work; as such things don't go unnoticed in these sorts of circles. Good tickets may very well be offered.

Mission Failure: This may result in one of several situations of varying badness, ranging from a loss of face in the Merc community to the unit taking severe enough casualties that they may be in hock to their eyeballs just to pay the medical bills and keep afloat. And, of course, if the mission is a failure the client may very well refuse to pay the unit's mission wages.

Mission Compromised: Julian is no fool, and if he gets wind of the operation he will undoubtedly react, and his primary target will not be the PC unit (although they will have to be dealt with): his priority target will be to eliminate Jeritta. If he succeeds in this, and captures or kills her, the players will be in a precarious position. They may have to attempt a hasty rescue of troops on the ground, or try to negotiate their way out. If Julian takes Jeritta down and manages to kill her, their mission is for naught – he will have won by default, even if the *coup* is otherwise successful.

We hope you enjoy this adventure, and remember: *a clean weapon, solid intel and a sound repatriation clause are your best tools.*

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