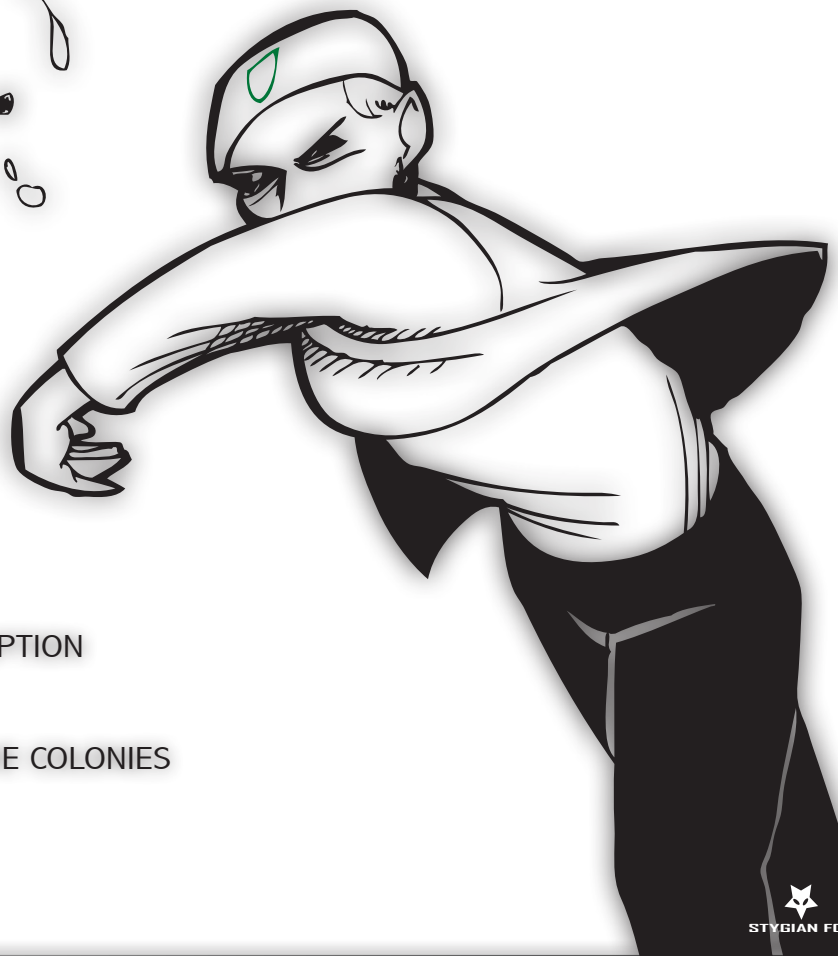
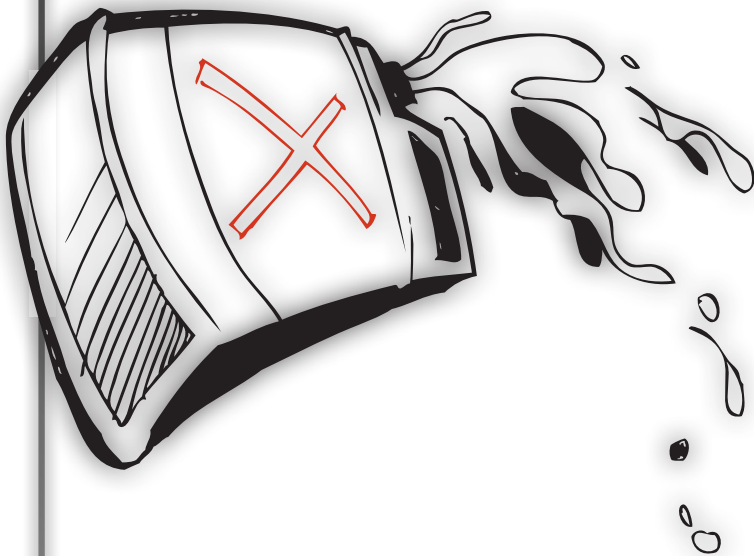


Q COLONIAL TIMES

THE JOURNAL FOR THE 2300AD SCI-FI ROLE-PLAYING GAME



DARK DAYS

INSURRECTION IN THE COLONIES

DE OPRESSO LIBER:
AMERICAN SPECIAL FORCES

A CURE FOR WESSEL SYNDROME?

PATRONS: GERD ROTH ON DUNKELHEIM

PURISM: CONTAINING EARTH'S ECO-CORRUPTION

SHOPPING SPREE: PURCHASING POWER

YOUR WORLD: NEWS FROM THE CORE & THE COLONIES



SPRING 2017

STYGIAN FOX

**LIBERTÉ
POUR
ELYSIA!**



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STYGIAN FOX

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SIGNALS FROM THE DEEP DARK

TOPICS BEING DISCUSSED ON FACEBOOK, G+, AND ELSEWHERE

FACEBOOK

The AI's Have It

The "Off Switch" Protocol

"You mean you built a multi-million dollar autonomous spy robot, equipped it with a nuke, and FORGOT to put an in off switch?" (or words to that effect - *Eve of Destruction*)

It is too much to hope that autonomous weapons will have a human in the loop at all times, but, in the future, all autonomous weapon systems (defined as weapons that make their own engage/safe decisions) MUST have an "off switch."

The nature of the off switch is up to the manufacturer, but it must be 100% effective.

Anything that disables the off switch must disable the weapon as well.

It must be possible to activate the off switch from outside the weapon's range.

The codes or signals must be securely stored at multiple locations - i.e. nearly impossible to lose.

What do you think?

I have a image making Black Magic M66, Eve of Destruction, Terminator N, and a host of other "Frankenstein" AIs movies very short...

Harry Spitz

Level Up

One of the things I have always wondered about the new 2300AD rules is why America shows as TL12.

I have been playing for years and I understand that America is no longer the worlds Superpower, but still it's a tier 2 nation so

shouldn't it be about equal to the others?

So what is everyone take on this?

Jeffrey Rockwood

GOOGLE+

An Expansive Outlook

Any chance for an Expanse sourcebook for 2300 for those of us who would like to play in that setting?

Bradley Clark

Edition Wars

I was wondering if anyone is planning to run 2300AD using the new 2ed Mongoose Traveller rule set..?

I don't have any other Traveller rules and I'm wondering if it will end up working out ok, or being broken. I am reading both core rule books at the moment.

Apparently a new 2300AD core rule book is in the works and will follow the new rules, but I don't see it on any release schedule.

Tony Durell



Q EDITORIAL

Out of nowhere this issue pops into existence. With commissions and releasing my own books I have been extremely busy and unfortunately had left no time to complete this issue. It's way overdue and I apologise for pushing the "irregular but charming schedule" statement in the copyright section of the Contents page to a ridiculous degree.

Apart from work getting in the way, I'm also making the transition from male to female (hence the name change). I won't apologise for that because I needed to be honest with myself. However, that's another reason this issue is massively delayed.

I have precious little time to devote to CT these days and would be more than happy to pass it on to a creative team who had the time and wanted to do it justice. Get in touch if that's you.

This issue deals with rebellion and insurrection. In our world we see old established democracies become more insular and right-wing, and once tyrannical, yet stable countries of the middle east be overthrown by a number of competing interests so it makes sense to use at least one issue to focus on how that translates into *2300AD*.

Traveller has its 'Hard Times', *Twilight*

2000 has a myriad of products dealing with disorder, but *2300AD* seems to forego these settings and focuses on the Core or stable frontier life. All the while having ripe settings ready to be used such as Elysia, Crater, and Novy Kyiv.

In this issue we'll detail a little on the philosophy of insurrection, a U.S. military unit tasked with putting out these fires that pop up from time to time, and we'll also add a few other articles to the mix.

Another reason this issue is delayed is the ending to the scenario featured in last issue. Sadly, that'll have to wait until Issue 8 or even 9.

If you have anything to add to the subjects in this issue, remember to look for us on Facebook and G+ where you'll find not only the creators of this issue but also other fans who would be eager to bounce ideas with you.

I cannot promise when the next issue will appear, or even if there will be one. That's down to you. I hope you can contribute and help to keep *Colonial Times* going.

With thanks.

Stephanie Josephine McAlea

Editor

DARK DAYS

INSURRECTION AND SUBJUGATION IN THE 24TH CENTURY



"It is impossible to predict the time and progress of revolution. It is governed by its own more or less mysterious laws."
Vladimir Lenin

Small scale insurrection is only possible as the state becomes big and unwieldy enough to be unable to counter it. The bigger the state apparatus, the harder it is for them to counter threats. Or, to quote a famous princess, "The more you tighten your grip, Tarkin, the more star systems will slip through your fingers."

While that may be true of truly huge bureaucracies such as the Galactic Empire or the Imperium in *Traveller*, the governments and it's rebellious citizens in *2300AD* have a different set of problems.

The governments in the early 24th century have, apart from a brief period during Twilight, a long history of collating data and using predictions from various models regarding civil unrest.

It's unlikely to have weathered the chaos and Twilight without being able to learn hard lessons from their national recovery. They have been in power a long time in terms of historical civilisations and are used to knowing what forms rebellions, what they look like, and how seemingly small actions can lead to the direst consequences. They have volumes of analysis. All aimed at keeping them in power and heading off any interruption of that power. On the other side, the insurrectionist, rebel, malcontent, whatever you wish to call them, are doing it all from a new perspective. They have learned only a few rudimentary lessons from past civil disorder and are complete novices when it comes to their fight. They may have the will, but the state has the experience and resources.

All is not lost for the rebel though. Take Elysia for example, Elysia's fight would have surely been for naught had 61 Ursae Majoris been closer, or had France not been undergoing turmoil at home. Instead they had the distance from the homeworld, alleged on site assistance

from other colonies, and a disgruntled population base willing to take the chance. Of course, the aftermath of revolution is always a little tricky...

Insurrection can still happen at home on Earth of course but would need to be a groundswell so large that politically it would become impossible or impractical to deny the wholesale change it would bring about. Sometimes, these seemingly small rebellions have large or rich sponsors in the shape of states or large organisations. It's hard to believe the Wehrmacht didn't jump at the opportunity to give those fighting for Flemish independence materiel, financial, and moral support during the tail end of the War of German Reunification.

Sometimes, the state apparatus sees revolution as the better of all available options. Letting a moderate and popular force remove the current govt is preferable than denying it, seeing it grow, and the violence escalate. In such occasions the state knows when to 'allow' change and when to stop it. The people seemingly getting what they want by changing the party in power is far better than denying them and eventually seeing civil revolt or even civil war that sweeps the whole country away.

On the colonies it is a different situation altogether. Many governors and leaders have to deal with the Real Politik on the ground knowing that support from the mother country can be sometimes weeks away. There is a lot more give and take in how colonies are run and many of those in government see this as a good thing. Many people move to the colonies to free themselves of the constant surveillance and monitoring (however benign) they are subjected to in the Core. Still, there are certain malcontents and defenders of the public wherever you go. They

rarely exist in true tyrannies as the govt snaps them up quickly, so more rebel movements exist in free societies but tend to rail against one or two facets of that society. Even in the comparatively free West you find 'Occupy', 'Anonymous', Jihadist movements, and far right movements.

Nothing, as far as a group's ethics go, is beyond the pale for the ardent revolutionary. Revolution isn't something you do, but rather something that sweeps you up and happens to you. Once you're in the midst of it your moral boundaries will change fast as you attempt to stay in control of what you do, or are told to do. Not everyone who pulls a trigger sending an enemy into a freshly dug grave wants to do it, planned to do it, or even, dislikes the enemy. They may do it to stay alive and out of fear of their commanders, some because they don't really see their enemy as human, and some do it because they have convinced themselves they are doing this heinous act so that they can report on their commanders later. It almost never happens, and soon that soldier may find themselves waist deep in blood and corpses, but they will tell themselves anything to justify what they do. It is sometimes the only way to stay sane. Years later, after the war, convicted or not, they may actually start to believe it. No cause or group, however twisted, are immune to this peculiar version of 'Stockholm Syndrome'

It may seem odd that a certain group of people would join Provolution but what if that started from a point of a local government disallowing vital communication software? If a non-Chinese colony needed translation software in a hi-tech system to trade with Manchu colonies but was disallowed their use because of unfair trade advantages, a group might start out as protesting against govt laws



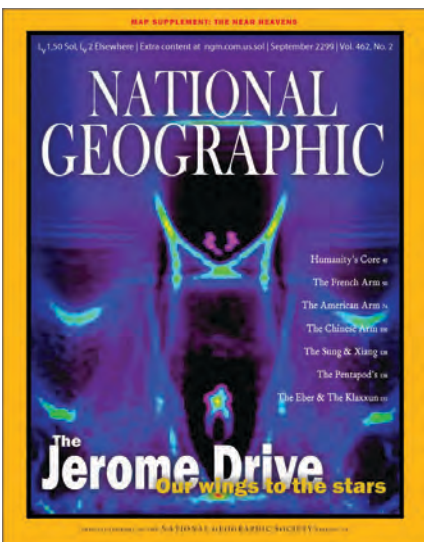


restricting trade. They may develop subtle ways to disguise their software. When the govt cracks down on the groups adherents the protest group may use the image of Manchu police cracking heads as justifying their need for arms. Or bombs. Or dangerous cyberwear. What started out as a complaint over translation software could develop into a fight for civil liberties and then to an underground war where one side is the state and defending the people from 'cyber-terrorists', and these 'cyber-terrorists' are defending themselves and fighting for freedom from a technophobic autocracy intent on controlling information. Its certainly not the case that Provolution would just walk up to a guy on the street and say "Hi, have you thought about joining Provolution and changing much of your meat for metal?" but many terrorist/resistance movements have started in the

middle of seemingly minor events.

In 2300AD there are a million ways that the authorities can track and prosecute a criminal in the Core. Predictive tracking, surveillance, DNA, instant fingerprint and olifactory analysis, and 3V crime scene modelling for example. On the fronteir though, things are different. A 3V virtual crime scene room is expensive for even the most wealthy of civic authorities and they need to rely on 'good old fashioned detective work' for three very important reasons.

1- Cost. Having a reliable police detective available for use is still a cost but it is less costly than having the cop and all the surveillance equip-



September's Issue Out Now!



ment. The cop is the very least you need as they'd still be the one going through the data from all the expensive instruments. The population of many colonies means that a lab with all the latest tech may not be used very often and so will be an uneconomical expense. Anyone who is rich and respectable enough to have a roving lab on a starship may find a lot of work on the colony worlds. It would be cheaper to hire a freelance team to do the work for a few days than to keep a team of your own on the payroll..

2- Personnel. Having more detectives in a team than would be in the Core is good for the community while wages are manageable. That officer is part of the community and is earning and paying taxes. An 'Earthworm' may say "We have machines to do that." a citizen of Beta Canum may say "Then what would that man do to support his family?"

The outlook in the colonies is necessarily more community based than in the Core. On some worlds, Aurore for example, a strong community might be the only thing that keeps the colony alive.

3- Justice. In the colonies, light years from the mother country, some lawmen need to act in the community's interests rather than the strict letter of the law. The fugitive caught in the Core will be sent away to a prison by a silent bureaucracy. Terrans and Tiranians accept this. Out on the frontier, people need to see justice be done. 'The Silent Authority' is not acceptable to people who want to escape the ever present machine that watches over them in the Core. They find the idea of a lawman they know and trust far more appealing and that, in itself, helps keep order. In Sky, on Aurore, they knew that TRP Sheriff Josie Nighthorse would give their boy a talking to and not jail time

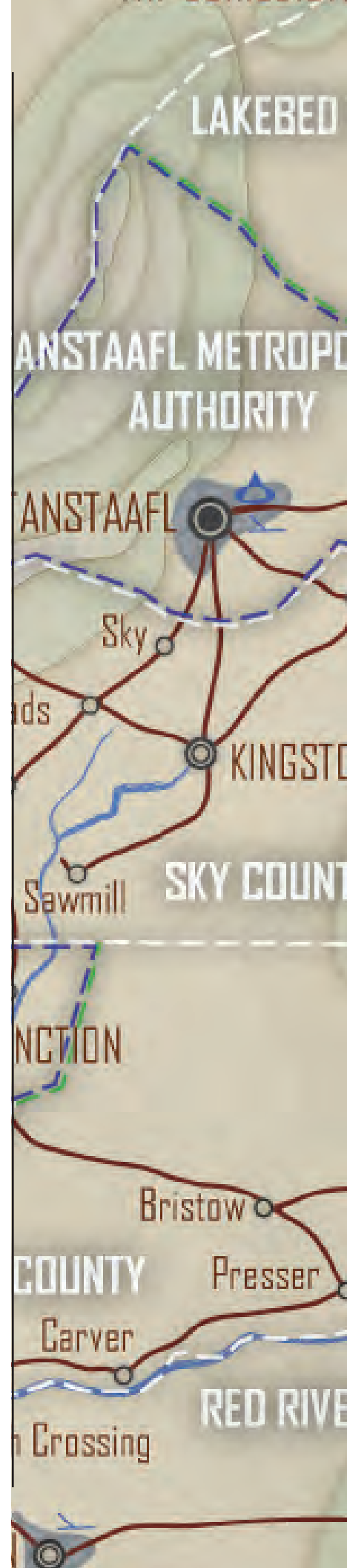
for 'rough-housing', a bit of a beating for robbery and then some small jail time, but would also lynch anyone who overstepped the wide mark she had laid down for the township. You could say she was 'tough but fair'. Whereas a new Sherrif from the Core might want to put their boy on a ship bound for a penal colony (wasting thousands of civic livre) for something that wouldn't be acceptable in the Core but on the frontier is marginally acceptable.

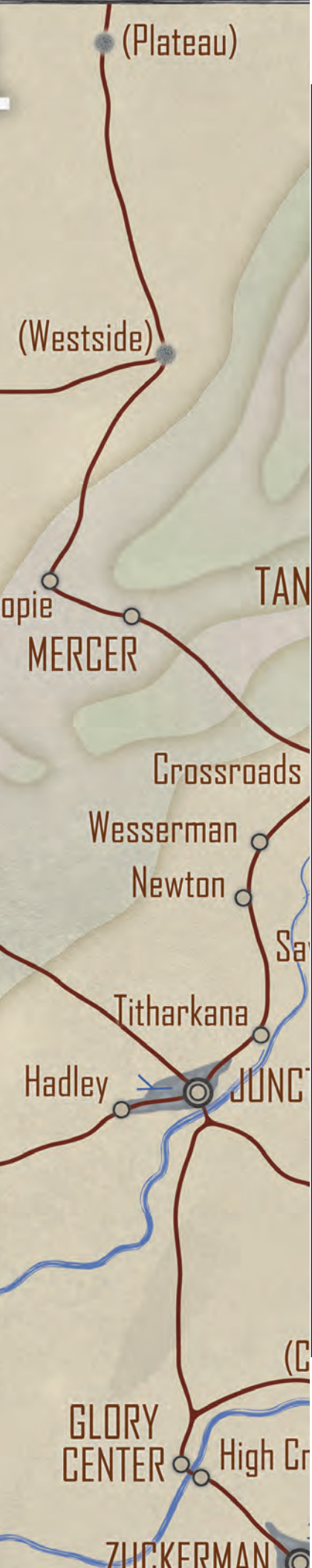
So all in all, conditions need to be pretty bad in a colony to get to a point of insurrection. While it might seem easier, numerically, to start a rebellion in a small colony, it would also be harder to win support in an area where everyone knows each other. It is in this environment that rebellions work in areas of income or cultural disparity (too little wealth or a recent influx of immigrants) and in usually medium sized populations relative to the colony. Small towns outside of the capital but not too far into the countryside are ideal.

Building a Rebellion

If there is one thing the tyrants of Rome knew, it was that they needed to keep the people fed and happy. 'Bread & Games' was the refrain. Tyrants courted public opinion because they knew that without the public at least content, they could rise up and stick their head on a pike if they had a mind to. There are, however, more than just a lack of food and entertainment that can cause the populace to rise up.

Take a look at the world where your games will be set. Are there any environmental pressures? Any resource shortages? Is the government fair or corrupt? or just inept? How recent is the neighbouring colony? Maybe they got a better spot on the planet than





where the locals are currently residing. Maybe they didnt but some local bully boy politician is stirring up trouble with stuff like “Them Azanians came here late. We even helped them here with a ship or two. Now they want the world for themselves! Now I hear that they expect to strike Tantalum! Are we gonna stand for that?”

If you want to take your players through a rebellion, with all its thrills, pathos, tragedy, and wisdom in the aftermath, then the rebellion and cause needs to be believable and to initially just be seen as a complaint.

For example, a downport engineering team from Planet A has been hired due to a shortage of local engineers on Planet B. Some local engineers are annoyed that they werent hired (for which there could be any number of reasons). Maybe the authorities sees them as “unionised trouble”, they could be ex-cons, or they could be less skilled. A vital tradeship from France arrives to deliver goods but needs repairs. The visiting team are given the best equipment so that the colony can keep their vital French traders happy. Pretty soon the disgruntled workers will form an action group;

“Why do these immigrants get the best tools to work on that French ship when we honest Planet B workers have to wait in line for those tools? Favouritism!” As the authorities wonder where this anger is coming from they release their response slowly (as government bureaucracies are wont to do). There may have been no malice in it, but bureaucracies can sometimes delay over consulting a focus group for ‘the right response’.

“This government contract is important to us. So we made a decision. There was no favouritism.” But in the bars and streets unemployed engineers see the visiting team

spending money, picking up local girls, and having fun while they worry about food for their families. Someone drunk throws a punch. A punch turns into a riot. the police are called, heads are hit, arrests made, and by the morning the 3v media is talking of “unrest on Heinrichstrasse”. As those disgruntled with other issues make their way to Heinrichstrasse to protest and join the ‘movement’ the original reason for the protests are lost. It now becomes something unmanageable and, worse still, something the government can’t relate to because it now comprises of multiple grievances. Most of the politicians will want to reason it out but as a groundswell action it may not have any leaders, or too many leaders, so they do the only thing any government seems to do when faced with ‘general’ unrest. It sends the police in.

At this point, certain individuals will join the movement and form a hierarchy. There may be violence as some members become disatisfied with just protesting. Video of police beating a grandma, or a kid, go viral. More people join, ordinary people, who are angry at police beatings (but seemingly blind to protestors throwing molotov cocktails).

A benign government may be faced with the prospect of wanting to appease the rioters so they look at the many demands not realising it’s already too late for many. They make concessions but soon realise they can’t please everyone. With overtime costing a fortune and police being understaffed they maybe faced with a police strike. A strong leader rises through local government on the promise of ending the troubles. This hardliner calls in the troops to quell disturbance. Once a civilian dies then the riots could one of two ways.

The government succeeds in the

crackdown. Troops are on the streets, interlink access is disrupted to stop groups organising, phones are monitored. Maybe the local TV news hour is critical so it is replaced by a govt sponsored channel. At this point, the situation becomes the responsibility of nations. Sanctions, intervention, diplomatic pressure, it could go any number of ways. Many colonies are susceptible to not only the whims of the parent world but also access to resources. A planet that cannot grow its own food will see its diplomatic bargaining power diminish quite quickly. Whether the parent nation would be held responsible is up for debate as all space faring nations will be aware of the limitations of interstellar travel and control. That won't stop the press that differs ideologically from stirring up trouble, mind you.

Another way it could go is the 'application' of state force could anger more of the population and provoke a wider backlash.

The moderate voices calling for change will be drowned out by those willing to shoot back. In less than a week life would change dramatically for the natives. Their bills would stop being paid as banks move off world, their credit cards wont work in ATMs, people will raid stores for cash and supplies. In a fortnight, the power will go off, maybe it's been attacked by one side or the other, or the staff have fled because of fear or lack of pay. Almost any city can be rendered unsafe after 2 weeks of nthing working. One side or the other may even use resources as weapons. That water truck is giving out water to all those who live in that rebel held district, for example. "I heard that the power is still on and that the Red Cross are delivering food to all those who live behind the Govt lines."

The 'ordinary people' will tell themselves



THE 'HISTORY TRAIN' RIDE AT THE HALCYON WORLD AMUSEMENT PARK IN SARREBRUCK STANDS STILL AFTER GERMAN BOMBARDMENT

Mr. Diller

mrkud.com



that they'd like to vote out the government but its difficult because they have the system rigged, or it takes too long, or they can't be trusted but at this point, any thoughts of political change are a fairy tale. Your vote now seems ambiguous, but the rifle in your hand is real.

Forward two years, those same people are now carrying SG-77s and firing at government soldiers in ruined Heinrichstrasse. Many are unsure of how they got there. They wanted a change in government but were somehow left with the rifle as the only option. They can't leave now because they'd be letting their squad down. Yet some people throw off their uniform and become refugees. Some begin to enjoy their work and see their enemy as 'cockroaches'. When bullets are firing over their heads, precious few ask "how did it come to this?" It now becomes "THEY destroyed our world. We must kill them."

Old men who have garnered support on both sides now begin to sit back and become warlords in the truer sense and begin to flex their political muscles. Some might be ok with being the public face of their side in the conflict (forgetting about war crime tribunals afterwards because they, and those they keep around them, are convinced they are right in all that they do.), some might go underground and further prosecute the war personally (though this is rare), and others still move into the moneyed sector such as black markets and war profiteering so they can feather their nest for when the war is over. Old men dreaming ignorant dreams.

Some of the rebels (for that is what they now are) have finally discovered what they are good at. Killing others. Some will forget they did anything else. Many will have their souls forever tainted by this, and some will revel in killing.

Existing in the Grey Twilight

Whichever side your PCs are on, you'll need to decide how they interact with the conflict. Does the situation they've stepped into look already lost to them? Do they think the government is hard done by and misunderstood? Are the rebels naive idealists? or do they have a point? All these questions need to be answered but first we need to decide when on the timeline of this revolution that they become involved.

One option is to bring in a little vignette to an earlier scenario and then let the players come back to it later once all hell has broken loose. For example, the players fulfill a mission for a local mining foreman on Crater. He wishes them to take certain documents to a respectable media company on Earth. These documents detail the abuses that the local Colonial Constabulary have forced upon the miners. Bribes, beatings, and other such injuries. The foreman in question tried to send the documents to London before but they were sent electronically and intercepted in orbit on their way to the message relay system.

He was beaten within an inch of his life and now, 6 months later, he walks with a limp and has been fired. The PCs, perhaps stopping to discharge their drives, encounter him in a bar as he drinks his sorrows away. At the moment, there is only protests, some subtle, non-dangerous, sabotage, and a general shunning of the constabulary. The mining union has stumped up a modest sum to get the documents to a law firm in London.

The players make it off world with some minor trouble such as rousting by the constables, papers not being properly filed, and delaying tactics but if the PCs get off world and back to Earth they can consider their job done. Until next time. As the referee you may want to play a few scenarios in the interim, and eventually,

REBELLION CHECKLIST & THE WHO, WHAT, WHY, AND WHERE OF CIVIL WAR

Player Characters

Conflict Name_____ Location_____

UWP _____ Law Level _____

Governing Authority_____

Government Notes_____

Flashpoints _____

Causes of Unrest

Adversaries of the Authorities

Group Name Political/Armed? Member No. Cause _____

Incidents & Vignettes

Pro-Government Bodies & Militia

Group Name Political/Armed? Member No. Cause _____

Warfare Style

Recurring Villains

Recurring Villains

Government

Faction Emblems

ASSASSIN

SEASON 6 JJ-04

they return to Crater to see massive protests and strikes in response to the law firm starting proceedings against the mining company and the constabulary.

Their reasons for rioting and protesting could be varied. Maybe the law firm caved in to corporate pressure, maybe the case was thrown out by a crooked judge (or even worse, an honest one), or maybe it's just been going on too long and the miners and their families can wait no longer as they are forced to pay 'civic policing tax' (extortion money) to the local coppers.

In the chaos of police charges with sonic pistols, puke sticks, and stun batons, their previous contact (the local foreman) and his union buddies flout their own strike as a favour to the PCs and re-fuel their ship to get them off-world and out of danger. The next time they meet the entire city or world could be at war. Maybe they get a message saying that their contact has been killed and can they get his family off world. They could be hired by the government or the 'Miners Militia' as combatants, or just be caught on the world unable to leave.

As a referee, let them know how friendly their contact is (so they feel emotionally invested), how much the streets and infrastructure has degraded since they were last there, but more importantly, let them know that their friends from previous visits (whichever side they're on) have done some terrible things. All in the name of the cause.

The moral certainty exhibited by either side has now become a strange and murky grey twilight where everyone has blood on their hands. Whether the PCs choose to join them in that is a question for your players and should reflect, in hard choices, the detail you put into your games.

'Been Away Too Long'

The scientist Jared Diamond coined the phrase '*Landscape Amnesia*'. It describes the effect of not noticing changes in your own environment because they are slow moving but consistent. A woman living in a town surrounded by hills with woods on them may not notice that those woods gradually disappear over twenty years as they are logged, but when a relative visits from out of town they notice it immediately. The last time the relative was there the hills were covered in trees, now only patches remain.

The resident simply never saw the abrupt change in environment because she lived it everyday. Many soldiers fighting in a desperate war often act in the same way. Some choose not to remember what their homeland was like before the war due to regret or sadness, or fear of distraction, but others have just blocked it out. In this manner, the locals may be fighting and that's all they've done for a couple of years, seeing the same bullet holes in the walls, the same empty and destroyed tanks on the high street, the same blown up bridge they can't use, and they may never walk down 'that' street anymore for fear of snipers, but when the PCs arrive they will be shocked at how much has been destroyed. Point out that cafe, which was vibrant and enjoyable on an earlier visit, is now almost unrecognisable as a burnt out shell. In fact, the building itself may be ruins. Also, the better you roleplay the NPCs on an earlier visit, that cute girl or guy who worked at the cafe, the friendly policeman who gave you directions, then the more impact it will have when your NPC tells the players "Oh her? She died when they bombed the square." or "The policeman? that cockroach was informing on us so he went the way of all traitors."

Moods and Themes

This entirely depends on what game you want to run. Is your O23U a place of two



fisted adventure like *Firefly*? or is it a realistic and serious portrayal of war like BBC's *Warriors*? Mood and pathos needs to be judged carefully when discussing these of war and death. We've all seen the tragic images from parts of the world struck by civil war and a feeling of pathos and tragedy brought forward in your players might be rewarding in terms of role-playing, but it can be a pretty draining experience. One of the most rewarding roleplaying experiences I had was as a French war photographer in a *Twilight: 2000* campaign. There was less combat and more problem solving. That meant that when the violence occurred it was more bloody and sudden because we didn't see much of it.

Likewise, pushing violence and warfare on your players in the middle of a civil war will either make them immune or will wear them out.

The PC game 'This War of Mine' makes use of day and night cycles to ease or push up the tension. It's a game that isn't about soldiers in a war at all, but rather about the

civilians faced with terrible decisions, and possibly losing their humanity, all in an effort to survive.

It's a great game but you can't play more than an hour at a time. It's not for the faint hearted. If you are like me and enjoy the serious side of roleplaying then be aware of your players during the game. That image you describe of a dead civilian casualty being crushed by APC tracks might be just too much for someone who just wanted a good time. You shouldn't shy away from harrowing truths, just don't make your game full of them.

A Rebellion Checklist

So, now that you've given it some thought, what is the most obvious cause for the rebellion? Who are the main players? Are they organised or just protesting as a rabble? Take a look at the sheet on p.13. Try to fill in the sections as shown and it will help give some consistency to the political and military elements you've made.



CAN
YOU
FILL
THIS
SPACE?

THEN
COLONIAL
TIMES
NEEDS
YOU!

WE
NEED
ART
AND
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SEE
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The Authority's Reaction

"The only thing that saves us from the bureaucracy is inefficiency. An efficient bureaucracy is the greatest threat to liberty." ~ Eugene McCarthy

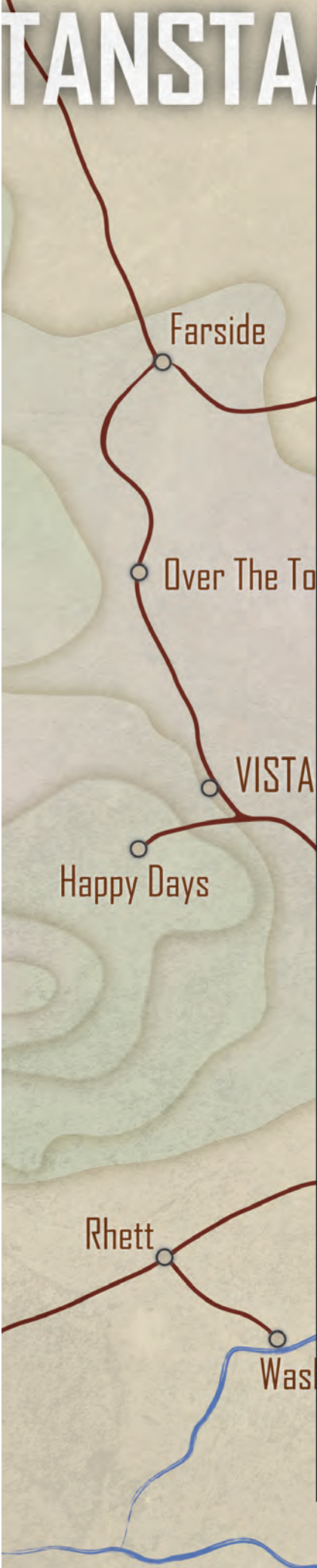
At first the Authority will seem clumsy, inept, and uncaring. They will try to understand the rebels demands but cries from their own ministers, police, and concerned citizens will demand action. At this early stage the Authority doesn't really understand the situation (providing it hasn't made any outre moves to start it such as prohibiting a section of the community from working or from benefits). It's ministers will aghast at the rioting on the street and start to be polarised but not into anti or pro-demonstrators but into pro-clampdown and almost fanatical ambivalence. Bureaucracies filled with almost tenured workers and representatives will distance themselves and leave the decision making to others for fear of making the wrong decision, or a decision that will seem 'out-of-step' with the rest of the Authority. The 'hawks' will point to the damage the rioters cause (and maybe the life lost) and their prejudice, emotional distance, or desire for power will push them to send in the riot police. The media will assist in the view that the rioters are out of control because it makes ratings and raises profiles.

After the initial police action there will be calls of 'heavy handedness' by the police but the police don't really have much of an 'out' on that. If they were peaceful and helpful they would still face the ire of the crowds as they are seen as the face of the Authority. While some officers will enjoy the chance to 'crack a few heads', the vast majority just want to go home and stop having bricks thrown at them. They have no more desire to smash a

20yr olds teeth in than you do but when 'in conflict' the human defence instinct takes over and both sides can do amazingly stupid, and brave, things. When the rioters at the front start to see the full response of the police, many will be shocked and sometimes cynical about it. At many civil events such as protests and demonstrations (and I've been on a few), there will usually be an element of the crowd that want to push a separate, more violent agenda, or are even there just to cause trouble. They will hang at the back of the centre of the crowd and start the missile throwing. Rocks and stones from smashed paving slabs, bottles (sometimes filled with anything from urine to petrol), and very rarely, more dangerous projectiles.

It won't matter what the greater cause is, it would need to be something truly monumental to get the public onside, but the reports on the media the next day will speak of 'trouble making elements' but they will make sure the public just remember the damage and/or loss of life, replayed over and over on a 24hr news cycle. The actual participants of the demonstration won't recognise the reports in the media. they went to a demonstration which was good humoured until the police baton charged the protestors. Most of the honest protestors will go home to relieve the babysitter or because they have work in the morning, or because their bus is leaving. The demonstration-now-riot will continue into the night with police filling the streets.

Government will be pressured by the media on their reaction to the crisis and the government will react as quickly as it can (holding crisis meetings over days while looking for the right response) and reasonably tolerant governments will look for political solutions and a minister or two may have to 'fall on their swords'. Non-tolerant governments like Manchuria or the Incan Republic may start rounding up dissidents and restricting media outlets and social media platforms to restrict the abilities of those who are protesting to organise.



This may work in the short term but people usually find a way around it in the Core and it will draw criticism from other nations (often giving them the excuse to sanction or work against the foreign regime for their own interests) but on the frontier things are a lot less high tech. Unable to restrict radio broadcasts significantly, some authorities may choose to try and override the rebel message with their own government message all the while trying to hunt down the pirate radio stations that crop up.

If the Authority can put a face to a leader then they will first attempt to find them and arrest them. They will try a quiet arrest so as not to draw attention. If the leaders are willing to cooperate then, even at that point, a deal might be struck. It may encourage splinter groups from the main opposition to arise, splinter groups not pleased with 'collaboration' with the Authority, but from the Auout the weapons are doing so to consolidate their own power as much as 'fighting back' and are doing so because they want the fighter to do something for them. For the fighter, it's an empowering thing, especially when you may have felt powerless in the face of depradations or deprivation. A leader of a household (male or female) may feel ashamed that they have been unable to feed or protect their family due to the Authority's actions. Along comes someone who says "Fight back, for your family" and the bargain is struck.

If we look again at your site for rebellion, what is the law level? Are guns highly restricted like in Tier One nations? or is it a colony like Aurore or a nation like Switzerland where a rifle is a good idea or sometimes mandated?

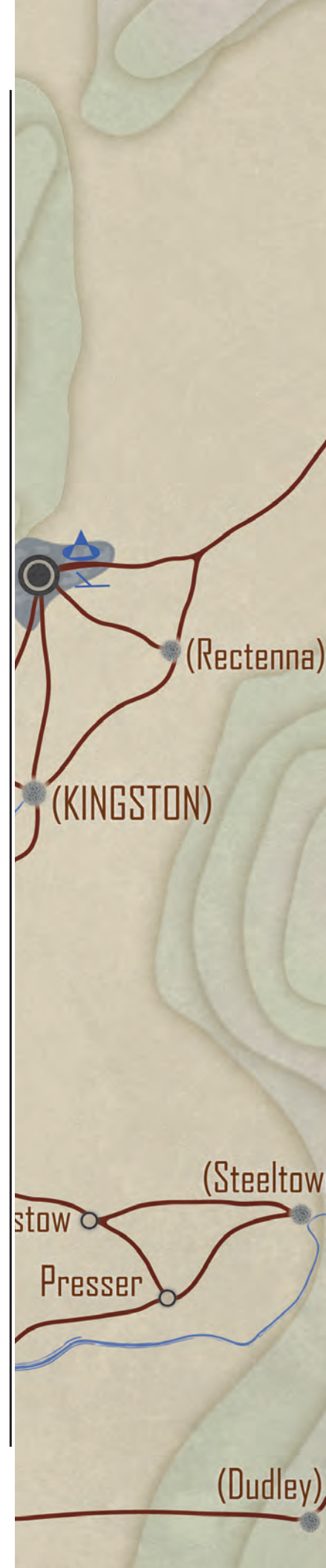
In 'gun light' nations rebellions usually take the form of propaganda campaigns, protests, then rioting. If the overwhelmingly superior firepower of the state has not been brought into play and not scared

the rebels off, then they may form a few groups based along ethical or ideological lines. Some will become political activists (which may or may not be banned by the state), and a smaller proportion may resort to either smuggled weapons or home made explosives (which are most assuredly are illegal).

Violent campaigns and their direction

When people are seemingly forced into violent acts it's usually an act of desperation by the foot soldiers and an act of manipulation by the commanders. A good commander using untrained troops nows to place his soldiers in a situation where they are defending themselves and their friends. To be sure of victory, only leaders with trained or experienced troops can rely on them to be proactive in engagements. In other words, when defending you have no choice but to shoot. When attacking, you do. Good rebel leaders will only send experienced foot soldiers into an enagement to start a firefight. Inexperienced foot soldiers usually find that, through the Authority's actions, the fight comes to them.

For smaller groups or those without much in the way of firearms, bombs may be used to intimidate local targets. This may change to assassinating local targets (police, soldiers, outspoken politicians) if the Authority is particular brutal in it's clampdown or if killing a target (sometimes accidentally) gains significant support from the population, unrest from the population that supports the Authority, or if the media give a lot of coverage. Even at this stage a deal may be struck in secret. Providing the rebels are not intending mass death or assassinations but merely intimidation and materiel damage then a warning may be given (the provisional IRA did this on a number of occasions).



NOT ALL REBELLIONS INVOLVE WEAPONS OF WAR



In the long term, bombs won't work unless it is accompanied by armed insurrection or a political reversal in the Authority. People get tired of living in a threat theatre and even if it takes a century, change will come leading to a partial victory for one side or the other. It's a human trait to let feuds die out when enough blood has been shed and time has passed. In time, either initial brute force or gradual 'hearts and minds' tend to win out. It's the mishandling of problems leading to the perpetuation of anger that leads to violence persisting.

From a player point of view, the initial protests and riots are exciting, as is the street violence and civil war that follows, but the preamble and the long drawn out contest of ideologies doesn't make for good roleplaying sessions. Political intrigue is all well and good but RPGs are confrontational stories by nature. Action makes good games while interpersonal political dramas take much more work. Now that we have our sides in the war, our causes, and a willingness to involve the players, it's time to look at what makes civil war sessions different from normal 2300AD sessions.

The Scene On The Ground

At this point it's safe to assume that the war has been progressing for some months without clear resolution. Protests and marches don't really need much tweaking from the 2300AD point of view.

When the players have previously met the players, and presumably given them numerous opportunities to get involved with the protests, they'll know who to talk to once they return to the troubled land. This will be pretty much the same for whoever they decide to interact with, be it the Authority or any one of the rebel factions.

-- There will be much physical damage to the infrastructure. In a 'Black War'

(a state of war where neither side has the power to launch a major, status quo breaking, offensive and where denying your adversary resources is as important as killing them) the water, power, gas, lights, may all be off. Medical centres will be targets, and civilians are just "unarmed combatants" so the buildings, facilities and utilities are all showing signs of damage. they are unlikely to have fallen unless one side alone has access to artillery, ortillery, or air power. If an Authority does have access to this and uses them in civilian areas, they can expect for them to be reasonably ineffectual in strategy terms and disastrous in diplomatic circles. A neighbouring Authority faced with refugees flooding over the border or an adversarial Authority seeking to score points in an election year will make capital of such actions.

-- 'The dead are among us'. The effect on those they once knew as peaceful protestors will be profound. The Authority will have previously helpful officers who are now completely ambivalent to civilian deaths. there are very few true psychopaths out in the open as they would have probably been killed in action or by suicide and assassination. There will be dead civilians within a very short distance of your PCs base of operations. Some soldiers will shield themselves from the horror and torment by cracking off-colour jokes or not even seeing them at all. Although most will look and keep the sadness until a time when they can let it out safely, some will develop a kind of 'Anti-Quixotism' where the horrors in their mind become more mundane.

-- Those you once knew will be markedly different people. They will be used to shooting people, planting bombs, and generally not ducking as bullets whizz overhead. Some may even resent your naivety of war.





-- It's quiet most of the time. Battles are rare and it's often just people picking each off at a distance. Snipers are the biggest threat and anyone who is a gung-ho hero (with the exception Mad Jack Churchill) will have been killed due to their idiocy a long time ago.

-- Mental Illness is everywhere but nobody seems to mind. That person who is coiled up in a ball near your sniping spot? move him out of the way. Or stab him in case he gives away your position.

-- Grab sleep, food, and ammo where and when you can.

Vignettes

Here are some small visual imagery segments to use on your players. Be advised that you really need to assess what game you want to play. Remember your player's sensibilities as some may find the following content upsetting or too serious in nature.

1- Your group investigate a fire started a short distance away in a light residential area. It is now a smoking ruin and inside are the corpses of several local women. One side was using this abandoned housing complex as a rape camp. In order to conceal their crime, they torched it when they were finished. A group of mothers and/or husbands from the area may be seen out on the streets looking for their loved ones, risking snipers to bring their women home.

2- A sniper takes out an NPC in your party. He is lying just out of reach holding his chest and reaching for help. Do the PCs risk being shot and run out to reach their friend? Here the Referee should be merciless. If they get killed, they get killed. It's a valuable lesson on how lethal snipers are. When they finally reach the sniper (who

did not relocate for some reason) they find him to be a 14yr old boy who is very frightened. They PCs may kill him or take pity on him and imprison him but he will not hesitate killing another PC if it means he can get away.

3- A young boy who is playful and smiling keeps coming to your camp and trying to steal tools or food to eat or sell on the black market. he's no real trouble and the soldiers and PCs almost take him on as a mascot. One day, while reaching through the fence with a wink in his eye and trying to reach a chocolate bar, a new soldier wraps his knuckles (or more likely breaks a couple of fingers) by hitting his hand as he reaches in with a wrench. the young lad stops coming back to your dug out/base. A few patrols later and he is seen floating face down in the river/pond/crater.

4-- Your vehicle breaks down in the wrong neighbourhood. The part you need is damaged beyond repair and you face the prospect of having to run 8 miles to be clear of danger. Just as you start to get your kit out of the vehicle a local, who would ordinarily be your enemy, comes out of his home with the part you need, all nicely oiled and ready. He could have it by luck, he may have owned a garage before 'the troubles', he may have killed a previous group and stole it. either way, he's asking for nothing and gives it freely. Do the PCs search his house and take his possessions? or do they thank their lucky stars and make good their escape? The old man may have been just being kind or he may have given them the part because he doesn't want a firefight outside his house...

5-- You and your team take up a position ready to assault an enemy convoy. Much to your surprise, another team has set up only yards away from you. Are they friends with a command structure that doesn't talk to others? Adversaries? If

they're enemies, you need to withdraw or take them out without tipping off the approaching convoy.

6-- In the middle of a firefight you see a Red Cross ambulance that is pinned down by crossfire. Some fighters from both sides are even shooting at the ambulance and it's staff in an attempt to either get the meds on board or to kill the injured commander being taken to a med centre. Do you try and convince your commander to order a ceasefire, knowing that the enemy will use it as an opportunity to withdraw? Or do you continue fighting?

War between communities is nothing short of brutal, savage, and tragic. Civilians with a grudge neither have the training nor the restraint to be that honourable or forgiving

in stressful circumstances. The Referee can run an insurrection campaign one of two ways, four colour action, sans moral quandry. Or he can add realism with all the heartache and despair that entails. The Referee really needs to gauge his players because it can be a dark road to go for realism. One option is to make the PCs Peacekeepers. That way they have R&R and can pursue other, lighter, missions (and the players may need that break from the heavy realism).

I've found that with a realistic approach it's best not to paint the good guys as totally good and the bad guys as totally bad. Also, add some humour to lighten the mood when needed.

M.TALER'S ART FOR THE UKRAINIAN RECRUITMENT POSTER 'IN DEFENCE OF NOVY KYIV'



THE PRO-MAOIST 'RED SKULL' LEAVE THEIR MARK ON A WALL IN A DISTRICT OF HAERBIN



References

'Warriors', BBC, 1999

A drama serial set in the Balkan War and following the lives of a British Warrior AFV crew and their translator.

'Savior', Lions Gate, 1998

A film set in Bosnia following a grieving American soldier who joins the Legion Etranger, then becomes a mercenary in order to kill Muslims. Dennis Quaid's best film in my view.

'The Death of Yugoslavia', BBC, 1995

A harrowing documentary on the break up and civil war in former Yugoslavia. Perfectly exemplifying how confusing civil war can be, it was so instrumental that parts of the film were used in the war crimes trials.

One more thing I've found is that PCs are generally better behaved than most combatants, civilians, or even Peacekeepers. The idea of making a quick Livre during so much depravation may be an anathema to most PCs but others shouldn't be held back by such morals. The dire need to feed your family trumps any morals you may have when you're in a warzone long enough.

Another, beneficial feeling for your players is when they kill that warlord, save that village finally, make that road safe, move the children from orphanage now being used as an AA emplacement, the feeling of accomplishment is profound and the Referee should reward handsomely those players who stuck to their moral guns. Not with cash or goods, but with honourable mentions in any reconciliation committees after the war.

It's entirely fair that any PC involved in a civil war, for whatever side, should take home as many benefits as scars (both physical and mental) and whichever side

eventually wins, the truth and reconciliation committee will still call them to witness or account. Their actions will matter and if they've been honourable that will help them during the following inquests.

When standing for possible war crimes you may be in a cubicle of twenty militia looking at a death sentence when one of their victims sees you and shouts across the court room "Oh no, not him. He was one of the good ones."



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THE WAR FOR OUR DIMENSION CONTINUES!

MARCH 12TH ON ALL MAJOR WORLDS FROM BINARY FICTION

"THE MASTER OF SCI-FANTASY!" ARIANNE SHUE - 'THE GLAIVE'



DE OPRESSO LIBER

THE AMERICAN ARMY SPECIAL FORCES

BY CARL HICKS JR.

Or, Improve, Adapt, Overcome: The Men, the Myths, the Mission of Special Forces

1830 hrs. 16 March 2297; Camino Estado 3, Estado de Guatemala, Mexico, Earth.

Dusk comes early to the jungle. It seems that no matter how high on the mountain you are, the trees seem to reach out and snuff out the sun's light and the day gives way to darkness, to fear, to death, to evil...

At least, that's how it seemed to Soldado Primero Jorge Castillo, Ejercito Mexicano as he stood his guard post on State Route 3 of Mexico's State of Guatemala's Rio Chixoy O Negro valley. The day's heat didn't dissipate with the dusk as it did back home in Sonora; it remained sticky and humid with trickles of sweat passing down the back of his neck and into his fatigues. The closed-in lines of sight, the sticky heat, the incessant bugs and surly populace didn't make duty in this green hell any easier than the iron discipline of Sargento Primero Ramirez, his company's senior sergeant. The life of a conscript is never easy...

The mud of the overgrown roadside gully soaked through the already-sodden fatigues of Michaela Donlon. Slowly, slowly

she slid forward, her head canted low, eyes up. These troops might be botas [boots, or conscripts], but sensors can't be fooled and you had to respect them. As the sun's light was extinguished and the Mexican soldier looked up longingly at the top of the tree canopy, there was a sharp chuff-chuff sound as two rounds from Sergeant Silva's Mk-23 pneumatic dart rifle put two rounds into the head of his guy's partner, and Staff Sergeant Donlon, American Special Forces, quickly rose up on one knee, her ceramic knife's monofilament edge almost flashing in the dying light as it struck the Mexican's throat...

The local Mayan leaders wanted a direct action to prove that America supported their desire to free themselves from the Mexican junta's grip. This was a beginning; cutting off this road block would allow several hour's worth of supplies for the guerrillas to disguise themselves as a normal goods convoy. Those 'goods' would be distributed into jungle camps in the hills within two days. Already some of the nascent guerrillas Donlon's team were training were referring to the yanquis as 'wach tsu'u'uts'iks', the 'smoke soldiers', who came with the mist and left nothing but rumors and fear in their wake.

Disclaimer and author's notes

This article has been formulated solely through open-source materials and my own recollections as a soldier attached to a Special Forces Group in the 1980s. I wish to clearly state that I am not, nor ever have been, a 'tabbed' member of Army Special Forces or any of its associations. No past or current Special Forces or Operations personnel [officer, enlisted or civilian] have contributed in any way to this article's content. No current or past operational details, motives or methods are revealed or implied save in the case of open-source documents.

Certain aspects of military subculture have been changed from modern usage to reflect the 300 years between now and the American military of 2300. Aspects of culture that my fellow American veterans might think of as set in stone can change very quickly, as we have seen this last decade of warfare. Needless to say a veteran of 1775 [just 239 years ago at the time of this writing] would scarcely recognize the Army of today, so it seems reasonable that drastic changes will happen be-

tween today and our projected future.

To avoid confusion, I will to refer to the modern United States military as 'United States [x]' or 'US [y]', and to their 2300AD counterparts as 'America [x]' or 'American [y]'.

The US Army Special Forces. The Green Berets. These words have left a lasting impression on the imagination of the public through movies, music and novels. Often, however, those impressions are entirely the wrong ones. This article seeks to dispel those myths, inform players and referees about the truths, and project those truths into America's politico-military situation in 2300 AD.

INTRODUCTION:

When one hears the phrase 'US Green Berets', one tends to think of the film image of a filthy bare chested man wearing a headband, fatigue trousers, combat boots, and web equipment. He's knee-deep in the swamps of a Third World nation somewhere and carrying either a machine gun or a K-Bar knife,

and is usually getting ready to unleash his highly trained combat skills upon some unsuspecting [yet clearly evil] bad guy. The alternate version is the drunken, tightly-wound, highly dangerous PTSD survivor who has a hard time living with The Things He's Seen And Done. As with most stereotypes, under the thick layer of nonsense is a minuscule kernel of truth.

THE MISSION:

Special Forces are designed to be a 'force multiplier' for the American military. They do this by integrating itself into foreign nations and cultures, using dissident factions and aspects of culture to create [or combat] insurgent movements. By speaking the language and knowing the cultures of target nations, a Special Forces unit can train a client military and easily multiply the commitment of assets by America. Prop-



erly supported, one Special Forces A team [12-15 troops] can train a battalion of client soldiers, creating a force very capable of fighting [or resisting] a guerrilla war on a provincial scale. The average number of troops in an infantry battalion is 700. Thus by committing 15 Special Forces operators, America can benefit by a 50-fold increase over its investment of personnel, supplies, and weapons when one factors in both the American assets used to support an insurgent movement and the assets expended by the target regime to combat said movement.

The following are the specific listed roles and missions of Army Special Forces:

- * *Unconventional warfare [guerrilla warfare]*
- * *Foreign Internal Defense (FID) [defense against guerrilla movements]*
- * *Special Reconnaissance [putting eyes on the subject of interest]*
- * *Direct Action [direct assault missions]*
- * *Counter-Terrorism [both in security arrangements and in CT incident response]*
- * *Counter-Proliferation [preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction]*
- * *Information Operations [propaganda and counter-propaganda]*

SPECIAL FORCES INSIGNIA

"I am a Special Forces operator, mister. A green beret is just a frakkin' hat. But was I you, I wouldn't wear one around here. So no, I don't want to dance..." --Staff Sergeant [SSG] Micheala Donlon, to a bar patron in Fayetteville NC, 2315 hrs. 22 JUN 2298

The Green Beret has a long mystique in the American mind and, to a lesser extent, to

observers worldwide. Units throughout the world have issued green beret-style headgear to elite units. For example, France's famed Foreign Legion uses a green beret with their fatigue uniform; Britain's Royal Marine Commandos also wear the green beret as does Germany's new LkGfPzGren 'Drachenzahn' Brigade.

By American Army Regulations, anyone assigned to a Special Forces Group may, whether Special Forces qualified or not, wear the group flash on the issue green beret. The headgear is unique to Special Forces units in the same fashion as the black beret is unique to the Ranger Battalions of the 75th Infantry Regiment and the scarlet beret is unique to the soldiers of the American Army's 82nd and 101st Airborne Assault Divisions.

The Special Forces Qualification Tab is an arch of black metal bordered in silver with the legend

'SPECIAL FORCES' also in silver. A soldier who displays this badge is Special Forces Qualified.

The Special Forces Branch Insignia is silver metal and enamel device 3 cm in height consisting of a pair of silver arrows in saltire, points up and surmounted at their junction by a silver dagger with black handle point up; all over and between a black motto scroll arcing to base and inscribed "DE OPPRESSO LIBER" in silver letters. This badge is authorized for wear by those soldiers whose branch of service has been changed to Special Operations AND who are Special Forces qualified. Such a soldier is termed 'an operator'.



GETTING THE TAB, PART ONE

Physical Readiness Test

"Alright candy-asses! Grab your socks and get on the block! Go, go, go!"

--SSG Michaela Donlon, A&S Cadre, after tossing a flash-bang grenade into a barracks of candidates at 0310 hrs 24 OCT 2298 as they begin Selection, Ft. Bragg, NC

** swim 50m in boots and fatigue uniform*

** pass the Armed Forces Annual Medical Assessment Physical Examination*

** must have 20/20 vision or correctable to 20/20 vision in both near and far distances*

The following are the basic requirements to apply for American Army Special Forces training as of 01JAN 2300:

[note: physical requirements listed below are minimum qualifications for entry and assessed at Earth Standard atmosphere and 1 G gravity]

** be a citizen of America, it's colonies or territories*

** be a high school graduate; two years college is preferred*

** be eligible for a SECRET security clearance*

** score above 105 on the American Armed Forces Individual Assessment Test*

** must be Infantry branch or meet the qualifications to change branch to Infantry*

** must be in their second or greater enlistment*

** must be Airborne Assault qualified*

** possess no cybernetic /biological /mechanical prosthesis*

** possess no DNAM that precludes returning to Earth via OQC*

** achieve a minimum score of 70 [officers 80] in the annual American Armed Forces*

Applicants who pass these basic entry requirements undergo a Special Background Investigation by both the Department of Justice and the National Intelligence Agency. A previous criminal history is not necessarily a bar to entry into Special Forces provided the candidate is completely forthcoming in the SBI questionnaire, however some crimes [violent felonies, illegal drug trafficking, etc.] are. Candidate's with outstanding felony warrants for arrest are turned over to the concerned jurisdiction. NIA tends to more pay attention to security threats such as close relatives in antagonist countries, a history of indebtedness, addiction, or gambling etc.

Applicants who pass the SBI portion of the process are issued orders to the Special Forces Assessment and Selection Phase at Fort Bragg, NC, and, upon arrival, become 'candidates'. When they arrive all prospective Special Forces soldiers, regardless of rank, are issued old, used fatigues without rank insignia and are referred to by the 'A&S cadre' as 'candidate'. Special Forces has historically observed that a great many people look good 'on paper' but lack the determination, teamwork, initiative, or drive to be special operators. The purpose of SFAS is to weed out the 'ticket-punchers' and select only those who possess the qualities needed not only to complete the very expensive training required to be Special Forces, but also the ability to work well in high stress environments as a team-

member and -leader.

Candidates are also informed that they may resign their candidate status at any time. Should they do so, they leave the SFAS encampment immediately and return to Fort Bragg, where they are deposited into Transient Officer or NCO Quarters and are designated for reassignment.

SFAS consists of two phases, 'Preparation and Conditioning' and 'Selection'. 'PnC' assesses the candidate's ability to learn and adapt in a physically demanding, high stress environment. Physical conditioning, land navigation, fieldcraft, and common-tasks are taught in the field and in all weather. This phase lasts roughly 3 weeks. Should a candidate's skill levels in any one of the training skills be lacking at the end of this time, they may be 'Boarded'. The Board of Review is a committee of SF officers and senior NCO's [all combat veterans] who decide if a candidate will benefit from being recycled through PnC again or are unsuitable for further SF training. A candidate may be recycled through PnC once.

'Selection' is a 3 week period that is remembered by all SF operators with nostalgia and no small amount of dread. Many an operator has flat out stated that 'Selection' is 'the toughest month in the Army' and specifically includes combat and more legendary courses as Survival, Evasion, and Prisoner Resistance to their statement. Candidates are woken by surprise at some time between midnight and 4am and begin a 3 week series of trials that are uniformly undertaken with a lack of sleep, barely enough calories to keep them going, and in all weather conditions [including blizzards]. Beginning with a timed cross-country 80 km land navigation march in full equipment, 'Selection' makes impossible demands of time, weight, and distance. Leadership, follower-ship, teamwork, problem-solving, determination, initiative, and drive are all pushed to their limits. As-

suming that the candidate makes it to the end of Selection, they then face the dreaded Board.

Upon completion of Selection, candidates are returned to Fort Bragg for Recovery. They are sent to a transient barracks to recover from their ordeal. Sleep, cleanliness, laundry, and medical issues are all seen to. After about three days each candidate is ordered to report to the Board, where their performance throughout the entire SFAS is discussed in some detail. The how's and why's of the candidate's decisions during SFAS are dissected. At the end of this Board, the candidate is informed whether or not they have passed SFAS and why. Soldiers [they are no longer 'candidates' after the Selection Board whatever the results] are immediately taken to the next stage of their military careers, be it back to their basic branch or onward to one of the Special Forces Skill Qualification Courses [the Q- Course].

GETTING THE TAB, PART TWO

"Welcome to the John Wayne Rambo School for Boo-Boos, ladies. Now the real work begins."

--SFC Michaela Donlon, SF Medical NCO, to a new batch of operators entering SF Medical Qualification Course Orientation, Reed /Bethesda National Military Hospital, Reston, MD

After A&S, the prospective SF soldier has been deemed worthwhile for the expensive training that all operators undergo. This training consists of several phases:

Special Forces Orientation and History Phase:

5 Weeks



Language and Culture Phase:

18-25 weeks.

Languages are taught via full immersion by native speakers. Media is used to impress cultural references and colloquialisms. Phase duration depends on the complexity of the culture studied and the student soldier's aptitude. Mere proficiency is not sufficient to pass this course, absolute colloquial fluency is required, and soldiers are retained in this phase until they meet that standard.

Combat Core Skills /SERE Phase

14 weeks.

This phase teaches advanced combat skills, including Close Quarter Combat, Vacuum /Zero-G Combat, Urban warfare etc. A significant portion of this phase includes the legendary Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape, or SERE course. This latter is a brutal instruction teaching prospective operators how to deal with being 'behind the lines' and what they can expect as a prisoner of war. The course is taught under actual prisoner of war conditions, and graduates are aware of just how much abuse they can take before they 'break'.

Skill Qualification Course Phase:

18 to 64 weeks.

Each member of a Special Forces unit has a role to play in completing its mission. To do this, each soldier, having passed through the previous phases, chooses a Skill Qualification Course, or 'Q- Course' that suits their interests. In the American Army's Military Skill Specialty System, these are the '18-series' MSS's. Once the soldier has passed the Q-Course and if they are later selected to join an operational Special Forces Group, their MSS

will be changed from whatever it was previously to his new, 18-series MSS.

The following are the Special Forces MSS Skill codes:

* 18A *Special Forces [SF] Officer /Commander*

* 18B *SF Weapons Technician*

* 18C *SF Engineering /Demolitions Technician*

* 18D *SF Medical NCO*

* 18E *SF Communications /EW/ECM Operator /Technician*

* 18F *SF Operations and Intelligence NCO*

* 18G *SF Sensors /Remote Systems Operator /Technician*

* 18Z *SF Operations /Team Leadership*

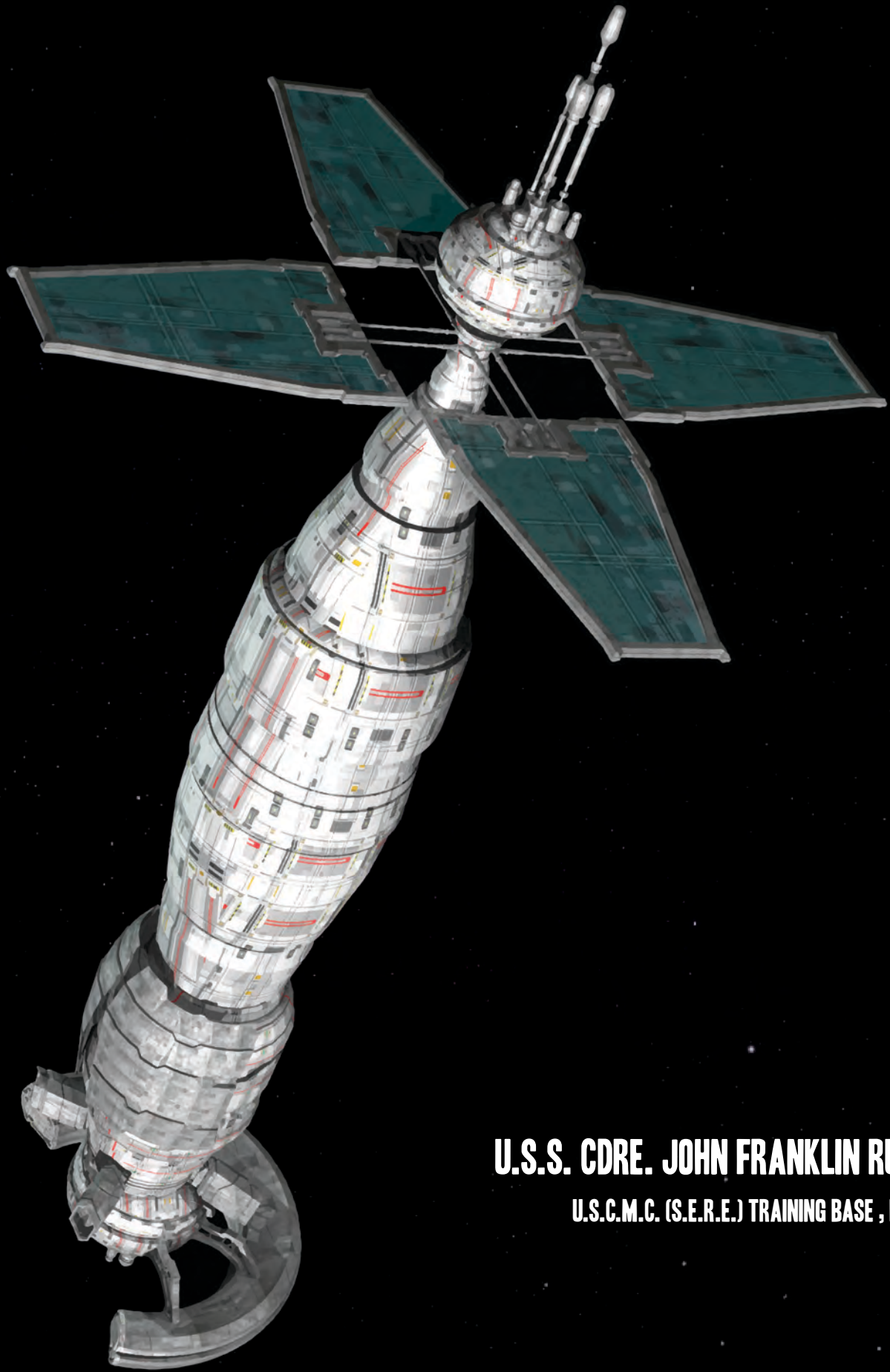
MSS codes are read as follows: [number] = Branch of service, [letter] = specific training within branch, [decennial number] = skill level within that training. For example, an Artillery sergeant gun chief succeeds in becoming an operational Special Forces Team Weapons Technician. His previous MSS of 13B20 [Tube Artillery Crew NCO] would be changed to 18B10 [Assistant SF Weapons Technician].

The duration of each Q-Course is variable based on the skills taught, with the shortest being Weapons and the longest by far being Medical.

FX: GREEN SAGE Phase:

4 Weeks.

The final exercise is Field Exercise GREEN SAGE. This month-long ex-



U.S.S. CDRE. JOHN FRANKLIN RUDLAND

U.S.C.M.C. (S.E.R.E.) TRAINING BASE , LUNA ORBIT



ercise is a Special Forces tradition and simulates several Special Forces teams infiltrating into the 'Imperial Republic of Sandpine', a fictional 'nation' used to simulate real-world political conditions. Their mission is to link up with, assist and train guerrillas who are resisting the 'IRS' government and military. Throughout the exercise the students are challenged by circumstances that have occurred in actual missions by active duty SF teams.

Graduation Phase /Final Board:

1 week.

At the end of GREEN SAGE, the student has become Special Forces Qualified. At the end of Grad Week each soldier is awarded the Special Forces Qualification Tab. Their training has cost the American people of upwards of a million dollars [about half as much as a fighter pilot's] and the new

operators can be justifiably proud of their work for the rest of their lives.

However, not all qualified graduates will be assigned to Special Forces units. By this time, the soldier has been given a realistic idea of what service is like in a deployed Special Forces Group. Not all soldiers desire to undertake that level of commitment. Also, there are those that still do not possess the 'Special Forces mindset'. Therefore each soldier undergoes a Final Board of Review. Those who are not selected by the Final Board return to the Regular Army, most to combat arms units [Armor /Cavalry, Artillery, Engineers, Infantry]. Those who are accepted by the Board are inducted into the Special Operations Branch and are assigned to Special Forces Groups.

'ZEROED'

An important part of this Final Selection is becoming 'Zeroed'. The opera-

tor's radio frequency identification chip [or RFID chip], which was inserted into their bicep at puberty, is 'blanked' and no longer retains, broadcasts or responds to RFID information or requests.

By their nature, the activities of Special Forces [and others in Special Operations] are secret. It would not do, for example, to have an operator sent to Libreville posing as 'Jean Dubois' to be recognized by an advertising kiosk as 'Tom Smith, American citizen' and announce "Hey Tom! How about a nice cold In-Dex?!" Given the level of surveillance in 24th century Earth, the ability to change identities or to have no easily searchable identity has moved from the realm of spies and become a military necessity for units like the SAS, Special Forces, etc. However, the American government does not allow just anyone to become a 'cipher in the system'. Getting 'zeroed' is considered evidence of the trust placed in the operator.

From this point until they leave military service, their RFID information is carried on a chip inside a nondescript watch [usually purchased at a pawn shops by embassy personnel at various cities around the world]. An operator will have a minimum to two watches; one with their actual ID and one with their cover ID. Oftentimes, the watch with the operator's real identity [or 'real-time watch'] will be left in the Group Intelligence Officer's safe [or the safe of an embassy's NIS officer] and the operator will be working only with the cover ID [known as 'local time' in SF slang].

SPECIAL FORCES ORGANIZATION

"Welcome to the team. We've been expecting our new commo guy for three months. What took you so long to qualify? Oh, and one more thing: you're gonna love your next physical..." --SFC

Michaela Donlon, Medical Sergeant, ODA 718, Ft. Bragg NC, two weeks before the team boarded ship to deploy on a military assistance mission to Taanstafl, Aurore, 17 FEB 2300

Like most special operations units worldwide, the standard infantry squad /platoon /company organizational model does not fit well with the mission requirements. It is a relatively rare occasion, for example, for 50 SF soldiers [an infantry platoon or section in standard line company organizations] to operate in one area at one time. Furthermore, all Special Forces soldiers are Sergeants and above in rank and because of the high individual skill sets and initiative of the soldiers involved, a high level of supervision is not required.

The A-Team.

The basic unit in Special Forces is the 'A-team', known officially as an Operational Detachment Alpha [ODA]. An ODA is comprised of 12 to 15 operators: a Captain or 1st Lieutenant commanding, a Warrant Officer executive officer, an Operations Sergeant [also known as the Team Sergeant and is the senior NCO

on the team], and the enlisted men of the team: an Assistant Ops /Intell Sergeant, two Weapons Sergeants, two Engineering Sergeants, two Medical Sergeants, two Communications Sergeants, and two Sensors /Remotes Sergeants. Also, each operator has been cross-trained in the specialty of another team member. Thus, when required, a team can be split in half and double the area covered with a minimum loss of efficiency.

ODAs are numbered by the insertion capabilities of team members. Operators are often trained in insertion techniques other than simple vertical envelopment [parachute or helicopter] or ground infiltration. Additional qualifications exist for military freefall, orbital freefall, and SCUBA insertion. ODAs are numbered according to their insertion capability. A team that is not fully trained in any alternate techniques is a 'zero' or 'boot'-team; a team fully qualified to insert via High Altitude Low Opening [HALO] or High Altitude High Opening [HAHO] military freefall techniques has a 1 in their team number; a team fully trained in orbital meteoric reentry techniques [which a new emerging ability] has a 2 in their number and are nicknamed a '



1ST LIEUTENANT SIMON ABDESHOE TAKING IN THE VIEW OF AURORE FROM HIS BUNK





THE 'WALRUS' C-299 MILITARY CARGO TRANSPORT ABOUT TO DROP MUCH NEEDED AMMUNITION INTO PORT BLACKJACK. SPECIAL FORCES OFTEN USE THESE MILITARY TRANSPORTS TO ENTER AREAS SO AS TO AVOID UNWANTED ATTENTION.



'roid-team', and a team qualified to insert via scuba or small boats [a 'fin-team'] has a code of 3.

Thus, Sergeant First Class Michaela Donlon in my example above is a member of ODA 718: she belongs to the 7th SF Group [see below], 1 = on a team with HALO/HAHO insertion specialty and that team is 8 = eighth team in the company.

The Company.

A collection of ODAs, supplemented by an Operational Detachment-Bravo [called an ODB or B-team] command element, form a Special Forces Company. The number of ODAs is variable, as commanders attempted to keep each ODA under their command as fully staffed as possible. Current thinking is to have fewer fully-staffed units available than more under-staffed units. For a Special Forces Company to be considered fully mission-capable it must field a minimum of 4 ODAs staffed to 80% levels or greater.

The ODB is the first level of SF organization where you'll encounter personnel who are attached to the unit, but are

not SF qualified. Certain skill specialties do not require the expensive training of SF qualification. While ALL personnel in a Special Forces Group must be Airborne Assault qualified, personnel working in administration, supply, the chaplaincy, etc. need not endure the rigors of Ft. Bragg in order to do their jobs for the operators. Wise 'non-Qualls' learn very quickly to work with the demanding idiosyncrasies of 'tabbed' operators. Conversely, wise operators do not muck with the 'non-Qualls' who staff the S-1 [Personnel and Finance] office. Or the Mess personnel. Or the Motor Pool NCO...

It should be noted that SF Qualification has a reputation throughout the American military for it's unrelenting toughness. Therefore the qualification process generally doesn't graduate enough acceptable personnel to keep up with SF's needs for replacements as units lose operators through normal wear [training injuries, retirement, transfer, etc.]. Add to this that you cannot just plug a vacancy in one Group with excess personnel from another. The 10th SFGAA [Special Forces Group, Airborne Assault], for example, is tasked with operations in Western Europe and the French Arm; the Army cannot therefore send a



Mandarin Chinese-speaking SF operator from the 1st SFGAA to fill a vacancy in the 10th. Also, it is very difficult to get replacements for teams deployed off-world, where DNAMs are often required.

ODBs are the command element of a Special Forces Company. An ODB consists of a Major commander, a Captain as Executive Officer, a Company Sergeant [who is usually a Sergeant Major in rank], an Operations and Intelligence sub-unit of a Chief Warrant Officer and Master Sergeant who assist the commander in coordinating the operations of the [often distantly separated] A-teams under his command, an ODB Medical unit consisting of a Master Sergeant SF Medic and an Staff Sergeant assistant, a Technical Services sub-unit of the company's senior Commo /ECM and Remotes /Sensors Sergeants, a Supply Sergeant and assistant [non-Qual], and a Chemical Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Warfare Reconnaissance NCO [non-Qual], for a total of 10-12 operators and soldiers.

The Battalion.


A Special Forces Battalion consists of between 4 and 5 Special Forces Companies and it's command

element, the Operational Detachment-Charlie [ODC or 'C-team']. It is commanded by a Lieutenant Colonel, who is assisted by a Major as his Executive and a Battalion Sergeant Major. In addition, an ODC contains 20-30 personnel who serve the Battalion Commander as staff and a ready source of replacements as they are required by lower echelons. In addition, newly designed equipment often requires the services of technical representatives from the manufacturer to assist soldiers in the maintenance and deployment of that technology. These 'tech-reps' fall under the aegis of the ODCs.

The Group.

A Special Forces Group is considered the 'unit of assignment' for individual operators, much as an infantry regiment might be for line soldiers. It is the Group flash that soldiers proudly wear on their berets and as their Combat Service Unit Insignia on their dress uniforms.

A Special Forces Group [Airborne Assault] is commanded by a full Colonel. The Colonel [who is never referred to as 'The CO', but only as The Colonel... there



is only one 'Colonel with a Capital C' in an SFGAA] is assisted by a LtCol executive officer and the Group Sergeant-Major, who is the senior-most NCO in the Group and is the font from which the wisdom of the ages flows. Generals who haven't left the capital of Reston MD, or indeed the Pentagon itself, in living memory ignore the 'friendly advice' of a Group Sergeant Major at their peril. This staff is augmented by an additional ODC.

As of 2300, Special Forces as a whole is divided into 6 Groups. These Groups are earmarked toward the theater or region of the world their training has focused on. Plans to activate a Group that is focused on the Eber and Sung of the Chinese Arm have stalled in the Pentagon due to funding and practicality concerns, and the French, British, and Germans have flatly refused to provide any intelligence on the Pentapods.

The current Groups and their theaters are:

- * 1st SFGAA, Asia /Pacific /Chinese Arm
- * 3rd SFGAA, Imperial France and Possessions [incl. Africa, Pacific, and French Arm]
- * 5th SFGAA, The Middle East /Indian Subcontinent
- * 7th SFGAA, Latin America and Latin Finger
- * 10th SFGAA, Western Europe and Possessions
- * 12th SFGAA[R], an Army Reserve Group to administratively handle Army Reserve and National Guard operators

CURRENT DEPLOYMENTS:

"Eh? No se lo que' quieres decir..." ['Huh? I don't know what you mean...']

--'Maria', Guatemalan villager [aka SSG Michaela Donlon] when asked off-screen by a reporter from International 3V News if she'd heard any rumors of fighting in the area, Coban, Guatemala, 03 OCT 2297

In order to keep her military 'current' on developing military tactics and technologies, the American Department of Military Affairs and Defense often 'swaps' units with friendly powers on a company-by-company basis as a sort of 'foreign exchange' program. Naturally the Marines, Army Rangers and Special Forces are often part of such arrangements. This has given Special Forces operators a far more cosmopolitan view of Human Space than is normal throughout the American Army. As of this writing, there is no Special Forces Company that does not include at least one operator that has served off-world of Earth. Indeed, the majority of teams in each company have at least one operator who has either come from a colony or served in foreign exchange mission at some point.

As of 01 JAN 2300, the American Army Special Forces are deployed in the following regions and worlds:

a] 7th SFGAA is involved in an ongoing covert operation in cooperation with the NIA to sow dissent within Mexico in hopes of destabilizing the country. Emphasizing the cultural differences between 'junta Azteca' in Mexico City and regional problems farther from the capital, it is hoped that America can destabilize the country enough to reclaim those portions lost to Mexico during the Twilight War. Key targeted regions include California around Los Angeles and Baja, the 'Estados Maya' ['Mayan States'] of Southern Mexico [Oaxaca, Yucutan, Guatemala, etc.], and 'Apache zones' of the former Arizona and New Mexico.

B] 3rd and 7th Groups have been tasked

with overt foreign exchange military assistance missions in the wake of the Kafer onslaught the Auroran colony of Taanstafl in the Eta Bootis system. One SF Company from each Group will in place by 2301.

C] 3rd Group has also been given an overt military assistance mission in the former French colony of Elysia on Joi in the 61 Ursae Majoris system. Third Battalion, 3rd SFGAA is assisting the new nation of Elysia in setting up an officer's and NCO academy system for it's military.

D] 10th Group has ongoing exchange missions with both Britain and Germany. The American military is particularly interested in the German Sturmtakik and Special Forces has long enjoyed a good working relationship with Britain's SAS.

About the author:

Carl Hicks Jr. is a United State Army veteran and life-long gamer. He is also a lifelong military historian and has been both a medieval and American Civil War reenactor. He currently serves as the recruiting sergeant for the Regular Army company that garrisoned his hometown in his home state of Washington immediately prior to the Civil War.

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Santé sans frontières

HEALTH & MEDICAL NEWS FROM ACROSS SPACE
by Stephen Parkinson
Sponsored Content from FPK.

Treatment for Wessel Syndrome undergoing trials

Durban, Azania

The Azanian Department of Health have confirmed that the Durban Neuroscience Institute has started testing a possible treatment to Wessel Syndrome. The syndrome – also known as Prosthetic Digital Neuropathy (PDN) – is a degenerative disease that attacks the connections between biological tissue and cybernetic grafts and can result in the inexorable loss of cybernetic functionality, with symptoms similar to that of other, rarer, neurological conditions such as Parkinsons Disease.

Whilst still extremely rare, Wessel Syndrome - if left untreated & the implants unre-moved - can spread and result in progressive cognitive failure, general loss of motor control, paralysis and even death.

According to Doctor Jan van Baai – the leader of the research team at Cape Town PEX-earlier medical treatments have focussed on the assumption that the Wessel Syndrome is associated with the bodies immune response fighting the presence of non-native grafts. “The new treatment, however, is more focussed on the deleterious effect the micro-electric fields the implants generate. This would not have been possible without new non-invasive sensors based on Pentapod biotechnology”

Although no treatment is anticipated in the immediate future, preliminary results from the double-blind stage-2 trials are anticipated by the end of the year.

PROFESSOR JEAN-LOUIS GAUMONTE EXAMINES HIS LATEST TECHNICAL MODELS





English Electric is a British industrial manufacturer with a long and varied history.

The catastrophic government meddling in private business (mainly aviation and shipping) wrecked the company and forced a merger into BAe. After the resurgence of British industry after the Twilight war and into the 22nd century the old names rose again.

EE became a business specializing in power plants, mainly those for shipping and portable plants. Eventually building specialist installations for the space industry. Now part of the British Exospace (BEx) conglomerate, it specialises in powerplants and interface engines.

Its valuable development work in Dual-Mode MHD coupled interface engines have given it international renown. Not to mention turnover. EE is the leading design agency for most interface capable designs for the UK and Commonwealth governments.

too old for this kind of shit, but that presumed I survived. New symbols painted on my helmet, a dozen of them, erupting out of the sea and closing on us at high Mach. The pucker-factor spiked as they closed, but they streaked past us and a moment later the pressure let go as the pilot levelled out. "Bit of unseen help from the Navy there," she said, laughing at some joke only she understood, "sub-surface launched SAMs, blew one of those buggers into very small pieces and the other will be lucky to make land the way he's losing altitude."

A pre-arranged flak-trap to delouse us. Nice. Of course that wasn't the end to the night's entertainment. "Feet dry," the pilot announced a few moments later, "Closing on drop-zone, stand-by." Lights at either end of the compartment turned red and each of us checked our own gear, then turned to do the same for our neighbours. "Stand-by," the pilot's voice said again, then "Green on" and I saw the lights change to green a moment before the bottom dropped out of our little world. We hit the slipstream in a staggered ripple, alternating left-right from back to front of the compartment as our seats ran down the rails that had suddenly been extended out from the troop bay. I was the last one out and I had a momentary flash of the bay doors closing even as I sailed past them. The slipstream hit me like a train, but instinct took over and I oriented myself into a stable free-fall, arching my neck to look upwards. I saw the Manticore for a moment, nose wrenched high, accelerating back out of the atmosphere, heading for a rendezvous in the outer system if it could make it past the orbital defences for a second time, then she was gone and I turned my attention down towards the New African jungle, hunting for the beacon that marked the clearing we were heading for.

Unpublished Notes
Lauren Tailyour

Genesis

The development of the Manticore has its roots in the Royal Space Navy's observations of Manchurian and Elysian operations against the French MSIF in the 2280s.

In both operations the French found it very difficult to achieve planetary blockades

In the aftermath of the CAW, the Royal Space Navy's Operational Research Department together with the Director of Special Forces and the Operations branch of MI-6 launched a survey of military interface operations conducted by the opposing sides, of which the Battle of Xiuning Station was one of the more prominent examples, as well as of various in-orbit sabotage operations. The conclusions were hastily reviewed in light of the War of German Reunification, but judged to remain valid.

The survey concluded that offensive planetary assault operations were now feasible, but that coup de main raiding operations by elite forces in company strength or smaller would predominate. These conclusions reinforced the decision to proceed with the Normandy Class assault ships and the Raven class assault landers. However, under the influence of the SOF- and intelligence community a secondary conclusion was reached: that there was a requirement for interface operations aimed at infiltration or exfiltration of teams as small as a single agent or SF brick and that even the new Ravens were too large, slow and insufficiently stealthy to accomplish the mission covertly.

Suggestions were made that the requirement could be met by the BEx Type 363 Griffin special operations lander. This was already in limited RSN service for

the rapid deployment of CTW teams anywhere on Earth or in low orbit. However the authors of the report were adamant that the requirement mandated a vehicle capable of being launched at standoff distances from a planetary objective; which meant that the lander needed to be stutterwarp capable. That ruled out the Griffin.

The Admiralty balked at the likely cost, but with increased tension on the Continent, bit the bullet and issued an Urgent Operational Requirement to meet the perceived need.

Development

English Electric is a British industrial manufacturer with a long and varied history. The catastrophic government meddling in private business (mainly aviation and shipping) wrecked the company and forced a merger into BAe.

After the resurgence of British industry after the Twilight war and into the 22nd century the old names rose again. EE became a business specializing in power plants, mainly those for shipping and portable plants. Eventually building specialist installations for the space industry. Now part of the British Exospace (BEx) conglomerate, it specialises in powerplants and interface engines. Its valuable development work in Dual-Mode MHD coupled interface engines have given it international renown. Not to mention turnover.

EE is the leading design agency for most interface capable designs for the UK and Commonwealth governments.

The crews have picked the 'Black Hog' nickname and ran with it. Callsigns often reflect this, using terms such as: "HOG ONE"; "RAZORBACK FOUR" and, for some reason: "HARLEY TWO". Unit PT-

sweaters and artwork often reflects the theme as well.

The crews go so far as to call themselves and their unit members 'Hogs', or 'Piggies' and it has led to good camaraderie and esprit de corps.

Figure 1 A 'C' Flight 'Hog' as seen departing an LZ on the 'Continent Francaise' on BCV-4

Figure 2 An early model Manticore in development colours making a low pass around the Mach Loop in Wales.

Rather than put the UOR out to competition the RSN handed it to British Exospace, who set up a joint venture team between their Interface Vehicles Division and their English Electric Aerospace subsidiary. Charged with bringing in the project to cost against a tight deadline the English Electric team knew that the only possibility was to take an existing spaceframe and modify it. BEx' Interface Vehicles Division had just the beast. The AL3 Raven was a fully developed in-service VSTOL interface assault lander and, while there were other interface landers, even military ones available, only the Raven was capable of surface-to-surface operations. The Raven gave them their basic platform, but the design was a conventional operations one where a far more permissive air-defence environment, or enforced aerospace superiority was the norm. Much more permissive environments than any envisaged for the new platform and so the Raven became the Manticore.

The outer skin went, light-weight construction giving way to stealthy practicality and construction materials the original design team just weren't cleared



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THRUST



STUTTERWARP

HULL INTEGRITY

LIFE SUPPORT

POINT DEFENSE

SCREENS

RITAGE-1 ARSEN

to know about. The fuel tankage was slashed in size, multiple entries and heavy loads now an un-needed luxury and the freed space became the basis of the new warp engineering bay. Standard spec avionics were dumped entirely, replaced by a hybrid of the mission systems suite from the Raven and the counter-measures suite from the Griffin and the Gannet ECM version. Initial thoughts of using the dual-mode engine from the Raven were dumped. They'd be too weak, since the resulting craft had become heavier and larger. The English Electric Ness engine would be used as the basis for a version that gave more thrust, but had a lower atmospheric top speed in jet-mode. To enable VSTOL operations two smaller lift engines were installed as per the Griffin. The system sailed through its preliminary design review, the only major issue being a last minute decision by the military to revise the specification to the carriage of twelve personnel rather than the original eight and a light vehicle. That could be met by a minor fuselage stretch, which EE actually managed to add to the full-scale mock-up overnight, and the construction of the prototype was authorised a bare six months from project start.

Initial Prototype 1 was a hybrid: a standard Raven AL.3 cut apart and rebuilt into an aerodynamic match for the Manticore by a rapid prototyping team in order to get a test vehicle into flight test in the minimum time. While IP1 was being hurled through the skies over Wellon's Colenso ranges, construction of the fully missionised IP2 proceeded at a more measured pace. The approach worked. By the time IP2 joined its half-sibling in the flight-test campaign on Wellon almost all of the aerodynamic anomalies

had been worked out of the system and the Manticore was delighting its test pilots. If IP1 had been good, IP2 was better. It penetrated the Wellon air-defence environment with an ease that had RAAF planners looking at the whole system architecture to see what they were doing wrong, while in air combat manoeuvring the Manticore might not have been a Fury, but was at least as capable as a significant number of in-service designs (what the flight test engineers strapped down in the troop-bay thought of the ACM experience is best not repeated).

And then IP2 went down. Inbound on an orbital insertion. Something went wrong at high-altitude and the vehicle ripped itself apart. The loss of both senior test pilots and a three man flight test engineer team was a devastating blow to the project, even if IP3 was only a month away from flight with IP4 barely two months behind it. The RSN acted rapidly to fill the breach, drafting in Commander Melissa Wyatt, the senior pilot of 1201 Naval Interface Squadron, a graduate of the Empire Test Pilot School and a trans-atmospheric vehicle specialist. Mel Wyatt had flown more types of TAVs than anyone else in the service. She was current on the RSN's three in-service interface strike fighter types

-Buccaneer, Vixen and Phantom- and had been the service test pilot on the Raven. Amongst foreign types she had flown the Texan/American Javelin, the French Foudre and Zénith and the Australian Boojum. She was also a fully qualified starship pilot and had even been loaned out by the service to fly the racing Griffin to victory in the 2297 Grand Prix.

Mel Wyatt quickly reinvigorated the flight-test team while bringing in specialists from her extensive network of contacts to run an air accident investigation that might otherwise have been compro-

mised by the problems of reading qualified air accident investigators into a black programme. The investigation took several months, limiting the flight test campaign to atmospheric work in the meantime, but finally the investigation team managed to pin the problem down to the high-g stressing of heat-loaded parts in the earlier air combat tests. Put through the heat stress of an atmospheric entry followed by immediate ACM, some parts were receiving a lifetime's cumulative stress load in a single flight. Eventually a part failed under load and IP2 was lost. Fortunately the problem was one that could be dealt with. A handful of critical structural parts were redesigned –and pre-emptively overdesigned– and stress monitoring throughout the airframe was recalibrated against the new model. In-service operating costs would be higher than anticipated, as would the maintenance load, but neither was a show-stopper and the Manticore moved quickly to Controller (Interface) clearance for entry into service, any lingering concerns over the stress issues submerged by the news of a possible alien threat beyond Aurore.

Design features

The Manticore AL.3E (E, for Enhanced), is an adaptation of the AL.3 Raven design for long-range independent operations and covert operations.

It is equipped with independent navigation, larger capacity electronic warfare and communications equipment, sensors and –most importantly– has a low-rate warp drive for intra-system operations.

All this means that the Manticore can operate from beyond the FTL shelf and make a high speed warp run to its objective planet, manoeuvre up-and-down the interface and warp back to the FTL shelf. All this while maintaining a low

detection profile, navigating itself and, if needed, communicate with forces on the ground over secure communications. The passive and active sensors allow the ship to navigate at high speed and low altitude over contested terrain without outside help from beacons or satnav. The warp drive is not fit for intersystem travel; it is only meant for high speed warp runs inside a star system.

The Manticore uses the same basic design as the Raven. It is lengthened with two 'plugs:' one in front of and one behind the main engines. This means the nose, in front of the intakes is now longer and that it has a 'tail' that sticks out between the exhausts –a tail being absent on the Raven. To maintain a good aerodynamic flow the curvature of the nose has been heightened to maintain the ideal 'teardrop' shape with the longer hull. This lengthening of the nose and rear sections on a flush-wing design like the AL.3 has meant that there is an increase in wing chord. Given the low level approach flights that Special Operations flights have, this is not a problem and actually improves low level, low speed handling. It does mean a shallower atmospheric descent must be flown to reduce heat stress.

The engines are different from the standard Raven. The Raven's English Electric SFE 'Ness' Bèta engines have been evolved and compared to the original dual-mode ducted fan-MHD turbine, they produce a ten and fifteen percent improvement in combat radius and ferry range, respectively. With improved take-off, initial climb, and acceleration, but at the cost of a reduction in top speed when not operating in scramjet or rocket mode. Most importantly, they deliver higher thrust –to cope with the extra mass.

The Manticore is heavier than the Raven because of the extra equipment and

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THRUST





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SCREENS

RITAGE-1 ARSENAL

heavier engines and turbine (there is a third MHD turbine to power the warp drive).

This means that the craft has a smaller effective payload. It cannot take a light armoured vehicle anymore. But light, wheeled vehicles are still possible.

The Manticore has some extra crew when compared to the Raven's three. There is an EW/ECM/Comms officer; an engineer to manage the –highly automated, lightweight, reactor and warp drive; and a navigator / sensor operator. The loadmaster position behind the cockpit has been taken over by the navigator / sensor operator, with the loadmaster moving to the 'container' in the hold, where the EW/ECM/Comms operator and warp engineer are housed together with a multitude of 'Black Box' equipment.

The crews have picked the 'Black Hog' nickname and ran with it. Callsigns often reflect this, using terms such as: "HOG ONE"; "RAZORBACK FOUR" and, for some reason: "HARLEY TWO". Unit PT-sweaters and artwork often reflects the theme as well.

The crews go so far as to call themselves and their unit members 'Hogs', or 'Piggies' and it has led to good camaraderie and esprit de corps.

Officially named 'Manticore', it is colloquially known as the 'Black Hog'. Because of the matt grey, almost black paintjob and the 'hunched' appearance caused by the higher curve. This makes it look like a charging wild boar to some.

The Manticore has the same weapons bays and abilities as the original Raven, but usually no weapons are carried. As in the Raven, the weapons bay can be used

to parachute cargo containers. The two rotating autocannon and both 7.5mm Gatlings are still in place. It maintains the ability to launch all weaponry the Raven has and has an added ECM 'Wild Weasel' ability due to its extensive EW suite.

When compared to the original Raven, the cargo hold is hindered by a container like structure holding the EW/ECM/Comms officer and his Engineer colleague. Behind that container is the 'cage' holding a third MHD and the warp drive. This means that there is no more Ro-Ro capacity and cross-decking ability. This does not matter since the Manticore is not a battlefield support craft.

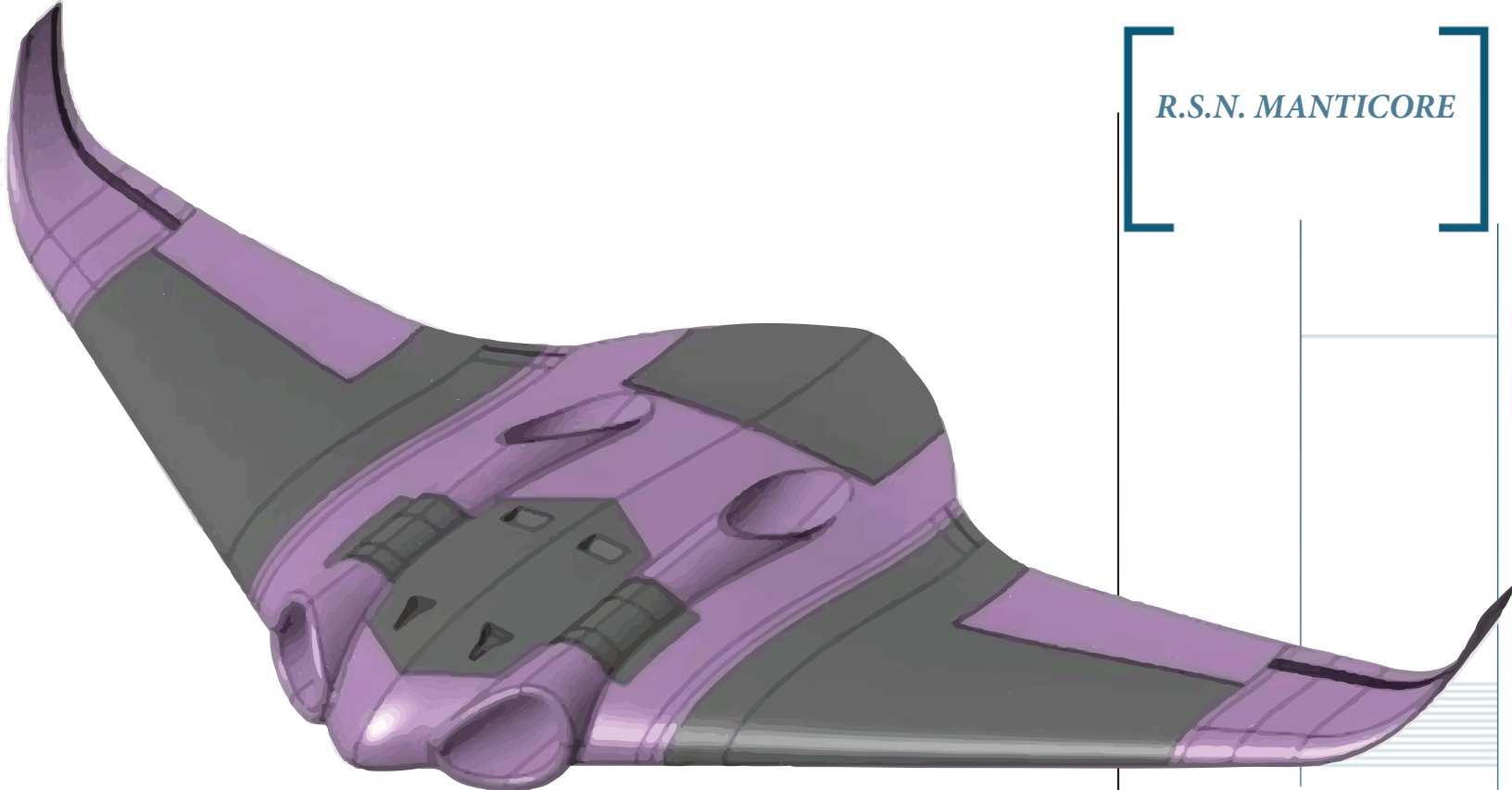
The hold floor still has the container and pallet handling equipment installed, as does the ceiling. There is an automated dispensing equipment, capable of launching palletised equipment, personnel hardshells and individual 'ejection seats.' When coupled to automated parachutes or gliders, this equipment is capable of delivering cargo and personnel with pinpoint precision under all weather conditions in day and night.

The ramp and hold are equipped with winches to tow in heavy equipment and semi-automated rigging equipment to quickly fasten loads in the field.

The hold can be fitted with a command suite to serve as an operational airborne mission headquarters and is fitted for multiple radios and C3i equipment.

The hold can also hold palletised medical equipment, turning the Manticore into a veritable mobile ICU for up to 8 littered and/or 12 seated patients with 2 attendants.

There is the same quadruple, single two-wheel bogie landing gear as the Raven, which has been strengthened to allow for the higher operating weights of the Manticore.

**Type¹**

Interface capable assault aerodyne

Streamlining

As Spaceplane

Crew

5Weight: 72 tons, full load (14 infantry/6 CW/2 wheeled v/h)

Armour:

all faces: 60

Signature:

0

Cruise Air Speed:

Mach 1 (approx 750kph)

Max Air Speed:

2200kph

Evasion:

12

Sensor Range:

500 km (+2) (compare with 0.5 km on the CIT-III)

Combat Move:

1600m

Power Plant:

3MW MHD Turbine

Fuel Capacity:

10,000kgFuel

Consumption:

65kg per hour (atmospheric flight) or 650kg per hour(orbital flight)

Weapons:

2 x 27mm Autocannon with 200 rounds each, 2 x 7.5mm Point Defence Anti Missile Systems with 4000 rounds each, 4 tons of expendable ordnance

¹
I chose the 'Look' of the Manticore based on a design I chose for my 'Raven' look. Since it isn't described anywhere, and I did want to show my PC's a picture I searched for an 'Off the shelf' one. The University of Sheffield's 'AMRC' 3D printed UAV comes very close. That is why I included it here. ~ Author

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RITAGE-1 ARSEN

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Price:

est £5.5 million each for British Forces (export cost is 8 Million Livre each)

The Manticore in Service

Standing up 1221 NIS

The RSN planned to pool the Manticores in a dedicated unit. The earlier Griffin had been distributed in independent flights to the main client units (SAS; ASLAN and the RSN's own SPS). Because the Griffin had been in service in such small numbers and only in use by dedicated SF units this set-up worked well.

The Manticore was meant to be used in larger numbers, not only in support of full Spec Ops and intelligence operations, but also by raiding forces and CSAR duties. The Manticore is however quite a departure from the original Raven and needs dedicated support personnel and a

dedicated training pipeline.

An earlier 'dedicated' NIS had been trialed, 1205 NIS had been performing dispersed operations in support of 'Red' RM units and resistance forces. It had been using adapted standard Ravens for these operations. 1205's concept of operations would be taken over by the new Spec Ops squadron, to be numbered 1221 NIS: Dispersed operations in Flight size, with the added abilities of the Manticore providing an immense increase in range and operational flexibility and safety.

Trials on Earth and Mars

1221 NIS was stood up in Wellington Station in the spring of 2301 and took up airframes as they came off the line. Mel Wyatt often 'shaking down' her new landers personally! Once a dozen craft had been accepted the squadron quickly started training on the UK's Martian territory, Wellsland, achieving IOC in the autumn. The first flights were despatched

to operate in support of operations on BCV and Dunkelheim that autumn.

Move to Alicia

The squadron's HQ flight and two operational flights relocated to Wellon where, after integrated staff training with UKSF and British and Wellonese special forces, FOC was achieved and 1221 found itself forward based on Alicia to support Graham's Reserve Fleet, only occasionally being called upon to aid units of Rochemont's Fleet.

New aircraft kept arriving off the English Electric line in a steady trickle and, despite operational losses, numbers kept increasing. This allowed Commander Wyatt to form new flights to keep available numbers up, despite having to train her own crews.

1222 NIS is born

The original flights, which were on operations while 1221 had still been in IOC, had been performing independent operations away from the squadron's main body since September 2301. Commander Wyatt, with the support of Fleet HQ decided to formalise the independent logistic support and command of these flights and form a second Manticore squadron, to be numbered 1222.

This squadron kept the original mission of its independent Flights: support of widely dispersed intelligence operations of dedicated Tier One SF units.

1222 did suffer from problems stemming from its nascence: It never did go through proper integration exercises, neither for its staff nor for its sub units. Also, it never operated as a unit, instead, from before its foundation it was spread out over light years. This caused problems in supply, maintenance and command. But mainly in mission preparation. Crews were often

working well above their pay grade, doing their own staff work as best as they could. Sometimes with disastrous consequences.

When commander Mel Wyatt, became captain and CO of the Manticore Wing, one of her first actions was to shake up the internal organisation of 1222 NIS.

Manticore in the Kafer War

Initial Operations

The first operational missions by Manticores were flown in support of SF units on BCV

and Dunkelheim. These missions were as much trials of the operational deployment of the craft as proper military operations. The RJSF offered the Manticore to the Germans knowing that the operational environment around Dunkelheim would be relatively low risk. The only real aerospace defence was expected around the Goldberg installations and various decentral 'Safe Places.' The real risk for Op. Lysandre was in getting to the FTL shelf and to the ground forces involved.

Operations on BCV were different in that sense. Before and after the first Liberation the Kafers had active space forces patrolling the system. On the ground they had functional, integrated aerospace defences in place. Getting ships, even as advanced as the Manticore past the interface was often difficult and led to many losses. Some time after the first Liberation 1221 NIS took over the operations around BCV-4 and 1222 NIS was formed around the semi-independent Flights that had performed the earlier missions.

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During this time operations to Kimanja-no, Crater and other worlds, all partly or wholly occupied were flown. Sometimes as national UK or Commonwealth missions, sometimes in support of French, German or general Allied operations.

30AU

The joint RM/RJSF strategic reconnaissance unit known as 30 Assault Unit, or 30 Commando, is a 'Red' unit that operates directly under the CDS. Its missions take it to places behind enemy lines, to hostile homeworlds and to places where deniability is part of the mission package. Transport to and from the deployment area for this unit is often difficult. Sometimes civil registered 'Q-ships' are used, or dedicated 0G craft. Since the use of Manticores became an option, 30AU has become an enthusiastic customer and has even proposed some changes that will be retrofitted to existing airframes and become a features on new ones.

The TBM

The much famed 'Three Blind Mice' missions, in their second incarnation have requested a flight of Manticores to be seconded to their operation. Not much is known about what these missions actually do, but it is known that the trouble in 1222 NIS have made captain Wyatt decide not to detail a unit to the TBM mission.

It is unclear whether the TBM will get use of the now-freed Griffins, or whether they will push their request for Manticore support further.

The Lamé Ducks

The Manticore's heat-stress problem was reduced by the corrective measures taken after the loss of IP2, but not entirely

eliminated. The conditions of the Kafer War meant that idealized flight profiles intended to limit heat-stress weren't always possible and there were times that Air Combat Manoeuvring was definitely called for. Over time this resulted in several Manticores exceeding their stress limits while on operations.

A Manticore was lost to stress failure over Novi Kiev while trying to reach orbit after infiltrating a Ukranian Spetsnaz team. The crew could easily have aborted to Lumiere d'Aube or Tanstaafl. Following this loss, orders were issued that any Manticore which exceeded its stress limits on a world with friendly units present was to recover to friendly territory rather than attempt to reach orbit. This change in policy resulted in several Manticores, collectively referred to as the Lamé Ducks, being marooned on occupied worlds. When the craft were safely flyable, or could easily be made so, the pilots were instructed to offer themselves and their aircraft to local commanders. If it was not possible to put the aircraft to use, or it was threatened by Kafer ground forces, pilots were instructed to burn or otherwise destroy the aircraft. As the Liberation rolled back the Kafers, these exiled pilots were mostly gathered back into the NIS fold and surviving aircraft scrapped for parts to maintain the fully operational Manticores. However, in at least two cases local forces have been allowed to maintain control of Lamé Duck Manticores due to ongoing operations against Kafer units on-world.

Manticore Units

1221 Naval Interface Squadron

Originally intended to be the sole Manticore unit, expanding to whatever size operations would require, 1221 NIS stood up in Wellington Station in Earth orbit,

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Note 2

DM+352436

Stellar Type: MO V

Mass: 0.48

Radius: 0.54

Luminosity: 0.04

Life Zone Distances:

Inner: 0.74 au

Optimum: 0.2 au

Outer: 0.28 au

Planets in System: 2

Planet I

(Grosshiddenhafen)

Grosshiddenhafen is the unofficial name bestowed to the planet by the Germans during the War of German Reunification. Official Terran charts do not name Grosshiddenhafen, which was deemed a poor choice for colonization.

A Post-garden rocky core world, at 0.2 au with a 47.15 days (std) tide-locked rotational period. The Diameter is 27,116 km, circumference is 85,187 km with a mass of 2.81.

Density: 0.3, surface gravity is high at 7.764.

Escape Velocity: 13.03 km/s.

Axial Inclination: 35° 49'12.8"

Mean Equatorial Temperature:

40°C

Atmospheric Pressure: 1.137

Composition: Nitrogen/oxygen, with a partial oxygen pressure of: 0.057 atm.

Hydrographic Percentage: < 1%

Colonies: None.

but was rapidly transferred up-arm to its operational base at Alicia when the Invasion began. The unit has primarily operated in support of Graham's Reserve Fleet, only occasionally being called upon to aid units of Rochemont's Fleet in operations. The squadron's theoretical establishment has expanded from 20 ships to 28 Manticores and 35 crews, however the risky nature of Manticore ops means that it is usually one or two aircraft short of establishment. Mel Wyatt commanded the squadron throughout the Invasion and into the Liberation, initially flying operations as well, but latterly operating solely in a mission planning role as she became increasingly part of Admiral Graham's staff. An immensely popular commander, Mel was promoted out of the squadron as the Liberation drew to a close, the squadron's 2i/c taking her place, although Mel remained in command of both Manticore squadrons in what was informally referred to as the Manticore Wing. Shortly after her promotion, Mel was forced to raid the squadron for a new commander and several crews for 1222 NIS, this has inevitably disrupted squadron operations to a significant extent, but Mel's choice for her replacement appears to have the situation well in hand.

1222 Naval Interface Squadron

Grown out of the first despatched flights attached to strategic reconnaissance operations by 30AU and the TBM DS and the more tactical Lysandre operations on Dunkelheim. The specialist operational requirements of both the Three Blind Mice and 30 Assault Unit (aka the Fleet Scientific Intelligence Unit) were ill-suited to operations based out of Alicia and Mel Wyatt quietly side-tracked some of her best and brightest flight crews into a separate squadron intended for detached operations. 'A' Flight is based at Gross-

hiddenhafen for operations under the Three Blind Mice Director Staff, while 'B' Flight is based on New Cornwall in support of Fleet Scientific Intelligence Unit (30AU). (Forward). 'C' flight has a more transient existence, operating out of alternately QAS and Grosshiddenhafen in the Adlerhorst system. 2 From there it supports operations on Dunkelheim and on BCV. The latter mainly on New Africa in support of national operations there, but occasionally on both the French and German continents as well.

'C' Flight has at times had six ships under command split in divisions of two and four (always an even number) between its two operating areas. The flight has routinely operated from privateers for the Dunkelheim 'Lysandre' operations and has built a good working relation with the crews of the infamous Kingfisher and Rillfisher. Manticore crews got their 'Black Hog' nickname from the Rillfisher crew, bestowing the 'Elves' term of endearment on the Rillfishers'

Despite being less than half of the size of 1221 NIS, the three flights of 1222 NIS suffered 75% of all casualties in the Manticore force. This was partially a result of the very high-risk operations undertaken, but a review of missions conducted by Mel Wyatt after the Liberation has revealed some very lax mission planning, by 'A' Flight in particular.

Promoted to command both Manticore units, Mel has been forced to relocate to Grosshiddenhafen to clean house, a process that has seen 'A' Flight's senior pilot, the acting squadron commander, transferred back to the Core to a flight instructor position on Ravens and two of the remaining five 'A' Flight crews swapped for experienced crews from 1221 NIS. Unit morale has taken a battering, but in Mel's opinion 1222 is already broken and she may have to break it further before she



Flight image A 'C' Flight 'Hog' as seen departing an LZ on the 'Continent Francaise' on BCV-4

can rebuild it into a functional unit. 'B' Flight's OC has been left in place, but Mel has dispatched 1221's former operations officer, newly minted as OC 1222 NIS, to watch over him. 'C' Flight has been left mainly untouched, except for sending one of its most experienced crews each, over to 'A' and 'B' and receiving slightly bedraggled of their crews in return. The new OC is using the 'monkey cage' effect to let his best Flight 'cure' the crews of his two lesser ones.

Notable Pilots

Captain Melissa Wyatt, RSN

If it flies across the interface between space and atmosphere, Melissa Wyatt has either flown it herself or knows someone who has. A massively experienced test pilot, Mel was leading the Raven's introduction to service when she was snatched up to reinvigorate the Manticore project after the catastrophic loss of IP2. The Kafer War has seen her not just bring the Manticore into service, but take it to war. Starting the war as commander of 1221 NIS, Mel was responsible for all initial Manticore activity, flying operations over Nyotekundu during Operation Entente and over occupied BCV and Dunkelheim. After she came back from a mission over BCV with a

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dead co-pilot and serious burns to one leg (courtesy of a ground-launched interceptor that speared them with a laser just as they reached orbit) Admiral Graham personally ordered Mel to stop flying operations and concentrate on running her squadron. He backed her in the decision to spawn out 1222 NIS in support of the Three Blind Mice and 30AU's more irregular missions, but turned down her request to command the unit herself. She was effectively part of Graham's staff both before and during the Liberation Campaign, advising on the interface aspects of special operations, a role which brought her into frequent conflict with her counterpart on the ASLAN staff. Mel has recently been promoted to Captain, with authority over both Manticore squadrons and has been forced to relocate to Grosshidenhafen to inject a necessary dose of reality into mission planning by 1222 NIS's A Flight.

Melissa is married with a husband and two children back on Earth. A compact woman with an 'English Rose' complexion, she is extremely fit, but conscious that she has reached the age where her body is starting to slow down on her. She is still troubled by the laser burn to her leg she received on her last mission over BCV and has to exercise constantly to prevent scar tissue from limiting her mobility.

Commandant Pete te Aroa, 1222 NIS

Pete te Aroa is an oddball, a Maori New Zealander, brought up in the Belt, commissioned into the RNZAF, but on permanent loan to the Australian Defence Force Fleet Command as an observer attached to a landing flotilla, his intended role to provide the RNZAF with a subject-matter expert if it ever needs to develop an in-house interface landing capability. When the war in the French

Arm went hot Pete was one of the first Commonwealth personnel to apply for a cross-posting into a British unit. Initially assigned to 1203 NIS on Ravens, Mel Wyatt quickly latched onto him as a potential Manticore pilot and Pete was pushed through the RSN's pilot course, emerging as a fully qualified stutterwarp pilot just as the Kafers pushed past Aureore. Pete was posted to 1221 NIS, flying operations over Nyotekundu and Nous Voila, before being once more snatched up by Mel Wyatt to replace casualties in 1222 NIS's B Flight. Unfortunately Pete's next mission, the delivery of a new 30AU team to BCV, saw his aircraft's stress limits pushed well beyond the safety margins in combat with a pair of Hotels. Neither of the Hotels made it home, but neither could Pete's Manticore and he followed standing orders to abort to friendly territory. Fortunately for Pete and his aircraft the British forces were still operating several concealed strips and his Manticore landed safely at a base in the Chill Fells. If Pete's Manticore couldn't fly to orbit, it could potentially still fly and the next Manticore mission air-dropped a selection of replacement parts. Pete and a mixed batch of British, French and German technicians spent the next two months stripping down and refurbishing the Manticore for atmospheric operations and it was back in operation in time to deliver special forces teams onto the Contiente Francaise as part of Operation Dynamo Bear, the extraction of Rochemont's 'First Liberation'.

Pete continued to fly operations throughout the Occupation and Liberation, both infiltrating and exfiltrating special forces and occasionally even branching out into strike missions using both guided ordnance from the Manticore's weapons bays and field expedient gravity bombs dropped from adapted seat racks in the troop bay. While he could now in theory

An early model Manticore in development colours making a low pass around the Mach Loop in Wales.



rejoin 1222 NIS, or even return to the Core, orders have yet to catch up with Pete and he is not eager to leave behind the friends he has made on BCV.

Pete te Aroa is a gangling 201 centimetres tall, a result of his childhood in the Belt and his possession, through his parents, of the Starman DNAM package. As a negative consequence of this Pete barely scrapes into the anthropometric profile used for designing cockpits and that only in a very limited number of aircraft, but Starman also renders him completely immune to any form of motion sickness, to the frequent regret of his passengers. While marooned on BCV Pete has formed a relationship with his crew chief, a Luftwaffe Unteroffizier. She has recently discovered that she is pregnant with their child, raising further doubts over Pete's return from BCV.

Operational Doctrine

Because of their warp capacity and navigational array, Manticores can choose where to enter the interface for their descent.

Manticore operations in support of covert operations are based on a number of points:

- Offset the interface entrance as far from the LZ as possible.
- Once inside the atmosphere make a low level approach.
- If possible make the interface entrance out over sea.³
- If possible choose an LZ near the coast to avoid having to fly over land.
- Only under dire circumstances risk anything but a cold LZ.
- Try to operate spinwise, that is: Fly Eastwards.

These choices were, to older landers, often hardly an option due to lack of range and achievable 'Delta-V' once in orbit.

Note 3

The Kafers haven't, so far, taken to sea on any of the worlds they occupied. No reason for this was known until their homeworld was observed: G. Serpentis III has no seas as such, only large lakes, massive salty marshes and immense humidity.

Kafers simply don't know how to sail. This opens up operational opportunities for Mankind which the Manticore crews seize.

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Other operational considerations are recognizable to any 20th century battlefield support aviator in general, those supporting special operations in particular. They prefer to fly at night; hate to spend any time on the ground, but love to fly near the ground!

The crews may complain about any aspect of a mission and may even use considerable clout to change the ground operation to improve the air operation. But they will fly anytime, into anything for a wounded soldier! And: if there is one guy on board they will wait for the rest: No-one gets left behind.

A special mention must be made of the loadmasters. The loadmasters of RSN landers are the only enlisted crew and they are RSC personnel. To a tactical lander the loadie is critical. He or she decides if the craft can fly, when the craft can fly and what cargo or personnel gets to fly. The loadie has a veto!

Loadmasters rig heavy cargoes so that people can sit inches away from it, be-

tween the crushing cargo and the hull under high-G manoeuvres. Loadmasters calculate how fuel and cargo have to be striped away against each other and thus what the ships' reach is.

In Manticores loadmasters also have vital tasks supporting the EW and navigation crewmembers, thus freeing time for them to spend on tactical decisions.

Lastly, the loadmasters 'owns' the plane. He, or she is the 'Plane Captain' when it is not flying and is in charge of maintenance, supplies, retrofits and all the extra equipment that is needed to fly an incredibly complicated piece of equipment that is capable of descending from the outer system of a constellation, fly into the atmosphere to come to a full stop in the dark and on its' own; then take off again and fly all the way back.

On difficult, or complicated missions sometimes a second loadmaster is carried. This LM2 can have the additional task to operate the autocannons and CIWS system.



Additionally a ground security detachment or medical personnel may be carried as needed. For short raids Manticores can be equipped to serve as airborne command posts.

Narrative

The Manticore Special Operations lander bucked and shuddered alarmingly as it cleared through Dunkelheim's re-entry zone. Its airframe creaking and bowing as the flight crew piled on the G on the completion of transition. Evasive manoeuvres on entry into atmosphere were SOP and a good way to avoid ground fire or interceptors. The ship was out of line of sight of any known Kafer strongholds so directed energy weapons were unlikely to be a threat - but detonation ASAT, long range SAMs or the occasional Hotel fighter weren't out of the question.

Lieutenant Commander Chris Fox was the mission commander and leader of the six flight crew made up of himself; the pilot; an electronic warfare and countermeasures officer; a Navigator / Sensor operator Officer; an Engineering Officer for the warp drive and a Loadmaster, all experienced crew of the RSN's Interface Division. Fox had come from the RSN's Fighter Division and was a Zero-G stutterwarp combat specialist and former Wellington and Buccaneer pilot.

The Manticore turned onto a new heading then overbanked to power down to the surface, losing altitude at a dizzying rate. In its wake a decoy sped off in the opposite direction accurately mimicking the ships heat and radar signatures although not its substantial bulk.

'Comms. Confirmation signal from from Viper on microburst. Pick up is confirmed. Enemy ground troops within 5km of LP. Viper declaring LP cold.'

'PIC. Roger. COP, commence approach run via drop-off points 1 and 2. Lysander-13 prepare for drop on automatic.'

The Manticore levelled out briefly at 3000 meters, slowing to half the speed of sound above the brown and blasted surface and launched a Hardshell containing a four-man German special operations team over its rear ramp. With separation complete and the Hardshell dropping away on autopilot, the Manticore accelerated and lost altitude again heading to its next way point. There, after a quick pop-up climb, four inertially guided Dakota cargo pods were lobbed from the weapons bays to glide to a drop off point where a team of resistance fighters would hopefully be waiting for it.

The final run into their Initial Point was made at 300 meters altitude, just under the speed of sound and with passive sensors only.

'Viper this is 'Harley One'. 'Give LP update.'

'Hello 'Harley One', this is Viper. Confirm LP cold, condition unchanged. Good to hear you. Be advised we still have Kafer patrols to our South but they aren't aware of our position. Over.'

"'Harley One'. Roger. Out.'

The Manticore slowed rapidly, bashing through the turbulent air in the hilly region, and transitioning to VTOL mode. The ships sensors rapidly picked out the heat signatures of the roaming Kafers' AFVs and the extraction beacon. Weapons were overlaid onto the targets for prosecution if required and a flight path chosen to avoid passing over the patrols. The landing was routine and noisy, the 250 ton ship didn't come down quietly.

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Fox fumed as the loadmaster's chivvied the Viper team, with several casualties in tow, onto the ship; every second they were on the deck increased their exposure and chance of discovery and destruction. However unlike a conventional lander at least they didn't have to worry about meeting a very small extraction window with their mother ship in orbit. The Privateer Rillfisher instead, was several light minutes away in deep space waiting for the RV at the FTL threshold.

Finally loaded and secure the co-pilot brought the Black Hog's power up from idle and brought the ship back into the air, rapidly transitioning to forward flight and smoothly away onto the exfiltration route. Lieutenant Commander Fox didn't even have to give any commands as pilot gained his heading and brought the engines into rocket mode and they streaked back towards orbit.

So far, so good.

The original concept for the Manticore as a Spec Ops lander is by Dan Hebditch. This work draws on his work and that of

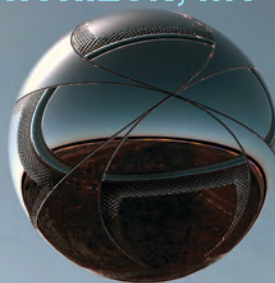
David Gillon. The Raven, which is also mentioned in this article is by Bryn Monnery and Dan Hebditch. I would like to thank these men for their support and the chance to use their work as a basis for this article.

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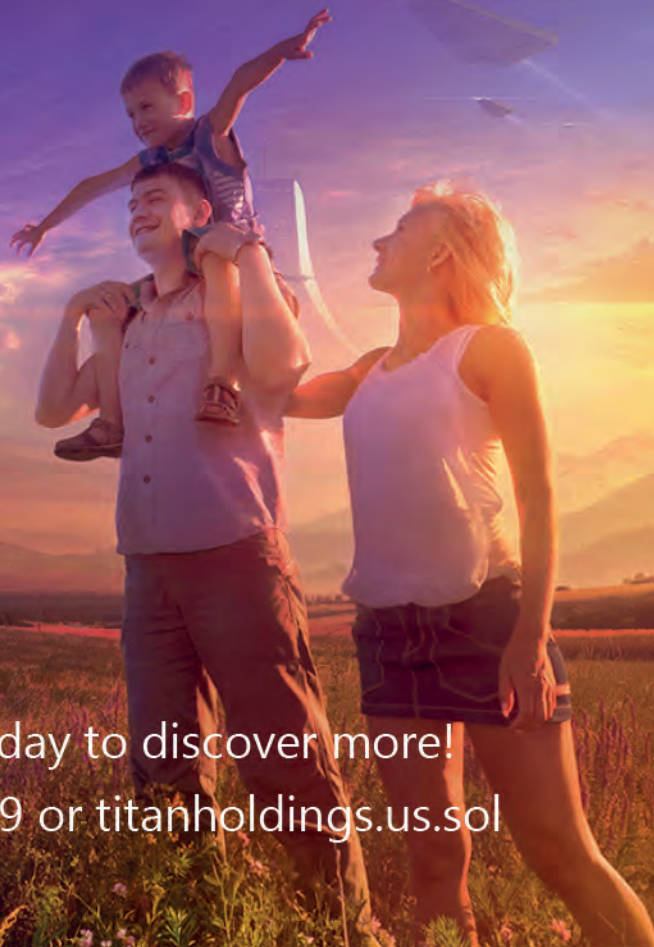
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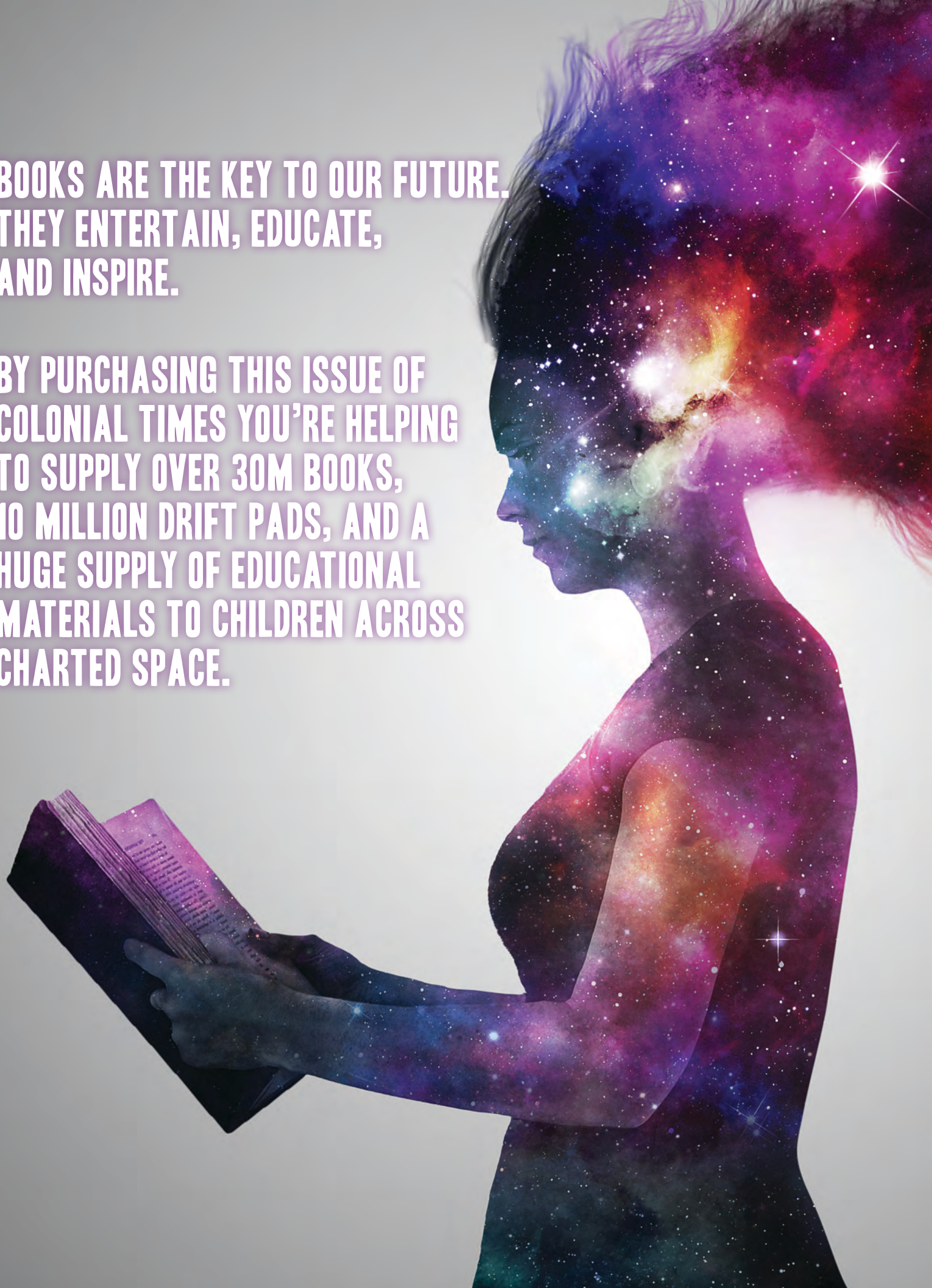


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PATRONS by STEPHANIE MCALEA

GERD LINUS ROTH ON DUNKELHEIM

Gerd Linus Roth

DOB: 7th May 2257 (42)

Gender: non-binary,
presents male

Ethnicity: Caucasian

Body Type: Endomorph

Background: Frontier

Nationality: "Dunkelheimer"
(de-facto German)

Homeworld: Dunkelheim

Str 7 +0

Dex 11 +1

End 8 +0

Int 10 +1

Edu 8 +0

Soc 6 -1

Note: this NPC article's focus is post-Kafer invasion. That said, much can be gained for the PCs from knowing Gerd before the war.

Gerd grew up as a troublemaker. If your bike was stolen, Gerd was the culprit. If someone broke into your home and sabotaged your air filtration system for a laugh and filling your home with bugs, it was Gerd. However, things all came to a head and stopped being so fun when Gerd got into a fight in a local bar with a victim of one of his robberies. A fight ensued and Gerd punched the guy to the floor but not before his victim dashed his brains on the step outside. Arrested and scared, things were looking bleak for Gerd. He eventually pleaded Manslaughter. It was self-defense but Gerd knew his reputation had damned him and no way was he going to get away on a self-defense claim.

From the age of 10 he'd been a petty nuisance turned low level criminal. When a local policeman, Karl Krötenschwanz, spoke up for him during his parole hearing, Gerd knew he had to make changes

to his life. Karl had been the unfortunate copper who had to deal with Gerd's shenanigans for years and knew he was just acting out. He wasn't sure why he was acting out as Gerd seemed to have good parents and a stable home, but he could see the signs and knew that Gerd wasn't all bad.

Upon release, Karl persuaded a local general store owner to give Gerd a job and his life started looking up from there. Until the day the Kafer's showed up.

It wasn't the Bugs that brought Gerd into the war but a local man determined to do his bit no matter the cost. On a sunny day, as news of the Kafer landing reached Goldberg, Karl visiting Franc Meuller who was locking up his store and awaiting the local militia to pick up his weapons and supplies for use by a resistance movement. A stranger entered the store with a pistol and demanded rifles and ammo to fight the invaders. When both Karl and Franc refused, citing the bigger picture, the stranger shot



A RARE PHOTO OF GERD LINUS ROTH

them dead and stole 4 rifles and ammunition. Gerd arrived 20 minutes later to find his friends dead. The assailant was never found.

In the months following the invasion, Gerd has taken to hitting Kafer convoys when they are at rest. He has figured out they are at their most docile when not under threat but assumes it's to do with sunlight. They are more active and wary of attack in the daytime.

He knows they have poorer eyesight in the darkness and will happily share any anti-Kafer information he has. He has also learned how to mine Kamelinsekt habitats for personal water and uses a plasma torch to burrow dens and small ambush holes into extinct habitats.

Gerd doesn't play well with other resistance cells. They don't really have his anger or his willingness to gorego relationships to get the job done. He joined a few but he seldom followed orders and was eventually kicked out or left. He does, however, have respect for any off-worlders who come to fight.

"This isn't their world, or even their fight, yet they come anyway."

When PCs meet Gerd he is likely to be in a hideout, sat near other resistance fighters but on his own, or, if you meet him before the kafer invasion, he is likely to be delivering supplies to a bar and offering to act as scout to the hinterlands.

"You wanna see a habitat? Yeah, whatever, just pay me and I'll take you."

He's not above raiding moisture farms in the hinterlands to get by, but he'll never leave someone without any water. He's learned the hard way that he can't drink the cocktail that Kafers drink which enables them to last weeks in the Dustrim.

Personality:

Focus: Low Clubs - Low Violence

Gerd's personality seems, on the face of it, quite straightforward but that falls into his trap of misjudging him. He'll play the bumpkin to be underestimated but is intelligent and quick witted. he is poorly educated but by no means ignorant. A lack

Traits:

Robust/2

Cool Under Fire/2

Hard to Kill/1

Heavy/1

Enemy/2

Vengeful/1

Infamous/1

Career

5 terms: Rogue (Flyer)
(5 terms)

Frontier Citizen (worker)
(2 Terms)

Skills:

Medic/ 1

Trade (Barter)/2

Drive (wheeled)/1

Computer/0

Navigation/1

Gun Combat
(Slug Pistol -Stracher
M6) /1

Gun Combat
(Shotgun-Stracher
Wolf)/1

Recon/2

Mechanic/1

Deception/1

Streetwise/1

Melee/2

Survival/2

Possessions:

Range Truck

Stracher M6

Stracher Wolf (with numerous specialist rounds)

Locksmith Kit

Microcomm (broken)

Det-Cord

Tactical Flashlight

Farseer

Mechanical toolkit

Mul-T-Tool

Tent

**Gerd will never injure someone enough that survival becomes dicey. Breaking an arm of a bandit might be his thing in town but in the Dust he'd never risk someone's life this way. He may break their nose or do something similar but he'd make sure they can fight for themselves or walk out of the Dust for medical treatment. On a world like Dunkelheim, all colonists realise that no argument is really worth risking your survival when they planet can kill you on a whim. Besides, a prolonged fight is waste of moisture.*

of patience with standard education saw Gerd disadvantaged early on but he has made up for that with practical knowledge. There is simply no one better in Goldberg to take you into the Dust. He sees violence as a useful tool but neither enjoys it (except against Kafers) or employs it often. He is often quiet but when he sees bullying he may surprise player characters by jumping up and breaking someone's arm* suddenly and without warning. Players may assume this to be psychotic behaviour but he's just ending the fight before someone gets killed.

There is something in Gerd's youth that turned him bitter and uncooperative. What that is, the Referee can decide but it's not his gender status. Such trivial matters are unimportant in the 24th century and communities across space are almost exclusively supportive.

While Gerd may be hard to get to know, he is loyal and makes friends amongst those who forget his rebellious past. He quickly learns to like veteran characters who share water with him. This does not work with those who are naive or new Travellers. He just considers them fools for sharing their vital resource, especially as it may fall on him to carry them out if they become dehydrated.

Gerd has the code keys for all the moisture farm pylons within 30 miles and can gain water from there. How he came by these is up to the Referee.

Gerd is one of the many who were not aware that threats of rebellion during the War of German Reunification was a gambit by Goldberg. He saw genuine merit in independence and joined one of the numerous rebel militia, however they soon petered out without a real enemy to fight. In many ways, the Kafer invasion has helped Germany retain control of Dunkelheim as angry tensions are siphoned off by fighting Kaf-

ers. What the colonial office in Bonn will do once the war is won is anyone's guess.

'A New Start'

Below are 6 scenario options for Gerd.

- **1** Gerd's days are numbered if Rosie Hapnar has anything to do with it. She will pay the PCs L200,000 for proof that they have killed Gerd. Rosie is the widow of Reinhardt Hapnar, the man Gerd killed in the bar fight. Rosie has been waiting a long time for less than scrupulous troubleshooters to come from off-world. Once Gerd knows of the plot he will go 'full rambo' and hide out in the area and pick off his would be murderers at distance or one by one, up close and personal.

- **2** A Scout vessel repurposed from a crop duster was sent up to spy on Kafer positions but has failed to report in after 3 weeks. The manager of the now shelled Aerodrome asks the PCs to lead a rescue mission into the Dust (outback). He points them in the direction of Gerd and offers them L10,000 each as his son Andreas was the pilot. Mikkel Sandersen is desperate for news of his son and while he doesn't trust Gerd (who does?), he knows Gerd is his best chance of seeing his son again. He was also carrying three passengers, two guards and a camera woman.

Despite fears that the Kafers were responsible, it appears that mechanical failure brought down the craft. Sadly, when they are found all are dead but one of the guards. Two died on impact but the guard killed young Andreas and started eating him out of desperation and living



'THE DUNKELHEIM DUCKHUNTERS'

ONE OF THE MORE SUCCESSFUL INSURRECTION MOVEMENTS ON DUNKELHEIM.

A GROUP OF 3 EX-GAME HUNTERS FROM EARTH TRAPPED BY THE INVASION AND GERD SET UP THIS RESISTANCE CELL WHICH NOW NUMBERS MORE THAN A HUNDRED COMBATANTS. THEIR BASE IS REPORTEDLY UNDERGROUND. GERD IS NO LONGER A MEMBER.

on the water rations, water in the vehicle's engine, and Andreas' thigh.

Mikkel wants to kill the survivor but it's plain to see the survivor is delirious and did what he could to survive. Do they let Mikkel and a small mob exact revenge?

- **3** The PCs see Gerd raid a family's moisture pylon for water. He takes quite a lot and even though the PCs directly benefit from the water, it's clear that there isn't enough for a family to survive on. Gerd won't answer questions on this. The PCs may think of reporting him, but will discover that the family have been dead for weeks and the waters would go to waste. They could find this out for themselves but the farm would be over 10 miles away from the pylon.
- **4** Gerd hears a rumour that the man who killed his friend and mentor Karl (and his employer Franc) is now a leader of a resistance cell near Neu Berlin. The rumour happens to be true and Gerd hires the PCs at L5,000 each to help dissuade any allies of the man (Jose Manuel Arancho) in aiding him as Gerd takes him in to the authorities.

Of course, Gerd has no intention of making a citizen's arrest and will kill him as soon as he is able. He will not abandon the PCs or put them in danger unless he fails a Coolness roll or panics. He will make his escape, hope to kill Arancho later and save the money he was due to pay the PCs.

- **5** Gerd has an idea to create real havoc behind enemy lines by ambushing a Kafer officer. He's seen him with his Farseers looking all shiny in his gold and silver bug-hat and wants to feed it to him. Why the bug leaves the

'safe place' is unknown but Gerd says it only comes out with about 4 guards. Easy prey for a group of determined adventurers and Gerd.

They day they choose to sneak near the travel route and ambush the Kafer officer is the day he decides to head out with 20 new recruits. Dammit! It looks like they've been spotted!

- **6** Free the Goldberg 1! Gerd is in a small township off the beaten track hunting Kafers when the local militia grab him and accuse him of stealing their fuel, leaving them without power. Gerd's reputation has preceded him and, as it's war time, the local burgermeister decides to execute him after a brief trial.

Gerd is innocent. The PCs may suspect this as Gerd has no need for fuel and steals water but the Burgermeister sees an opportunity to be popular with his frightened citizenry and thinks an execution will cement that. Do the PCs become Advocats for the accused? Or sensing a kangaroo court, do they bust him out of gaol and possibly kill innocents in the attempt?

Further events are up to the referee.



PLACES AND FACES

A GUIDE TO UNIQUE PLACES AND THOSE WHO INHABIT THEM

Sometimes, when things go sour, there is only one man to turn to; Johnny Tranh. At least that's what Johnny would say (Johnny isn't his real name). If you're in Phnom Penh and find yourself in trouble, Johnny can help. For a price.

He lives in Chrey Kaong, on Vreng Sreng Blvd (18c, Concourse 6) as it winds its way from downtown to the Downport at Brasath (see image below. Johnny's apartment door is ringed). He is able to get all mundane things within an hour, contraband

items such as drugs and weapons by the end of the day, and maybe fake documents in a day or two.

While his services aren't cheap, PCs may make good use of all he supplies. He doesn't deal in information (that can get you killed) but he will help out of towners get acclimated.

His place

Johnny lives in what is locally known as 'Phtangsela' or Maze/Warren and it's easy to see why. Thousands of doors, stairs and steps, corridors, small plazas, road crossings, lift pads, and impromptu housing crammed into a small district (all without any kind of planning) means this area will be a nightmare if you're chasing, or even looking, for someone.

Anyone here who is known and trusted can count on 2d6 locals armed with melee weapons to come to their aid in 1d6 minutes. If someone needs to escape they can melt away through a fake door over a heating duct and be gone in seconds. If you're wanted by an off-world agency then this is the place for you to hide. If you're wanted on Earth then it becomes a little harder to leave the Phtangsela.

The Indochinese authorities are giving the Phtangsela a wide berth. Last year, an over enthusiastic city official decided to order Police into the maze of buildings looking for a smuggler. The resulting firefight started a fire which left 17 dead, including 5 police officers. the target, unsurprisingly, was never found.



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systems (for our non-civilian customers) all exemplify the very state of the art in engine and starship design. Our Test vehicle was Capt. Willard Dureage' cargo vessel 'Old Man River' carrying cargo from Tirane to the end of the French Arm. With Hyde Dynamics behind him, we make sure he keeps roll, roll, rolling along.



Purism:

Containing the evils of the world



Religiosity in 2300AD

As we saw in the article 'The Ramtha Cult' in CT6, religion is alive and kicking in the 24th century. Post-twilight there would have been many doomsday cults, armageddon sects, and churches that would've lauded the end of mankind as literal proof of the second coming or the fulfilment of prophecy.

These churches and sects wouldn't have been solely

Purism

"I look forward with horror to contact with the other inhabited planets, if there are such. We would only transport to them all of our sin and our acquisitiveness, and establish a new colonialism. I can't bear to think of it." C.S. Lewis

Ethics

Purism is an anti-colonial movement with strong roots in eco-Catholicism; whilst its main texts & teachings predate interstellar travel by several centuries, the advent of stutterwarp and the discovery of life on other worlds gave its interpretation of Catholicism a new relevance.

At its heart, Purism is the belief that

mankind is simply not ready - or worthy- to explore other worlds. Until we have alleviated the evils that exist here on Earth - to be pure - all we will do it spread the taint of human corruption to other worlds, to other forms of life.

The creed has proven to be very appealing, especially to those in the less fortunate sections of society - the ones who live in poverty and pollution, scratching out a living from waste dumps & landfills, praying to find some pre-Twilight antique. To them, mankind's status as a star-faring species has been bought at a terrible price: how is it moral that their children live in poverty and die from pollution-related diseases? Why should we inflict the same punishments on other worlds?

Whilst never conclusively linked - thus

far - to any acts of violence, Purists are regarded by many in the media and law enforcement community as enablers. Several government agencies believe that they hide behind their legal status as a religious entity whilst using their resources to further their extremist agenda. Although there is nothing more than circumstantial evidence of their involvement in acts of terror, they have gained an undeniable reputation of being media savvy operators who can be reliably called upon to excuse or otherwise explain acts of violence that happen to further their agenda.

History

Whilst the group emerged as a separate – albeit trivial - branch of the Catholic faith in the post-Twilight era, it remained of only academic interest until the contact with the Sung & Slaver War in the mid-23rd century. Upon seeing evidence that their doctrine was being proven right, some felt that action must be taken - action to save the universe from the original sin that humanity carried.

Whilst this new direction resulted in a string of low-level “terroristic” events (most little more than industrial accidents), their first ‘spectacular’ came in 2267, with the loss of the British registered Pioneer Queen, later attributed to a corrupted navigation system. In the aftermath of this attack, intelligence agencies stepped up their surveillance of the Purists and have since reported a string of credible threats against several targets – not least of which is the Libreville beanstalk, though, frustratingly, firm evidence has been impossible to obtain.

In June 2271 Pope Alexander IX felt that the situation was intolerable and called a conclave in Verona to address the issue; after much debate the subsequent

Papal Bull “De exploratio de Stellis” decreed Purism to be a heresy and excommunicated the leaders of the movement.

Despite the excommunication, Purism still has a strong following around the world, with several mega-churches in Indonesia & the Philippines providing it with significant financial muscle. The

current Archbishop of Manila (The Most Reverend Joseph Andrada) and his predecessor (The Most Reverend Emmanuel de Asis) are both believed to be leading lights of the organization and both have been excommunicated & sanctioned by the Papacy in the last decade - seemingly to no discernable effect.

Area of Interest

In accordance with their ethics, Purists appear to show a high degree of interest in acts of violence against technology & infrastructure, albeit exclusively within the Earths solar system: whilst the attacks might be primarily against infrastructure, this distinction is of academic interest to those who ultimately lose their lives.

In a seeming dichotomy, the Purist movement is also closely linked with several green movements and has funded (and patented) numerous environmental remediation technologies, many of which are now in routine use around the more egregious legacies of 20th century consumerist society.

occupied by lunatics and fringe elements but many desperate people would've see the church as not only spiritual salvation but also as a distribution point for food and supplies.

In time, many cults would've fallen by the wayside, been exterminated, or changed into something more acceptable to society as a whole. Many groups may have even been the foundation of their future societies. Islam and Judaism are already established as theocracies and as the world recovered and international trade resumed around 2010, these theocracies will have softened their dogma to be permitted to enter into large trading bodies. Religious nations couldn't turn their backs on the opportunity to recover quickly and secular nations would, as a Dutch diplomat said openly at the reestablishment of OPEC in 2011; “We're tired of your shit.”

While isolation and privacy among the stars enables cults to form again, they too are in need of support by an ever watchful government. In 2300, the major religions remain, but also do the hidden cults.



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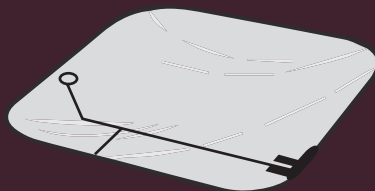
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The Flex™ 130



Using LIDAR waves to 'shift' the visible frequency enabled Flex, a modest start up in Annapolis, to produce a small box that enabled engineers, builders, and other construction workers to avoid utility lines and pipes buried in walls and also to scan for lost rooms, rooms that were abandoned or built over after Twilight but still exist. It soon became apparent that rescue teams became one of their biggest customer bases followed by the police and lastly, the military.

They come in a range of sizes from a credit card sized rigid panel to a 60"x50" flexible screen that is able to be mounted on sur-

faces using small stik-its. While they do use a lot of energy, the forewarning during a breach to any police service or armed force is invaluable. The large panels can be mounted on stretchers and held over fallen masonry during earthquakes or after a battle and can peer through 10 foot of rock and debris for those trapped underneath. While a dog or Burrowvarg's sense are much better, the Flex130 allows the rescuers to see any teetering structures or ruptured powerlines.

Military use can assist in mine detection as well checkpoint searches. They are also useful in starship repair as engineers behind an airlock can see through it using the Flex to assess the damage in a part of the ship open to vacuum without needing an external power source or to step into the damaged area.

Flex™ is currently working on a spray

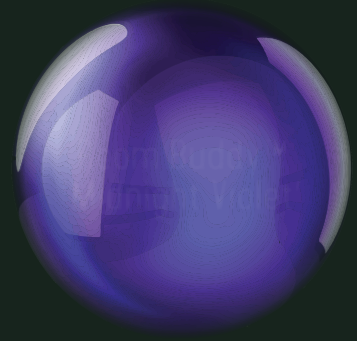


CALM AND CONTENT SHOPPING ON KAITEKI STREET, CHIBA CITY, TOSASHIMIZU, JOI.

paint version that requires less energy. This is vital on worlds where resource management is of primary concern. If the paint application can be made to work, it will revolutionise observation security. The very walls could be watching you and hidden cameras could be placed behind solid walls and left there without serious energy concerns.

One drawback of the Flex™ is its energy needs. Anyone with a bargain basement I.R. camera can easily see the energy source behind the wall and defend against it. The security services over confidence in Flex may be their undoing. The Free Elysian Front is believed to have used a wall cam stuck to a small piece of Flex on the outside of the French Consulate's main meeting room. It is thought that for 3 months the Elysians knew every detail of the daily planning meetings of the previous colonial government and could adapt accordingly.

Price: L_v500 per sq.m.



The Room Buddy™

Originally designed as an aid to painters and decorators, this small rigid baloon could be thrown into a cleared room and in about 10 seconds would explode spraying paint all over the room. The internal chip controlled an even splatter pattern and is programmable to exclude floor, ceilings, and other surfaces. The slight pop would result in a beautifully painted room in seconds.

While its sales were sky rocketing, the parent company's reputation was dropping. Revolutionary and protest organisations started using the Room

CAFE PARISIENNE, DONETSK STREET, LIBREVILLE

Buddy to stun, and in some cases, render blind, or even suffocate law officers and soldiers. Not all peace officers wore face shields so while some cops and troops were momentarily stunned, they could just wipe their visor clean and carry on. Not so militia or the local cop.

In a year, the death toll from the Room Buddy was 14 and several governments were considering legal action. However, Hydraplane, the Room Buddy's manufacturer, successfully pleaded that they were not responsible for the mis-use of their product and that it had been used millions of times safely. This led some local authorities to ban the import of Room Buddies but that encouraged decorators just to move. A Room Buddy saved them hours of painting and having to do it again by hand just made their prices less competitive. Many decorators from neighbouring areas just wouldn't care if the Room Buddy was banned in the district they were working in and just use one anyway. Facing a dip in revenue, however slight, this

encouraged smaller towns to legalise the Room Buddy once again.

You need to show you have a trade licence to purchase a Room Buddy (in a variety of colours) but they are easy to come by.

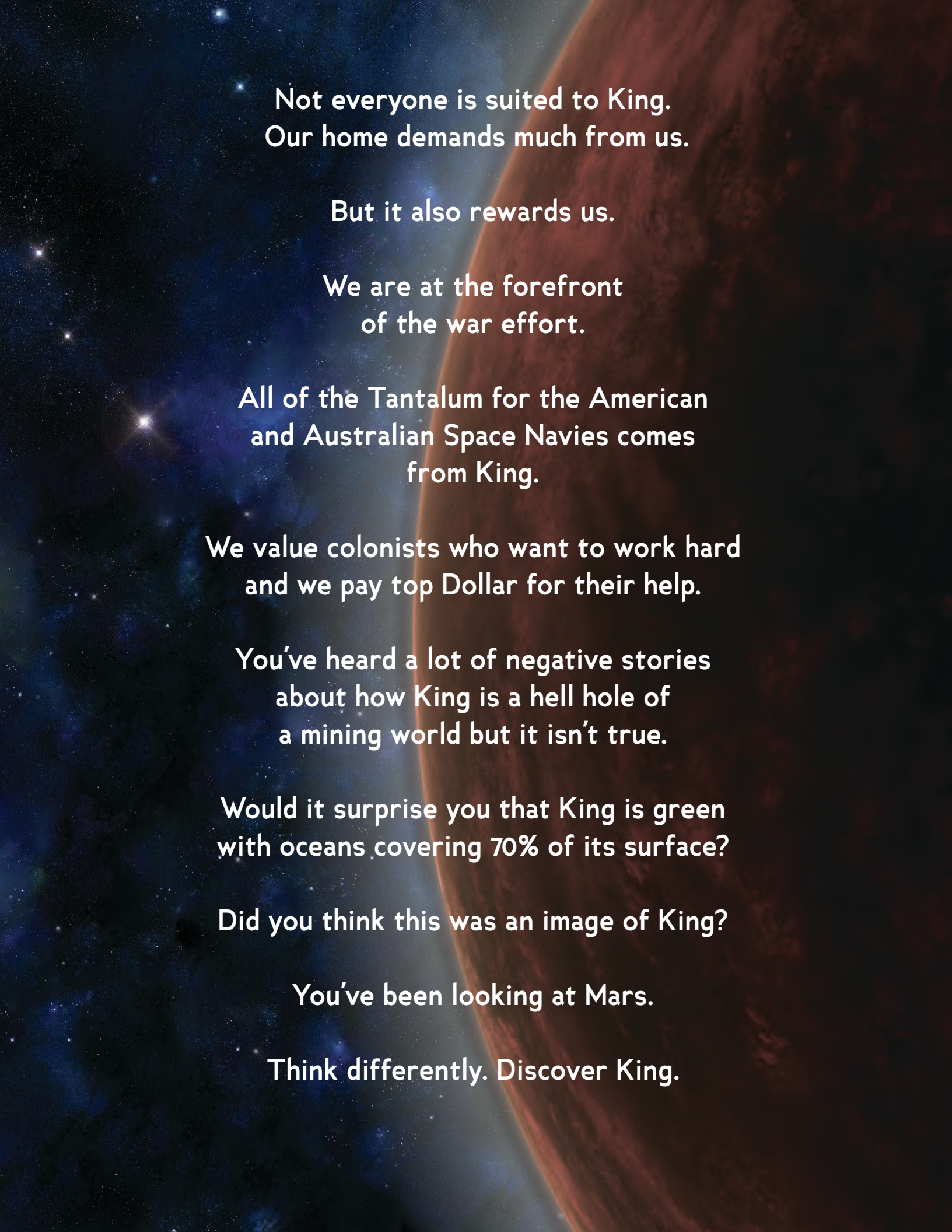
L_v10 per Room Buddy.

Captain Fantastic Displays

Gone are the days when you needed a small fortune to have a holographic display in your store window. Now, with CFD's innovative Curved Light™ technology, even small homes can have motile projections that entice and amuse. The first to put these into mass effect were Mama Tsu's Sweet Emporium. Known throughout the core as *the* place for sweet treats and candy, you can now see their Sugar Whirl Wizard mascot reach out to you in the street!

L_v300 for a 4msq panel.





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YOUR WORLD

THE LATEST NEWS BROUGHT TO YOUR FINGERTIPS



Speed Fever: The Mirshama Cobra 90

Mirshama's new roadster is a sight to behold. Able to attain a road cruise of 320kph, its Sutrium Iod-DAM battery can get you from London to Athens on a single charge. Its wheel contact provides extra stability and its patented Unpackme™ system means it ships cheaply and will set itself up and start charging while you go an get your gear on. At L_v16,999 for a bike without a lift skirt it isn't cheap, but it sure is beautiful!

"The simple things."

Captured on a rare misty evening in Nantes, this feline adventurer walks his path in the chill November icy air. The photo was shared widely on Drift™ with many of the comments citing a pleasureable and calming feeling when viweing it.

"I dunno, really. I just saw it and knew, instinctively knew, that everything was going to be OK in my life.

It's an amazing picture." said Post Officer Julie Harris of Brighton, England. It turns out that there is more to it than just the image. Quinn Optronics' SABRE supercomputer actually constructed the image, paying special attention to composition and detail. It examined 400 million photographs, got rid of the constructed images that made no sense and was left with thisone. Its criteria? 'A peaceful feeling with the world' SABRE told us.



I See you

The fight against the invaders on Aurore continues as Sgt Alan Bedford of the TFL tests a new drone application not far from Sky in Tanstaafl. The drone, with very delicate thermal receptors has had some moderate success in tracking Kafer forces in the area. While they can be shot at by small arms fire, it seems the enemy's 'Snapfire' system cannot track them. Testing continues.

Trouble in Mudville

Last night saw the worst burst of violence in Mudville ever. Alleged Chrome Ronin members assaulted a social center and opened fire against the helpless attendants in the Libreville district.

In the ensuing firefight with rival gangs a kindergarten was set ablaze and at least 3 toddlers died of suffocation. The combats continued during the night with a deadly toll of more than 150 people dead.

The LMPD (Libreville Metropolitan Police Department) did not intervene and is now accused of ineffectiveness. According to Léon Duvallier, spokesman of the LMPD, Mayor Lin Natora is to blame: “This is an outrageous conspiracy. The Mayor is ruthlessly trying to engage in private business by privatizing the police force. We are understaffed and without the proper equipment to get involved in war-like conflicts”.

In a recent press conference Mayor Lin Natora has sharply replied: “I suggest Mr Duvallier to stop this useless chit-chat and focus in doing what the LMPD is being paid for: restore peace and enforce the law in the whole city. If the Chief Officer is unable to fulfill his duty I just wait for his resignation”.

With the airfilm service cancelled in many areas and the distribution of food and water jeopardized in many EZ1 Stops, usually neutral spots in gang wars, the citizens have much to fear the incoming night that promises to be restless, again.



A possible combatant is chased into the night by the citizenry



Hatemonger's return

The avant-garde music producer is back again with his 5th studio album. Weighing in at 220 minutes, ‘Hopper’ is a grand opus of Sublim, Rock, Liquidity, and EFM and pre orders have already broken records.

Hatemonger’s hopping has calmed down for the moment and for the next tour he tells us he will be male, though he vows to return to his more familiar female form after the tour. See your local EZ1, Drift™, and Lucky Penny to purchase ‘Hopper’. Out today.

EUROPE: 2300





The Conurbation Conundrum

The map opposite may seem familiar to us but throughout most of humanity's history the map has been missing. Map reading was a skill only known to scholars until the late middle-ages when laymen took up the role of tax collectors of an ever expanding population. Needing more tax inspectors and collectors than ever, lords and kings would teach their subjects on boundaries and roads in order to better collect tolls and levies.

Some of the modern cities depicted opposite now outstrip those kingdoms in every way but we must remember that, apart from necessity during Twilight, those cities were placed by those same peoples. Were it not for the Data Age shortly before Twilight, we'd have lost all the knowledge our ancestors accumulated and while we know that much has been lost, we can also take comfort in the fact that much has been saved from those dark years.

However, while cities sprawl and people prosper, we need to keep in mind that space is not finite. There are sporadic mentions in *The Great Collection/ Libro Crepusculum* that cities had become quite crowded pre-Twilight which led to social unrest. When our cities become overcrowded we can go off-world. The pre-Twilight civilisations could only go up or into neighbouring lands, triggering conflict.

Dr Lin Yuwei during her tenure at the Sorbonne



“Once is happenstance, twice is coincidence, three times is enemy action”

If we are to believe Ian Fleming’s quote, we are not to be worried... yet. Three months ago we reported that Dr Maciej Kowalczyk, recent Nobel laureate in physics vanished during a sport trip in North Mexico barrens. Now the ranks of the scientific community have been depleted again. Young quantum physics Dr Lin Yuwei is reported missing while visiting Wellon invited by the Foundation of Practical Knowledge. She was last seen in an attuning session of the surging Ramtha Cult. Displaying a more than remarkable success among the scientific community, Lin Yuwei is a Ramthist enthusiast. She recently declared her intention to attend the traditional pilgrimage to Limbes, only reserved for the most enthusiastic – and wealthiest – adherents.

Lin Yuwei is well known as an expert on building complex structures with entangled quantum particles.

John Hodges, Chief Superintendent of the Royal Wellon Constabulary reassured Dr Yuwei’s family: “An inquiry is on the way. We do have some good hints and I expect a prompt resolution. As every Wellonese know, in our country no offence will go unpunished”.

WATER ON MARS



MARS TOMORROW
Making the red planet blue
BBC INTERSTELLAR
see local listings



M.I.A.?

This may be the last picture of Marie De Parr. The leader of Elsyian's Front de l'indépendance (pictured left with her trademark SG-77) hasn't been seen since she left for work at her antique business last Saturday.

While she made many enemies in her days as an armed fighter, it is unlikely Imperial agents had anything to do with her disappearance as France wants to solidify ties with its ex-colony, not shatter them.

An Old-Fashioned Outlook

Snr Alberto Ferrera is an old fashioned type of guy. You'll often see him in his antique Ford Paragon on the Caya Republica in Ciudad St. Juan on Montana. He won't be driving though, as he gets his antique DN-2000 android from the now defunct Cybersight Inc to do the driving for him.

"It's a little company, ya know? Since my wife Maria passed away he's been a comfort (Alberto calls his android 'Gentle Ben') and I couldn't do without him. mainly because I love that car and the DMV won't let me drive anymore now that I'm 110."

Gentle Ben never gets a ticket and his Paragon is unable to power any self-drive tech. It still cracks water for hydrogen. The maintenance runs into tens of thousands of Livre every year but a good pension helps with that. If he can afford it, and people enjoy seeing him travelin style, who are we to argue?





Eyes on the world

Canon released the specs of their new professional tri-lens this week via their magazine, On Sight. The romantically named CN3a-1001 rivals best-in-class for zoom magnification and telephoto focal length for the Super Tru-Life™ format, and is engineered to offer unrivaled optical performance for demanding high-end productions, meeting and exceeding industry standards.

Intended for the working professional, the CN3a-1001300mm lens has markings on angled surfaces on both sides of the barrel, making it easy to read settings from behind, or from either side of the camera. Focus markings can even be switched from American labeling to metric, depending on production need. This lens is equipped with control rings designed to maintain the proper amount of resistance with consistent operating torque, and a covered flange-back adjustment mechanism to meet numerous of production application needs.

Designed to fulfill contemporary 32K production standards, this phenomenal lens surpasses the performance requirements of any HD imaging system. The only issue is the price. At L_V38,000 it's likely to only end up in movie studio hands.



Chills in the cold lands

This month sees the return of Tirane's biggest horror festival, Core Gore and with it all the fanplay fanatics dressed as their fave horror icons. May 25th in New Washington, Tirania (the Theater District) is when and where it takes place with movies, books, games, VR, Drift presentations, and comic books all being the centre of attention.

Harriet Blayze, author of the Red Hook trilogy will be guest of honour and the cast of 'Killing Time' will have a panel Q&A session.

With all the hotels booking up fast you'll need to hurry if you want to attend!

core-gore2300/prismmedia/newwashington/tirania.ac-a



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