

Comstar Games/Avenger Presents

Golden Age Starships 1: Fast Courier



Approved for use with Traveller

GOLDEN AGE STARSHIPS 1: FAST COURIER

BASED ON THE AWARD-WINNING *TRAVELLER* GAME SYSTEM AND UNIVERSE BY MARC MILLER

Golden Age Starships 1: Fast Courier is set in the Official Traveller Universe in 1105, but can be used in any Traveller campaign.

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INTRODUCTION

Starships are the lifeblood of the *Traveller* Universe. Most campaigns will revolve around at least one starship – the character's. If characters do not possess one, they will likely travel on starships many times in the course of a campaign. Starships run by characters take on a life of their own as they are husbanded between star systems, illegal operations, and overdue overhauls. Properly detailed small starships add color to any campaign, even if they are used as encounters rather than PC starships. Hence this line of booklets from Comstar Games and Avenger Enterprises.

This booklet contains complete information and deckplans for the Type CF Fast Courier, a starship that has been operating with the Scout Service for hundreds of years and can be found throughout the Imperium. This starship is also suitable as a character ship, as it is used on merchant routes to transport priority cargos and VIPs as well as acting as a mailship. In addition, 7 adventure seeds are presented based around the Fast Courier.

STANDARDS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In order to use this supplement you will need one of the *Mongoose Traveller* rules set. Statistics are included for Mongoose Traveller, though other rules sets can be used with a minimum of work. This supplement is designed to be used in the Official Traveller Universe (OTU) although the design could be used in any setting that uses Traveller's starship design rules.

Dates: All dates correspond to the standard Imperial calendar from the OTU. This supplement is officially dated 320-1105 (the 320th day of the 1105th year since the founding of the Third Imperium).

Place: The starship detailed in this supplement can be used anywhere in charted space, although the adventure seeds and background details on ships in service are based in the Spinward Marches Sector.

Theme: This supplement provides detailed information on a particular starship used in Chartist Space, along with background details, history, variants, operational use and adventure seeds for using the starship. Deckplans are also provided.

THE TYPE CF FAST COURIER

The Type CF Fast Courier is a standard design used since the 500s throughout the Imperium and beyond to convey priority cargos, mail and VIP passengers over Jump-3 distances. The Fast Courier was originally built to an Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS) specification for a 200 ton, Jump-3 capable ship to reach systems beyond the reach of the Jump-2 scout/courier communications network and the X-boat network. Hence the ship is more often encountered in low stellar density areas of the Imperium. The Fast Courier is relatively rare in comparison with the ubiquitous scout/courier, with approximately 20 Scout/Couriers in service with the IISS for every Type CF.

A few examples of the Type CF have been converted by the IISS for exploration and survey beyond the Imperial borders. Over 1500 have been built, most for the Scout Service, and the plans are readily available for private interests, client states and system governments to purchase. The governments of key Imperial worlds like Mora, Glisten and Rhyllanor use the Fast Courier for conveyance of priority cargo and VIPs throughout the Marches. Similarly, the type has been seen in service with the Navies of Imperial client states. The client world of Collace in District 268 is known to have two in service. Some have been built for private interests requiring a fast mail ship or a classic high Jump courier.

SPECIFICATIONS

Built to TL-12 standard, the Type CF Fast Courier masses 200 tons and is capable of Jump-3 and 2-G acceleration. Built to a streamlined configuration, the ship has integral fuel scoops and an onboard fuel purification plant capable of processing 40 tons of Jump fuel per day. The rationale for including an onboard purification plant is the Fast Courier is configured for maximum speed across the stars, and that includes minimal downtime between Jumps. Hence, gas giant refuelling or use of unrefined fuel may sometimes be necessary.

The ship's general configuration consists of a spherical bridge and crew quarters forward, with a passageway connecting the forward sphere with the aft drive, fuel and cargo section. The aft section has two cargo bays on the port side, each bay with its own external airlock for movement of cargo to and from highport docking bays. The Launch bay is situated in the centre of the aft section, with a hatch in the floor of the Launch bay to allow exit and entry of the Launch. The Launch bay leads directly to the larger cargo hold, while an airlock allows entry from the 14 ton cargo hold to the smaller secure/hazardous cargo hold. Both the external and internal airlocks to the secure hold run the anti-hijack program making the hold as secure as the bridge. The starboard side of the rear section also contains the majority of the fuel and the purification plant. Fuel scoops are present on the underbelly of the aft section.

The ship has 6 staterooms and 4 low berths. One stateroom is reserved for a VIP passenger. A model/2bis computer is installed on the bridge.

Type CF ships come standard with one triple turret mounted on the dorsal position of the forward sphere. Weaponry varies - some ships in safe parts of the Imperium have no armament beyond a single sandcaster, but most ships operating on the frontiers have a mixed armament of a single sandcaster, a single pulse or beam laser and a single missile rack. Fast Couriers that have been converted for exploration beyond the Imperial border have two turrets installed.

The Fast Courier has a 20 ton Launch small craft capable of atmospheric lighter missions with its 13 ton cargo capacity. The Fast Courier has a 14 ton cargo hold and a special 10 ton "secure" cargo hold for transportation of secure cargo, hazardous cargo and also mail.

The minimum crew requirement is a pilot and engineer. However the standard crew complement is 5: two pilots (who share watches and also share duties as Launch pilot), navigator, engineer and gunner.

Fast Couriers take 11 months to build.

FAST COURIER STATISTICS

FAST COURIER		Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull 200	Hull 2		8
Streamlined	Structure 2		0.8
Armour	Crystaliron	10	1.6
Jump Drive C	Jump 3	20	30
Manoeuvre Drive B	Thrust 2	3	8
Power Plant C	Rating 3	10	24
Bridge		10	1
Computer Model/2bis	Rating 10 (15 for jump control)	0	0.24
Electronics Basic Civilian	DM -2	1	0.05
Weapons Hardpoint #1 Triple Turret	1 Sand, 1 Missile, 1 Pulse Laser	1	2.5
Hardpoint #2 Empty		1	
Fuel 72 tons One Jump 3	Four weeks of operation	72	
Cargo 24 tons		24	
6 Staterooms		24	3
4 Low Berths		2	0.2
Extras Fuel Scoops		0	1
Fuel Processor	40 tons per day	2	0.1
Launch		20	11.677
Self Sealing Hull		0	0.2
Software Manoeuvre/0 -			-
Library -			-
Fire Control/1	Rating 5		2
Jump Control/3 -	Rating 15		0.3
Maintenance Cost (monthly)			0.0079
Life Support Cost (monthly)			0.0124
Total Tonnage & Cost		200	94.667

THE LAUNCH

The Launch is a small, slow streamlined cylinder vessel capable of fulfilling a wide range of roles from cargo and passenger transfer to lifeboat, search-and-rescue or starport utility work. The Launch found on Fast Couriers is typically not armed but retains a sandcaster for self defence, especially if operating on exploration missions.

The standard Launch carried by Fast Couriers does not have Low Berths, but Exploration Scout Launches may have 4 emergency Low Berths fitted.

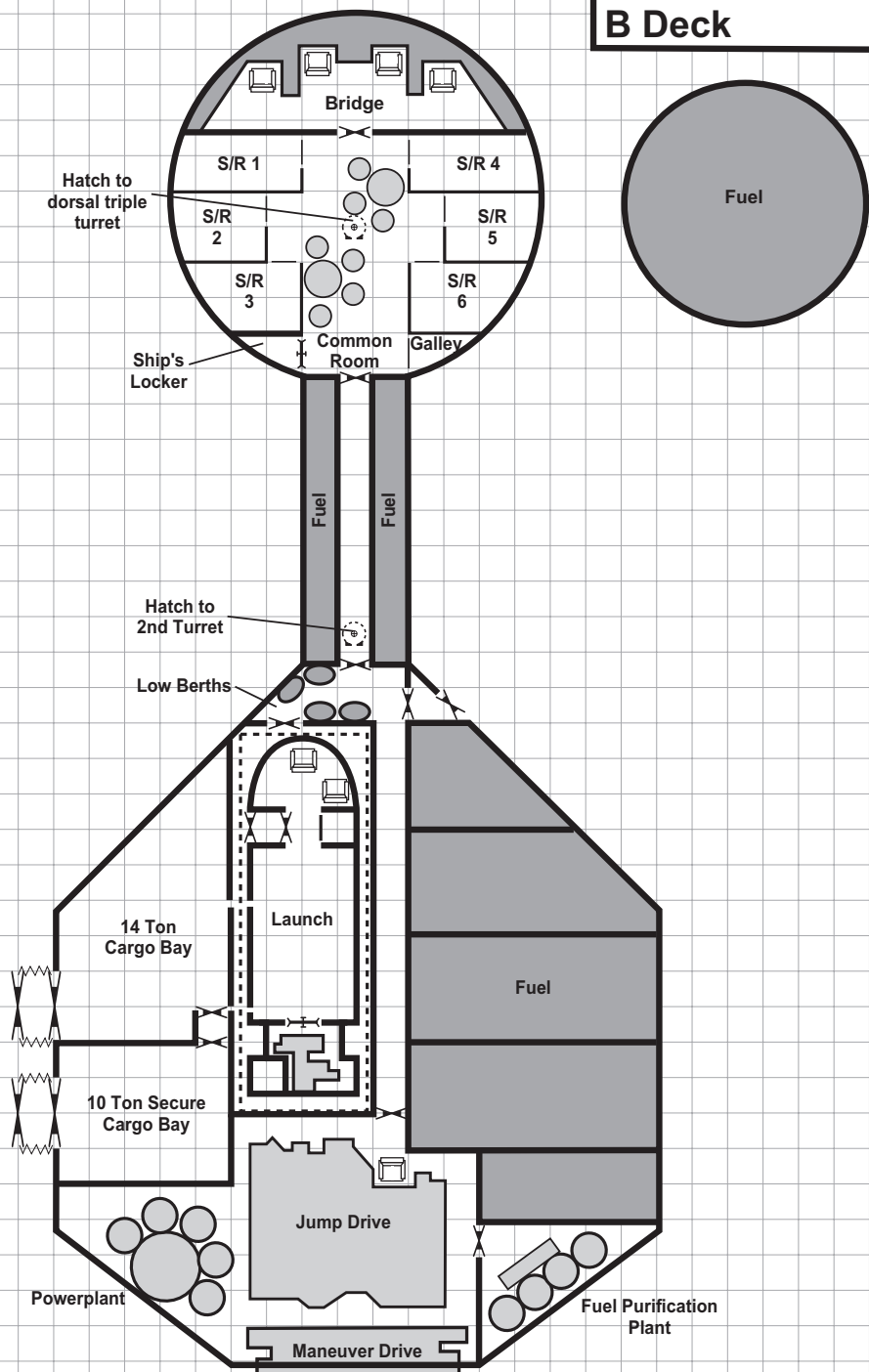
Launch			Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull	20 Tons	Hull 0		1.32
	Streamlined	Structure 1		
	Radiation shielding			5
	Heat shielding			1
Armour	None			
Manoeuvre Drive	sA	Thrust 1	0.5	1
Power Plant	sA	Rating 1	1.2	3
	Solar Panels		0.12	0.012
Bridge	Control cabin for 2		6	0.1
Computer	Mode/1fib	Rating 5		0.045
Electronics	Standard	DM-4		
Weapons	None			
Fuel	1 ton	Two weeks of operation	1	
Cargo	10.18 tons		10.18	
Extras	Airlock		1	0.2
Software	Manoeuvre/0			
	Library/0			
Total Tonnage & Cost			20	11.677

Fast Courier A Deck

Legend

-  1.5m Square
-  Bulkhead
-  Interior Wall
-  Sliding Door
-  Maintenance Hatch
-  Crew Station
-  Iris Valve
-  Manual Hatch
-  Overhead Iris Valve
-  Floor Iris Valve
-  Floor & Overhead
-  Floor Hatch
-  Overhead Hatch
-  Floor & Overhead
-  Lift Shaft

Fast Courier B Deck



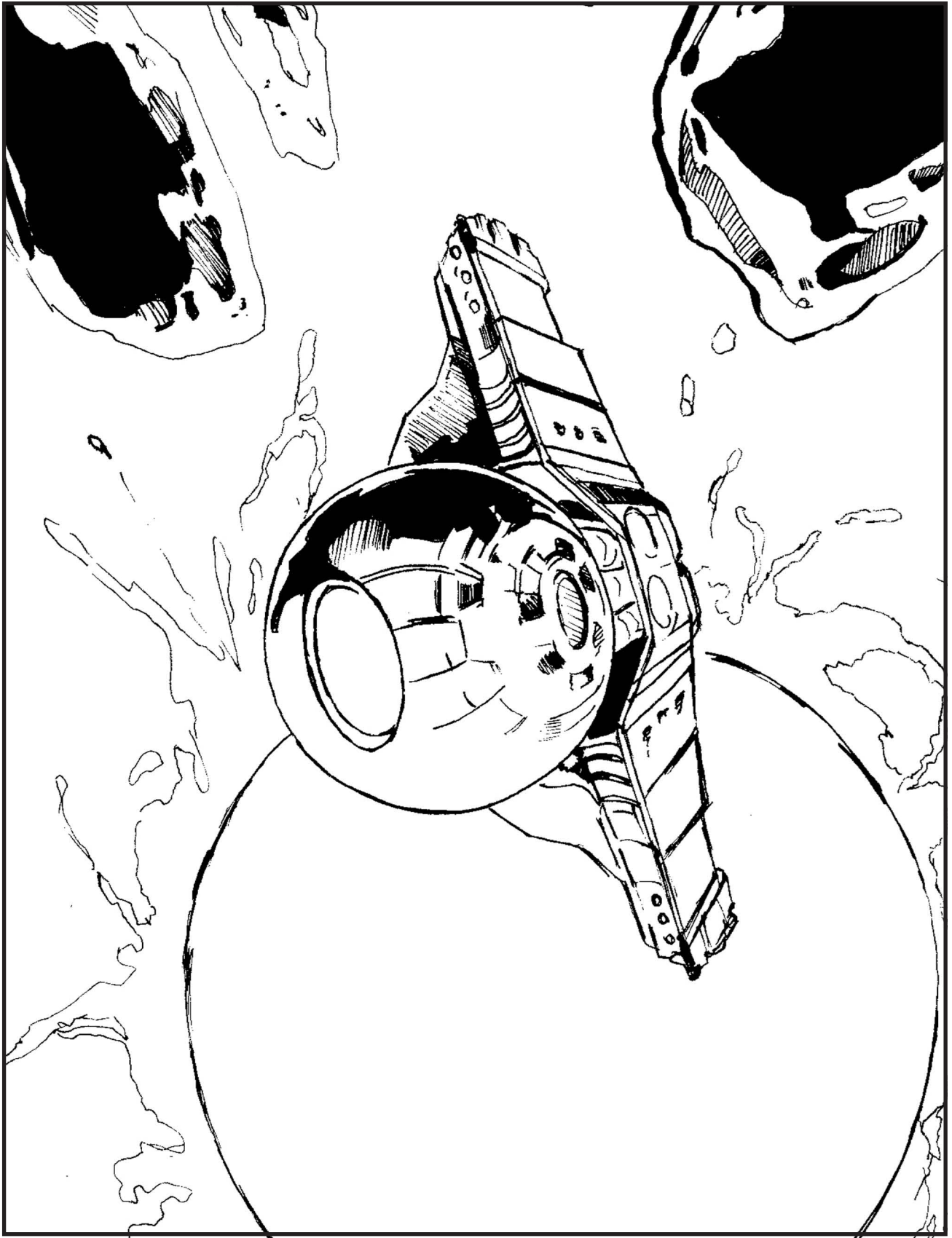
SHIP'S LOCKER

Ship's lockers are a sacred thing: each one is different, and equipment is either lovingly added to, or nonchalantly discarded into them. The list below represents a basic standard locker for a Fast Courier. The referee may amend the contents, because the characters certainly will. Some of these items may be stored in the locker on the Launch.

- 10 Environment Suits
- 10 Breather Masks
- 6 TL 12 Vac suits
- 2 TL 10 Computers
- 2 Inertial Locators
- 10 Commdots
- 6 TL 10 Comms
- 1 Geiger Counter
- 2 Binoculars
- 3 Light Intensifier Goggles
- 1 Electronic Tool Set
- 1 Mechanical Tool Set
- 1 TL 12 Medikit
- 1 TL 10 Habitat Module
- 3 Tents
- Prepackaged food and water for 6 people for 4 weeks
- Water purification tablets

Weapons

- 1 Rifle with 100 rounds
- 2 Snub Pistols 50 rounds each
- 3 Blades



A Fast Courier maneuvers somewhere in the Thanber Scatter.

VARIANTS

Exploration Scout Variant

Because of their reasonable Jump capability, Fast Couriers make excellent long range Exploration Scouts for the Scout Service. None of these variants have ever been built from the keel up – all are converted from existing standard Fast Couriers. The conversion consists of the following changes.

A second double turret is added mounting two beam lasers. This provides additional firepower should it be needed. A laboratory is installed in the secure cargo bay to allow scientific experiments to be undertaken during the mission. The remaining space in the secure bay is given over to the storage of Probe Drones, which are released through the awkward process of opening the cargo bay door and shoving the probe out the door. The procedure may not be pretty, but it works. Cargo space is reduced to 15 tons.

Solar panels are retrofitted to the hull, a move designed to give the Scout emergency power for an unlimited period of time, especially if operating beyond civilised borders.

The most controversial (and expensive) design change mandated by the Scout Service for its Exploration Scouts is the installation of radiation shielding. The bean-counters in the Service were always against this expensive addition, but the utility of this shielding is beyond question, and has in fact saved many lives in the Scout service.

The Launch is retained, and its cargo hold is also usually packed with supplies.

A typical exploration team would consist of 7 people: Scout Mission Commander/pilot, backup pilot/Launch pilot, navigator, gunner, engineer/gunner and two scientists (one with medical skill).

Exploration Scouts operate in limited numbers around the vast fringes of the Third Imperium and beyond.

VIP Passenger Variant

This rare variant is used by local governments and special Imperial units for fast movement of VIP passengers. The cargo hold is reduced to 4 tons to allow for 5 extra staterooms, increasing the total to 11. This allows for the carriage of up to 6 passengers.

EXPLORATION SCOUT STATISTICS

EXPLORATION SCOUT		Tons	Price (MCr)
Hull 200	Hull 2		8
Streamlined	Structure 2		0.8
Armour	Crystaliron	10	1.6
Jump Drive C	Jump 3	20	30
Manoeuvre Drive B	Thrust 2	3	8
Power Plant C	Rating 3	10	24
Bridge		10	1
Computer Model/2bis	Rating 10 (15 for jump control)	0	0.24
Electronics Basic Civilian	DM -2	1	0.05
Weapons Hardpoint #1 Triple Turret	1 Sand, 1 Missile, 1 Pulse Laser	1	2.5
Hardpoint #2 Double Turret	2 Beam Lasers	1	2.5
Fuel 72 tons One Jump 3	Four weeks of operation	72	
Cargo 15 tons		15	
6 Staterooms		24	3
4 Low Berths		2	0.2
Extras Fuel Scoops		0	1
Fuel Processor	40 tons per day	2	0.1
Launch		20	14
Laboratory		4	1
Radiation Shielding			50
Probe Drones (20)		4	2
Solar Panels		1	0.1
Self Sealing Hull		0	0.2
Software Manoeuvre/0 -			-
Library -			-
Fire Control/3	Rating 15		6
Jump Control/3 -	Rating 15		0.3
Maintenance Cost (monthly)			0.0129
Life Support Cost (monthly)			0.0124
Total Tonnage & Cost		200	154.267

THE ECONOMICS OF FAST COURIER OPERATION

Running a starship isn't cheap. And running a profitable "free trader" type operation with a Fast Courier is almost impossible because of its limited cargo capacity. But the Scout Service did not design for Fast Courier to make a profit, so that is unsurprising. Most Fast Couriers in Scout or government service do not need to make a profit to survive, as they are working in some sort of official courier/VIP carriage role. There are two ways to run a privately owned Fast Courier as a profitable operation. First, one needs to have a mortgage-free ship. A few older Fast Couriers in the Marches (including the *Jewelstar*, *Aramis Express* and *Mora Mailer*) have been paid off and so turn a reasonable profit picking up priority, secure and hazardous cargo, without being restricted by a subsidy's area of operation.

The more common method of running a Fast Courier is through a subsidy contract with a local government or even a megacorporation. Although competition is fierce for such subsidies, there are many subsidized routes throughout charted space, each one connecting from 2 to 12 worlds. Fast Couriers are suited to such contracts because of their high Jump number. This enables them to connect worlds separated by rifts, also worlds which require regular shipping runs and therefore more likely to offer subsidies.

The following section introduces a new type of cargo - secure/hazardous/priority (SHP). Fast Couriers as well as some other ship types have special secure cargo holds which allow them to pick up these and ship them. Cargoes are rolled for normally as per pages 160-161 of the *Mongoose Traveller* Core Rulebook, but **incidental** cargoes are further rolled for on the table below. Every cargo has a story – sometimes mundane, but sometimes dangerous or potentially profitable for the characters. The table below can be used by the referee either rolled randomly or chosen to provide the characters with some interesting situations to deal with over the course of a normal delivery mission.

SECURE/HAZARDOUS/PRIORITY (SHP) CARGOES

4D	Type	Notes
4	Lethal Chemical/Biological Warfare Agents	
5	Conventional HE explosives	ie: Grenades, HE shells, starship missile warheads
6	Small Arms ammunition	
7	Low Grade Radioactive waste	
8	Strong Acids	
9	Dangerous alien lifeforms	Contact could prove rather deadly
10	Military small arms	(Types are dependent on TL of world where goods are picked up)
11	Civilian small arms	(Types are dependent on TL of world where goods are picked up)
12	Lethal Solvents	
13	Combat Drugs	Highly sought after
14	Fast/Slow Drugs	Also highly sought after
15	High Grade Radioactive Waste	
16	Specialised/experimental computer equipment	
17	Combat Armor	Only if pickup world is TL 11+. If TL 10-: combat environment suit
18	G-Carrier	One only per secure shipment
19	Starship weapons	4 per ton. Pulse lasers, beam lasers, sandcasters and missile racks
20	Lanthanum	Key component in Jump Grids
21	Zuchai Crystals	Key component in Jump Drives
22	Platinum	Metal Ore
23	Iridium	Metal Ore
24	Local/Imperial Treasury Bonds	
25	Nuclear warheads	4 per ton of secure cargo. Nominally safe because primers have been removed, but a juicy target for terrorists.
26	Secret Artifact	Could be an Ancients artifact?

Modifiers:

-2 if Law Level of destination world is 2 or less

+2 if Tech Level of destination world is 14+

Size of each Cargo: 1D tons.

SHP cargoes are paid by the ton per parsec, just like passengers.

Parsecs travelled	Fee
1	Cr10,000 per ton
2	Cr12,000 per ton
3	Cr14,000 per ton
4	Cr16,000 per ton
5	Cr18,000 per ton
6	Cr20,000 per ton

SHP cargoes can only be carried by starships with special secure cargo facilities - just like the Fast Courier's secure cargo bay. Special procedures are put in place to load and unload such cargoes, the cost of which is borne by the company or organisation freighting the goods. The bay has an intelligent lock, preventing entry by anyone except certain crew members. Intelligent locks are even more secure than biometric locks, as you can't simply take a corpse of a crew member and get its retina scanned to open the lock.

MONTHLY FAST COURIER EXPENSES

The following represents standard monthly expenses for Fast Courier operation using a government subsidy, based on the assumption that two Jumps are made each month, and 6 days is spent in port between Jumps. It is further assumed that the subsidy is the standard type offered throughout the Imperium, whereby the mortgage payments are taken over by the government and 50% of the gross receipts are also taken by the government. Some Fast Couriers resort to fuel skimming from oceans and gas giants to further minimise costs.

Type	Monthly Cost	Notes
Starship Mortgage	Cr0	Paid by Government subsidy
Crew Salaries	Cr23,000	Base don standard crew
Life Support/Food	Cr15,400	Based on 3 double occupancy staterooms
Highport/Orbital Berthing	Cr1000	
Unrefined fuel	Cr13,200	Refined using onboard purification plant
Routine Maintenance	Cr7,900	Requires 1 full day per month
Annual Maintenance	Cr8,083	Yearly cost amortized into monthly payments
TOTAL	Cr68,583 per Month	

MONTHLY FAST COURIER INCOME

The scenarios below can be used to simplify book-keeping during a campaign, if that is the wish of the players.

Income can also be generated from special charters, special courier deliveries and buying and selling speculative cargo. Governments generally allow speculative cargo to be carried, so long as 100% of the risk is taken by the Courier crew. Governments do not take any of the profit (or loss) from speculative trade.

Scenario 1: Standard Cargo (the "It's bread and water for lunch" scenario)

2 Jumps per month: 24 tons of standard cargo, average Jump distance 2 parsecs, 4 Low and 2 Mid Passages per Jump:

Income: Cr91,200, minus 50% taken by the subsidizing government = Cr45,600 income

Net Loss: Cr22,983

Scenario 2: The "At least salaries are getting paid" scenario

2 Jumps per month: 14 tons of standard cargo, 6 tons of secure/hazardous/priority cargo, average Jump distance 2 parsecs, 4 Low and 1 Mid Passage per Jump:

Income: Cr199,200, minus 50% taken by the subsidizing government = Cr99,600 income

Net Profit: Cr31,017

Scenario 3: The “We will soon be Richer than God - assuming our lethal biotoxin waste cargoes don’t kill us first” Scenario

2 Jumps per month: 14 tons of standard cargo, 9 tons of secure/hazardous/priority cargo, average Jump distance 2 parsecs, 4 Low and 1 Mid Passage per Jump:

Income: Cr271,200, minus 50% taken by the subsidizing government = Cr135,600 income

Net Profit: Cr67,017

Scenario 4: Mail Cargo

Fast Couriers are perfectly suited to carry mail, therefore a mail scenario is presented below for reference and possible use.

2 Jumps per month: 14 tons of standard cargo, 2 tons of secure/hazardous/priority cargo, one 5 ton mail container, average Jump distance 2 parsecs, 4 Low and one Mid Passage per Jump:

Income: Cr153,200, minus 50% taken by the subsidizing government = Cr76,600 income

Net Profit: Cr8017

SHP CARGO ASSAILANTS

Secure cargos may be carefully tracked by people and organizations wishing to intercept and acquire those cargos. Despite strict security surrounding secure cargo transactions, groups wanting to acquire secure cargos may attempt to take them by various means. A Fast Courier crew experienced handling such cargos will have various means to ensure the cargos are secure – false radio traffic, misleading departure times, using a remote/secure installation for cargo transfer, issuing false cargo manifests, running silent with the ship’s transponder off or even more elaborate ruses for particularly sensitive cargos. The referee should ensure that sensitive cargos are targeted in some way early on in a campaign to ensure the characters are aware of their value, and their downside.

1d6 Assailant

- 1 Imperial Corporation (boarding party of hired thugs using two armed pinnaces faking a customs search)
- 2 Non-Imperial Corporation
- 3 One man fighting-machine saboteur disguised as a VIP passenger on the same flight as the target cargo
- 4 Rogue Mercenary Group (running an 800 ton mercenary cruiser or other para-military ship)
- 5 Corsair Group (running a 400 ton corsair or other large ship)
- 6 Rogue Government (either from a balkanised world or rival to the destination world – uses customs cutter to make illegal seizure at an intermediate jump point)

The way any of these entities target the secure cargo is up to the referee. Some suggestions are listed above, but more subtle means than pulse and beam lasers can also be attempted.

The referee is free to make up other cargos as the situation permits.

FAST COURIERS OPERATING IN THE SPINWARD MARCHES AS AT 320-1105

Fast Couriers operating in the Imperial Scout Service are generally named for recipients of the Imperial Order of the Arrow Medal. The table is grouped by type of owner. Ships lost in the Sector are not listed: but at least 6 have been lost or destroyed over the centuries in the Spinward Marches.

Name	Completed	Owner	Notes (including base/area of operation)*
INDIVIDUALS			
Aramis Express	1074	Individual	Fast Courier (Based on Aramis)
Jewelstar	1065	Individual	Fast Courier (Based on Lanth)
Saviour	1093	Individual	Subsidized – Vilis-Phlume Chain (Vilis)
Fortuna	1095	Individual	Subsidized – The Junidy Cluster (Aramis)
Dia Dellmar	1096	Individual	Subsidized – The Thanber Scatter (Querion)
Sultan	1102	Individual	Subsidized – The Jewell Scatter (Jewell)
Pacesetter	1103	Individual	Subsidized – The Glisten Arm (Glisten)
Hinterland	1103	Individual	Subsidized – Vilis-Phlume Chain (Vilis)
CORPORATIONS			
Amber Runner	1076	Al Morai	Fast Courier (Vilis)
Glisten Express	1086	Whiplash LIC	Subsidized – Glisten Arm (Glisten)
Mora Mailer	1075	Mora Mail LIC	Mailship (Mora)
Pace	1084	Whiplash LIC	Subsidized – Glisten Arm (Glisten)
Rawlins	1088	Sinzarmes	Mailship (Regina)
Star-Reach	1090	Diamond Couriers	Subsidized – The Jewel Scatter (Jewell)
Xpress One	1093	Diamond Couriers	Subsidized - The Jewel Scatter (Jewell)
Red Star	1101	Al Morai	VIP Passenger Variant (Lunion)
GOVERNMENTS			
Arcadia	1094	Aramis Govt	(Aramis)
Mihlyesan	1086	Darrian Navy	VIP Passenger Variant (Darrian)
Seelan	1099	Collace Navy	(District 268)
Collace Sprinter	1104	Collace Navy	(District 268)
Signet Courier	1105	Rhylanor Govt	VIP Passenger Variant (Rhylanor)
SCOUT SERVICE			
Katarina	1079	Scout Service	(Lysen/Jewell)
Asmezi	1081	Scout Service	Exploration Scout Variant (Mirriam/Five Sisters)
Forman	1083	Scout Service	(Karin/Five Sisters)
Zorana	1089	Scout Service	(Persephone/Lunion)
Nakakin	1090	Scout Service	Exploration Scout Variant (Mirriam/Five Sisters)
Belleran	1090	Scout Service	(Nasemin/Aramis)
Matterhorn	1091	Scout Service	(Aramis/Aramis)
Aceh	1092	Scout Service	Exploration Scout Variant (Nasemin/Aramis)
Fibernachi	1096	Scout Service	Exploration Scout Variant (Nasemin/Aramis)
Zudarmaa	1100	Scout Service	(Garda-Vilis/Vilis)
Goromiah	1101	Scout Service	Exploration Scout Variant (Mirriam/Five Sisters)
Boyden	1105	Scout Service	Exploration Scout Variant (Nasemin/Aramis)
Agirash	Building	Scout Service	Building

*Scout service vessels have a “homeport”, a scout base from which they return for overhauls and maintenance. The area of operations is generally within a subsector of their home scout base, except for exploration vessels which range far beyond the Spinward Marches.

SUBSIDIZED ROUTES, SCOUTS AND CAMPAIGNS

If characters wish to build or buy a new Fast Courier they would add to the Spinward Marches registry list and find a subsidy from a system government in the Marches to pay the mortgage. It is important to note that even if a government subsidizes a Fast Courier, a 20% downpayment is still required from the characters.

If characters are starting out on a campaign the referee may assign one of the ships listed as being owned by an “individual” and place the characters in the area where the subsidy is. It is assumed the 20% down payment was paid in the past, but the referee should take most of the starting money away from the characters in partial compensation.

If referees don't want to give anything away then the characters may have to somehow come up with the 20% down payment to build/buy a Fast Courier. This could be achieved by selling a free trader or seeker which has some equity in it, or some other devious means.

Another way of building a campaign around a Fast Courier is to have characters take a Scout Service Exploration ship on an exploration mission beyond the borders of the Imperium. These missions may last for a year or more, and there are no mortgages to worry about. These missions could take place anywhere on the fringes of the Imperium, which means there are virtually limitless starting places for such a campaign.

The Referee may wish to make his or her own subsidized routes, and add Fast Couriers to the Spinward Marches registry. The subsidized routes noted in the adventure seeds below necessarily restrict the characters to a particular cluster, but some of the clusters are large and have many possibilities for adventure. In addition, special courier missions could take the ship outside the subsidized routes for a time.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE JEWELL SCATTER CAMPAIGN

In an effort to improve communications between the Jewell scatter and the Regina subsector, the Jewell government subsidizes different kinds of ships, mainly high Jump ships for the Jump-3 routes trailing to Regina subsector. The worlds included in the subsidy are Jewell, Emerald, Ruby, Esalin, Mongo, Nakege, Lysen and Louzy – 8 worlds in total. Subsidies for this area are funded by Jewell primarily to maintain a Jump-3 link between the spinward worlds of the Scatter and Louzy, which is the “end of the line” in the enormous chain of worlds which make up the Spinward Main.

Operations in the Jewell Scatter are characterized by a constant fear of Zhodani interference in Imperial systems. The Jewell cluster of worlds are heavily fortified, containing numerous Navy squadrons and Imperial Marines. All systems are heavily patrolled by the Imperial Navy. As a result, piracy is virtually unknown in the subsector, but the Zhodani are always gathering intelligence and sometimes even use Imperial citizens for information gathering. While the Navy uses its own couriers for communications with the Regina subsector, the occasional lower priority secure cargo is taken by private courier firms. Very few private firms own Jump-4 ships however, so privately owned Jump-3 ships use the Jewell-Nakege-Louzy route to trailing, avoiding the Lysen Gulf which lies between Lysen and the Regina subsector.

Jewell is a major exporter of manufactured goods throughout the region, and rely on Fast Couriers for the despatch of time sensitive and high value cargos onward to the Spinward Main in Regina subsector, and between worlds in the Scatter. Louzy and Mongo both export high grade ores from their vast mines, so bulk ore carriers move most of their exports. The occasional priority ore cargo is moved via Fast Courier however.

The Imperial armed forces are major consumers of resources in the region, and sometimes use Fast Couriers for movement of lower priority cargos and even VIP passengers from the Navy, Marines and Imperial Army.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE JUNIDY CLUSTER CAMPAIGN

Located in the trailing portion of the Aramis subsector, the Junidy cluster governments offer subsidies to link the worlds of the cluster with the Spinward Main to rimward via Patinir, Zila and Pysadi. Governments offering such subsidies in the Junidy Cluster include Carsten and several nations on Aramanx, and Zila, Pysadi Patinir, Natoko, Aramis and L'oeul d'Dieu. Carsten and Aramanx constitute a “dropping off” point for priority/secure/hazardous cargo requiring urgent shipment to the Spinward Main to rimward. Fast Courier operations link these two worlds to the Spinward Main via Zila, Pysadi and Patinir.

Operations in the Junidy Cluster are characterized by frequent contact with Vargr traders, and the occasional Vargr corsair. The Imperial Navy's attention is fixated on Regina, Vilis and Jewel subsectors to Spinward, and the frequency of patrols are not what they should be.

Sternmetal Horizons LIC is particularly active in the cluster, especially on Aramanx, supporting the Lavrenyi nation in a world war against the nations of Lanax and Senled in order to gain control of the world's mineral resources. The war has developed into global proportions. Sternmetal maintains its own fleet of freighters which provide war material for Lavrenyi, but the nations of Lanax and Senled also offer subsidies to merchants and Fast Couriers to provide interstellar transport capability in this time of crisis. Lanax and Senled are forced to use subsidized vessels because they lack the tech level to build and maintain their own starships. Ships subsidized by these two nations are used to export manufactured goods in exchange for desperately needed hard currency to continue the war effort.

But the subsidized starships are also used to import secure and hazardous cargos to continue the war effort – and there are no end of extremely hazardous and important high value cargos awaiting importation from nearby worlds. While such work is a gun runner's dream, entering the Aramanx system can be a nightmare. Para-military "merchant ships" owned by Sternmetal intimidate any ships bound for the Lanax or Senled starports, but the Imperial Navy's 674th SDB Squadron maintains an iron grip on the spacelanes in the system, allowing trade to continue to and from the world. The squadron consists of 4 400 ton SDBs and a very old 300 ton *Gazelle* class close escort. Once a starship enters the upper atmosphere of Aramanx however, the rules change. The Imperium no longer has jurisdiction, and subsidized ships become fair game. More than a few starships have been downed by primitive interceptor aircraft, and most starships now take extensive evasive maneuvers when descending to the surface of Aramanx. A Fast Courier operation in this environment is filled with danger and more than a few moments of terror, but most operators are getting very rich from the millions suffering in Aramanx's horrific world war.

Cargos transported by a Fast Courier that may be of great interest to Sternmetal operatives seeking to stop the flow of weaponry to their rivals include nuclear weapons, military small arms, ammunition, AFVs, aircraft, high grade radioactive waste, explosives and anything else that could aid the war effort. Sternmetal operatives could use any means to stop the flow of goods – sabotage, outright piracy, mercenary boardings – just so long as the corporation can get away with it.

A new player has recently emerged on the scene however. Megacorporation Ling Standard Products, longtime rival of Sternmetal, has started covertly supporting Lanax and Senled's war effort. Many products being transported by subsidized ships are actually financed by LSP.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE THANBER SCATTER CAMPAIGN

Beyond the spinward border of the Imperium lies the Querion subsector, its Coreward worlds dominated by the Zhodani. In Astrographic terms, the Thanber Scatter consists of every world in the subsector not claimed by the Sword Worlds or the Zhodani.

Operations in the Thanber Scatter are characterized by little Imperial traffic, small independent tramp traders and small Zhodani Navy patrols passively observing proceedings on Scatter worlds. Three Tukera Line 600 ton armed Subsidized Liners work the main routes but only call on worlds on an irregular basis, leaving openings for couriers to carry SHP cargos. There is an increased risk of piracy in the region, with corsairs operating from the Foreven Sector striking into the subsector. The Zhodani Navy are actively engaged in trying to destroy Corsairs in the Foreven Sector and will protect starships from such raiders, regardless of the origin of those starships. But Zhodani Navy ships will also stop and search Imperial ships operating in the region, even if they are not military ships. This is an accepted risk of working in the Scatter.

A small amount of priority/secure cargo are handled between Choleosti, Thanber and the Imperial Research Station in the Retinae system, but most of this cargo is moved by Imperial Navy couriers to and from Retinae. The majority of cargos consist of urgent consignments between worlds in the Scatter, especially the movement of high yield, high tech goods from the Imperial border. The movement of such goods is a target for corsairs and other unsavoury types, and the hardy locals in the Scatter generally bargain hard, resorting to unlawful means if they do not get their way. The mantra of a Fast Courier operation (or any trader operation) in the subsector is be prepared for anything.

Any world in the scatter can offer subsidies, but a few in particular will do so for specific reasons. Anti-Zhodani Attica offers subsidies to Imperial and Arden Federation registered ships in order to keep trade flowing with them. Situated on the border of the Consulate, Attica is a world in a perpetual state of paranoia about Zhodani intentions.

Fast Courier subsidies offered by the Imperial client world of Thanber link the worlds of the Scatter with the Imperial border world of Choleosti in the Vilis subsector. The worlds serviced consist of Choleosti, Thanber, Dekalb, Faisal, Retinae, Bael, Rushu, Xhosa, Yiktor, Attica, Prinx, Mizen-fel and Atson.

The Imperial Client State of Dekalb relies on high jump ships to transport high value ores from its sea mining platforms dotted across the shallow seas to markets on Entrope, the Federation of Arden and the Imperium. The system is also a market for mid tech goods to keep its mining platforms operational.

Prinx, located at the Spinward end of the subsector, provides subsidies to Imperial registered ships for the same reason as Attica. The military regime there ended Zhodani presence on the world decades ago, and maintains a mildly pro-Imperial attitude despite the lack of support for the government from the Imperium. Prinx is the probably the most isolated of all the pro-Imperial worlds in the Spinward Marches.

Tukera Lines, a powerful shipping megacorporation, dominates the starport activities of the key Imperial client state of Thanber, which links the Imperium with the worlds of the Thanber Scatter. The starport is guarded by Tukera mercenaries, and non-Tukera merchant ships are accorded the worst starport facilities and worst service. The mercenaries will undertake punitive searches of non-Tukera starships and the slightest discrepancy will land the ship's crew in deep trouble. However, non-Tukera ships also have a saving grace. The technocracy which runs Thanber is financially supported by Tukera, but the local judges and customs officials who run the court system are opposed to Tukera influence in local affairs and will assist non-Tukera merchants if they are being victimised by Tukera thugs. That is not to say some locals haven't been bought by Tukera however. Fast Couriers can expect to be hassled by Tukera mercenaries every time they pass through the Thanber system. PC operated Fast Couriers can also expect to be hassled by Tukera Line Subsidized Liner crews if they are encountered in starports throughout the subsector.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE VILIS-PHUME CHAIN CAMPAIGN

Situated on the Spinward border of the Imperium, the Vilis-Phlume Chain is relatively isolated and stretches from Margesi to Phlume across the subsector. Various governments in the Chain provide subsidies to facilitate trade between worlds in the Chain and the Spinward Main to trailing. Fast Courier subsidies cover the following worlds which form part of this tenuous link: Phlume, Denotam, Calit, Mirriam, Frenzie, Stellatio, Arkadia, Ficant, Garda-Vilis, Vilis and Margesi.

Operations in the Vilis-Phlume Chain are characterized by a heavy Imperial Navy presence, as this section of the border is highly exposed to both Sword Worlds and Zhodani incursions. Pirates would not dare enter any Imperial systems, but a few have been spotted across the border in neutral systems. Vilis is a major supplier of mid tech goods throughout the subsector and relies on Fast Couriers to transport urgent shipments of high value goods to markets throughout the Vilis-Phlume Chain.

Vilis also exports military hardware and starships, and as a consequence has a substantial demand for fast deliveries of high value, secure military items to buyers and subcontractors throughout the Chain. There is also demand for the importation of hazardous goods to assist the massive manufacturing plants on Vilis, particularly with the Just-in-time management practices employed by these facilities. There is a lot of work in the Chain for a Fast Courier, as well as moderate dangers from the types of cargos being carried. Sloppy hazardous cargo-handling on Vilis and Garda-Vilis have seen some horrific accidents in the last decade. There have been so many problems some merchant crews prefer to handle their own hazardous cargos.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE ROYAL MERCANTILE NAVY OF HERONI CAMPAIGN

Situated on the Spinward Main in the Mora subsector, industrialized Heroni is an oligarchy ruled by a hereditary King. The Royal Mercantile Navy maintains a small fleet of 30 old freighters and is making an impact in the surrounding systems, mainly by exporting TL-8 goods from Heroni's factories to nearby worlds. The focus of this campaign is the Navy's need for higher Jump services for priority and secure cargos. The Navy is prepared to enter into a standard subsidy agreement with a merchant crew to man and run a Fast Courier, since the Heroni Navy lacks the technology to support a Jump-3 (or even Jump-2) vessel. The Jump-2 ships in its fleet are maintained by a subcontracted shipyard on Lunion/Lunion.

The Navy has a military style leadership, with a Chief of Staff heading the Navy, and a chain of command that ends with individual vessel captains. Every vessel in the fleet is armed, but many are in a state of disrepair and urgent funds are required to keep ships operational. The Navy's largest competitor is Al Morai, which operates from Mora/Mora. A few shooting incidents have occurred between Navy crews and Al Morai crews, both in ships and at starports. Al Morai mainly recruits from ex-Navy and Scout personnel, and their ships are fully capable of defending themselves. If the characters take on the Heroni subsidy, they will be hassled by Al Morai crews on a regular basis.

The Mercantile fleet consists of 8 free traders and 19 subsidized merchants, along with 3 scout/couriers for Jump-2 deliveries. The activities of the Jump-1 ships are limited to working the Spinward Main in the Rhylanor, Lunion, Lanth and Mora subsectors. The free traders are usually engaged in speculative trade, while the subsidized merchants work set routes along the Main.

The systems included in the subsidy are: Heroni/Mora, Fosey/Mora, Byret/Mora, Mercury/Mora, Catuz/Mora, Moran/Mora, Fornice/Mora, Ivendo/Lanth, Gitosy/Rhylanor, Capon/Lunion and Quiru/Lunion. Heroni ships are effectively cut out of the massive Mora market by El Morai. Worlds along the Main are generally serviced by the Jump-1 fleet, leaving the long routes to the Fast Courier.

Of interest to military-minded characters are the Imperial Navy and Scout base operations on Mercury. These bases often obtain TL-8 goods from Heroni as part of their extensive planetary training operations on the world.

The route for Heroni's goods to the massive market of Fornice is a lucrative one for high Jump couriers. Using the Heroni-Byret-Catuz-Fornice route, TL-8 secure and priority cargos are regularly rushed to the 20 billion population Fornice system. Secure packet pickups and deliveries are also transported on this route. El Morai operatives are currently engaged in trying to stifle competition in the Fornice system, so Heroni ships have become a target for devious and underhand tactics designed to destroy Heroni's reputation as a reliable freight line. Recent Incidents have included attempts at sabotage, bribing corrupt customs officials to hold up Heroni ships, planting highly illegal cargos on Heroni ships and smear campaigns in vid-zines. All these measures have weakened the Heroni Mercantile fleet's reputation, causing a cash crisis and threatening to close the Navy's merchant operations for good. But hope is on the horizon. Rumors abound of a financial backer for the Navy in the shape of Imperiallines, a rival to El Morai.

A continuation of the campaign could see the characters rising through the ranks of the Mercantile Navy and help halt its slow slide into financial ruin by running a profitable operation, and exposing the ruthless tactics of El Morai to the worlds they call upon. A healthy vibrant Heroni Mercantile Navy would provide a great counterbalance to the domination by El Morai and other players in this area of the Marches. And it would make the characters rich and powerful if they help restore the former glory of The Royal Mercantile Navy of Heroni.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE GLISTEN ARM CAMPAIGN

Multiple subsidies for the Glisten Arm are offered by various Glisten cluster governments, including passenger, bulk freight and mail services. A Fast Courier would receive a standard priority/secure/hazardous cargo subsidy or a mail subsidy. The Glisten Arm is an offshoot from the Spinward Main that snakes from spinward to trailing through the Glisten subsector. The operational area of the subsidy consists of the worlds of Melior, Egypt, Callia, Overnale, Glisten, Aki, Windsor, Weiss, New Rome, Craw, Trane, Horosho, Sorel, Tsarina, Wurzburg and Bendor. Fast Couriers are used to provide high Jump capability between worlds in the Arm. A Jump-3 ship is capable of reaching any world in the Arm from any other world in the Arm in just one or two Jump-3's.

Operations in the Glisten Arm are characterized by the movement of priority high tech goods between worlds in the Arm, particularly to and from the manufacturing center of Glisten. Space in the cluster is generally safe from piracy.

The corporate government of Weiss (which is in fact a subsidiary of the Spinward Development Corporation) has offered a few subsidies to encourage trade with that world.

The Overnale Agricultural Corporation, in an effort to promote high value exports for Overnale's exquisite agricultural products, offers subsidies for high Jump ships to deliver high value products to major markets in the Arm. The cargos may not engender a vast profit, but they sure do taste good.

The New Rome government offers subsidies to encourage exports from New Rome's large-scale manufacturing enterprises.

Craw's government has been known to offer subsidies, being little-visited by major freighters.

Trane is often called upon by small cargo ships because of its reputation as a major manufacturer of arms. Certainly, visits to Trane's starport can be hair-raising affairs because everyone is armed. The world seems to be awash with slugthrowers. High value secure and hazardous weapons shipments from Trane to other worlds in the Arm and beyond occur on a regular basis. Consequently the planet's starport harbors some rather unsavoury types who may cause problems for Fast Courier operators, both on the ground and in space. The Imperial corporation Instellarms also maintains a small TL-B facility on Trane, manufacturing Grav-APCs which are exported throughout the Marches. Such shipments always require urgent or secure delivery.

Although located just Coreward of the Glisten Arm, Inthe has call for hazardous goods shipments on a regular basis. Radioactive ores from Inthe are exported to various manufacturing facilities throughout the Glisten Arm, although such shipments are carefully monitored because of their risk factor.

Wurzburg is classified an Amber Zone due to its violent, anarchistic starport area and crumbling infrastructure. It is an exciting place to visit if a Fast Courier crew is looking for highly illegal materials to buy, sell, or transport. Bendor relies on just-in-time deliveries from other manufacturing centers in the Arm, particularly Glisten, to keep its starship manufacturing facility operational. Owned by the Bendor Government (which itself is a captive, administrative arm of the Ffudn system government), the Bendor Shipyards build large freighters and are in direct, bitter competition with shipbuilders on Glisten. The Bendor government subsidizes a small number of high Jump couriers to maintain the flow of high-tech subassemblies to the shipyard. The primary shipbuilders on Glisten, Bilstein Yards and Ling Standard Products are rumoured to be working together to bring down the fledgling Bendor Shipyards.

Glisten's bureaucratic government offers no subsidies at all, there being no need as there is ample incentive for freighters to call there. However, corporations based in the Glisten system may, from time to time, offer subsidies to service specific routes in the Arm. Corporations sometimes offer subsidies as a means of keeping direct costs down, although such subsidies have been known to be unilaterally cancelled, sparking legal battles and even extreme retaliatory actions from the unfortunate ship crews.

ADVENTURE SEED: THE EXPLORATION SCOUT CAMPAIGN

Two Imperial scout bases in the Marches run active extra-Imperial exploration operations. The Scout Base at Mirriam in the Five Sisters subsector runs the 12th EIE (Extra-Imperial Exploration) Detachment, which consists of three 1000 ton scout cruisers and three 200 ton exploration scouts as well as two scout/couriers for short-duration exploration missions. All are tasked for independent operations, with most of the EIE Detachment on exploration missions at any given time. Long-Missions generally use detached duty Scouts and even experienced non-Scout personnel to fill specialist roles.

The Detachment is tasked with exploration of worlds in the Foreven and Beyond Sectors to Spinward, although some Long-Missions have penetrated even further Spinward into the Far Frontiers Sector. The scope for exploration is vast, and the limited resources of the 12th EIE Detachment can do no more than scratch the surface of the vast number of systems stretching Spinward. But that is the daunting task of the Exploration Office, a task undertaken with glee by its hardy personnel.

The other major EIE Detachment in the Marches is located at the Scout Base orbiting Nasemin in the Aramis Subsector. With its focus pointed Coreward, the 8th EIE Detachment is tasked with exploration and survey of the Vargr dominated Gvurrdon Sector. Some of the Long-Missions have explored even further Coreward into the Knoellighz Sector, but operations are mainly confined to the Gvurrdon Sector. The detachment runs two 1000 ton scout cruisers, three 200 ton exploration scouts and four scout/couriers, all configured for long duration missions. Another possibility for Coreward exploration is a mission to observe or locate part of the route to the Core of the Milky Way, mapped by the Zhodani over the course of 5000 years.

A character group undertaking an exploration scout campaign should include at least one experienced Scout, and the campaign should be presented as chance to explore new worlds, aliens and interstellar civilizations beyond the imagination of citizens of the Third Imperium.