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CHALLENGE

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The Magazine of Science-Fiction Gaming

TWILIGHT: 2000
A Rock in
Troubled Waters

Adam Giebel

MEGATRAVELLER
From Peace to War

Jeffrey Groteboer

SPACE: 1889
The Biology
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Challenge, the magazine of science-fiction gaming, is published bimonthly.

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The issue price is \$3.25. One-year subscriptions (six issues) are \$15 in the U.S. and Canada. Foreign subscriptions (outside the U.S. and Canada, but not to APO or FPO addressees) by surface mail are \$30 per year. Foreign subscriptions by air mail are \$50 per year. Please make all payments in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank.

Submissions: We welcome articles and illustrations for **Challenge**. Please inquire before submitting manuscripts, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope, we will send manuscript guideline and format sheets. Art portfolios should be addressed to the art director, c/o **Challenge**. Foreign inquiries (except APO/FPO) please include an International Reply Coupon.

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MEMO

From the Management

This issue is the last one assembled under the editorial control of Timothy B. Brown. With his hand on the tiller, **Challenge** grew from 48 to 80 pages, went from a quarterly to a bimonthly, and changed its emphasis from GDW games to science-fiction gaming in general. Tim remains a close friend, and while we will keep in touch, his presence will be missed. Join with everyone here at GDW to wish him the best of luck.

That said, on to other matters: Gaming has grown considerably over the years, but it seems that people (the public at large) still have a hazy idea about what it is we do. This is partly because of the small numbers involved in the hobby (even though there are millions of us, we are a small percentage of the population) and partly because of cliquishness on the part of gamers. I think gamers need to pay more attention to public relations.

I heard of a group that was on a small-town television show—whether the tale is true is unimportant to my point. The station was doing a piece on role-playing games and wanted footage. The producer discovered that several members of the group were Society for Creative Anachronism or science-fiction fans, and wore costumes at conventions. He suggested that everyone who had a costume should wear it. When the crew arrived, the producer suggested they film a game in the basement, against a black backdrop the crew brought. The game was filmed by candlelight, stage-managed by the producer. When the piece aired, the narration indicated this was what every game looked like, and weren't those people perverted, playing at night in a basement? It was a real hatchet job.

The moral is, don't let the media or other outsiders *use* your group. Unless you usually play by candlelight with incense, don't let be depicted as doing so. Play your regular games, and don't dress things up (figuratively or literally). Bear in mind how you're going to appear to outsiders, and remember that you may be the only picture some people ever get of gamers. Do you want that impression to be a mistaken one?

—Loren K. Wiseman



A Rock In Troubled Waters

The coastal settlements around south Jersey's shores form a region of small communities that has managed to survive the war relatively intact. It is one of the more stable and lucrative areas held by Milgov. This article provides a detailed reference of the area, centering on the Intracoastal Waterway—the most

reliable local avenue in the year 2001—used by slow-moving military and civilian traffic. It is also designed to tie the **Going Home** module with any adventure set in the northeastern United States. "A Rock In Troubled Waters" (set in early 2001) details the territory and notable clusters of civilization from the Delaware Canal and Cape Henlopen in Delaware, north and east across Pennsylvania and New Jersey to Perth Amboy. This includes Philadelphia, Trenton, Wilmington, Cape May Naval Base, Fort Dix, and Tom's River Naval

Station. Also covered are the specifications on several "brown water navy" vessels, as well as the state government and militia system for New Jersey (as organized by Milgov).

The deserted coasts of South Jersey have been a haven of smugglers, pirates and back-water political intrigue since long before the days of the American Revolution.

ADVENTURES

The primary design criteria for this article was to provide an endless choice of activities for adventurers. Options will be dictated depending on the characters' standing with Milgov. Those in government service or hiring themselves out as mercenaries can consider the following paths:

- Join a Milgov mission into western Pennsylvania to counter a rumored Civgov operation (*Referee*: This is detailed in **Allegheny Uprising**).
- Weed out Civgov spies in New Jersey or help solidify Milgov's hold on the area. This could entail amphibious operations against marauders or salvage missions into the ruins. For those in Civgov service, the following are possible.
- Spy on operations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania without interfering at this time.
- Try to unite the refugee camps against the New Jersey or Pennsylvania governments.

CONDITIONS IN SOUTH JERSEY

The deserted coasts of South Jersey have been a haven of smugglers, pirates, and back-water political intrigue since long before the days of the American Revolution. In the year 2001, nothing much has changed. Marauders ran across the state, raiding farms, and attacking merchant convoys and passing ships.



The predominate terrain feature of south Jersey is flat, fertile land which becomes sandy toward the coast. The area has been supporting agriculture since it was first settled in the mid-1600s. The great forest of the colonial times has vanished, replaced by the light woods of today, but a large pine forest thrives in the sandy soil of the eastern part of the state and gives the area its name—the Pine Barrens.

The state is susceptible to the whims of the weather. The Atlantic coastal islands are constantly shifting, and gales and hurricanes have destroyed more than a quarter of the dwellings in the last three years. The lowlands along the bay are regularly flooded during the rainy season; the forests threaten to burn during the dry season.

Although it has dissipated, radiation from the west was a problem for a couple of years after the nuclear strikes. The nuclear attacks around Philadelphia and New York (plus disease, starvation and chaos) killed millions. Many more fled the state, and New Jersey was seriously depopulated. The survivors are relatively prosperous by **Twilight: 2000** standards—they farm enough to eat well and even export a bit. Dietary protein comes from fish and chicken. Goats, sheep, cattle and horses are raised primarily for government consumption. Salvage and re-manufacturing are thriving cottage industries, and pay the taxes in the Milgov protected areas.

CAPE MAY AND CMNB

The town of Cape May is built on a tip of land extending into the Delaware Bay. The north side of the community is

Twilight: 2000

separated from the mainland by a canal 120 meters wide. Currently this canal serves as the main defense line for Cape May. Watchtowers were built every 200 meters and are manned around the clock. Scrap chainlink fencing, barbed wire and an abatis protect the entire length of the south side. Mobile patrols randomly pace the length at night.

Cape May was a prewar resort community catering to an older crowd. It was also home to a coast guard station and a small fleet of fishing and pleasure boats. Early in the war the coast guard was brought under military command and, after Philadelphia was destroyed, Cape May was reclassified as a naval base (CMNB). The base is on the south side of the canal, at its eastern end. It now serves as the center for the area's naval operations.

Cape May has a small runway for light fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft, fuel and ammunition bunkers, barracks, docks and a fairly well equipped, though small, military shipyard.

The town extends south and west of the base. The civilian

Rumors

The referee may sprinkle these rumors into the campaign, fostering paranoia and confusion among players.

A. Philly and the area around it for 20 klicks are completely deserted. Nobody at all!

B. Salvagers have found a half-sunken supertanker full of high-octane fuel.

C. Cannibals from the ruins of Philly have moved into the area. They're the ones responsible for all the disappearances. Milgov ain't even doing anything about them.

D. Satan worshipers are holding black masses deep in the barrens. They're grabbing folks to sacrifice to the Jersey Devil.

The following rumors would be heard in the vicinity of Fort Dix.

E. From a 78th Division infantry private: The 78th's artillery train is in Civgov's hands somewhere in upstate New York.

F. In a refugee camp cantina: Salvagers have found several tanks of oil (several thousand tons) southwest of Philly.

G. Common knowledge, of course: Civgov has spies in the 78th.

H. The last mission to New York radioed that the city was full of cannibals. HQ hasn't heard from 'em since.

I. The base hospital has diagnosed typhoid in one of the refugee camps.

J. The veterans of Europe have a plague.

K. A monster in the barrens wiped out a farming community.

L. Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont have seceded from the United States. Part of southern New Brunswick has joined them, and they're holding negotiations with the French for official recognition as an autonomous nation.

The following rumors would be heard south of Fort Dix.

M. Soviet submarines have been sighted real close to the shore, and the survivor from one farm says Russian sailors shot everyone.

N. A Soviet submarine group has been landing raiding parties for food. They sank a fishing trawler that discovered them last week.

O. Fishing boats going into the Atlantic have been disappearing like mad.

P. Someone found a saboteur trying to destroy the planes at the county airport. Supposedly he's from Civgov in Maryland.

Q. People are dying from contaminated fish caught in the Delaware.

R. A thousand convicts who escaped from Leesburg have control of a big part of the interior. They're building up to take the cape.

docks and shipyard are north, opposite the naval base. At the western end of the canal are the ferry slips and offices—now an auxiliary base for the patrol boats.

The naval fleet at Cape May consists of the USS *Hyman Rickover*, USS *Bigelow* (DD 942), USS *Confidence* (WMEC 619), four inshore patrol craft (PCF), one oceangoing tug, two Cape May/Lewes ferries, two LCM 6 (expedient monitors), two LCM 6 (expedient ATC), eight patrol boats Riverine (expedient, four with sail/motor, four with motor), one 10,000-ton tanker, immobile. In addition, a small civilian fishing fleet uses the harbor: 14 large fishing vessels, motorized (over 50 tons); 21 large fishing vessels, sail (converted pleasure craft); 85 small fishing vessels, sail (under 15 tons).

CAPE MAY TO SALEM

Following are some points of interest.

Town Bank and North Cape May: Bay-side resort communities now populated by approximately 2000 farmers and fishermen.

Cape May County Airport: Now a government installation, with the hangars, fortified control tower, and four runways (the longest is 5000 feet) constantly patrolled. Navigation aids and control equipment have been scrounged from every other field in south Jersey. This field is maintained as a relay station to New England and is one of the few airbases in the country operating. Fuel and spare parts are scarce, so flights are restricted to a minimum, and the fuel bunkers are guarded.

Maurice River: The river is navigable (draft is three meters to Port Elizabeth, shallowing one meter per three kilometers upstream, to a depth of .5 meters). The mouth is 150 meters wide, narrowing to about 50 meters after four kilometers.

Port Norris: This is a healthy cluster of buildings acting as a community center and seat of government for the 1600 farmers and their dependents in the area. The population resides within a 10-kilometer radius of the town, between the bay and the Maurice River.

Mauricetown Bridge: The bridge has a clearance of 3.6 meters. The nearby town is occupied by 200 farmers and their families.

Leesburg and State Prison: This is one of the pockets of safety operated by what remains of the New Jersey state government—a Milgov program of “local autonomy” intended to add some prestige and legitimacy to local rule. Beyond a five-kilometer radius, it’s everyone for himself. A 100-man militia company is quartered within the walls. The local populace is to use the prison as a fort when threatened.

After the nuclear exchange, inmates seized control of the prison. Some left to scatter across the countryside to sow horror and chaos. An armed group of convicts held the prison (and some 50 hostages) until mid-April 1998 when a raiding force of militia and state police eliminated them.

Port Elizabeth: The 150 people inhabiting Port Elizabeth make their living raising and selling horses. They live in a cluster of buildings near Route 47.

Millville and Union Lake: This is a community of 500 lake fishermen and farmers; the town also has a village glassblower and a blacksmith. They conduct a tenuous trade with Cape May. This is the last known community in the interior to have contact with the government.

Cohansey River, Fairton, and Bridgeton: The Cohansey River runs inland to Bridgeton and has an average depth of two meters and an average width of 200 meters. Fairton is the present location of a south Jersey New America cell that was overrun by marauders in 1998. All of their papers and communication gear was destroyed in the fire that consumed

their fortified farm. The survivors moved south and settled in an abandoned trailer park near the town. The idea was to somehow link up with or contact another New America cell, so they moved into a community hoping to get word of the eventual New America uprising. They number 35 men and women, are well armed, and act friendly to visiting government forces, even providing guides upon occasion. One hundred twenty farmers, herdsman, and their families live in and around Fairton. Bridgeton supports another 300, who live in

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a fortified cluster of buildings on the south edge of town. Trade and traffic with the outside world are conducted via the river, as caravans along Route 49 to the cape disappear before they reach Millville. Although the government patrols are aware of the situation, they can do little. The feeling in Bridgeton is that the folks in Millville might have something to do with the lost caravans.

Stow Creek Lodge: A marauder hangout in a sprawling old cluster of farmhouses and outbuildings. The marauders are 23 convicts from Leesburg. Most are Novices poorly armed with stolen and makeshift weapons. They hold 14 women and three children captive. They force the captives to do some farming and keep house for them. Three small sailboats are used for local raiding. The marauders fooled a militia patrol that visited last year into believing that they were honest locals and refugee farmers. Another 200 people live in single-family units around the area—they want little to do with outsiders.

Wreck of the *Amco Arabia*: This is what remains of a supertanker abandoned in late 1997. It is burnt out and falling apart—pieces sporadically wash ashore after storms.

Bayside: This is a small fortified camp of salvagers operating as far north into the nuked areas as possible. Seventy men and women live in the camp. Usually two teams of 25 each are out working, and one team guards the base, which is an industrial park protected by a ditch and a berm with a firing step. Five farms were attacked and burned out two months ago by marauders from the interior.

Salem: Abandoned and stripped of nearly everything salvageable, Salem’s ruins house less than 100 refugees.

CAPE MAY TO PERTH AMBOY

The descriptions included below cover the coast north of Cape May.

Inland Waterway: The drawbridges are permanently down and, due to silting, are passable only by boats less than nine meters high with a draft less than 2.5 meters.

Wildwoods: A popular prewar resort community damaged by the last hurricane. The south end is now inhabited by 500 fishermen and their families.

Great Egg Harbor: Fifty families of fishermen reside around this bay. The stripped wreck of the Beesley's Point power plant dominates this area. The Great Egg Harbor River is navigable up to Lake Lenape, averaging a width of 175 meters (but punctuated with mud flats) and a depth of 1.5 meters. The Tuckahoe River flows into the bay from the west. It is narrow (less than 50 meters) and shallow (one to 1.25 meters) but navigable by smaller vessels up to Tuckahoe/Route 50.

The banks of both rivers are one meter or less in height and heavily forested. The areas around both of these rivers are ideal for cultivation but are fallow due to marauders. The government has plans to move a unit of state militia into the area, to be followed by settlers.

Lake Lenape: Cut off from Great Egg navigation by the downed Route 50 bridge, this lake has many fish and fowl.

May's Landing: This community is abandoned but full of untapped salvage.

Atlantic City: The gambling capital of the east which drew hundreds of thousands of tourists and millions of dollars of revenue a year to the state before the war is now officially abandoned. In the rubble lobby of one of the casinos is a vault rumored to contain hundreds of thousands of dollars in gems and jewelry. However, the vault door is closed, and nobody knows how to open it.

Although the weather has wiped out many smaller buildings and the first floor lobbies of the casinos, society's dregs have somehow managed to survive in the ruins, living in a twisted parody of civilized society. Four hundred of society's misfits now call Atlantic City home. They are escaped criminals, army deserters, marauders, and other low lifes who scavenge, raid the mainland for food, and fight among themselves.

Milgov has mounted a couple of operations against these inhabitants, but both failed because all the inhabitants scrambled into the tangle of high rises to hide. In frustration, the captain of the *Bigelow* shelled three casinos, reducing one to a heap of rubble with a lucky shot and eliminating over 100 inhabitants. The raids decreased in frequency for a month afterward.

Two groups now vie for control of this lonely island. One is lead by a Columbian drug smuggler nicknamed "the Indian"; the other is a group of counter-culture types known as "those punks." Each group numbers about 50; the rest are neutral bystanders. So far conflict between the groups has been minimal, as pressing concerns (like eating) have required everyone's attention. The Indian plans to end this situation soon.

TWILIGHT: 2000

Great Bay: This is another small island of civilization, populated by a few fishermen and their families.

Mullica River: This 200-meter-wide, two-meter-deep river is navigable as far west as the community of Batso. This town of 250 in the heart of the Pine Barrens is a former mock colonial tourist attraction, and a few of the inhabitants still wear their costumes.

Barneget Light: The lighthouse is inoperable (the automatic machinery broke down years ago), and the island is deserted after several Milgov attempts to refit the light failed.

Forked River/State Game Farm: The southernmost community of the Fort Dix Protected Area. The 45 families who live here harvest wild game from the Pine Barrens.

Tom's River Station: This is the community surrounding the Tom's River Naval Station. Some 100,000 citizens occupy the old communities around Beechwood.

The Naval Station provides limited berthing, fuel and maintenance, and contains the remnants of the Earle Naval Ammunition Depot. The docks and buildings are protected by fortifications.

Long Branch: This is the northernmost community visited on a regular basis by Milgov and naval forces. A dozen families live clustered near the center of the town.

INLAND

This region includes the area north of Fort Dix, west to the New Jersey turnpike, to the edge of the Perth Amboy zone. The communities in this area would like more protection.



FORT DIX

This is the economic and military center of New Jersey. Fort Dix and McGuire AFB are home to the 78th Infantry Division (light) and its attached militia and support units. Pemberton, Brown's Mills and several refugee camps provide an economic base, supplying Milgov with food and manpower in exchange for protection.

Currently, 250,000 residents and refugees reside in a 15-kilometer radius around the Fort. This excludes the community of Tom's River.

Fort Dix was a typical prewar military base—a group of generic buildings, home to the army's Cooks and Bakers School, as well as a training ground for drivers. In 1998, the engineers took the precaution of building a ditch and a berm with a firing step around the main camp. This protective measure is just over half a kilometer long.

After the 78th was reformed, sandbagged observation towers were installed every 150 meters along the berm, with bunkers evenly spaced between them. The ditch was filled with sharpened stakes, and the top of the berm was strung with barbed wire.

Fort Dix is also home to the state armory, a large collection of small arms without which the New Jersey State Militia would never exist. After the New Jersey National Guard left for Europe, state armories were bare. Though the legal framework and manpower were available to raise a state militia, there were no weapons to issue. The prize cache was 4000 Garand drill rifles removed from Annapolis when the school was abandoned in September of 1997, and sent to New Jersey for safe keeping.

The weapons were reactivated and became standard issue in the militia. Additional weapons were obtained from gun stores, a large civilian weapons parts company, and the inventory of a local importer/manufacturer of Uzi submachine-guns.

The end result was a pile of hardware, ammunition and parts that would give teeth to the state tiger (and turn into a quartermaster's nightmare).

MARCUS HOOK TO CAPE HENLOPEN

This section describes the area along the Delaware River and the Atlantic coast of Delaware.

Marcus Hook: The refineries here were the targets of a nuclear strike, and the city and environs are a complete and utter wasteland.

Wilmington: Bracketed by nuclear strikes, the residents of this town panicked and headed northwest on routes 100 and 202. As the winter took its toll and no more warheads dropped from the sky, some people returned. Eight thousand souls now make their livelihood salvaging all manner of heavy machinery, raw materials and luxury goods.

Delaware Memorial Bridge: This bridge is still standing but is structurally unsound.

Delaware City: The refineries here were nuked, and they and the surrounding area were destroyed.

Delaware Farms: These are scattered along the east coast of the state, usually within 20 kilometers of the shoreline. About 100 are in operation, between Wilmington and Cape Henlopen. Nearly identical, these farms are fortified and house three to five families (10-50 people). Between these islets of civilization are marauders, usually small groups of a dozen or so.

Dover: Formerly the state capital of Delaware, Dover now has a population of 3900 gathered in one walled-in neighborhood. They are cautiously friendly with anyone who isn't obviously hostile and will trade salvage for food with outsiders.

Dover AFB: The base had been operating at a reduced level, the aircraft and support elements dispersed to other facilities, when it was hit by nonnuclear cruise missiles. The control buildings and hangers have been destroyed.

Cape Henlopen: The site of the Delaware-side docks of the Cape May/Lewes ferry, frequently visited in good weather by New Jersey merchant vessels.

The prime targets
were the refineries
in the south,
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CONDITIONS IN NORTHERN DELAWARE AND SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Before the war this was a fertile and populous plain, home to high-tech industries and horse-drawn Amish buggies, oil refineries and cornfields. The nuclear attacks created an unofficial "forbidden zone" along the Delaware as far north as Trenton. Beyond that, the area is a basket of misery and starvation, hemmed in on one side by the Alleghenies, nuclear craters and a wide river on the other.

Philadelphia: The only major city in Pennsylvania to be nuked. The destruction was horrible, but even with huge expanses flattened or burnt, major sections in the north of the city are still standing. They are too large to describe with any detail; therefore, only the more important aspects are outlined.

The prime targets were the refineries in the south, but the firestorm from the strikes spread over the whole city. Salvage is more abundant in the north, primarily in the industrial neighborhoods along the Delaware north of the fallen Benjamin Franklin Bridge. However, this has not been tapped by the Jersey salvage crews, as the area is isolated by two fallen bridges, long stretches of residual contamination, and legions of missing salvage teams.

Signs of life are limited to a few crows and buzzards. Of humans, there is no sign except an occasional scavenger. Scattered individuals do inhabit the northern half of the city, although most suffer from the same "dement" symptoms as described in **Armies of the Night**. Of the 15,000 hiding in the ruins, only 200 are "normal," and they are extremely wary

of the prowling human animals. The demented are solitary types, with any groups numbering less than a dozen. Luckily, they have not exhibited any sign of organization.

Huntington Valley: A northwestern suburb of Philadelphia, now virtually abandoned except for an occasional refugee escaping the city.

The Camps: After the first nuclear attacks on the United States, over 6.5 million refugees from western New Jersey, the Delaware cities, Philadelphia, and New York flooded the southeastern section of Pennsylvania. They settled into a dozen refugee camps, located near the larger towns. As the area started to slip into anarchy, fighting between the various camps broke out, fueled by rumors of hidden caches of food. The fighting quickly degenerated into what resembled medieval warfare, with mobs armed with crude weapons hacking each other to pieces. The combat, unchecked diseases, starvation, and exposure reduced their numbers to less than three million and left the countryside decorated with unburied skeletons.

Six main camps remain in the suburbs of the towns of Lancaster, Lebanon, Reading, Pottstown, Allentown, and Easton (where they can be close to arable land). Including the original inhabitants, they now number a few thousand each. They all have militias, though they are haphazardly armed, trained, and led. They cannot agree, even among themselves, upon any course of action. Sanitary conditions are abysmal, but shelter is relatively easy to find—many undamaged buildings are available.

Other refugees eke out a meager existence north of these camps, toward the foothills of the Poconos. Their camps seldom contain more than 1500 souls. The land to the east of the camps is deserted. Only brave or crazy people venture toward the ruins of Philadelphia for any reason.

SOUTH JERSEY INTERIOR

This section describes the section of the southern half of the state more than 20 or 30 kilometers inland.

Vineland: This is now a ghost town populated with a small group of salvagers who live in a fortified complex near the town's center.

West Jersey Communities: The built-up area, from Paulsboro north to Palmyra and as far east as Berlin, suffered severely during the nuclear attacks. Uncontrolled fires helped to destroy 85 percent of all structures in this area.

Pine Barrens: From Route 30 north to Fort Dix extends a lonely pine forest that, in spite of three years of unchecked plagues of diseases, insects, and fires, stands relatively intact. In the late '80s, the area underwent the ravages of condominium developers, threatening to destroy the ecological balance. Building was checked in 1992 by a group of locals backed by the Green Earth Society. After the nukes, nature quickly reclaimed her turf.

Dense growths of pine and heavy underbrush thrive in sandy soil, making off-road movement difficult and reducing visibility all year round. In the warmer months, mosquitoes, ticks, and snakes make it unhealthy for man, but game—deer, fowl, and wild pigs—fare somewhat better (especially

TWILIGHT: 2000

small animals and birds). Quicksand, lightning fires, and unsociable, superstitious hermits dissuade casual travellers.

There is one other local hazard—the legendary "Jersey Devil." Attributed as the child of Mrs. Leeds of Leeds Point, this creature was allegedly sired by the devil early in the 1700s and has roamed the barrens ever since. Man-sized, with cloven hoofs, bat's wings, horns, and a tail, it is reputed to wear a tuxedo (according to some reports). Disappearances of sheep, fowl, and laundry are habitually attributed to it. The creature eventually became not much more than a tourist attraction. But, as frequently happens in mankind's darker moments, the Jersey Devil has recently returned with a vengeance. In the 21st century, his appetite has expanded to include people. Maybe humanity feels better blaming something supernatural for events beyond its control.

Worse than legends are the people. Away from the coastal areas, there is no civilization. Fifty thousand people live in the interior, on farms of three families or less, or in wandering groups of less than 50 marauder/refugees. The vast majority of these people are antisocial, extremely xenophobic, and just plumb crazy. Roads are usually narrow, twisted, and blocked by wrecks. This makes overland travel through the area lethal and practical only for heavily armed convoys.

Trenton: Formerly the state capital, this city was destroyed by refugees from Philadelphia rioting with locals in the year or so after the nuclear exchange. A great deal of salvage lies untapped, too far away to safely reach at this time. Less than 500 starving refugees live in the ruins.

NEW JERSEY STATE GOVERNMENT

The current government is loyal to the Military Government of the United States for several reasons. Governor Charles R. Samson, the prewar district attorney of Gloucester County, was a Vietnam vet sympathizer and former veteran himself. After the attacks, Samson worked feverishly to bring some order to the southern counties, desperately cajoling refugees and locals to cooperate. He became acting governor by public consent. When the government and the military parted ways in 1999, Samson declared for Milgov, which, in his estimate, would wind up the winner in the end. Besides, all of his state's vital river and ocean traffic were under the guns of the navy.

The temporary capital is at Cape May courthouse, while a "branch office" exists near Pemberton, outside Fort Dix.

MILGOV FORCES IN THE AREA

The following is a list of federal and state units in the area. Though these units are not up to prewar quality, they are more than sufficient to maintain Milgov's toehold in south Jersey.

Milgov Command, Cape May: Responsible for the command and coordination of all Milgov activities in New Jersey and northern Delaware. This unit numbers 50 officers, specialists, and communications experts.

Naval Command, Cape May: Identical in size and mission to Milgov Command, but dedicated to naval operations. This unit's commander is subordinate to Milgov Command, and both units usually work in close cooperation.

237th Maintenance Detachment: A service and support detachment staffed with a mismatch of survivors of sunken ships, retired naval veterans, civilian experts recruited from the refugee crowds, and a handful of young seamen. This unit handles all technical support, except for aviation (armorers, electricians, machinists, etc.). Current unit strength is 200 enlisted and officers—10 percent are Veteran, 55 percent Experienced, and 35 percent Novice. They are issued M16s but carry them only on alert.

1325th Naval Aviation Support Group: Thirty rotary-wing technicians and support personnel in the Cape May Naval Base.

828th Air Support Group, Cape May County Air Base: Twenty-five air force aviation mechanics are based here.

23rd Air Security Group, CMCAB: A 50-man detachment guarding the airbase. They are Experienced and armed with 45 M16s, four M60s, 10 M203s, and two M2 .50 calibers.

1st/612th, 78th ID: A 50-man rifle company providing security for the naval base. They have two M203s, four M60s, and two 60mm mortars, in addition to M16s.

Red Dragons: A mercenary group of 100 Chinese-American refugees (formerly a Philadelphia street gang), trained by a cadre of ex-military types. This group is fiercely loyal to the commander of the Naval Command at Cape May and is currently used as an amphibious strike force. They are armed with Uzis, M16s, shotguns, and an M60. Twenty-two percent are Elite, 35 percent Veteran, and 43 percent Experienced.

3rd Regiment, New Jersey State Militia: Under New Jersey law, all males between the ages of 17 and 45 are liable for service in the state reserve militia, in the event that the governor declares an emergency. The New Jersey State Militia will under no circumstances venture outside the state.

Three regiments were raised and armed in early 1998 to assist hard-pressed law enforcement units in local crisis control. Another three were raised in early 1999. Cadre for these units were the survivors of the New Jersey Volunteer Militia, a well equipped prewar organization of conservative survivalists and gun store commandos numbering 1000.

Regiments are authorized a present level of 630 men, organized in three battalions of 205 and a regimental headquarter of 15. Each battalion has four 50-man companies and a battalion headquarter, and is armed primarily with M1 Garand rifles, though some members carry shotguns or hunting rifles. Additionally, each battalion is issued two 60mm mortars and 15 M79 grenade launchers. Most units have ac-

quired extra firepower by various means.

Two companies of the regiment are based at Fort Leesburg, two at Cape May courthouse and one battalion at the CMCAB; the remainder are on picket duty along the Cape May canal.

The average degree of experience is as follows: two percent Elite, 15 percent Veteran, 26 percent Experienced, and 57 percent Novice. When defending their homes, they make up in tenacity what they lack in training.

1st Cavalry Squadron, NJSM: Seventy-five horse-mounted troopers armed with FN-FALs, four M79s, and two M60s. They also carry a miscellaneous collection of sabers

looted from a local museum. This unit was initially formed around a cadre of a half-dozen civil war reenactment enthusiasts, and some of the troopers use their reenactment uniforms and equipment. They currently operate north of the canal, sometimes deep into the interior on recon missions. Twenty percent are Elite, 20 percent Veteran, 40 percent Experienced, and 20 percent Novice.

2nd Cavalry Squadron, NJSM: Fifty troopers carried by 10 armored bank trucks. These vehicles have an armor value of 8, and all

have other characteristics of a two and a half ton truck. Each car has a radio and an M79, in addition to the passengers' small arms. They are responsible for road patrol in and around Cape May, north of the canal.

B and C Flights, 112th Naval Aviation Squadron: Flight B consists of three 0-2 Cessna twin engine spotter planes, each rigged with a 7.62 machinegun. Flight C contains two Bell 47G helicopters (ex-cropdusters). There is enough fuel to occasionally turn over the engines and to fly extremely critical support missions. This unit is based at Cape May Naval Base.

Piseck Commando: This unit consists of 18 ex-SWAT teammembers from the Philadelphia and New Jersey state police. They are currently deployed as an amphibious commando and are well armed with light military weapons. Named for Peter Piseck, the unit's commander, they report to the naval commander at Cape May.

301st Independent Battery: This unit is currently providing fire support for Cape May Naval Base, staffed with 80 ex-military "graybeards" culled from the refugees. In addition to small arms, the unit has three M202 howitzers and six 120mm mortars salvaged from national guard and army reserve armories.

1st Regiment, NJSM: This regiment is assigned to security duty north of the Fort Dix/Tom's River area. Its 300 soldiers patrol as far north as New Brunswick-Perth Amboy.

2nd Regiment, NJSM: Recently deployed for security duty north of the Cape May courthouse, the 400 soldiers of this unit are currently quartered in the Wildwoods, awaiting orders to move out.

Ship operators from the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild had cast off late Thanksgiving Day in an effort to escape the inevitable destruction of their city and save the ship.

3rd Squadron, NJSM: This unit was formed from remnants of the state police and local law enforcement units, mounted on cross-country motorcycles and used for reconnaissance and peace keeping. It presently musters 240 effectives.

4th Regiment, NJSM: The 275 members of this regiment are assigned to garrison duty and training at Fort Dix.

5th Regiment, NJSM: The 370 members of this regiment are assigned to garrison duty and training at Fort Dix.

6th Regiment, NJSM: The 350 members of this regiment are assigned to Fort Dix and are presently patrolling the region north of that area.

78th Infantry Division: These are the survivors of the New York fiasco, reorganized in March 1999. This unit has been building its strength, stores, and morale since its crushing defeat. Their headquarters has been promised reinforcements from the USAEUR returnees, but so far only a few hundred have shown up.

The division now has three rifle battalions of 275 men, an artillery battery (60 men), a headquarters and signals unit (45 men), and an engineer battalion (70 men). M16s are issued to every member of the division. Support weapons include three recently received 105mm howitzers, eight 4.2" mortars, 30 60mm mortars, 30 M60s, and 65 M203s. The engineer unit has a bulldozer, a half-dozen dump trucks, and a small warehouse full of scrounged construction equipment and supplies. Currently, one rifle battalion is dispersed across New Jersey—one company at Cape May, two on reconnaissance in northern Jersey, and two with the headquarters company at Tom's River Naval Base. The other two rotate security details for the important installations at Fort Dix. One company from each of the Dix-based battalions is training and outfitting as a mechanized reaction force.

Naval Command, Tom's River Naval Station: This unit is a 30-man command, intelligence, and communication group based at Tom's River.

304th Naval Support Group: This is a 25-man maintenance unit based at Tom's River. They are indifferently armed with a random assemblage of civilian and military weapons.

HQ and A Flight, 112th Naval Aviation Squadron: Based at CMCAB, this unit includes two P-3 Orions and two 0-2s. Fuel limitations prohibit the larger planes from flying at all.

NEW SHIP DESCRIPTIONS

USS Hyman Rickover: Formerly the barkentine *Gazela* of Philadelphia, this sailing ship was taken under navy cus-

Twilight: 2000

tody 10 kilometers off the Delaware bay on December 3, 1997. A group of the ship operators from the Philadelphia Ship Preservation Guild had cast off late Thanksgiving Day in an effort to escape the inevitable destruction of their city and save the ship.

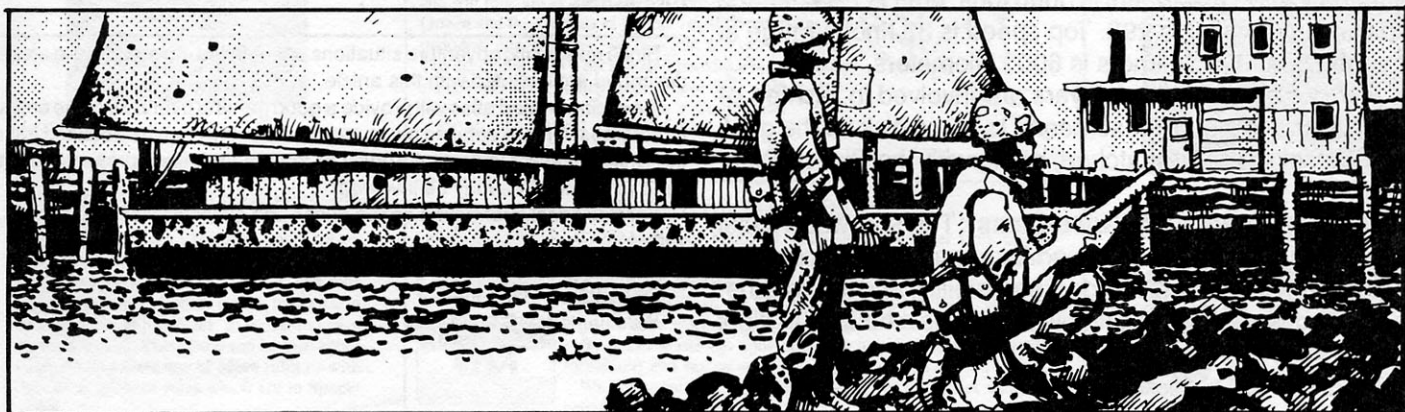
A navy "custody crew" was put aboard, and the ship sailed to Norfolk. For the next three months, *Gazela* acted as an auxiliary packet ferrying supplies, personnel, and messages between scattered military forces and the dozen or so naval vessels hiding along the Chesapeake. When Norfolk was declared operational again, *Gazela* put in for minor maintenance and, after some paper juggling, was officially commissioned *Hyman Rickover*.

This name was suggested by the new master, Commander Beckly (formerly a nuclear sub commander). A sailing ship named after the father of the nuclear submarine force is a typical example of the man's odd sense of humor.

Rickover received her armament and a speckled, rather than camouflaged, coat of black and gray paint on her hull. In deference to the originally civilian members of her crew (now "drafted"), the sailing ship was berthed at Cape May Naval Base and operates between there and Norfolk.

By way of background, *Rickover* began life in 1883 as the Portuguese topsail schooner *Gazela Primeiro*. By the time she had entered the Philadelphian's hands, *Gazela* had been rerigged as a barkentine and received an auxiliary diesel engine, two generators, and an engine to power her windlass (which can still be manually operated). A sophisticated short-wave radio was installed in 1989. She has a draft of 5.4 meters, sparred length of 177 meters and width of 10 meters; her beam is 27 meters; and her tallest mast is 93.4 meters.

The navy found an ancient 3"/54-caliber pedestal-mounted deck gun for her. It is placed over the centerline between her fore and mainmast. It has a limited field of fire—a 60-degree broadside. She also received four pintle mounts (two .50 M2



HMG amidships, and one fore- and one aft-mounted Mk19 AGL), and two 81mm mortars, also mounted amidships. Personal weapons for the crew were also issued.

The ship requires a crew of five to operate under power, a dozen under sail. Permanent crew is 28, with room for 15 passengers and three tons of small, crated cargo. For more information on handling procedures, refer to **Gateway to the Spanish Main**.

Rickover is currently employed as a patrol vessel against Soviet vessels (though no one has ever seen one), marauders, and smugglers. Her area of operations extends north to Tom's River along the Jersey coast, up the Delaware to Marcus Hook and the mouth of the Delaware Bay. She is occasionally used as a mother ship for smaller patrol boats operating along the rivers and creeks of south Jersey, as well as a fast message packet to Norfolk.

The greatest advantage of *Rickover* is her economical ability to travel without petroleum. Her diesel, long since converted to alcohol, is handy for shallow-water cruising, the sails for longer open-sea journeys.

Service on *Rickover* is an enviable position. The captain has managed to assemble an excellent team of sailors, fighters, and scroungers. Morale is high, and food is plenty in spite of the continual danger.

USS *Bigelow* (Forest Sherman/Hull-Class): Seven of this class of warship were mothballed at Philadelphia. Work began early in January 1997 to bring them into service. Only by working overtime with a greatly swollen work force were five of them combat-ready by Thanksgiving, 1998. Two were destroyed in port; two others were subsequently lost at sea, presumably to enemy submarines. Of the surviving three, two are based at Norfolk (*Mamley* DD 940 and *Blandy* DD 943) and one (*Bigelow*) at Cape May. They rarely put to sea, due to a lack of fuel. Their last mission was escorting the *TF34* convoy in for the final third of the journey to Norfolk.

This vessel is unique in that it mounts three 5"/54-caliber guns (one forward, two aft), and two twin 76mm Mk75s— heavy armament unheard of in the more modern ships, but extremely useful in providing fire support for ground units. The 5" guns are equivalent, in all respects except ammunition interchangeability, to 125mms; the 76mms to 75mm automatics. Displacement is 3000 tons; draft is 7.44 meters; ship's complement is 292. Top speed is 33 knots; range at cruising speed of 20 knots is 6000 kilometers.

Referee's Note: If the players are involved in **Armies of the Night** and signal for someone to come pick up the gold, this vessel will be dispatched, along with the Piseck Com-mando.

USS *Confidence* (Reliance-Class): This ship was a coast guard cutter originally designed for search and rescue missions. The bridge has 360-degree visibility, and the weather deck aft of the bridge is suitable for use as a helicopter flight

deck. Ships up to 10,000 tons can be taken under tow. Armament includes two 40mm GLs and a foredeck-mounted Mk75 turret fitted in the early '90s.

The *Confidence* is temporarily berthed at Cape May, taking on high-tech salvage from the teams operating further up the Delaware. When its supply of trade goods (weapons, ammunition, canned food, etc.) is exhausted, it will return to Norfolk.

Displacement is 950 tons; draft is 3.2 meters; ship's complement is 61. Top speed is 16 knots; range at cruising speed of 14 knots is 9200 kilometers. Armor value is 60 for the hull, 45 for the deck structures.

Inshore Patrol Craft: These small craft are modified off-shore drilling support vessels, mounting twin .50s in a pulpit atop the pilot house and a 40mm AGL on a pedestal mount on the aft deck. Displacement is 22.5 tons; draft is 1.1 meter; and the ship's complement is 6. The top speed is 28 knots, and range at cruising speed is 120 kilometers. The armor value is 10. A swift boat can carry either 24 passengers or three tons of cargo.

Monitors: These are a variation on a Vietnam-era modification. LCM6s drawn from the amphibious base at Norfolk received boiler plate armor and whatever weaponry was handy. This usually consisted of a forward turret, a midship weapons "bucket," an armored deckhouse/bridge, and an aft turret. Forward turret armament was usually two 20mm Vulcans scrounged from wrecked fighters, a 20mm or 25mm autocannon, and a 40mm AGL. Bucket armament was an 81mm mortar and two 7.62mm MGs, rear turrets carrying twin .50s, or a 40mm GL and a 5.56mm minigun. Crew size was usually 10 men. Overall armor value is 15; top speed is eight knots; and displacement is 24.5 tons.

Armored Troop Carriers: These are similar to the monitor, but are designed to transport troops and supplies. They retain the original landing ramp and cargo bay (which has an armored roof), but lack the forward turret and midship weapons bucket of the monitors. They can move 20 troops or eight tons of cargo. Otherwise, all statistics are the same as the monitors'.

Since no specific adventure situations are detailed, no maps of the areas described are included with this article.

An ordinary road atlas will provide a good general overview of the areas for referees. If more detailed maps are required, they can be obtained from the United States Geological Survey or from the tourism bureaus of each state (a minimal fee may be involved).

For additional information on the prices and availability of USGS maps, write to:

The United States Geological Survey
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20242. □

Service on
Rickover is an
enviable position.
The captain has
managed to
assemble an
excellent team of
sailors, fighters, and
scroungers.

SKY GALLEONS ADVERSARIES

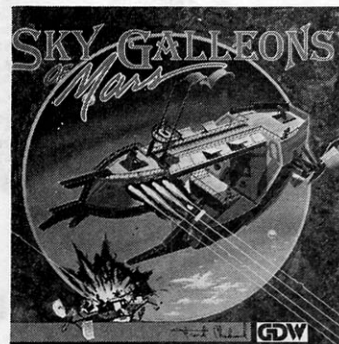
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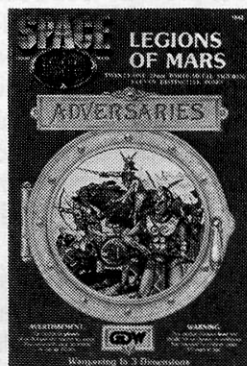
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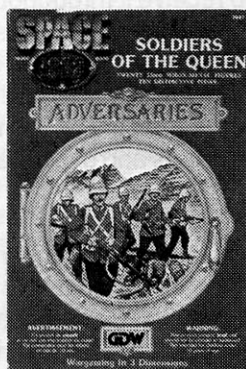
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MARTIAN CLOUDSHIPS

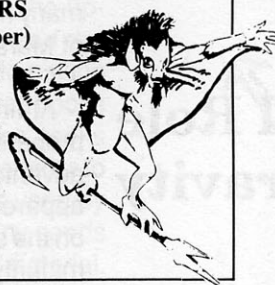
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The Biology of Liftwood

Marcus L. Rowland



espite the fact that space travel and flight are almost wholly dependent on liftwood, little is known about the plant's biology. It should be emphasized that much of what follows is based on examination of a very small number of specimens; liftwood species only develop their antigravity properties in the soil of the remote high kraags of Mars, and expeditions to these regions are invariably attacked by thieves or the barbaric High Martians. There has been little opportunity to study these curious plants in their native habitat. The physics and chemistry of the liftwood effect remain an enigma.

Liftwood

Liftwood is the generic name for a group of similar plant species (*Lignivolucer* var.) found exclusively on Mars. No close correspondence to any Terran plant family exists. The seeds show unique dispersal mechanisms.

Main Species

Three species have been studied—they are the most widely cultivated types. They are named for the areas where they were first seen by Terran scientists.

- *L. aeria* is the broad-leaved species first reported by Edison on his return from Mars. It is the most common form and is now known to be widely distributed throughout the Martian heights. The physical properties of *L. aeria* are used as the standard by which other liftwoods are judged. Mature plants produce wood that is usable for approximately 10 years.

- *L. edensis* was first reported in the Eden hills and has a broad north-south distribution in mountain ranges from Cydonia to Noarchis. The plant is smaller than *L. aeria* and tends to produce less usable wood for a given volume of timber. However, it is believed to tolerate poorer soil conditions than *L. aeria*. This is probably the reason why its lifting power and service life are half that of *L. aeria*.

- *L. arabia* is distributed sparsely through the Arabia, Meroe, and Tempe mountains. It is a smaller tree, but the trunks are generally knot-free and give a good yield of usable wood—up to a third more than *L. aeria* for a given volume of logs. Lifting power is roughly 1.5 times that of *L. aeria*, and the service life is longer; it is usable for approximately 12 years after harvesting.

Pollination

All liftwood plants produce pollen and are prepared to receive it throughout the Martian year. The plants are apparently capable of self-pollination, but this has not been confirmed experimentally. The pollen is extremely fine-grained, on a par with that of the finest grasses. It does not appear to have any antigravity effect, but its size and the fierce mountain winds ensure that grains stay airborne for many months. Scientists have collected samples at all altitudes and over all areas of Mars, including the poles and deserts.

Biological Role of Antigravity

At first sight, there seems to be no obvious natural need for the antigravity properties of liftwood; the plant dies if uprooted, so it is apparently unable to take advantage of this capability. The importance of this characteristic only becomes apparent if the habitat of the plant is considered. Liftwood plants are dependent on the soil of the high kraags; they can be cultivated elsewhere but seldom reach maturity, rarely bear seed, and do not show any antigravity properties. Other plants which only grow in the same areas and seem to require the same soil do not develop the liftwood capability.

Thus, it seems clear that the soil fulfills some nutritive need; the antigravity effect is secondary to this need.

As yet it has proven impossible to make a careful survey of many liftwood groves. On the evidence available, it would appear that similar liftwood plants are found in widely separated areas of Mars, but the other species associated with liftwood

groves are far more varied, often unique to a single mountain. Two conclusions are possible: Either the liftwood species have been widely distributed by the High Martians, or their spread is aided by their remarkable properties. Although the High Martians undoubtedly cultivate and spread these plants, discoveries of isolated plants and untended groves suggest that they can spread unaided. Wild liftwood is generally 10 to 20 percent weaker (in terms of the antigravity effect) than cultivated plants. Wild liftwood also gives lower yields of usable straight-grained wood. A rumor persists that wild liftwood is better, but this is untrue.

On Earth most seeds are distributed by animals or the wind. On Mars there are significant barriers to animal distribution, primarily huge expanses of arid land where animal life is scarce. Liftwood plants have an additional handicap—their need for special soils. To take full advantage of suitable habitats, all known liftwood species are able to propagate by the use of runners (like banyan or strawberry plants). However, dispersal beyond these areas requires a mobile seed; in view of the vast distances involved, a flying seed is preferable. The three species studied all produce seeds which show the liftwood effect. Escaped slaves report that High Martian liftwood farmers remove most of the seeds as they form; thus, this may make the trees retain more of the liftwood chemical and is possibly one of the reasons why cultivated liftwood is more powerful than wild plants.

L. edensis shows a good example of this form of seed dispersal. The pea-sized seed trails thin root-like tendrils which do not have any gravity-negative property. The seed is initially able to lift its own weight plus the weight of the tendrils. Seeds float slowly upward from the plant, dispersing widely on the mountain updraft. After a few hours, the seed loses a little lift and is gravitationally neutral, staying at a constant altitude for weeks or months. Not surprisingly, this altitude happens to be ideal for the species. Drifting flight continues until the tendrils touch any solid object. Within a few moments of contact, the seed loses some buoyancy and sinks until approximately half the length of the tendrils rests on the ground. With some of the load removed, the seed remains airborne and continues to drift, dragging the tendrils behind it. When the tendrils encounter a patch of suitable nutritious soil, thin root hairs dig in to anchor the seed and slowly pull it into the ground.

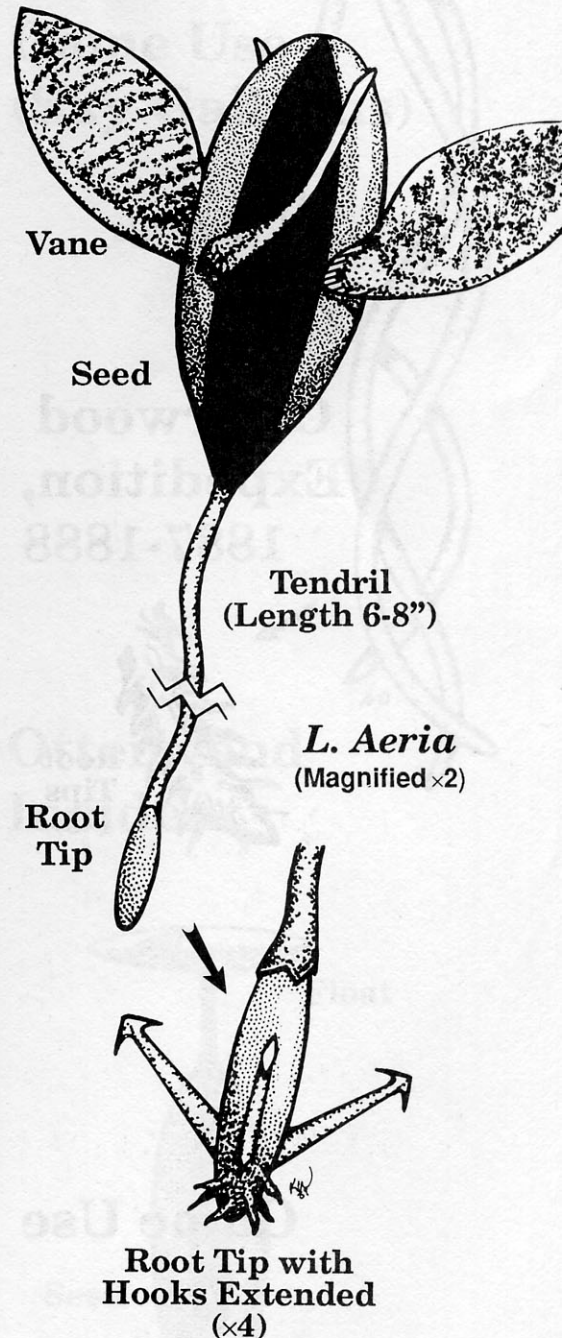
One drawback of the method used by *L. edensis* is that the low-altitude flight is triggered by accidental contact with the ground. Given a strong updraft, it is possible for such seeds to encounter a mountain and fly over it without ever making this initial contact.

This problem is avoided by the acorn-sized seeds of *L. aeria*. *L. aeria* secretes the lift chemical in the seed and in leaf-like vanes attached to it. The vanes are arranged to make the seed spin if they catch the wind. The seed trails a single tendril with a bulbous tip. Like *L. edensis*, *L. aeria* is initially gravity-neutral. However, after a few days, the vanes dry, and their point of attachment becomes extremely brittle. If the seed then encounters turbulent winds, such as the updrafts near a mountain, the vanes snap off, and some lift is lost. The seed descends until the tendril touches the ground and commences low-altitude trailing flight, in the manner of *L. edensis*. If suitable soil is encountered, four barbed hooks spring out, anchoring the seed while the root tips grow. Extension of the hooks takes approximately three seconds and appears to use a mechanism similar to the collapse of leaves on the Terran mimosa plant. A simpler method is used by *L. arabia*, the smallest of the common liftwood species. Thousands of tiny seeds are produced, each topped by an oval disk—a “float” of gravity-negative material. This seed is stable in calm conditions but tilts and loses much of its lift when it encounters turbulence. It then descends randomly and starts to grow regardless of the type of soil. Most of the seeds die, but a small portion fall onto suitable soil.

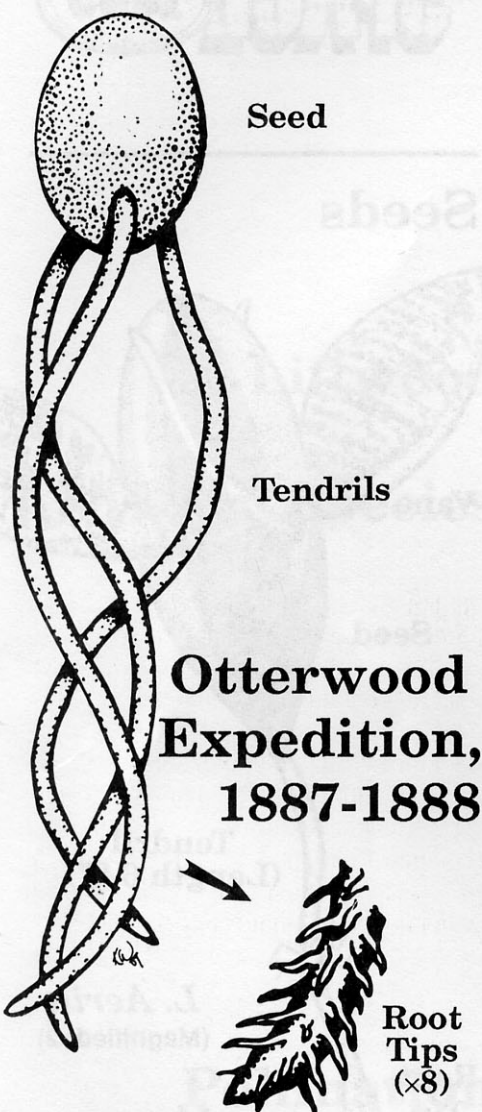
At least two other liftwood species may exist, but they are only known from second-hand accounts, wood, and fruit. As yet, no Terran scientist has seen the actual plants, and scientific names have not been assigned.



Seeds



Other Species

L. Edensis(Magnified $\times 2$)**Otterwood Expedition, 1887-1888**

● Shiuskup is a rare Martian fruit that resembles a sweet blue apricot with a spicy aftertaste. It is much prized by Martian gourmets and can be fermented to make an extremely potent liqueur. If the oval seeds are carefully removed, they float upward. It is assumed that these seeds are normally dispersed by animals, possibly the flying skrilk or one of its smaller relatives. The seeds retain the anti-gravity ability, which is used if animals are not available. There is no obvious mechanism for efficient airborne distribution, unlike the other large seeds studied. Experiments show that the seeds lose their antigravity effect after passing through the gut, which would support this theory. Presumably uneaten fruit rots to release the seeds, which drift off in any wind. Martian sources claim that the plant is a bush, not a tree, and does not produce usable liftwood—but this has not been verified. It apparently has a limited range in the Noachis heights.

● Seerdiik is an extremely rare, dense liftwood with straight grain and very powerful antigravity effects. A piece of seerdiik will lift approximately twice the load of a similar volume of *L. aeria*. It is claimed to retain its lift for 20 to 30 Martian years, far longer than other species. The largest piece examined by Terran scientists is the hull of a model ether flyer, given to a British merchant by the amwaak of Parhoon shortly before he was assassinated. The uncut wood was approximately a foot long by four inches square. The grain patterns suggest that it may have been cut from the main trunk, which would appear to be no more than six to eight inches wide. The source of seerdiik remains unknown. Unreliable reports say that it is a dwarf hybrid species cultivated by members of a civilized High Martian tribe, but this seems extremely unlikely.

In 1887 naturalists working at the Royal Botanical Gardens decided to mount an expedition to obtain samples of liftwood plants, the soil they grow in, and associated plant and animal species. The expedition was led by Dr. John Otterwood, a botanist who had previously been involved in expeditions to the Congo and Upper Amazon. For logistical reasons, the explorers decided to visit the Astusapes Highlands.

Unfortunately, it took some time to arrange the hire of a steam launch and other equipment, and the departure from Parhoon has delayed until February of 1888, a few days before the Kraag Barrovaar incident.

For some time, there was no news of the expedition, and it was feared that the explorers had been caught up in the fighting that led to the Oenotrian War. These fears were justified; an Oenotrian *Bloodrunner* kite encountered the launch on its return journey and attacked it.

The scientists (armed only with a Nordenfelt machinegun and small arms) retaliated by running the launch into the kite's sails and setting them on fire, then picked off the kite's crew as they tried to extinguish the blaze. The kite ultimately crashed, with no survivors. The launch was badly damaged in the fight and made a forced landing in the Meroe Badlands. The scientists escaped across country and eventually reached Parhoon but were forced to abandon the soil samples and most of their equipment. Otterwood's leg was broken in the crash and became gangrenous during the return journey; he died less than a week after the expedition returned.

Seed specimens and drawings returned by members of the expedition were one of the principal sources for this article.

Game Use

Adventurers are more likely to be interested in the commercial and military uses of liftwood than in its botany or ecology. However, this research can lead to some interesting plot ideas.

● The adventurers trade for liftwood. During the return journey, they realize that the liftwood they are carrying is *L. edensis*, not *L. aeria*, and has less than a quarter of the value they expected—probably not enough to pay their expenses and debts.

● Seerdiik contains an unusually stable and concentrated form of the liftwood chemical. Given a large sample, it might be possible to make a detailed analysis

and discover its secrets. The only accessible sample is a model ether flyer, the pride and joy of a rich Parhooni merchant who has no intention of selling it.

- Where does seerdiik grow, and who (or what) grows it? Could there be civilized High Martians?

- Shiuskup plants are cultivated as food, not for their antigravity capability. Can the plant be grown in a more civilized setting? If so, will it have the taste that Martian gourmets expect from this delicacy?

- Somewhere in the Meroe Badlands is the wreck of the Otterwood Expedition launch, containing several hundred pounds of liftwood grove soil, a variety of plants and seeds, and scientific instruments. Have the Oenotrians found it? If not, is there anything worth salvaging? Did anyone ever salvage the *Bloodrunner* kite?

L. arabia gives more lift than normal liftwood—usually 150 tons per hull size number but up to a maximum of 240 tons per hull size number. It costs £8000 per hull size in Martian yards (but is usually unavailable; roll 1D6 plus hull size to determine the number of months needed to obtain the supply necessary for a given vessel). British yards can never get large quantities. At best, they can supply enough for one hull size for £12,000, but it will take 2D6 months to obtain the wood. To calculate the lift of a hull built from *L. arabia*, use $Lv=150Hs/T$, where Lv is lift value, Hs is hull size, and T is tons.

L. edensis gives less lift than normal liftwood—usually 50 tons per hull size number but up to a maximum of 80 tons per hull size number. It costs £3000 per hull size in Martian yards, £5000 per hull size in British yards. However, the disadvantages of this wood mean that no yard routinely stocks it. It must be ordered (delay 1D6 months) or supplied by the purchaser of the hull. In practice, it is mainly used for small craft, conveyers, and other applications where strong lift capability isn't needed. To calculate the lift of a hull built from *L. edensis*, use $Lv=50Hs/T$.

For a steel hull (British yards), add £2000 per hull size to the cost of the wood.

If these variant woods are used, the exact type of hull should be noted on the ship record form (e.g., *L. arabia* wooden hull, steel-clad *L. edensis*, etc.).

For game purposes, species of liftwood with different lift values cause trim instabilities and cannot be mixed in the construction of a hull.

Seerdiik is not available for ship construction.

The material presented here will permit interested players to recreate the Otterwood party's encounter with the hostile kite.

Map: Use the Kraag Barrovaar map from *Sky Galleons of Mars*. Each brown line is a terrain boundary. The highest point on the map is at high altitude. Ignore all ground installations apart from the trees on the smaller peak.

Ships: The British have an aerial steam launch: *Move:* 5 *Hull Size:* 1 *Armor:* 0 *Bridge:* C, H, T *Passengers:* 4 *Wpn:* Nordenfelt gun bearing forward, port, starboard *Cost:* £4840 *Weight:* 50 tons *Max. Height:* VH.

All passengers and crew have modern rifles. The passengers count as Green crew when using weapons; one of the passengers must man the gun. For ship plans and other information, see *Space: 1889*.

The Martians have a standard *Bloodrunner* kite with a Trained crew.

Setup: The British launch begins landed on the smaller peak, height Medium. The Martin kite begins on the edge beyond the other peak, height High.

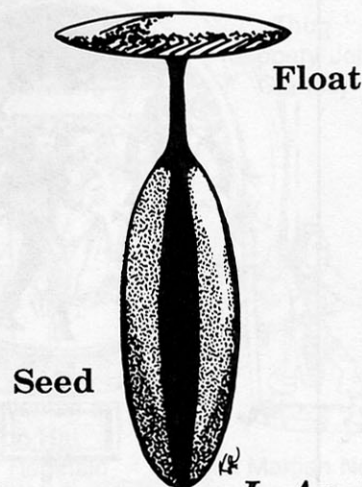
Special Rules: Neither craft is a military vessel, but the kite captain is sure that he can take on one puny launch. He will attack until his ship is damaged or crew is killed, then try to withdraw. If it is obvious the kite cannot continue (e.g., the gun is destroyed), the captain will press the combat unless the kite retreats off the map. For the purposes of this combat, a boarding party may deliberately start fires with damage value 1.

Victory: The British win if the kite retreats off the map or is destroyed or disabled, and they are then able to leave the map. The Martians win if the launch is captured, destroyed, or disabled. Ω



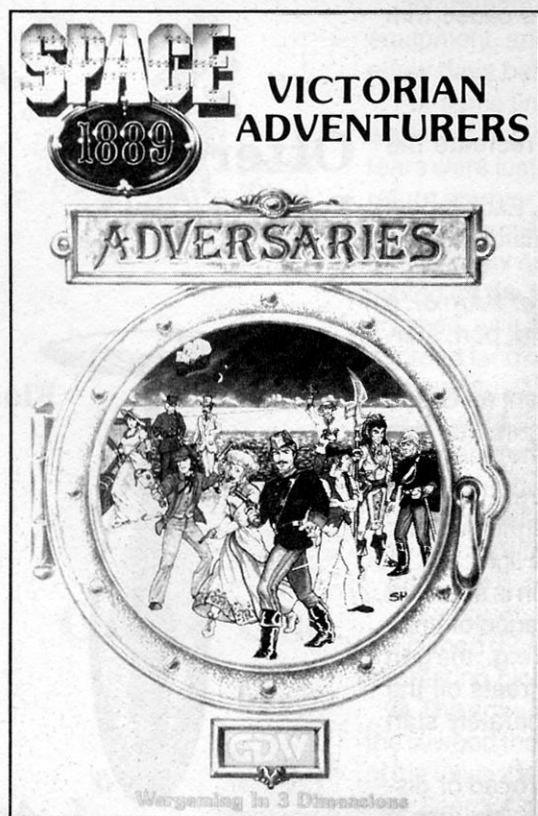
Game Use (Sky Galleons)

Otterwood Incident



L. Arabia
(Magnified ×8)

CHALLENGE *Showcase*



The four **Adversaries** 25mm-miniatures boxed sets for **Space: 1889** provide a basic assortment of interesting and useful miniatures for role-playing adventures and for larger miniatures battles.

The first set is the ideal introduction to miniatures for **Space: 1889**. The 10 **Victorian Adventurers** cover the range of possible character types—everything from adventuresses to military officers to Martian nomads. We enjoyed these 10 figures so much that we designed **Temple of the Beastmen** so they can be used as pawns in the game.

The next two sets are **Soldiers of the Queen** and **Legions of Mars**. **Soldiers of the Queen** provides British colonial troops from Mars; **Legions of Mars** contains local Canal Martian troops loyal to any of several Martian empires. Each boxed set is enough to field a company (using the **Soldier's Companion** rules that govern **Space: 1889** miniatures) on the battlefields of Mars.

GDW's latest miniatures release is **Kraag Warriors**, with 20 figures of flying High Martians. Half the Martians are mounted on stands and flying; the other half are the same figures standing on the ground.

This month's Showcase features figures from two sets: **Victorian Adventurers** and **Kraag Warriors**. Next issue, we'll show figures from the other boxed sets, as well as from our new blister packs.

Our aim in Showcase is to provide a look at miniature figures, both old and new, that can enhance your science-fiction gaming. Tell us what you want to know about miniatures: Write Showcase, **Challenge Magazine**, PO Box 1646, Bloomington, IL 61702-1646 USA.

ADVERSARIES

Kraag Warriors



Flying King
(King Gnaashriik)



Landed King
(King Gnaashriik)



War Chief with Mace
(Flying)



War Chief with Mace
(Landed)



Warrior with Trident
(Flying)



Warrior with Trident
(Landed)



Warrior with Sword
(Flying)



Warrior with Sword
(Landed)



Warrior with Spear
(Flying)



Warrior with Spear
(Landed)

Victorian Adventurers



Army Officer
with Revolver
(Lieutenant Arthur)



Army Officer
with Sword
(Major Bagley)



Navy Officer
(Captain Timmons)



Inventor with Pistol
(Dr. Eberwein)



Thug
(Slippery John
Grimes)



Missionary
(Reverend Phelps)



Lady with Revolver
(Mrs. Gates)



Lady in
Travelling Clothes
(Miss Lucy)



Gentleman in
Top Hat
(Sir Reginald
Colton-Haynes)



Hill Martian Nomad
(Uumotaak the Bold)

2300 AD

Italy: 2300

Mark Galeotti

Diplomat for the empire Le Comte N'Jumani was a notorious Italo-ophile. Nevertheless, the past half-century has seen great developments in Italy, making it one of the more open and confident of the "third rank" powers seemingly fated never to break into the "spacepower club." Italy is one of the few continental European nations with a culture able to resist the dominant position of France in the age. And this rests primarily on her historical role, especially the recent and still powerful heritage of the so-called Neon Renaissance of the mid-23rd century.

HISTORY FROM 2000

The nuclear exchanges and conventional bloodbath of the wars shattered Europe into a patchwork of petty warlordships, city-states and communities. Remnants of the Italian Army quartered near Venice became the focus of the Nuova Italia (New Italy) movement and began, by negotiation, alliance and conquest to reunite the country.

Two tactical moves were to be of long-lasting significance. One was alliance with the Italian Communist Party, the only nation-wide organization with the discipline to survive the fall of 20th-century civilization. Its eurocommunist stance had ensured it stood with, not against, its country and had not been tarred as unpatriotic. The second was the Tuscan Declaration, wherein the central command of Nuova Italia refused to accept the incorporation of cities and baronies under any terms

other than full acceptance of the leading role of the movement. Even the powerful city-state of Naples was eventually forced to accede to these terms after a six-month siege in 2025.

The new Italy sprang from disciplined, hierarchical organizations, uncompromising in their approach to power. This was to become a characteristic of the Italian state through the painful years of reconstruction and beyond. Government by a small group of experts wielded near-absolute power, not so much representing the people as acting in their interests—and in the interests of the state.

The Inauguration of 2100: The task of reconstruction demanded such a firm and authoritarian approach. And under the tutelage of Nuova Italia the country slowly recovered from the traumas and dislocations of war. The culmination was the inauguration, in 2100, with Rome as the national capital once again. The old city had to be all but rebuilt from scratch, and in its rebirth, it was a proud symbol for the whole country.

The Space Age: Through the 21st century and the first half of the 22nd, Italy muddled along like most of the other lesser nations of Europe. It was content to rely on the French Peace for security and follow in the technological, social, and cultural wake of its superpower neighbor. Despite a near war with Spain in 2168 concerning sub-Mediterranean mineral rights, and a rumbling, ill-tempered border dispute with Aurstovenia 2206-8, Italy was hardly in the world news. That is, not until the Neon

Renaissance began.

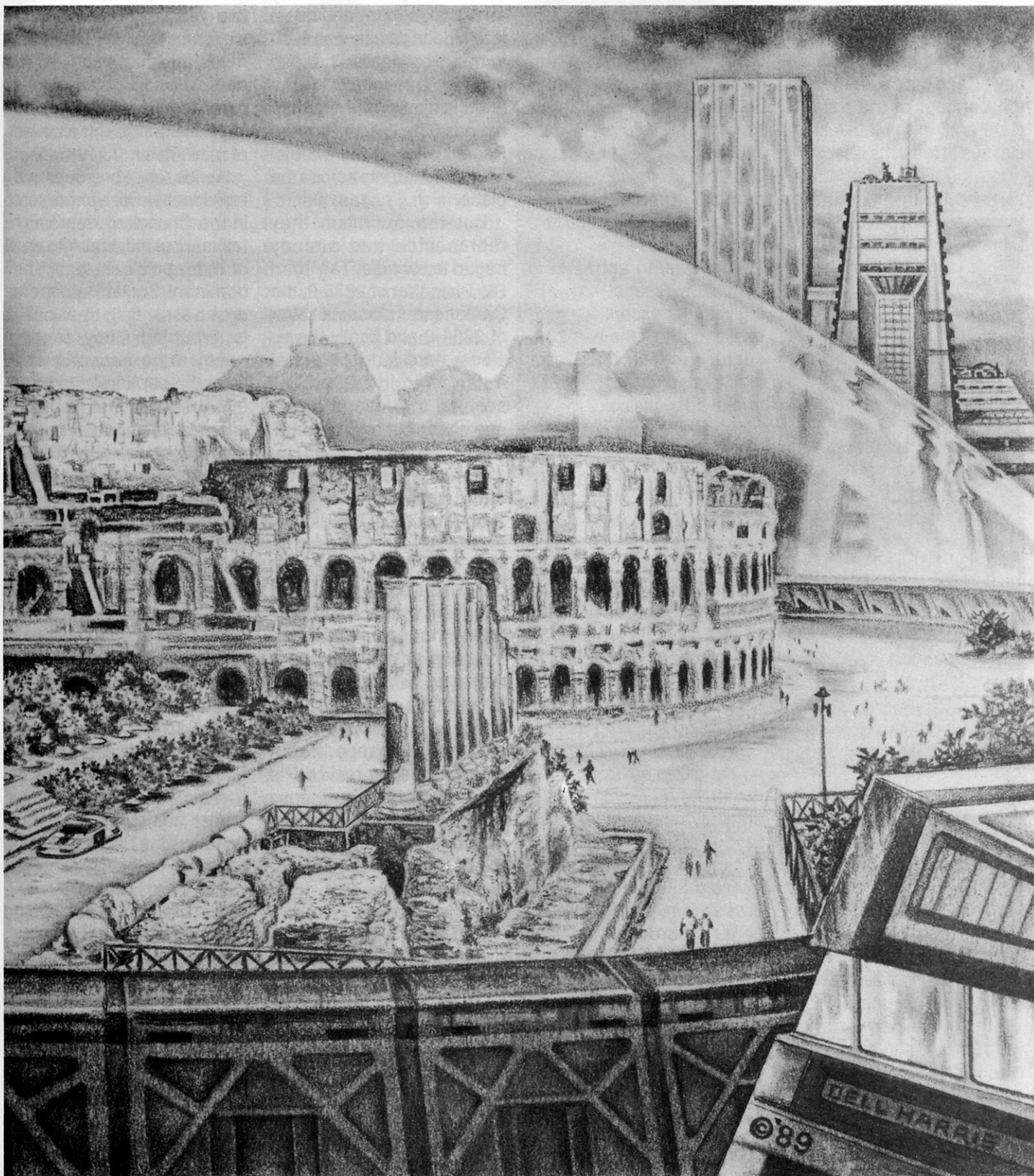
Technocratic Humanism: This was a philosophical movement, and the art, literature and politics associated with it flowed from that basis. The doctrine of Technocratic Humanism was not, in itself, particularly novel. But it was a synthesis which managed to capture the spirit of the age and turn it into a concrete system of values and plan of action.

Its ideological roots were nothing new. The belief (generally called Hegelianism), was that the universe had its own reason for being. And once man knew his inner purpose, he would live in harmony with himself and his universe, content in his role in the grand design.

Two other forces, though, went to reshape this framework to create technocratic humanism: the growth of the leisure economy and a resurgence of interest in the Twilight War.

Despite recurring fears, automation never made man obsolete, but a 20-hour working week became increasingly commonplace. Automation did allow for more leisure time and an ever-widening range of options to occupy it. This breadth of possibilities bred dissatisfaction with the situation and a feeling that life was becoming devoid of genuine purpose. In the words of one commentator, man was becoming a "polymath of trivialities, never realizing that many zeros still don't add up to anything."

After its publication in 2236, Depardieux-Lafontaine's epic portrayal of World War III triggered a general resurgence of interest in that dark chapter of history. It was particularly popular in Italy on



2300AD

account of its sensitive study of the formative agonies of the Nuova Italia movement. One consequence was a renewed and critical analysis of the concept of the nation-state and, in the intellectual classes at least, its rejection.

Having discarded the nation-state as the basic unit of human society, philosophers (notably the radical and energetic faculty of the Univer-

My next posting was to Rome, and scarcely could there have been a greater contrast. Italy had no pretensions about her place in the world. I was met with friendship, not the half-repellent, half-subservient mien found in France's neighbors. The Italian knows he has a grand heritage and feels this makes him the equal of any Frenchman.

—*Diplomat for the Empire,*
Comte Alain N' Jumaní, 2294

sity of Padua) looked to other concepts. Interest focused on the concept of the unity of humanity, which contact with the alien races inevitably threw into sharp relief. Besides, ease of travel and communications were beginning to marginalize the very concept of "nationality."

These various strands were tied together in compelling form by Salvatore Pulcini in 2242. His academic paper in 2240 was followed by a best-selling book, *Time, Man and the Universe*.

The dominant theme was that increased leisure time provided man with an unparalleled opportunity to plumb the depths of his soul and

discern the wider truths of his existence. The horrors of the Twilight War had, if not discredited the nation-state system, at least shown the potential dangers it entailed. But man had survived. Was this not, it was argued, the sign that there was more to humanity than a disorganized state of political and ethnic allegiances?

This was an upbeat and dynamic message—in keeping with the essentially optimistic mood of the mid-23rd century—which could provide a *raison d'être* for those unmoved by the colonization of the stars.

Artistically it fostered the "humanist romantic" movement, which stressed internal harmony over appearances. Literature saw a resurgence of concern with motivation and human growth over the rather sterile obsession with form and style which had characterized the early decades.

Politically the effects were liberalizing and progressive. Technocratic humanism had no set creed but concerned the discovery of the inner plan—whatever it was. By lack of any firm direction, it became a very tolerant force. It was manifested in a new *laissez-faire* culture and an eager embrace of cultural, social and political change.

Italy's effects were much stronger. The Italy of the Neon Renaissance underwent a cultural explosion. It was known for a passion for the exploration of the human psyche and purpose that frequently veered into the self-indulgent.

Post-Humanism: Technocratic humanism was to decline in importance under a number of influences, many of their own creation. In Han-

over, Westphalia, Saxony and Brandenburg, the quest for a hidden destiny was soon turned to nationalist ends and used as a rationale for the reunification of the German nations. The War of German Reunification of 2292-3 dismayed adherents across the globe.

But the optimism they represented had already begun to dwindle. The Third Rio Plata War of 2275-9, the Cantonese-Indonesian War of 2264-8 and finally the vicious, hard-fought Central Asian War in 2292-3 all seemed to presage a new age of conflict and nationalism.

Besides, the very concept of the unity of humanity, given such a boost by the discovery of the Sung, was soon infected with an ugly xenophobia with the discovery of their treatment of the Xiang. The Slaver War and contact with the less-advanced Ebers prompted a smugness which struck at the very heart of the philosophy about human growth and change. Fortunately this never realized its ugly potential for a new sense of manifest destiny, but it had already undermined one of the bases of the Neon Renaissance.

THE NATION

Italy is still governed on very corporatist and rational lines. It is run by experts whose powers are tempered by close supervision and open discussion by the people and their elected representatives. The president is elected every six years but fulfills an essentially ceremonial role. Real power is vested in the Consiglio, an executive council elected from the Council of Representatives which, in turn,

faces the electorate every five years. The primo consigliere, effectively the prime minister, chairs the eight-person body which wields considerable and far-reaching powers through a series of ministries.

A wide range of groups and individual views are present in the Council of Representatives, but most fall into one of three political blocs. The dominant Social Reformers are an essentially traditionalist grouping. They are benevolent bureaucrats who want the population to have every intellectual freedom imaginable while leaving the actual business of politics to the professionals. The Liberals are relatively libertarian and free-market oriented, while the Progressives veer toward various collectivism and socialisms.

Citizenship: Anyone living or working in Italy must pay taxes, but every resident in the country or of Italian descent can petition for citizenship. Citizens can vote and pay reduced taxes, but all have to spend 18 months in the service of the state—sometimes as a soldier, but usually as a specialist, bureaucrat, or the like.

The Law: Nothing demonstrated the duality of modern Italy more than her criminal code. In keeping with the individualistic tenants of technocratic humanism, all sorts of sexual, social, even narcotic practices have been legalized. However, the authoritarian tradition is visible in the state security laws. On even the slightest suspicions, the state has almost absolute powers of surveillance, arrest and detention—all for the "public good." This tension is particularly evident in Italy's liberal freedom of information

laws. Her system of government depends on an informed people. But an elitist bureaucracy often feels practical considerations demand secrecy. The result is usually a running battle between judges and journalists on the one hand and civil servants on the other, with neither ever winning as ascendant for long. The police and the Guardia Nazionale customs service are obliged to consult the Servizio Segreto in every instance a case may have an internal security implication.

International Relations:

Pragmatism and traditional friendships combine to keep Italy on good terms with France. But abortive Italian attempts at establishing a leading role among the secondary powers of the Mediterranean have led to some friction. The continuing presence of a traditionally German-speaking minority in northern Italy has defied attempts at integration and remains a ground for sporadic dispute with Austrovenia. In the face of an increasingly aggressive UAR, old disputes with Spain have been settled, and the two nations signed a treaty of friendship in 2286.

Security: The Italian Army (the Celeri) is a small formation, divided among an all-professional rapid-deployment force. It protects Italy's frontiers. A large territorial army of conscripts and reservists trained in techniques of guerrilla warfare make occupation too expensive a task for any invader. The army also sponsors three small mercenary units, both for the currency they earn and the opportunities they offer to provide combat experience for Celeri. The Secret Service's espionage counter-

part is the Servizio di Sicurezza Statale (State Security Service or "S3").

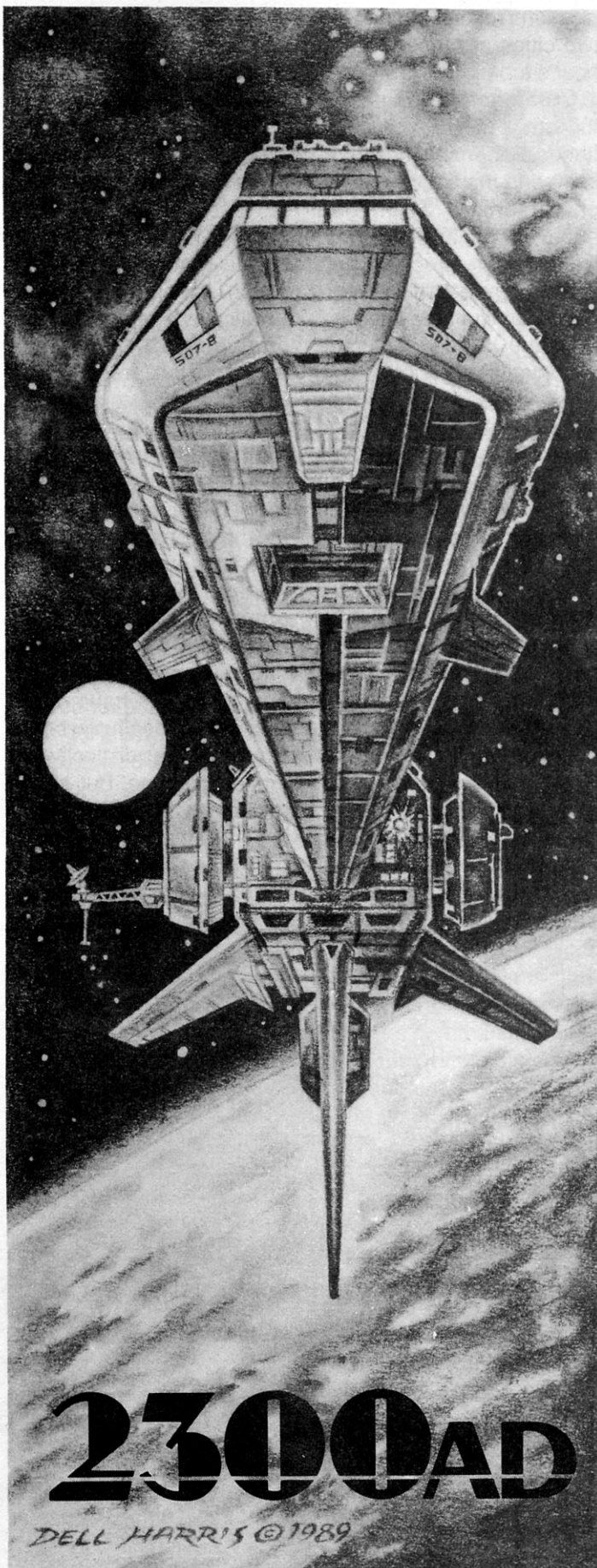
The Economy: Social ownership or partial state-control is the norm in Italy, and all but a few of the largest Italian enterprises have sizable state shareholdings. For this reason Italy and the large multinationals do not see eye-to-eye, and the country is largely free of the zaibatsus and multinationals. Italy is known for its thriving, light industrial and fashion sectors, and still excels in design. It has a small spacecraft construction sector: Michelangelo SPA's range of freighters and various in-system short-haulers.

The unit of currency is the Scudo (sc.), which is generally pegged at about sc.10 to the livre. The three main banks—the Banco d'Italia, Fondo Nazionale Veneziana and Banca Commerciale Lombarda—all issue personal finance cards and are partly owned by the state's Banca Nazionale. They are, therefore, backed by the Banca Nazionale's reserves and, more importantly, data processing resources.

THE COUNTRY

The Nuova Italia movement was based in Venice, the only city to escape nuclear attack. Nevertheless, Rome remained the focus for the "idea of Italy," and the return of central authority to a largely rebuilt Rome in 2100 represented the climax of over a century's work.

History has left its mark on the political structure of Italy. Whereas Rome is the legislative and ceremonial capital of the country, Venice remains its administrative center. After all, it is an epoch characterized by its commu-



nications revolution, and the two cities are less than an hour's tube journey away.

Urban Italy: Like most of the other nations of Earth, Italy is predominantly urbanized, and the countryside is characterized by myriad small towns and villages, linked by an excellent network of over- and underground airfilm train lines.

Padua is known for the unconventionality of its university, Genoa Nuova for its magnificent new airport, and Naples for the surviving criminal traditions of its inhabitants. Florence, still the mecca of millions of tourists every year, is domed in a protective bubble dating from pollution scares of the 2140s. Naturally defensible Perugia became the retreat of what was left of the papacy during World War III and has remained the papal city ever since. The Cathedral of St. Joan, completed in 2243, remains one of the great sights of the religious world.

Rome: The Eternal City is

a grandiose monument to the Italy of the past and the present. The old Roman forum was largely undamaged in the wars, but the coliseum was destroyed, and a replica, cunningly aged, has replaced it. Nearby is the Palace of Representatives where the Italian elected legislature meets, as well as the Palazzo Ebraico—the so-called Hebrew Palace, official residence of the president. In Rome the streets are wide, the museums many, and tourists everywhere. It is quite a small city, with most residential suburbs out along the main commuter train and tube lines.

Venice: Venice, on the other hand, is a far more business-like center. Recurring problems of subsidence and pollution have been successfully dealt with, so the city remains as distinctive as it is picturesque. But all the major ministries are here, as well as most of the main banks and financial institutions. The city of St. Mark is

unquestionably the powerhouse of the country.

Milan: The third city in Italy is Milan, primarily an industrial center. The original city was effectively razed by direct nuclear attack and secondary fires, so Milan is the most modern—and most planned—city in Italy. Generous development grants and the opportunity to start from scratch attracted a large proportion of the country's industries to Milan. It dominates the domestic, light industrial sector.

LIFE IN ITALY

Italy is still heavily influenced by the spirit of technocratic humanism. As a consequence, people usually work only 15 to 20 hours a week, and they are free—indeed, encouraged—to discover their true *métier* or purpose in life. Clubs, societies, and mystic groups abound. Transferring between jobs of widely different nature (or, indeed, holding several at once) is regarded as perfectly

normal as people continue in the endless quest for the "right" one. It should be noted that this does not revolve purely around fields such as the arts or sciences. Those, for example, who feel their vocation is fighting are welcomed in the Celeri or the mercenary units, while a successful chef can be *fêted* just as highly as a top engineer.

Education: In keeping with the humanism of the age, the Italian educational system is both flexible and very capable of allowing a pupil to progress as far and as fast as possible. If the required aptitude is there, a citizen can make a career of studying! On the other hand, the Ministry for National Defense has steadfastly refused to brook any interference with the Italian's traditional two hours a week of paramilitary training.

National Service: Every Italian citizen is required to serve the nation for 18 months before the age of 26



(or within five years of citizenship, in the case of people petitioning later). Only in a few cases does this involve serving in the army, police, Guardia Nazionale, navy, or air force. More often it is in some aspect of the civil service, from teaching to sanitation to working as a clerk or an accountant. Considerable effort is made to match the individual with an appropriate job (both the efficient and humanist approach), and many elect to stay afterward, if only for awhile. The state also retains the power to coopt the services of any of its citizens in times of war or "in the national need"—an all-embracing clause.

Culture: Italian culture is vigorous and original, still propelled by the creative vigor of the Neon Renaissance. Maroni's huge holosculpture, "The Womb," a stylized globe superimposed with impressionistic images from history, has become the unofficial symbol for Mother Earth. The Acchielli school of composers has set new standards for synthetic music. Expatriate Brazilian author Emilia do Costa e Silva wrote the magnificent "Stairway" cycle in Florence. Italy remains the cradle of this new genre of art and literature, dominated by the themes of equality, liberty, and internal growth.

THE ACADEMIA DEI LINCEI

The academia was established in 2036, in the midst of the drive to rebuild Italy. Its members were academics and other influential people concerned lest Italy's distinctive culture and history be forgotten in the day-to-day struggle for more practical aims. Originally run from a

small set of offices in Pisa, it moved to a larger block in Rome shortly after the inauguration in 2100.

The year 2100 marked a turning point in the history of Italy and, with it, of the academia. With the return of stable government, the trustees and benefactors of the academia looked increasingly to broadening their role. From them championing the study and reverence of the past, it was a short step to the founding of the Italian Traditionalist Party. This movement espouses a return to ancient morals and values and the revitalization of the Christian Roman Empire.

Much to the horror of the austere bureaucrats of Venice, this populist mix of nationalism and fundamentalism, heavily backed from the pulpit of the Roman Catholic Church, rapidly gained support. There was a justifiable fear that the Traditionalist Party could destroy the still precarious national consensus and plunge the country into reckless foreign adventures.

The state showed its teeth. Every weapon at its disposal, from the national news networks and the tax service to the secret police and local government, was brought to bear on the academia and its political arm. By 2183 a combination of public morals charges, vicious rumors, and open harassment led the central caucus of the Traditionalist Party to wind it up. In 2186 a very real question hung over the continued existence of the academia: The government announced that the academia's support for a political organization had jeopardized its tax-free charitable status and threatened it with 123 years of back taxes

2300AD

and compound interest.

In the end the state settled for emasculation over elimination. An apolitical board of trustees was appointed, and the constitution of the academia was redrafted to prevent any further forays into politics. In this form the Academia dei Lincei has gone from strength to strength.

Purpose: The academia is devoted to the quest for antiquity: its artifacts, its ideals, and its knowledge. This makes it essentially an Earth-based foundation, though it has, for many years, broadened its field of study beyond the borders of Italy. Nevertheless, a small but vocal contingent has begun to argue that the academia could fruitfully turn its attention to alien history, too. A sign of the times is the semiofficial outpost on Daikoku studying Eber artifacts under an eccentric academician, convinced it reveals Christian beliefs among aliens.

Resources: The academia is a rich organization, thanks to numerous bequeaths and the fees earned by its museums and experts. In keeping with its global role, it has offices in major cities and cultural centers across the world, and a large staff of archivists and experts. In addition, the academia has contacts with all sorts of individuals and institutes, contacts which can be called on in the course of its work.

The academia often has the need for expert investiga-

tors to track down works of antiquity—still held as a form of investment, frequently in breach of the law. The academia can pay well, and successful agents may find themselves approached again if the board was impressed with their resource and, particularly, tact.

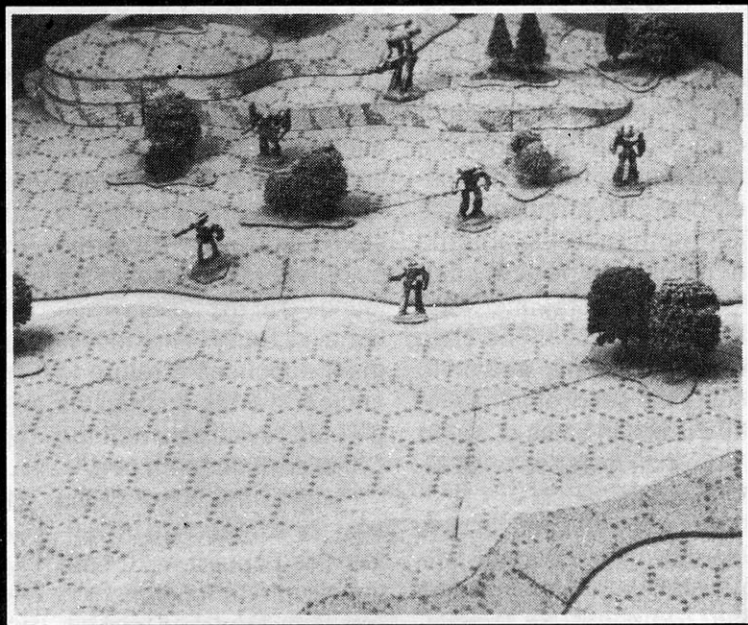
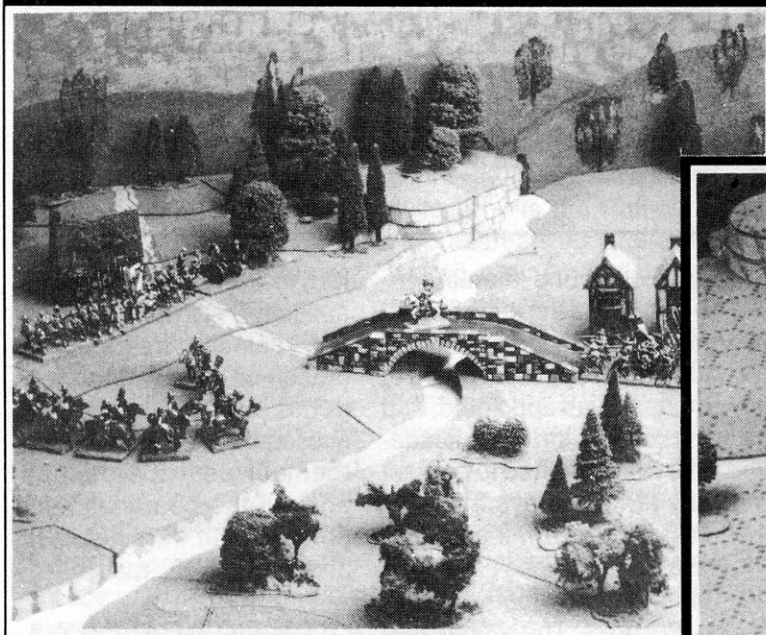
LE COMPAGNIE DELLA BELLA MORTE

The three picturesquely named Companies of the Good Death are the official Italian mercenary units: namely, the Granatieri di Sarzana (Grenadiers of Sarzana) and Lupi d'Umbria (Wolves of Umbria) light infantry, and the Pugni d'Accaio (Fists of Steel) light armored companies. They are all individual joint-stock companies with a majority government shareholding, and the commanding officer is a senior Italian soldier on attachment.

In this way the government keeps a slight arm's length from the operation of the units (e.g., allowing them to undertake missions within the gray areas of legality and diplomatic nicety) without compromising their overall control.

All soldiers sign on for a four-year tour, and receive a salary and a share of profits. They are equipped to Italian standards, though individuals and units have some distinctive touches. Most are Italian citizens, but approximately 20 percent are foreign. Ω

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Mark Galeotti

Manhunt

With the Kafer War has come a general resurgence of concern for the defense of far-flung colonies, regardless of their proximity to the immediate threat.

This has caused problems for many smaller settlements, which, hitherto, regarded militias and self-defense forces as expensive diversions of resources from more immediate day-to-day uses. Something, in other words, to leave until the agrarian base is stable, the communications network in place, and industry on the way. Having selected their immigrants and trained their young along more practical lines, they lack a suitable pool of military skills.

So they turn either to their parent governments or, frequently, small groups of "military advisors"—mercenaries to form a cadre training and leading a local unit until its officers and men have acquired the necessary level of experience. The players are one such group, hired by a small island community on the Australian world of Botany Bay. They are on a six-month contract to turn a handful of locals into some sort of credible militia.

The community, Murray Point, is a town of some 1500 people, mainly second-generation colonists from the capital city of New Cairns. For its economic livelihood, Murray Point depends on a small mine providing iron ore for a newly built smelter on a nearby island. It also depends on a meteorological station which sends unmanned drone aircraft on regular sweeps out to sea to supplement Botany Bay's weather satellite pictures with readings on wind speeds and distances, precipitation counts, and pressure gradients.

The players are provided with a secluded bay for firearms practice and a large warehouse in the town. A force of 30 locals, 18 to 27 year olds, has been assembled along with a

little military equipment. All have the equivalent of FC-70 rifles and an abundance of 7.5mm ammunition, but the town council has also managed to obtain five Ramirez-Abruggo BF-1 assault rifles and 6000 rounds for them. Other initial equipment consist of six radios, flares, three pairs of binoculars, and two medikits. Six Songbird hovercraft have also been set aside for the Murray Point Irregulars, one with chronic engine trouble and another with a built-in vehicle radio, along with a fuel station.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The volunteers are all skilled in the use of boats and hovercraft, and most will be adequate shots. They will all be quite enthusiastic (the Kafers are too far away for most to connect playing soldiers with realities of fighting an implacable, murderous race of xenophobes). The main problem will be instilling discipline in the naturally boisterous and individualistic volunteers.

If the players are interested in playing it through, many different situations could arise in the first month. If they feel more equipment is needed, they will have to convince the local council—a task which will face opposition from its more skeptical members. More radios, for example, would be a very useful force multiplier, and telescopic sights would maximize the value of the FC-70s.

The small contingent of local policemen are lukewarm about the existence of the militia, and any brawls or accidents could involve the players in delicate negotiation with Lieutenant Armitage, the local chief of police—an honest man, but totally lacking in humor, and always prickly about real and suspected slights to the dignity of his office.

Regardless of the amount of detail given in the early stages

of play, the players' plans will soon be thrown out of kilter. A local boy who has been serving as a mercenary in the French Arm is coming home. If the players are on friendly terms with the locals, they may hear about Ian Peacock's imminent arrival. This should be checked as a task roll for each player, but a roll sufficient for a Difficult task will also impart the reason for his return: a psychological discharge.

Peacock may be seen as a valuable potential recruit, but if the players speak to him, they will soon realize that he is hardly up to military service. He is twitchy, introverted and moody, and shies away from talk about the war. A successful use of Psychology skill will show how deep the scars are.

Task: To hear about Ian Peacock's imminent arrival: Simple. Streetwise.

Task: To evaluate sanity (Uncertain): Routine. Psychology. 15 minutes.

His grip on reality and self-control is very tenuous since his service on *Aurore* in the Tanstaaf Free Legion, when he was trapped for over a day, near death, in the wreckage of his squad APC, surrounded by a band of Kafers intent on interrogating his teammates. He was rescued and given psychiatric care, but in war attention tends to be lavished more on those who will fight again, and Ian Peacock's treatment was incomplete and short-lived.

A few days after his arrival, the PCs will be contacted early one morning by a distraught Lieutenant Armitage. Peacock was staying with his widowed mother, and a few hours ago neighbors rang to complain about Peacock crying over and over again, "Just stop asking me questions!" When a squad car could be spared, the door was found open. Peacock was missing, and his mother was dead from over a dozen vicious stab wounds to the face and body. An immediate search was mounted. The body of the town's newest doctor was found in a nearby street. His hovercraft had disappeared.

Armitage explains that Peacock apparently killed his mother and the doctor, stole the craft, and headed out to sea. His course has been tracked by the infrared photographs taken by Botany Bay's weather satellite, transmitted real-time to the meteorological station. He has gone to ground on a small deserted island 100 kilometers away. Armitage adds that Peacock had a provisional license for an F-7 laser rifle.

Armitage has seven men armed with handguns and a few shotguns. Though it sticks in his throat to admit it (and some tact on the players' part at this point will win them a friend for life), he and his men have neither the equipment nor the training to tackle a trained gunman on the run. Rather than appeal for a SWAT team to be mobilized and airlifted from New Cairns, he and the council feel that the Murray Point Irregulars should deal with Peacock. The "we clean up our own front yard" ethos is very strong on Botany Bay.

The players may not be convinced, but the fact is that their contract does require them to "aid the civic authorities when said authorities consider the issue to be urgent or necessary." In other words, the council has them over a barrel. They do have some leverage, though. A strong case could be made

for commandeering more radios and even some night vision gear from the police if the players realize this and push.

The island where Peacock has gone to ground, Rimmer's Rock, is little more than a small dimple on the coastal shelf. It is roughly triangular, two kilometers long and one kilometer wide. Broad, swampy beaches slope up from the shallow waters to a central rocky outcrop about one kilometer long and 500 meters across at its widest point. The beaches are flat and treacherous, thickly veined with looping seaweed. But the rocky scarp is gnarled and barren, ancient lava deposits eroded into fantastic shapes by wind and rain.

Players with binoculars will be able to make out the hovercraft from about 10 kilometers offshore. Peacock drove it up the beach and left it half in and half out of a cave amidst the rocks. Peacock himself is nowhere to be seen.

From this point events will be determined by the players' actions. Peacock has, needless to say, lost even his tenuous grip on sanity and now thinks he is being hunted by Kafers. No amount of persuasion will change his mind. He is armed with his F-7 laser rifle, ample power cells, and a Stracher P-11 magnum. He also has a combat knife which he will use on himself rather than be captured by the Kafers.

He is wearing biocontacts which will give him some infrared vision in the dark and up to $\times 5$ magnification—something the players will have to discover for themselves. One last souvenir of his service is a military-issue radio. He can use this to overhear the Irregulars' radio traffic, so unless they are using code, they will find Peacock one jump ahead.

His skills should depend on the strength of the players, but Peacock will have good Combat Rifle and Melee skills, Stealth, Recon and Survival. He also has Demolitions-0. He has used this to rig up a crude booby trap on the hovercraft. If investigating characters do not spot it, then roll his chance to rig the trap. If he succeeded, the cigar-lighter will trigger about 20 11mm magnum shells, blasting in all directions.

Task: To spot trap (Hazardous): Simple. Demolition and Recon. 6 seconds.

Task: To rig booby trap: Difficult. Demo-0. 15 minutes.

Two strategies are open to the hunters. They can place pickets around the island and hope to starve him out (investigation of the ship will reveal that all the supplies were left on board). This is hardly viable. The Irregulars' weapons all have 800-meter range to his 1000 meter, and come night the hunters would soon become easy meat for a trained, experienced soldier. Besides, the local boys will soon become restive. Not as restive, though, as the local council which, after a day or so and certainly after a few casualties, will start complaining and probably turn to New Cairns for help.

More dangerous, but more practical, is to go in after him. With some men safely far out at sea covering the beaches with binoculars, the Irregulars can begin to sift across the island, trying to drive Peacock out of cover and either onto the beach or into an ambush force (the so-called hammer and anvil strategy). Small groups could move from cover to cover, in close radio contact with other teams and ready to

provide fire support if Peacock should start shooting.

One subtlety would be to use the drones from the weather station to buzz the island and try to draw Peacock's fire, helping locate him (though laser fire is largely invisible). Alternatively the players could try tracking him from the hovercraft. The rock does not, however, make for easy tracking, and this would be a Difficult task, at best. It would also leave Peacock in a good position to turn on his pursuers from ambush, with the tracker the target of choice.

Peacock is insane, but if anything, this will make him even more wily and cunning. To flush him out while he monitors the Irregular's radios would seem an almost impossible task, were it not that two main factors work in the players' favor.

First of all, hunted men often retreat upward, a fact known to any characters with 5+ years law enforcement experience or Psychology-3 or better. This will allow the hunters to better predict Peacock's behavior.

Second, Peacock believes he is fighting Kafers. He thinks their use of human voices on the radio is a cunning ruse, and will eventually interrupt the Irregulars' communications to crow over the fact that they haven't fooled him (and that he has drawn blood if any militiamen have been killed). This will alert the players, and they will have one chance to initiate a dialogue with him. Attempts to talk sense into him will fail, but a skilled technician with a vehicle radio may be able to triangulate his location to within 50 meters from his transmissions.

Task: To initiate dialogue (Unskilled): Formidable. Interview. 10 minutes.

Task: To locate Peacock: Formidable. Communications. 20 minutes.

In addition, Peacock may expose himself to stupid risks, relying on his imagined Kafer enemies' delayed-reaction intelligence. He may, for example, mistakenly take for granted

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his own ability to get in a second shot in an ambush.

Play Peacock as a very smart and dangerous animal, but one prepared to take risks if it will draw blood. He is capable of near-superhuman feats in his madness—especially to avoid capture. If events drag into night, he will become especially lethal, particularly if the players have no night vision gear. If they retreat for the night, he may prepare deadfalls and similar traps. If necessary, fudge rolls to avoid a lucky early shot ending the chase too soon. It is better to create a running hunt-gunfight-hunt sequence with a wounded, brooding prey plotting to turn the tables on his Kafer pursuers.

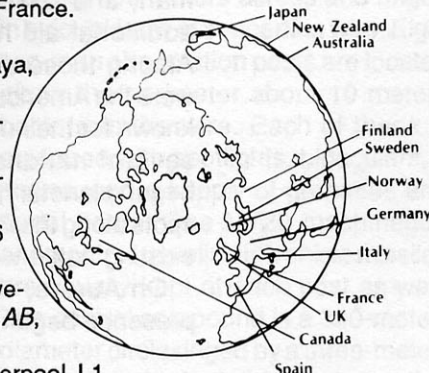
The local militiamen are brave and willing, but they are hardly battle-hardened troops. They will be hard to command once Peacock has started killing by either hanging back or becoming foolhardy in their anger. Ambushes by an almost-undetachable laser are demoralizing enough at the best of times. Leadership skills would probably prove useful to prevent the militiamen from running the first few times.

The outcome will determine the players' continued welcome at Murray Point. Success with no or minor casualties will do wonders for both their reputation on Botany Bay and the morale of the Irregulars, while heavy casualties will lead to the invocation of termination clauses and their sudden, ignominious departure. On the whole, though, the affair will unsettle and embarrass the people of Murray Point, and playing at soldiering will probably become less popular in the city after this brush with the realities of war. Ω

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By C. W. Hess

Leathernecks on Aurore

This article gives referees some background information concerning the marine presence on the colony world of Aurore (Eta Bootis IIc) during the Kafer conflict. With this information, along with GDW's **Aurore Sourcebook**, referees should be able to run adventures involving the American Marines. The information provided is based on a current date of February 2303. However, it should be accurate from the time period between November 2302 and about May 2303. Beyond that time, circumstances in the French Arm may change. Further material covering the American Marines may be found in GDW's **Mission Arcturus** and 3W's **Operation Overlord**, as well as in **Challenge 39**. Also, be sure to look for a marine combat mission in **Challenge** in the near future. This adventure takes place on Aurore and is based out of Marine Outpost Foxtrot, which is described later in this article.

Throughout 2301 and 2302, the Kafer War continued to burn throughout the French colonial arm. With the Kafer War tying up vast amounts of French, German, and Ukrainian ground forces, additional aid had to be brought in. Among those drawn into the conflict were the American Marines. While best known for their use aboard warships of several nations, the marines have begun planetary deployment in several spots along the French Arm to assist the existing battle-weary forces.

On Aurore, the American Marine presence began in November of 2302

with the arrival of advance elements of the 6th Marine Brigade. Local construction firms were recruited to begin construction of Marine Base Alpha on the outskirts of Tanstaaf. Marine engineers were immediately landed to begin the construction of four additional small bases across the region stretching from Tanstaaf south to the sea. From north to south these small bases, referred to as outposts, were labeled Charlie, Delta, and Foxtrot. The marine battalion was divided up into its three rifle companies and one weapons company, and assigned one company per base. Additional assets were split up between these bases.

Recently, local construction contractors were again being recruited—this time to build Marine Air Station Bravo. This is scheduled to be completed by May of 2303 but is now partially operational. Elements of the 12th Air Transport Squadron (CV-120 equipped), the main bodies of the 29th Fighter Squadron (AV-90 equipped), and the 7th Air Transport Squadron (UX-10 equipped) are based here at this time. Also in progress is the expansion of Outpost Charlie to make room for a battalion-sized unit to set up operations. This project, being undertaken by marine corps engineers, has made it difficult for Delta Company to conduct normal operations, but the expansion is scheduled to last only until March 2303. When completed, the facility is expected to be termed marine base instead of marine outpost. The present plan is that 3rd Battalion, now deployed among the

An American Marine Article

three outposts to the south, will be moved into M.B. Charlie, while either 1st or 2nd battalion will be used to man the outposts. However, new brigade operation plans are now calling for the construction of three new outposts to be located further east. The idea will be to establish a strong foothold directly south of Mount Phaeton in hope of forcing the Kafer ground troops into the Auroran hot backs. Such a plan would call for a major brigade operation to take and maintain the foothold to the east.

Referee's Note: In addition to the arrival of the 6th Marine Brigade, the Americans are also deploying the 8th Marine Brigade. This unit is scheduled to arrive in force in May of 2303. The 8th Marines are scheduled to be deployed north of the Novoa Kiev region to assist the Ukrainian Army against the Kafer ground forces.

AMERICA MARINE BASES

The following are bases on Aurore.

Marine Base Alpha: Located in the Tanstaaf area, this base serves as 6th Brigade HQ and as the center of all American Marine operation on Aurore. The base serves as temporary home for all new marine units and as the corps' primary supply distribution center on Aurore.

Marine Air Station Bravo: This base is now under construction and when completed in May of 2303 will serve as the primary home for all marine air assets based on Aurore. The base will be equipped with extensive maintenance and repair facilities. A temporary air strip is complete and is already in use by existing air units.

Marine Outpost Charlie: This is the third American Marine facility located in the Tanstaaf area, presently serving as the home for Delta Company (the 3/6's weapons company) and Hotel Company of the 1st Armor Battalion.

Marine Outposts Delta, Echo, and Foxtrot: These three facilities are located in a line stretching south from Tanstaaf to the sea. The three outposts serve as home for Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie companies, respectively. Also based at each of these outposts are elements of Delta company (the 3/6's weapons company), Hotel company



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(Armor), and assorted air elements. These outposts serve as regional centers of combat activity against the Kafer ground troops.

Marine Outpost Golf, Hotel, and India: While construction of these facilities has not yet begun, they are intended to be built identical to the outposts Delta, Echo, and Foxtrot. These new centers will be located well to the east of existing marine outposts. Construction is expected to begin by March 2303.

Marine Outpost Foxtrot: Marine Outpost Foxtrot is one of four outposts located along a line reaching south from Tanstaaf to the sea. Foxtrot is the southernmost of this line. Constructed by marine corps engineers, the base is nearly identical in layout to outposts Delta and Echo located farther to the north. The outpost currently serves as the home for C Company of the 3/6 Marine Battalion. Also stationed at the outpost is one air defense team and one mortar team assigned from D Company, one tank section from H Company, one AV-90 VTOL fighter team (two fighters total) from the 29th Fighter Squadron, and two teams of utility X-wings (four UX-10s total) from the 7th Air Transport Squadron.

The outpost itself is a circular area roughly 700 meters across and ringed in a double row of concertina wire. Eight two-man observation posts are located along the perimeter about 10 meters back from the wire. Each of these is equipped with spotlights, binoculars, a phone, and a supply of grenades and aerial flares. One M720 machinegun and a pair of Javelin antivehicle missiles are usually kept at each post as well. The central compound is a 330-meter-diameter circle ringed by a three-meter-high wall of packed dirt. The top of this wall is about three meters wide and is solid enough to support the weight of a standard light vehicle.

Deployment Timeline

November 2302	6th Brigade advance elements arrive on Aurore (brigade headquarters and 3/6 Battalion). Construction begins on Marine Base Alpha and outposts Charlie, Delta, Echo, and Foxtrot.
December 2302	Outposts Charlie and Delta are complete.
January 2303	Marine Base Alpha and outposts Echo and Foxtrot are complete. Expansion of Outpost Charlie begins. Construction of Marine Air Station Bravo begun.
February 2303	The date of this article. Operation Overlord begins in the DM+36 2393 star system.
March 2303	Expansion of Outpost Charlie complete. 1/6 Battalion arrives on Aurore. Construction of outposts Golf, Hotel, and India begins.
April 2303	Construction of new outposts complete. Remainder of the American 6th Marines arrives on Aurore.
May 2303	Construction of Marine Air Station Bravo is complete. Deployment of the 8th Marines begins.
June 2303	Final elements of both the 6th Marines and the 8th Marines arrive.

Within the central compound are nine major facilities. These are laid out into a rough circle. Starting with the lower leftmost facility and going clockwise are the troop barracks, landing pad one, fuel dump, landing pad two, ordnance storage, landing pad three, vehicle repair and maintenance facilities, landing pad four, and in the lower right most location, medical, mess, and storage facilities. All buildings are of standard prefabricated type which were flown in by CV-120 Planet Lifter tilt-rotor cargo aircraft. Each building is self contained, utilizing roof-mounted solar collectors and large banks of batteries for providing electricity, and water tankage and waste water recycling equipment.

The troop barracks facility consists of three large prefab buildings and one small one. Each of the three large buildings is designed to house one full platoon of infantry in a large bay-style arrangement. Because of the additional air and armor assets attached to C Company, these facilities tend to be a bit crowded. At one end of the building are two large rooms with shower and latrine facilities. At the opposite end of the building is the main entrance, which can be equipped with an air lock, if necessary. The small building at the troop barracks facility serves as the company headquarters building. Here the company C.O., X.O., and first sergeant have

their administrative offices. Also located here is a central communications facility and tactical operations center. A small storage room contains a large number of the more expensive and high-tech pieces of equipment, including a pair of inertial map displays, a pair of portacomps, a variety of communicators, plus extra rifles, pistols, two M720 machineguns, two M10 sniper rifles, and four extra Javelin missile launchers. Only a small amount of rifle ammo is stored here. The rest is kept at the company ammo dump.

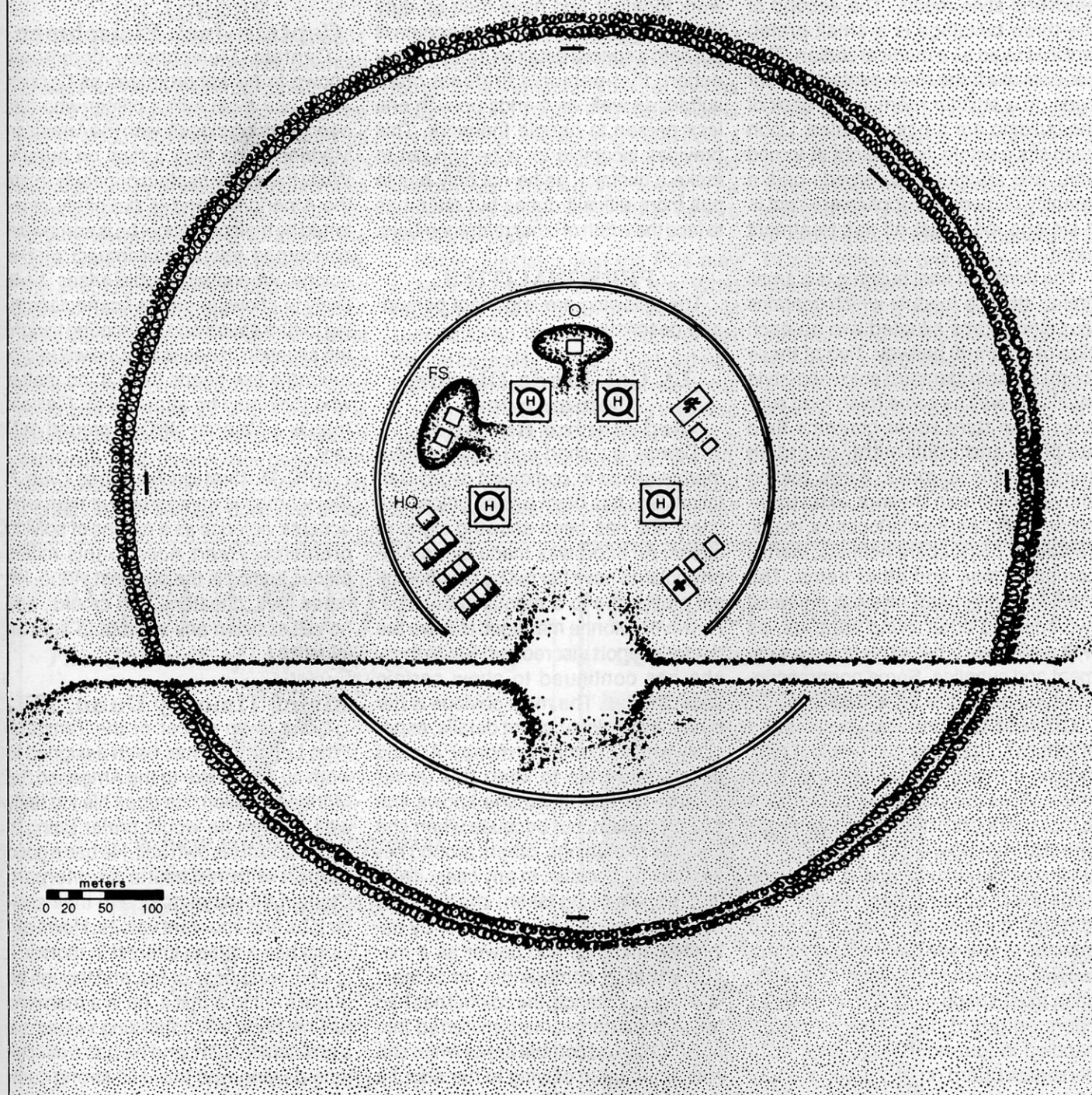
The outpost's fuel dump consists of a pair of reinforced buildings mostly buried at the bottom of a four-meter-deep, oval-shaped pit. These buildings, again prefab modules, house banks of fuel tanks which contain hydrogen fuel for use by all air and ground vehicles. An earthen ramp leads down between the two buildings, allowing the outpost's fuelling vehicles to easily resupply.

The ammunition dump is the northernmost facility in the central compound. It consists of a single reinforced building located at the base of a four-meter-deep pit. The single building houses rows of bombs and missiles for use by the marine ground-attack fighters, along with boxes of rifle and machinegun ammunition, cases of grenades and Javelin missiles, and a number of spare infantry weapons as well.





The maintenance and repair facility is made up of one large prefab building and two small ones. Of the two smaller buildings at the repair facility, one is used as a storehouse for spare parts and tools. The other is used as a repair shop and storage for spare parts for other nonvehicular equipment located at the outpost. Repair and maintenance handled here ranges from communications equipment to firearms, and from water recycling systems to solar energy collectors. The large building is a standard vehicle maintenance module. It is only lightly equipped, as the marine rifle company does not directly possess many vehicles. The facility is equipped to handle most repairs of light vehicles and aircraft. However, armored vehicles are a bit of a problem, and only light repairs can be made on these. Moderate to major repairs require the vehicle to be pulled out via planet lifter or CIT (combat interface transport) to better equipped facilities. The same is usually done whenever possible for major repairs on light vehicles and aircraft.

The final buildings at Foxtrot are the company medical and mess facilities. These consist of three prefab modules. The largest of these serves as the company mess hall. When meals are not being served, the building is an indoor recreation center for the troops. The facility consists of a large dining

Outpost Foxtrot



Key

	Marine platoon barracks		Ordnance storage
FS	Fuel storage	HQ	Company headquarters
	Aid station		Maintenance

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area with a fully equipped kitchen at one end. The two rooms are separated by a counter for chow-line-style service. However, most outposts are currently serving high-quality, prepackaged, autovend-style meals. The second of the three buildings is a small prefab which is used as a medical station. This consists of a large room containing four beds. In a smaller room in the back of the building are a pair of tables. Upon each sits a single, lightweight automed unit. Two additional automeds plus a quantity of medical supplies are kept in a storage room just off this treatment room.

The third and final building is a small prefab storage module which contains four storerooms situated two on each side of a central hallway. Two of these rooms contain standard autovend-style meals, as well as some fresh food supplies. The third room contains field supplies and equipment, including compact rations, ropes, flares, folding shovels, one-man shelters, extra backpacks, ponchos, inertial locators, maps, canteens, belts, spare helmets, inertial combat armor, and other items. The fourth room is used to store personal hygiene and other living supplies, as well as various types of cleaning equipment and supplies. Some nonprescription-type drugs are kept here also.

Outpost Operations: Besides the outpost's small repair and medical staff, at least one platoon is kept here at all times. While this platoon does not have to face the rigors of field duty, it provides general manpower for the outpost. Under normal circumstances, half of the perimeter observation posts are manned constantly. This ties up 10 marines at any one time. With a total of roughly 30 marines available for duty, each must spend eight out of every 24 hours on guard duty. This is usually handled in four-hour shifts, with each person on guard duty four out of every 12 hours. Along with guard duty, each person generally spends about four hours on some other duty. These range from supply-handling details to cleaning and maintenance details or training sessions. Each person on garrison then has about 12 hours a day of off-duty time to use for sleep, meals, personal hy-

giene, personal equipment maintenance, and general recreation time. Outpost duty assignments are usually filled by fireteams, so all members of a fireteam end up doing the same type of work together and have their off-duty time together. Whenever one person is put onto a special detail as a disciplinary action, that person's fireteam often suffers as well, as it ends up with one less person to handle the work. This provides incentive for a person not to make a mistake, as he not only has to pull more difficult duties but often has to face the wrath of other teammates.

PERSONALITIES

The following are important personality descriptions.

Lt. Col. Linda Dionne, Commander, 3rd Marine Battalion

Dionne is a short and stocky career marine officer in command of 3rd Battalion. She has been a good officer, but lately she has been showing signs of stress. An effort was made by an ASF physician to have her put on psychological profile due to a mental imbalance. However, Dionne managed to have the doctor's report discredited. Since then, she has continued to show certain eccentricities. The most obvious is her tendency to bicker about details, especially when it comes to money. Around others she tries to keep this under control—not because she knows she has a problem, but because when she haggles over things, others around her start acting peculiar. In any case, if she thinks she's being taken, she'll get the culprit back one way or another by using her influence and power as a marine battalion commander. In at least one recent instance, the colonel has had two marine sergeants transferred into hotly contested combat areas when she suspected them of lying to her about a large supply requisition. Unable to prove her claims, she simply had the two re-assigned. Colonel Dionne is an Experienced marine (space military).

NPC Motivation Results: *Major Joker:* The colonel is quite insane, though she appears to be a normal, if slightly eccentric, hard-charging officer.

Diamond 5: Dionne's regard for money is the primary symptom of her insanity. It is always her first consideration, though she is good at keeping this to herself.

Captain Jack Fleischman

Captain Fleischman, commonly known to his subordinates as Captain Jack, is a local militia officer who has been working closely with the American Marines since their arrival on Aureore. While the militia captain generally trusts the Americans and is definitely comforted by their presence, he is somewhat concerned about their impact on the colony. Whenever trouble arises, he is likely to show up on the scene searching for the cause and attempting to right the situation. If necessary, he will knock around a few heads to do it, no matter who they may be attached to. Fleischman is a Veteran NPC in ground military.

NPC Motivation Results: *Club 7:* Fleischman is an aggressive man who accepts violence as a means of solving problems. *Heart Ace:* To this militia officer, justice is the greatest virtue. He hates liars, cheaters, and crooks, and he will assist in any attempt to right an injustice.

Major Timothy Dunn, TFL

Dunn is an officer of the Tanstaaf Free Legion. He has been assigned to work as an advisor to the American 3rd Marine Battalion. He does his job fairly well, though he would prefer being in command of his own unit. He has a good rapport with his militia counterpart, Captain Fleischman, due to their similar jobs and apparent values. However, Dunn has a strong interest in money. It is a big weakness of his, and though he prefers not to admit it, he is a man who has his price. His conflicting values are a problem for him, and he has a difficult time dealing with this. His strong commitment to fairness is probably the result of a strong sense of guilt. Dunn is a good man at heart, and if confronted about his problem, he will confess to his weakness. Major Dunn is an Experienced NPC in ground military.

NPC Motivation Results: *Heart 9:* Dunn has a strong commitment to fair-

ness and reacts with anger to injustice and brutality. *Diamond 5*: He values money and can be bribed.

MARINE ADVENTURES ON AURORE

Throughout the period from mid-2301 to mid-2303, *Aurore* served as a human stronghold. While the American Marines did not begin to arrive in force until the end of 2303, several units served as ship's troops aboard various French warships. Many of these shipboard units have been landed at *Eta Bootis* for varying lengths of time to assist the battle-weary combat units based there. This should give plenty of opportunity to have American Marine-based adventures taking place during the actual period of the invasion. One of the better known operations involving the use of American Marines as ship's troops is detailed in GDW's adventure *Mission Arcturus*. After the marines begin to arrive on *Aurore* late in 2301, there will be a great deal of combat duty, and those

referees and players interested in such games will have plenty to do on *Aurore*. However, these are American troops deployed on foreign turf with a large number of foreign troops and civilians around.

A group of marine characters can get involved in a lot of other things that make for good adventures. Think of this as "Tour of Duty: 2300." The *Kafer War* is the backdrop, and fighting *Kafer* troops is the players' job. The work is hard and dangerous, and it pays lousy. The adventures begin when other factors come into play.

Some questions that the PCs may answer in their adventures are: What happens if the PCs run across Colonel *Dionne*? The PCs may discover her mental instability, perhaps the hard way. Will they be able to do anything about it, or will she stop them before they stop her? What about the political motivations behind military missions? Is a TFL unit being endangered for the benefit of an American Marine unit or vice versa?

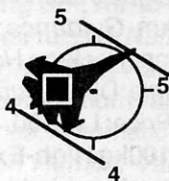
2300AD

What do the PCs do when civilians, possibly their friends, are caught in the middle of an action with the *Kafer*s? What about enmity between the PCs and another unit (perhaps French, TFL, or American)? How will that affect the PCs or the other unit if one or the other needs assistance?

This is just a small sample of ideas that may involve the player characters as American Marines on *Aurore*. As an alternative, the referee may wish to run a game with the PCs as civilians, or as TFL or French troops. In this case, the information provided in this article should suffice for contact with the American Marines. Ω

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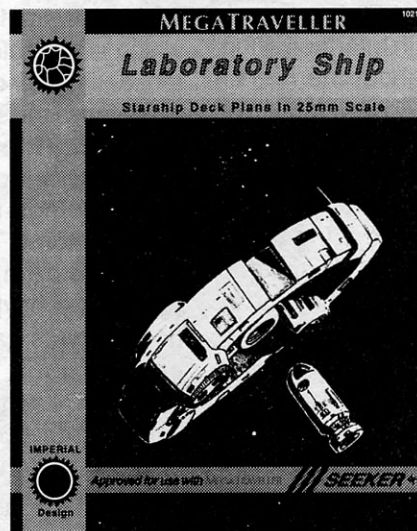
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AV-90 Marine VTOL

Ground-attack fighter hardware for 2300 AD

By C. W. Hess

In 2280, the U.S. Marine Corps adopted a new ground-attack aircraft to replace its aging fleet of AV-77 VTOL jets. Like its predecessor, the AV-90 is capable of vertical take-off and landing, and can carry a wide variety of weaponry, including both air-to-ground and air-to-air weapons. While the AV-90 is used extensively throughout the corps, its use is not as widespread as the aircraft it was designed to replace. The reason is that the corps has adopted a much wider variety of aircraft over the past three decades, providing it with a more versatile air support capability. The AV-90 is primarily found in use with the 8th Interface Wing, now operating throughout the French Arm, and the 7th Air Wing, which is one of the Earthbound marine corps units.

DESIGN

The AV-90 is a well armored, ruggedly constructed aircraft, ideally suited for deployment near the battle front. Its reliable twin TJ-3200 engines are practically maintenance free and provide enough thrust to give the craft a top speed of 900 kph. The AV-90 has a combat radius of 2000 km, which, with extended fuel tankage, can be extended to just over 3500 km. Using vectored thrust from its engine exhaust, the craft is able to take-off and land vertically, making large, paved runways unnecessary. However, unlike some vectored thrust aircraft, the AV-90's exhaust can only be channeled downward and aft, and lacks steerable nozzles to adjust exhaust in any other direction. This

makes the craft less maneuverable than some other VTOLs, but also makes it easier to maintain. The craft is equipped with a high degree of armor protection, making it a first-class choice in the ground-attack role. The underside armor is particularly strong, shielding the craft's crew and internal components from ground fire. This armor is capable of stopping small arms fire, as well as fire from most plasma guns and light autocannons. The AV-90's integral armament consists solely of a single fixed-mount 25mm autocannon, located in the craft's fuselage. This weapon is belt-fed from a 200-round magazine. The craft also has a small internal weapons bay which is capable of carrying extra fuel tankage, a pair of 200kg bombs, or two air-defense missile racks with three missiles each. The craft is also equipped with three hardpoints on each of its stubby wings for carrying external weapon stores. The four outboard hardpoints are each capable of carrying up to a 200kg payload, while the two inboard points can carry up to 400 kg each.

Crew: Pilot, gunner *Weight:* 9000 kg *Armor:* All Faces: 6 *Armament:* One 25mm autocannon with 200-round magazine, 6 wing hardpoints, 2 internal hardpoints *Evasion:* 18 *Sensor Range:* 300 km (+2) *Signature:* -2 *Max Speed:* 900 kph *Cruising Speed:* 800 kph *Combat Movement:* 1800 m *Endurance:* 5 hour *Price:* Lv2,250,000.

ORDNANCE LOADS

Four 200kg aircraft-guided bombs and four striker antivehicle missiles on

wing pylons. Two 200kg aircraft-guided bombs in internal bay. Eight 100kg aircraft-guided bombs and four Striker antivehicle missiles on wing pylons. Two 200kg aircraft-guided bombs in internal bay. Four Mk40 cluster bombs and two 200kg aircraft-guided bombs on wing pylons. Extra fuel tankage in internal bay.

NEW ORDNANCE

The following new ordnance is available.

100kg WASP Bomb: *Type:* Aircraft-guided bomb *Nation:* Generic *Launcher Weight:* 0 *Bomb Weight:* 200 kg *Range:* 6 km *Guidance:* Automatic following gunner lock-on *Homing Value:* 10 *Attack Angle:* Direct *Burst Radius:* 500 m *DPV:* 6 *Price:* Lv2000.

100kg High-Explosive Bomb: *Type:* Aircraft-guided bomb *Nation:* Generic *Launcher Weight:* 0 *Bomb Weight:* 200 kg *Range:* 6 km *Guidance:* Automatic following gunner lock-on *Homing Value:* 10 *Attack Angle:* Direct *Burst Radius:* 500 m *DP:* As explosion (EP=60) *Price:* Lv1200.

Mk40 Iron Rain Cluster Bomb: The Mk40 is actually more of a bomblet dispenser than a bomb by itself. It is an area weapon that disperses numerous bomblets over a large stretch of land. The area affected varies with the altitude and speed of the launching aircraft. At normal low-altitude attack speed, it covers an area roughly 100 m wide and 1000 m long. For each group of infantry within the effected area, roll a 1D10 and subtract one. In the case of vehicles, make a 1D10 roll, but subtract three

instead. This is the distance to the nearest impacting bomblet. Next roll 2D10 and add this to the first roll to determine the distance to the next closest impacting bomblet. Use the scatter diagram for artillery rounds given in the **2300 AD** rules to determine the direction of the impact.

Type: Freefall submunitions dispenser **Nation:** Generic **Launcher Weight:** 0 **Bomb Weight:** 200 kg **Dispersal Area:** 100 m wide by 1000 m long **Range:** 0 **Guidance:** None **Attack Angle:** Direct **DPV:** As tamped explosion (EP=4) **Price:** Lv1000.

AAM-12W Lightning Bolt Air-to-Air Missile: **Type:** Air-to-air missile **Nation:** America **Missile Weight:** 50 kg **Range:** 120 km (flight time to maximum range is one minute) **Guidance:** Automatic following gunner lock-on **Homing Value:** 22 **Attack Angle:** Direct **DP:** As tamped explosion (EP=8) **Missile Price:** Lv12,000.

ACM-27P Guardian Countermeasures Pod: The Guardian countermeasures pod fits on an aircraft's ordnance hardpoint in place of any 100kg weapon. The unit operates by disrupting the targeting of any missile which is locked onto the aircraft. This tends to work best on human-designed missiles. Against Kafer missiles, the results are less predictable. When activated, the unit reduces the homing value of any human-made missile targeted onto the aircraft by 2D6 and any Kafer made missile by 1D10.

Type: Aircraft ECM pod **Nation:** America **Weight:** 93 kg **Range of Effect:** 100 km **Price:** Lv35,000. Ω



EARTH—AMERICA

<i>State</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Roll</i>
Alabama	2%	1-2
Arkansas	1%	3
California	7%	4-10
Colorado	1%	11
Connecticut	2%	12-13
Florida	6%	14-19
Georgia	2%	20-21
Illinois	6%	22-27
Indiana	4%	28-32
Iowa	1%	33
Kansas	1%	34
Kentucky	2%	35-36
Louisiana	2%	37-38
Maryland	2%	39-40
Massachusetts	4%	41-44
Michigan	5%	45-49
Minnesota	2%	50-51
Mississippi	1%	52
Missouri	2%	53-54
New Jersey	4%	55-58
New York	9%	59-67
North Carolina	2%	68-69
Ohio	6%	70-75
Oklahoma	1%	76
Oregon	1%	77
Pennsylvania	6%	78-83
Puerto Rico	1%	84
Rhode Island	1%	85
South Carolina	1%	86
Tennessee	2%	87-88
Virginia	2%	89-90
Washington	2%	91-92
West Virginia	1%	93
Wisconsin	2%	94-95
States less than 1%	5%	96-100

STATES BELOW 1% POPULATION

<i>State</i>	<i>Chance</i>	<i>Roll</i>
Alaska	3%	1-3
Delaware	9%	4-12
Hawaii	8%	13-20
Idaho	6%	21-26
Maine	7%	27-33
Montana	6%	34-39
Nebraska	12%	40-51
New Hampshire	9%	52-60
Nevada	4%	61-64
New Mexico	4%	65-68
North Dakota	6%	69-74
South Dakota	6%	75-80
Utah	10%	81-90
Vermont	6%	91-96
Wyoming	4%	97-100

Where Ya From, Mack?

Homeworld Determination for American Characters

C. W. Hess

This article is written to provide players and referees with a simple system for determining a character's homeworld. Using the system given in the **2300 AD** rules, a player has to choose a homeworld based on some die rolls which determine whether the character is from a Core or Frontier world, and then what the gravity of that homeworld is. Using the tables provided in this article, the process takes place in a different order.

First, the player randomly determines the character's homeworld. The result then automatically determines the homeworld's gravity type and whether it is a Core or a Frontier world. Not all players may wish to use this system as it may cause some difficulties for their characters. If a harsh world such as King is rolled, a player character will be forced to wear a respirator in normal atmospheres, and so on. It may also designate characters as coming from worlds they know little about. However, even with these possible drawbacks, this system provides a challenging element of random chance which may place a character's home at L-4, Ellis, Tirane, or somewhere in Idaho back in the states.

This system requires the use of percentile rolls. As the **2300 AD** game does not use percentile dice, some players may need an explanation. To make a percentile roll, roll 1D10 and multiply the result by 10. Then roll a second die and add its result to the total. This new total is the percentile result. For example, a 4 is rolled on the first die. Multiplying this by 10 gives a result of 40. The second roll comes up a 6, which is added to the first result, giving the percentile result of 46. If both dice come up 0s, treat the roll as 100. This system

allows for the random generation of numbers between 1 and 100, and is commonly referred to as a percentile roll. It is also commonly notated as D100.

When a character is created, the first step is to determine the character's homeworld. Instead of using the Homeworld Table included in the **2300 AD** game, use the tables included in this article. To begin with, roll percentile dice and consult the American Homeworlds Table. This will provide the name of the homeworld, whether it is a Core or a Frontier world, and its gravity type. Certain results may require further explanation or additional rolls to complete the process. Information on Tirane, Hermes, Ellis, and King may be found in **Colonial Atlas**. Information about Earth may be found in **Earth/Cybertech Sourcebook**. Little information is currently available concerning the remaining American colonies.

Earth: The result "Earth" indicates that the character is from somewhere within the continental U.S., including Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. The player has the option of rolling to determine the character's home state. To do this, a roll of 1D100 should be made on the Earth—America Table. Rolls between 96 and 100, inclusive, indicate a state containing less than one percent of the total U.S. population. If this result is rolled, simply make a second 1D100 roll and consult the States Below 1% Population Table.

Ellis: This is the 50th American state, even though it is not on Earth. It is in fact far at the end of the American Subarm of colonial space. While Ellis is on the Frontier, it is a state, complete with the government, bureaucracy, legalities, and modernization that goes along with the title. For this reason, players with characters from Ellis may choose their background skills from either the Frontier or Core categories, or both.

King: All characters who come from King possess genetically modified bodies to survive in that hostile environment. The main result of these changes is that, aside from strength and dexterity modifiers when operating in nonhigh-

2300AD

G environments, the character must wear a respirator in normal atmospheres.

Australian World: The character was originally raised in Australian territory. This may be because one or both of the character's parents were Australian, because his parents were Americans who worked for an Australian firm, or simply because his parents were Americans who moved to Australia during the character's growing years. The result is that the character has had both American and Australian influences, though he is presently an American citizen. At the referee's option, the character may be assumed to have dual citizenship. The system provided in the **2300 AD** rules will have to be used to determine the character's homeworld. An upcoming **Challenge** article will do for Australian characters what this article does for American characters.

Other Foreign World: The character is as described above under Australian World, but is from any non-American and non-Australian world. The system provided in the **2300 AD** rules will have to be used to determine the character's homeworld.

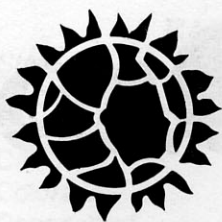
Asterisked Colonies: Any colony listed with an asterisk next to its name is an outpost and is too small for any permanent settlers. Characters who receive this result were probably born at the colony listed, but were then raised at a larger colony shortly afterward. The player rolling this result may wish to make a note of his birthplace, but should immediately roll again. Ω

AMERICAN HOMEWORLDS

<i>Homeworld</i>	<i>Percent Chance</i>	<i>Dice Roll</i>	<i>World Type</i>	<i>Gravity</i>
Earth	20%	1-20	Core	Normal
Alpha Centauri, Tirania	10%	21-30	Core	Normal
Ellis	28%	31-58	Frontier	Normal
King	10%	59-68	Frontier	High-G
Mu Herculis (Hermes)	17%	69-85	Frontier	Low-G
Red Speck*	1%	86	Frontier	Zero-G
Vega*	1%	87	Frontier	Zero-G
Broward*	1%	88	Frontier	Zero-G
Barnard's Star	2%	89-90	Frontier	Low-G
L-4	1%	91	Core	Low-G
Australian world	6%	92-97	Varies	Varies
Other foreign world	3%	98-100	Varies	Varies

*See Asterisked Colonies section in the text above.

If this chart were based on actual American populations, Earth and Tirane would be the characters' homeworlds about 90 percent of the time. So we will assume a majority of the Core world populations prefer the comforts of home to the challenges of the Frontier. The chance of space-faring citizens having one of these Core worlds for a homeworld is reduced to match the **2300 AD** Homeworld Table. A character's chance of being from King has been similarly reduced as its inhabitants have gone through biological changes to adapt to its harsh conditions. This is assumed to force most inhabitants of King to stay on King, doing less interstellar travel than inhabitants of other American colonies.



Pirates of the Blood Asteroids

Marcus L. Rowland

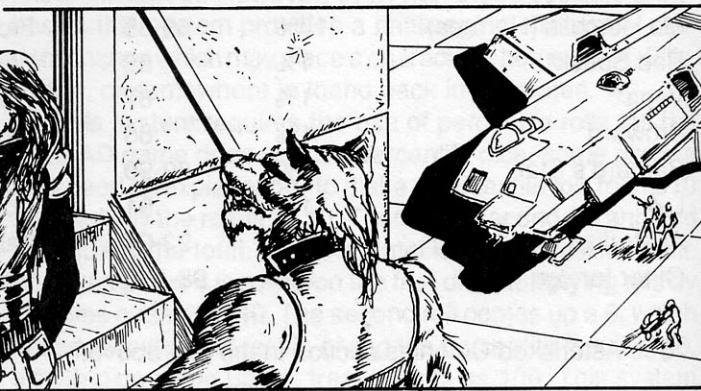
Marcus L. Rowland

While shopping at the duty-free spaceport shop, one member of the team notices advertisements for a new computer game called "Pirates of the Blood Asteroids." It's published by LeComet Software, which is one of the most popular software houses in the sector. It seems to be a complex adventure, arcade game, and economics simulation based on the activities of a pirate ship in an imaginary solar system. It'll run on most common types of home and portable computers, or on the entertainment channel of a starship computer network. There's only one tiny problem—the advertisement includes a glossy holoposter, a wanted sign showing some nasty looking pirates posed in front of a battered starship on a spaceport landing pad. If you look carefully, it's possible to see distinguishing features which prove that it's the team's ship. LeComet Software is based on a world the team frequently visits, and its schedule will take the members there again in a few weeks.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

This adventure is designed as a campaign subplot for a team of adventurers with its own ship, such as the crew of the *March Harrier* (see **The Traveller Adventure**). If you are running it under **MegaTraveller** rules, it should take place in an area that's currently peaceful, or at least maintains some vestige of normal civilian activities and commerce. As the team travels, it'll find that many acquaintances have seen the advertisement and recognized the ship. No one seriously suggests that the teammates are pirates, but there do seem to be a lot of jokes circulating around the seedy spaceport bars. If the team has been involved in piracy, this attention could be extremely embarrassing. Optionally, you may wish to run one or more of the following incidents.

- Due to an administrative error, some of the posters are sent out without any accompanying pamphlets or advertisements. Port officials on a backwater world assume that they



are genuine, and try to arrest the teammates as pirates.

- The ship is intercepted by system defense boats and thoroughly searched. The navy knows that the poster is a fake; it is searching the ship to make sure that the poster isn't a cover for some illegal activity.

- The ship or crew is searched by customs officers for the same reasons.

- While the ship is unloading cargo, a vandal paints a skull and crossbones on the hull.

- An eccentric millionaire offers to buy the "famous" ship but doesn't offer enough money. See the miniadventure "Charter To Cratersea" (in **The Traveller Adventure**) for some possible complications.

Eventually the ship will arrive on LeComet Software's homeworld, and the team can start to learn the facts. The picture was taken several months ago, while the team was on leave; LeComet's advertising director took a few models to the spaceport for a holosession, and posed them with the ship in the background to make the pictures look more authentic. The teammates may feel that their reputation has been tarnished by this use of their ship; alternatively, they may feel that they are entitled to a hire fee for use of their ship as an advertising prop. Unfortunately the pictures were taken inside the spaceport extrajurisdiction area, so any claim will involve the laws of at least two governments. There's another important factor—LeComet is a subsidiary of the entertainment's subdivision of Naasirka, the computer and software systems megacorporation, and can afford to hire the best lawyers to fight any lawsuit. Don't reveal these details unless the teammates start to look into the legal possibilities and investigate the ownership of the company. Extensive playtesting has revealed that teams generally consider:

1. Using the simulation as a training aid, then turning pirate when they have developed strategies that work well in the simulation. If caught, they argue that LeComet's program glamorized piracy and led them into a life of crime.

2. Raiding LeComet's offices, taking hostages, and demanding compensation. If caught, the PCs argue that the software drove them to a life of crime.

3. Pirating the software. If caught, the teammates argue that LeComet pirated the team's image in their advertising, and is thus in the wrong.

4. Suing LeComet in the local courts.

5. Suing LeComet in the Imperial (or whatever) courts.

6. Suing the spaceport authority.

7. Demanding a public apology without taking legal action.

8. Demanding compensation without taking legal action.

9. Doing nothing.

Option 1 is unlikely to succeed because the programmers made some drastic simplifying assumptions in the simulation. For example, they omitted factors like routine maintenance expenses, put far too many civilian ships into the system, and gave the pirate ship ridiculously accurate weapons. It's also illegal and extremely dangerous.

Option 2 is suicidal. The police of an industrialized world can mount impressively lethal SWAT operations, and will do

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so if a megacorporation subsidiary is held for ransom.

Option 3 is illegal. Two wrongs don't make a right, and all the systems involved have signed copyright agreements which specifically ban software piracy. LeComet has the resources to give the teammates a lot of trouble if they try this tactic. Incidentally, breaking the copy protection used by LeComet Software (and most other suppliers) is an extremely hard task; a minimum of Computer-3 skill is needed for any chance of success.

Options 4 and 5 are very difficult and expensive. The planetary courts will say that any irregularity took place in the spaceport extrajurisdiction zone, and is thus outside their jurisdiction. Higher courts will demand proof that the teammates have suffered personal or financial harm as a result of the advertisement, then take four weeks to determine that damages should be paid to them. The damages will be roughly a third of the team's legal expenses, which will not be paid by the court. If you are feeling generous, or the team has good lawyers, LeComet may choose to settle out of court (as in 7 and 8 below) and hire the teammates and their ship for a public relations exercise.

Option 6 will be laughed out of court. The standard spaceport landing certificate limits liability to a few specific hazards, such as damage from ground crew. It says nothing about advertising. The spaceport authority has no influence on LeComet Software.

Options 7 and 8 won't work; LeComet's legal department will advise the directors that any apology or payment is an admission of liability. However, the publicity department has a better idea; if the teammates will keep quiet and agree to forget about their claim, LeComet Software will pay them to advertise the software. This involves painting their hull to match the ship in the game, and distributing posters and pamphlets on each world they visit. There will also be more photographic sessions, a good excuse to involve the team with attractive models who may have very exotic or expensive tastes. If the teammates play their cards right, they may also land some lucrative cargo contracts; after all, someone has to transport LeComet's software.

If the team takes option 9 and does nothing, LeComet Software will stop advertising the game when sales fall below an acceptable level. The hologram will be forgotten within a few months. In the meantime, run any of the events you haven't already used.

The title of this adventure was suggested by a story by Dave Langford and is used with his permission. ♪

From Peace to WAR



An examination of government policy-making in the war-torn MegaTraveller universe.

Jeffrey Groteboer



Reams of literature, in this magazine and others, have been devoted to the conduct of war in **Traveller** and **MegaTraveller**. From squad tactics to grand interstellar strategies, games offer players the chance to "duke it out" on fictitious battlefields. But what, exactly, is war? What are the different levels, and how do various governments react to them? This article will discuss modern warfare (and its permutations) and will synthesize a broad spectrum of government actions and reactions into easy-to-fol-

low rules from a **MegaTraveller** standpoint. Players of **2300 AD** and other science-fiction games should take note—this article applies to worlds and colonies in those games as well. Your only homework will be to decide what form of government each nation installs on its colony worlds and take it from there.

Levels of hostilities are shown on the Hostilities Table. The escalation of conflict continues from peace through internal unrest and into interstellar war. Balkanized planets should be considered to have international wars rather than interstellar conflicts. It is much

more likely that they fight among themselves than join forces to attack a neighboring world, although it may happen infrequently.

Peace refers to a state in which there are no incidents of high crime, civil unrest, or terrorism, and in which the nation or world is not involved in any military confrontations. The presence of "military advisors" may or may not affect this status.

Local unrest refers to high crime rates, including local gang wars and similar incidents.

Terrorism includes both interna-

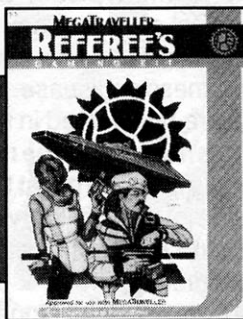
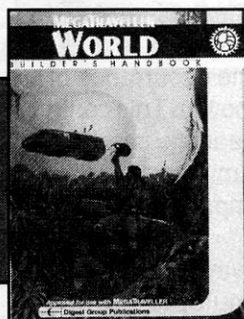


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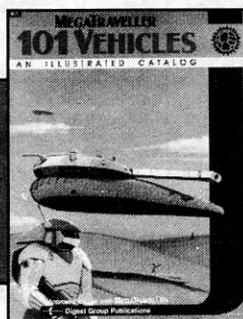


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tional terrorist attacks within the nation's borders and attacks from local groups.

Revolt is a one-time occurrence of a forceful change in power. This could be anything from a peaceful assumption of power by the military to a protracted, bloody campaign by rebel forces.

Revolutions are always bloody; they are instances of multiple groups fighting for control of a nation. As in the case of the French Revolution, a multitude of governments may be installed and subsequently toppled during a revolution.

Interstellar war (international war on balkanized worlds) has three categories: conventional, chemical/biological, and nuclear. Conventional war is the traditionally accepted form of solving interstellar disputes when force is involved. The use of chemical or biological weapons is usually outlawed by interstellar treaties or popular convention. In fact, however, worlds can

do little against an aggressor who uses such weapons short of entering the fray themselves. In addition, many governments simply do not deem it unfair to use biological toxins. Chemical weapons are usually tactical, being employed on a battlefield or similar area where neutralization of enemy troops or guards is the goal.

Biological warfare is usually strategic, since the toxins typically take some time to affect an area. They are most effective when used to cause widespread sickness or disease. Biological agents are rarely used in their most lethal forms, since even the most evil governments are aware that their mutation could not only destroy the enemy, but could render the entire planet uninhabitable as well.

A nuclear exchange is the pinnacle of warfare; the destructive capabilities of strategic nuclear weapons, complicated by the subsequent radiological pollution of major parts of the globe, make their use of little value to the

aggressor, unless he has no intention of occupying or utilizing the world he plans to conquer.

If outright destruction is his aim, then nuclear weapons are actually less effective than the proper biological toxins. Thus, the use of nuclear weapons in practical terms is limited to tactical nuclear strikes—which will cause the same radiation problems but on a smaller scale than strategic arms—and in-space conflicts, where the radiation problem is minimal. Imperial mandates forbid the use of nuclear weapons by anyone but the Imperium itself, but since the splintering of the realm such restrictions are falling by the wayside.

Now that we have examined, in short, the types of warfare, take a look at the various government responses to the aforementioned hostilities at various law levels. For the convenience of non-MegaTraveller readers, I have reproduced the government and law level descriptions here.

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GOVERNMENT TYPES

Lvl Conditions

- 0 No government
- 1 Company/corporation
- 2 Participatory democracy
- 3 Self-perpetuating oligarchy
- 4 Representative democracy
- 5 Feudal technocracy
- 6 Captive government
- 7 Balkanization
- 8 Civil service bureaucracy
- 9 Impersonal bureaucracy
- A Charismatic dictator
- B Noncharismatic dictator
- C Charismatic oligarchy
- D Religious dictatorship

LAW LEVELS

Lvl Conditions

- 0 No restrictions
- 1 Explosives, gas weapons prohibited
- 2 Energy weapons prohibited
- 3 Military weapons prohibited
- 4 Submachineguns prohibited
- 5 Concealable weapons prohibited
- 6 All except shotguns prohibited
- 7 Shotguns prohibited
- 8 Long-bladed weapons prohibited
- 9 All weapons prohibited

HOSTILITIES TABLE

Lvl Conditions

- 1 Peace
- 2 Local unrest
- 3 Terrorism
- 4 Insurgency
- 5 Revolt
- 6 Revolution
- 7 War (Interstellar, Conventional)
- 8 War (Interstellar, Chemical/Biological)
- 9 War (Interstellar, Nuclear) Ω





TRAVELLER NEWS SERVICE

CAPITAL/CORE (2118AS86A98-F)

Date: 183-1119

¶ In Lucan's first address to the citizenry as a whole in over a year, he expressed his expectations that the vast majority of the Imperium will be reunited under his banner within the next year.

¶ "Our fleets are advancing system by system toward Dian as resistance crumbles before them. It should be within only a few months that Dulinor and his forces capitulate."

¶ The emperor then went on to announce new negotiations with Margaret and communications with the archduke of Deneb, suggesting that those fragments of the shattered Imperium might soon return to Lucan's fold.

¶ In his entire 45-minute-long address, the emperor did not mention the pretender Strephon or the battles being waged along that front.

¶ The emperor appeared tired though resolute, using a newly found commanding tone in his speech which was broadcast live here on Capital.

ESALIN/SPINWARD MARCHES (1004 C565673-8)

Date: 190-1119

¶ The Admiralty today released photographs of several Zhodani ships performing frontier refuelling in the system just one week ago. The two ships in high guard position are shown quite clearly in the photos; they have suffered tremendous battle damage—entire sections of their hulls have been burned away and hastily patched.

¶ The other ships in the convoy were apparently of both military and nonmilitary origins, including freighters and passenger ships. The ships broadcast warnings not to interfere with their refueling, apparently aimed at both Imperial and Zhodani forces in the area—no Zhodani forces aided or interfered, though they had patrol ships in the vicinity to monitor the situation.

¶ Once refuelled, the entire convoy retreated and jumped out of the system.

¶ There has been no official explanation given; speculation ranges widely and is largely unconfirmed.

GUSTAVUS/HINTERWORLDS (0739 C000525-B)

Date: 204-1119

¶ The Gustavian League, a mining conglomerate with absolute ties to the Solomani Rim, has gone on record as being a safe haven for Solomani ships in the Hinterworlds sector that seek a friendly port.

¶ The league has begun putting beacons out in several systems to alert otherwise inaccessible Solomani vessels to this news, and it has spread the word through all official channels, as well.

¶ The response to Gustavus' new policy will be difficult to judge, since most vessels responding will be travelling silently through the sector on their way back to Solomani-held systems.

KAGGUSHUS/MASSILA (0402 A442AA7-G)

Date: 212-1119

¶ Strephon's military commanders, faring poorly with their fleets against Lucan's forces, have turned to a mass propaganda campaign aimed at several fleets opposing them.

¶ Through every available means of broadcasting they have put out a plea from Strephon himself in which he insists that he is genuinely the emperor, and he opens his arms to any who will join him in his struggle against Lucan.

¶ There are no accurate numbers indicating Strephon's success, and there are certainly no mass conversions of fleets or ships to his cause. But the growing body of evidence that says Strephon lives must certainly be putting ideas into the heads of Lucan's officers and men, the very men Strephon must fight.

BERANGE/HINTERWORLDS (0311 C4284CB-B)

Date: 238-1119

¶ Authorities today announced the seizure of all assets and offices of WebTrade Industries in Berange Starport, the culmination of a month-long investigation of WebTrade's origins and trade practices.

¶ A small commercial firm until mid-year, WebTrade was bought out by hitherto unknown agents, after which the company enjoyed an influx of capital. It was at this time that the company began specializing in starship components.

¶ Though unconfirmed, a source close to the investigation indicates that WebTrade has been a front for Solomani raiders breaking out of the Imperium, probably those responsible for the attacks on Ryathian more than three months ago.

¶ It is likely that Solomani fleet agents bought WebTrade and secured legitimate component contracts with falsified identification and securities, according to our source.

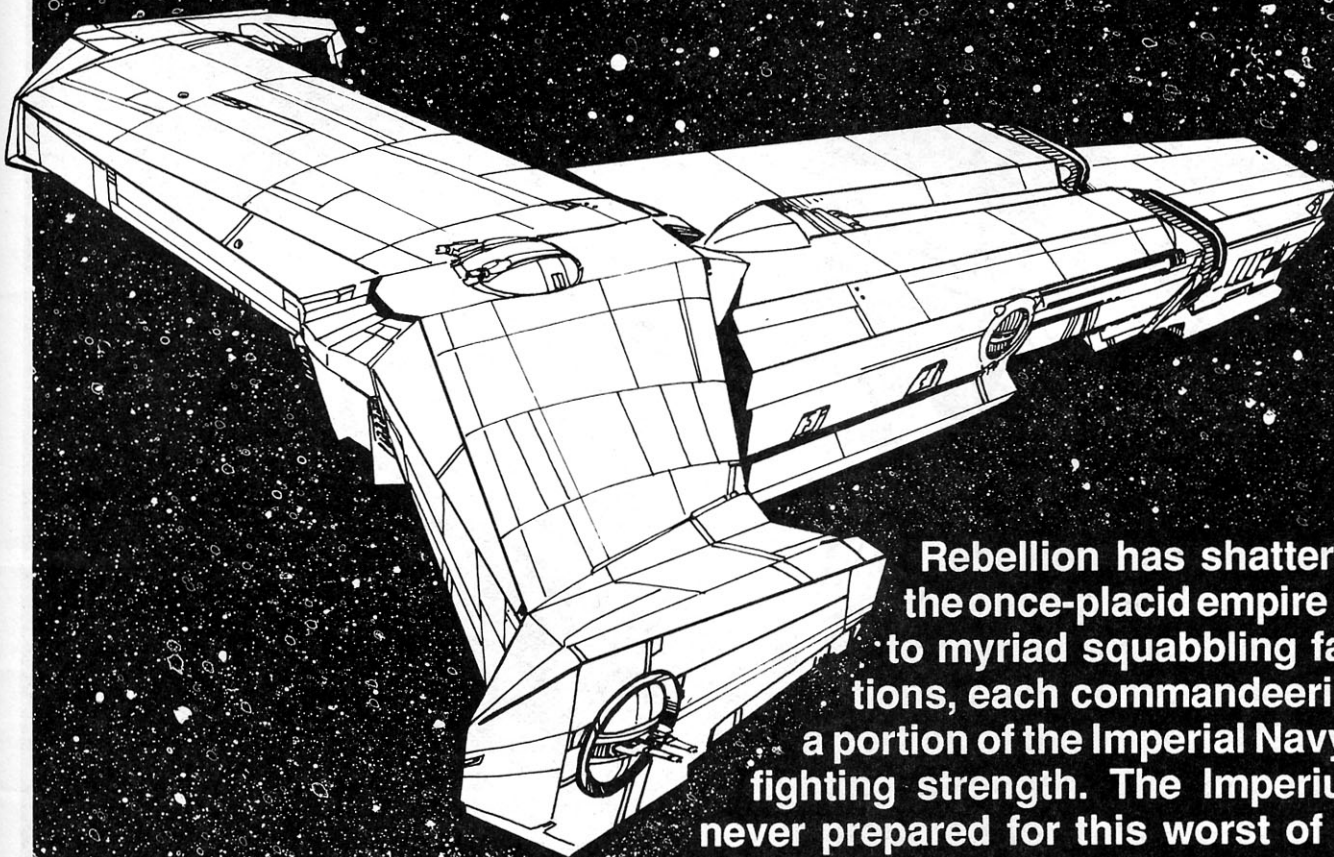
¶ It is also likely, according to other sources, that, since WebTrade has been securing supplies in the Berange system, the Solomani fleet elements are probably in hiding nearby.

¶ WebTrade's assets and those personnel detained will be held indefinitely until the final investigation is complete and all the facts have been ascertained. Ω

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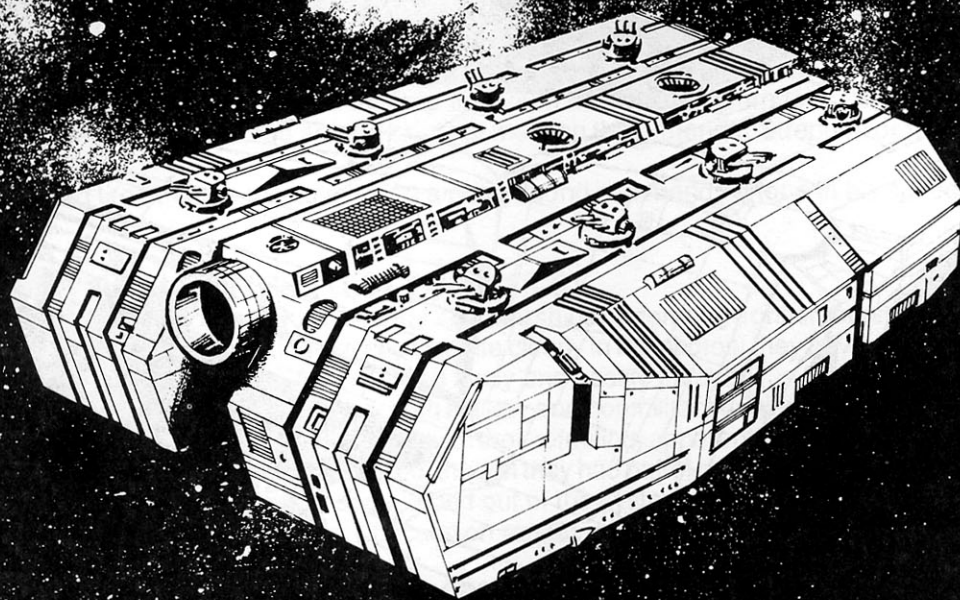
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Imperial Research Station Beta

Randy B. Windle

It is the middle of the year 1117 and dark times for the Imperial forces in the Solomani Rim sector. Solomani Confederation forces have made great advances along a broad front since their hostilities following the death of Emperor Strephon. Terra is besieged with little hope of relief as Imperial forces are stretched thin from Dingir to Zaggisi to Lagash and beyond.

Following events with a certain trepidation are the in-

habitants of Imperial Research Station Beta (IRSβ) located in the Nyarlathotep system, Banasdan subsector (2720 Solomani Rim sector). News received is certainly of the "filtered" variety so as not to cause alarm, but most of the staff can read between the lines. Anyway, who can ignore the increased stress placed on emergency evacuation procedures?

Morale on board is already at a low ebb. All personnel have been pushed to their limits lately, and the strain is

beginning to show. It seems as though the closer they get to success, the more they have become prisoners. All long-term leaves have been disallowed for almost a year, and the short ones permitted have been spent in-system. Worst of all, the mail, their contact with the outside universe, has been heavily censored. Many would like to resign but are afraid they would not be allowed.

All characters are conducting "business as usual" when the alarms sound and a voice on the public address system shouts, "This is not a drill!"

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Depots, naval bases, and high population worlds are obviously quite valuable, and hence common targets. Less emphasis is perhaps placed on technology, though it cannot be ignored. A slight edge can decide a battle; a huge gap can win an empire. Several opposing parties desiring to gain a technological edge will thrust the PCs into the chaos of the shattered Imperium.

As is the case with all Imperial research stations, the exact nature of research at IRSB is not general knowledge. Indeed, the Imperium goes to great pains to maintain secrecy, so few except those with the need to know have all the information.

Still, given enough time, a sophisticated, experienced, and determined intelligence agency can penetrate even the strictest security. In 1112, SolSec succeeded in placing one of its operatives in a crew position. His first reports were treated with skepticism, but eventually their authenticity could not be denied. IRSB

was working on instantaneous interstellar communication! While results so far had proved negative, the feeling among the researchers was that a breakthrough was imminent.

Solomani knew as well as any what advantages that would bring and made plans to make it their own. A commando raid was designed that would strip the facility of records, equipment, and personnel. All that was needed was the opportunity.

**This adventure requires
the *MegaTraveller* rules set
and *Azhanti High Lightning*.
Alien Module 6, *Solomani*,
may be helpful.**

The project was shelved as unworkable given the existing border conditions. And then came a pistol shot from Archduke Dulinor.

The Imperials had not been idle since hostilities began. Contingency plans were proposed in case evacuation was necessary—the goal being to move the research station out of the sector in the direction of Core.

Lately, the Vegans (minor partners in the project) began to petition for the removal of the station in its entirety by converted battlerider to the safety of the Vegan Autonomous Region. Intense negotiations ensued but did little to assuage the Vegan fear that the new emperor might abandon them to the Solomani. To the Vegans, IRSB might provide the means for the VAR to stand on its own. The Vegan High Council re-

cently sent its strongest arguments yet, carried by a cruiser squadron and escorts.

In the end, the bickering proved fortunate for the Imperium. The Solomani ex-

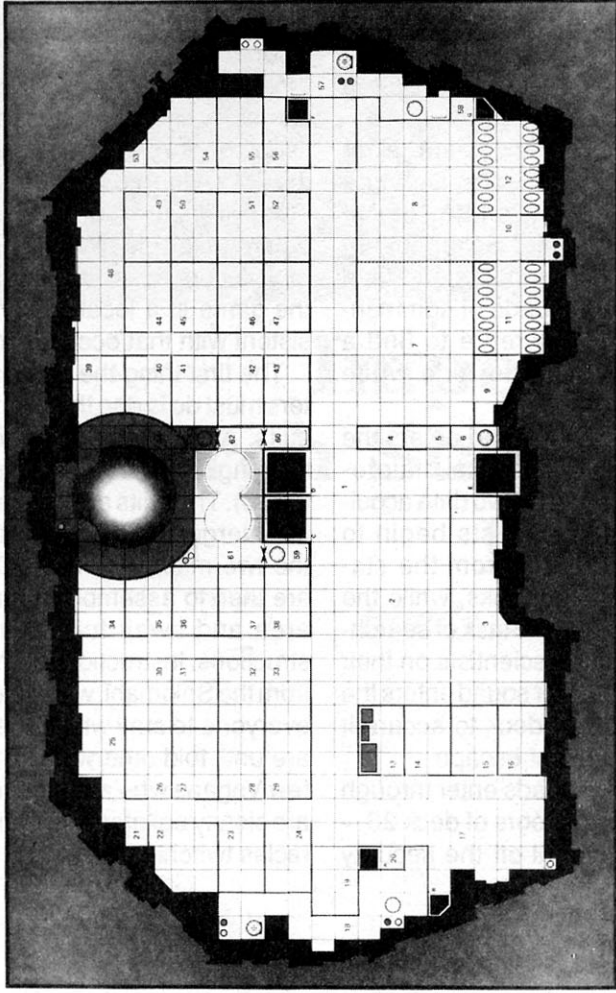
forces below, and the other to move upward collecting scientists.

Administering the Adventure

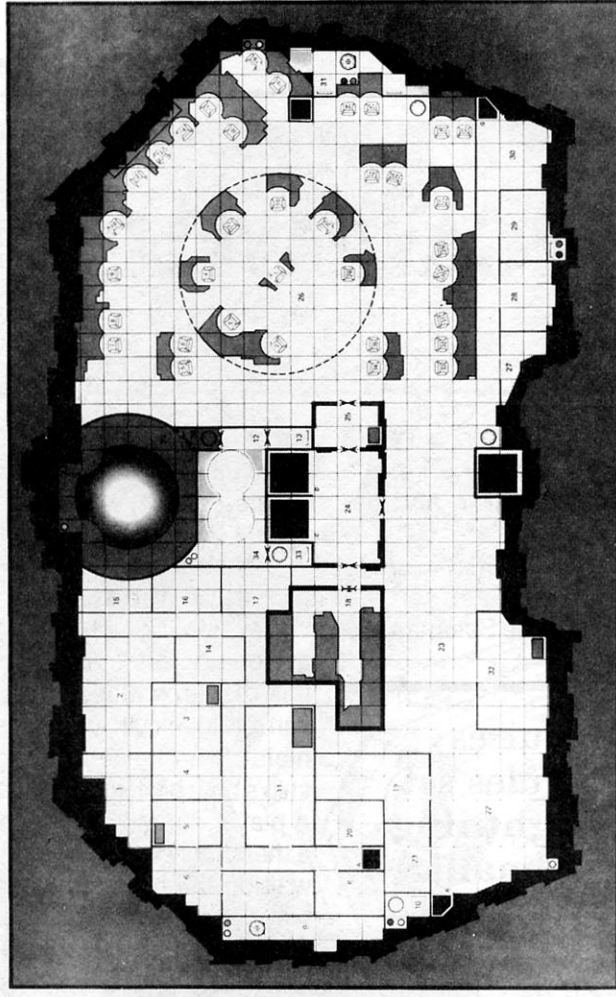
Players will need to generate characters suitable for this research station. They can roll up a scientist (or technician), staff, security, or ship's boat pilot, for example. A player character could be a merchant captain forced to wait on the boat dock deck while some jumbled paperwork is straightened out. Having a wide variety of occupations and skills would be to the group's benefit, but if they would like to be fellow scientists, by all means let them. However, at least one character should be a scientist important enough to be on the Solomani "must have" list. This will ensure that they are actively sought. Whatever their occupations, they begin the game in a location consistent with that occupation.

The first thing the characters must do is don their vacc suits. All have rudimentary training in their use (Vacc Suit-0). The suits are located in emergency lockers near the two main lifts. The PCs are then to assemble in that area and await further instructions. Instructions come from the Solomani, who order everyone to stay where they are until told otherwise. The few Vegans who are present are clearly agitated, their tentacles twitching nervously.

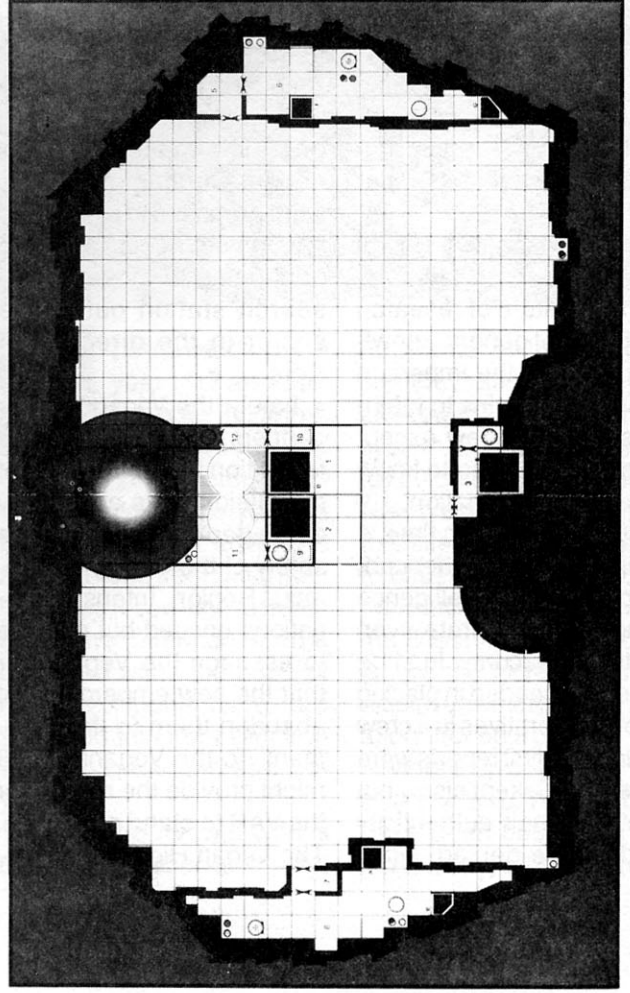
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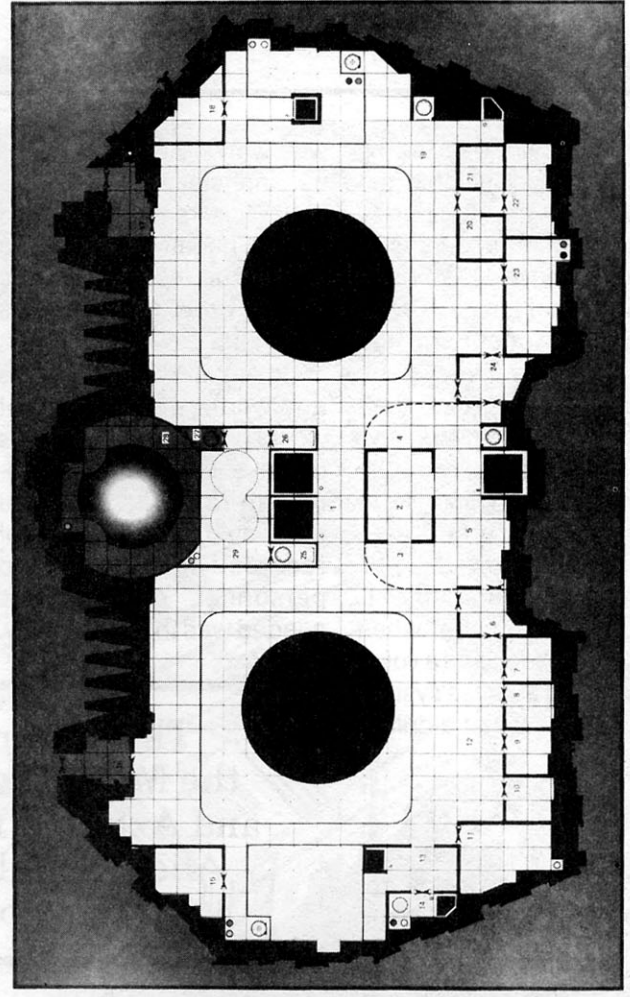
Crew Quarters Deck (Deck Plan 3)



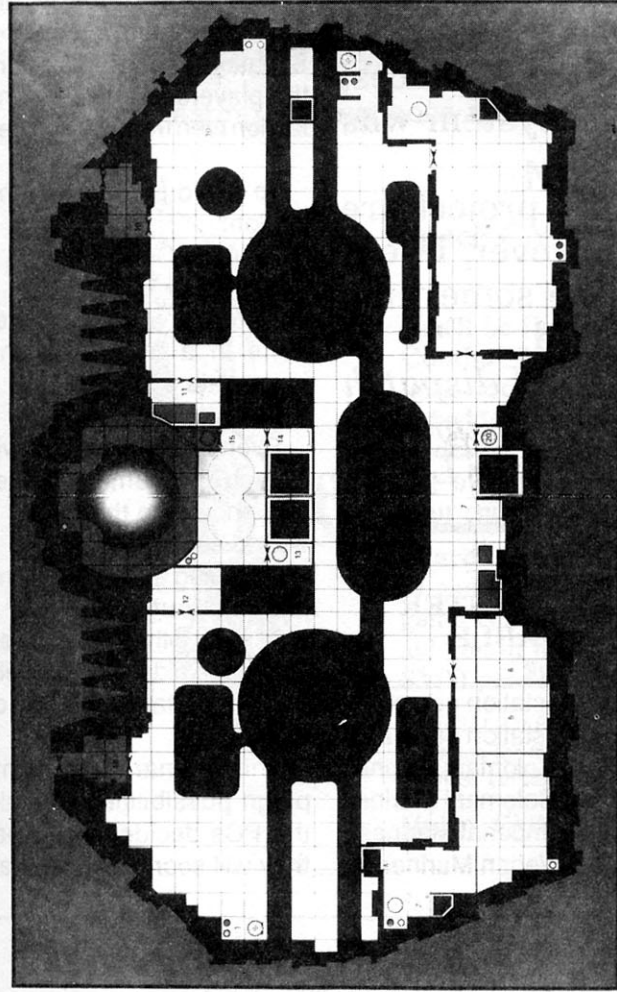
Bridge (Deck Plan 4)



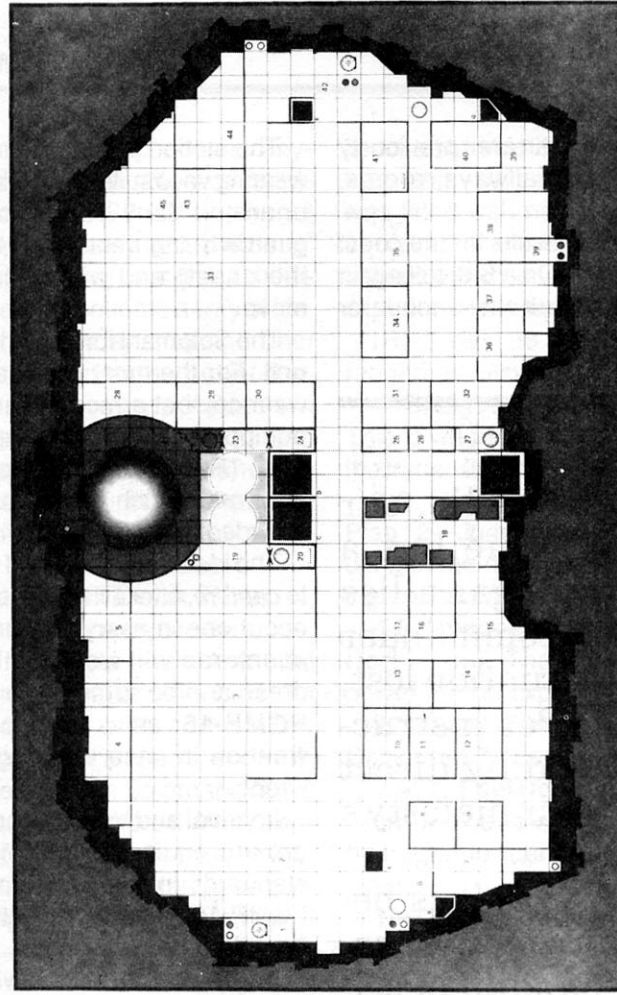
Cargo Hold (Deck Plan 5)



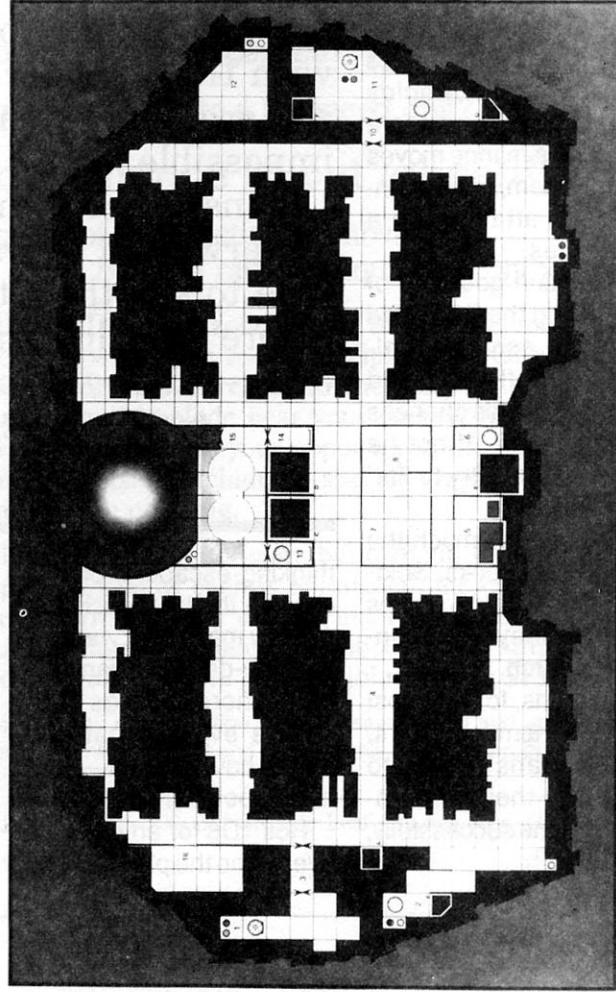
Power Plant Deck—Upper Level (Deck Plan 7)



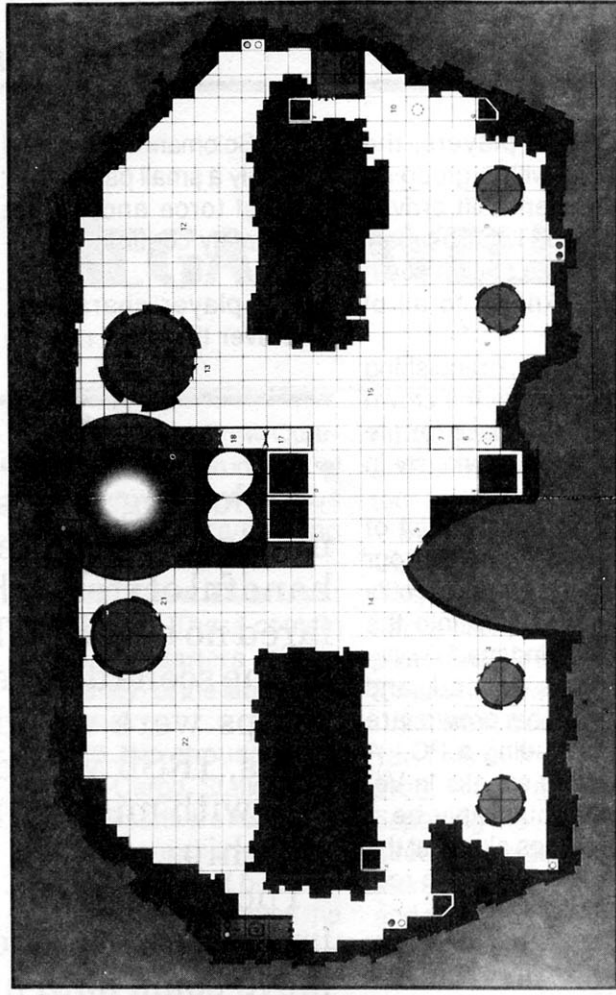
Power Plant Deck—Lower Level (Deck Plan 8)



Flight Crew Deck (Deck Plan 10)



Jump Drive Deck (Deck Plan 12)



Boat Dock Deck (Deck Plan 13)

One of the players, the scientist, is with a group on deck 19 when a lift arrives and out steps two Solomani Marines and a station security guard known to all of them!

The first two, brandishing laser rifles, usher the crowd back to make space for the security guard, obviously in charge.

"I will now read a list of names. When you hear your name, step forward, identify yourself, and step into the elevator behind me."

He begins to read, and several in the crowd are named, including a PC. A Vegan called speaks in Vegan what could only be a string of curses aimed at the once-trusted man, who reddens noticeably.

"Fool!" the guard shouts. "We will take you where your work will be more appreciated! Guards! This one needs assistance."

At that the Vegan lashes out and wraps tentacles around the guard's neck in a fit of rage. As a marine moves to separate them, the remaining Vegans attack, and a melee ensues.

The situation goes out of control, giving the PC called a chance to escape. If already in the lift, he could close it and take his chances on another deck. If not he could get into it or try to find another way out.

The situation is much the same on other decks. Solomani Marines with holograms of the ones they seek continue the search.

The humans, for the most part, resign themselves to it, but the Vegans refuse to surrender to their past oppressors, some successfully, some not.

The Solomani have arrived with only a small part of their original force and cannot adequately control the situation.

The player characters, wherever they are, may be

ters are in an area previously unseen (hallways, rooms, lifts, etc.).

A 1-4 results in "the coast is clear." On a 5-6, roll again and consult the Encounter Table.

EPILOGUE

Following a most fierce battle, our marines managed to rescue but a handful of staff, while our Vegan allies fared no better. When the commander on the scene deemed the situation lost, troops were withdrawn. Per instructions, IRSB was destroyed by direct hits with missiles from your majesty's warships.

Though nothing is certain, it is believed the attackers managed to remove some data and a handful of scientists. Most of the station personnel are unaccounted for and presumed lost with IRSB. Under the circumstances, a thorough search of the system was impossible.

Plans to reconstruct the project are underway, of course. However, I venture to say that it will be some time before it could be relocated.

—*Excerpt from the INI dispatch to His Most Imperial Highness Emperor Lucan*

thinking escape is possible only via the boat dock deck. As they make their way there deck-by-deck, the pandemonium increases as it becomes evident that other forces have arrived—Vegan and Imperial marines.

Roll 1D6 for an encounter every time the player charac-

The station personnel are wearing vacc suits and will be unarmed (any remaining guards being neutralized at the onset) and will panic-move.

The Solomani form a TL13 unit. For the most part they wear combat armor and are equipped with laser weapons. (Plasma and fusion guns make such a mess in a crowded area.)

The idea behind the raid is to capture, after all. However, about one in every four encountered will wear battle dress and be armed with a PGMP-13 as a support weapon in case things go wrong.

Imperial and Vegan troopers are equipped to TL-15 standards (battle dress and FGMP-15s) coming directly from their home vessels.

In general, troopers will ignore nontroopers if enemies are in sight, but will try to capture them otherwise. Situations could arise where the players are held by one faction then freed by another.

To avoid pursuers in the station:

Routine, Determination, 1 min.

Referee: A "fumble" results in a "stumble" and immediate capture.

Eventually the players will manage to come together and should be thinking of a way to escape.

Grabbing a small ship and jumping out-system is a possibility if they do not wish to choose sides. They could decide to leave with any of the parties.

This scenario has campaign possibilities. Should the PCs decide to escape, they will soon discover they

ENCOUNTER TABLE

Die	Result
1	1D6 station personnel
2	1D6 station personnel
3	1-3 Solomani Marines
4	1-3 Solomani Marines
5	1-3 Imperial Marines
6	1-3 Vegan Marines

are wanted individuals. Any one even remotely connected with IRSB will be sought after by any and all factions.

"Looking over one's shoulder" will become a way of life. Though they may find brief respite in some out-of-the-way place, a pursuer will eventually find them and force them to continue to travel through the Shattered Imperium.

IRSB Deck Plan Arrangement

IRS Beta was completed and operational in 1085. In common with some other research stations and outposts in the Solomani Rim, it was assembled from sections of scrapped *Lightning*-class cruisers damaged during the Solomani Rim War. It

is not a starship. It no longer has jump drives, though it was fitted with new maneuver drives to allow it to change orbit or orientation for experimental purposes.

IRSB has 28 decks arranged as follows:

1. Bridge: Deck Plan 4. This is where the "ship" and the transmitter are controlled.

2-3. Transmitter: Deck Plan 12—Jump Drive. These contain the machinery making up the transmitter.

4-8. Upper Power Plant: Deck Plan 7. These provide power for the experiments.

9. Lower Power Plant: Deck Plan 7. See above.

10-17. Fuel Decks: Deck Plan 8. These store liquid hydrogen to fuel the power plant.

18-19. Work Areas: Deck

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Plan 10—Flight Crew Quarters. These contain individual and group work stations plus larger conference/meeting areas.

20-22. Crew Quarters: Deck Plan 3. These contain the living quarters (single occupancy) of the laboratory personnel.

23-26. Warehouse: Deck Plan 5—Cargo. Station supplies of all sorts are kept here. The areas are characterized by row after row of bins and crates. Deck 26 handles the

off-loading of supply shuttles and is the only deck of the four that will open to space.

27. Flight Crew Deck: Deck Plan 10. Other station personnel (a small maintenance crew, security, shuttle pilots) and the infrequent visitor are housed here.

28. Boat Dock: Deck Plan 13. This is the "reception" area. All traffic arriving or departing the station passes through here. It also provides storage for the ship's boat and fuel shuttles. Ω

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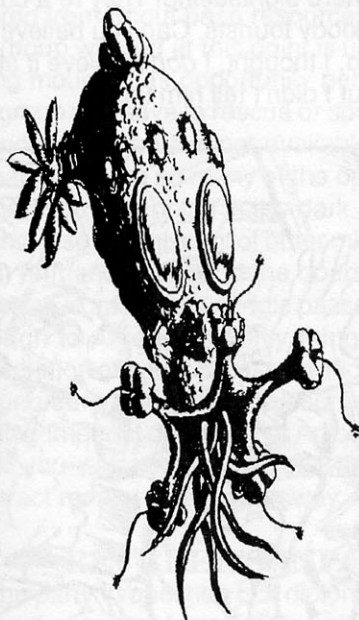
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Space Combat was designed to be easy to learn, but difficult to master. Every game starts with ten players, and as each is eliminated, the chances of the game ending will increase. Turnsheets are custom made on a laser printer to aid you in filling out your next turn. The games run about 12-16 turns. Cost is \$3.00 per turn. A rulebook (required before you can join) is only \$1.00.

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Tourist Trap

The Nullian League provides political and military security in the Hinterworlds sector against encroachments from both Margaret's Domain and the Solomani Confederation. Some league alliances were forged over discussions of mutual enlightened interest—others over the edge of a gun barrel. The bottom line is that the Nullian League controls a growing number of systems in the Nullia and Bruia subsectors.

Charles E. Gannon

He was just like all the other Intelligence operatives in the galaxy—a little too calm, a little too well dressed, and way too green. Same stuff, different day.

"The Empress Margaret is pleased to welcome you into her employ." Yeah, right. I figured he wouldn't appreciate my cynicism, so I stayed quiet and listened.

"Given your recent arrival out here in the Hinters, you may not be aware of certain developing situations—for instance, the emergence of a political power known as the Nullian League."

"I read the papers. Let's cut to the chase," I said. He floundered for a second, found his place in that oh-so-carefully prepared script of his, and bumbled on.

"Well, er, the league is clearly readying for some major military moves. We're unsure of the main targets, but there is a high degree of confidence that—that Imperial interests could be compromised or endangered."

"Yes, I am aware of the standard line. Ex-navy intelligence, aren't you? My, what big words you fellas use."

That did the trick. He dropped the act. "All right, then. We'll do it the no-frills style. That's what you ex-IRIS spooks like best, isn't it?"

"All we ever had the budget for." We shared a smile, and he went on.

"Look. Here's the deal—our undercover networks have come across some mutterings inside the Nullian intelligence services. Seems the league is working on an operation designed to secure some political leverage over the Imperium. Something to keep our hands tied if they pull some stunt we don't like but aren't willing to go to war over."

"Right—standard practice. What's the operation they're planning?"

He leaned back with a sigh. "There's a cargo that's inbound to Margaret's Domain that has to pass within only two parsecs of Nullian space. We think they're going to grab it."

"And Margaret's going to let a little freight stand in her way if push comes to shove?"

"She might. The cargo consists of four Imperial Moot members and their staff—one of whom happens to be Margaret's nephew."

Not good at all. "And what the Hades were they doing out here?"

He shook his head. "The idiots were out here *sightseeing*! They're a bunch of bloody tourists. Can you believe it?"

No, I thought, I *don't* believe it at all. But I didn't tell him that.



TC. MacGill

PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The Nullian League is a recently evolved political power in the Nullia and Bruia subsectors of the Hinterworlds sector. Spokesmen for the league claim that it exists to provide political and military security against encroachments from both Margaret's Domain and the Solomani Confederation. However, it is common knowledge that both Nullia and Bruia have found that the recent turmoil created by the Imperial Interregnum and the ensuing Solomani incursions offers a fertile environment for expansionist activities. While some of the following alliances were forged over discussions of mutual enlightened interest, and others over the edge of a gun barrel, the bottom line is that the Nullian League controls the systems listed below.

Under Nullian Control: Hugus, Riies, Sigam, Ane, Meadow, Uga, Angerhelm (conquest underway).

Under Briuan Control: Rouen, Orphan, Greene, Hood, Branch, Lastop, Horton, Shugii, Stailveiki.

The Nullian League is mercantilistically aggressive, and is possessed of the military resources and resolve to turn its desires into realities. It is important to note that economic coercion is *always* the league's first tactic, but it will roll out the ships and the troops if its monetary overtures are refused.

The tourist group is returning on the TL13, jump-2, 5000-ton luxury liner, *Cunard's Canard*. Returning from a cruise of the Aquila subsector, it has been edging back to Imperial space by moving coreward via Iaasiv, Nefane, and then into Gniivi space. At the time of the first discussion with the team, arrangements have been made with certain sympathetic Gniivito to detain the ship at Pru-Magu (hex 2817) due to various customs "infractions." The anticipated delay will allow the team to rendezvous with the ship at Drygrass (2119). This rendezvous will be affected by a jump-4 courier, commandeered from Scout base resources at Tiffany (0620). What the group will find at this point is unknown; the operation is being mounted as opportunity permits. Full information on the group you have to rescue or specifics on how the league intends to snatch it is not available at the time the team is dispatched. Like so many of the operations you've been on before, you're running in the dark.

And, also reminiscent of other missions, there's not a lot of cash on hand to support the operation—Cr1000 per team-member, in addition to middle passage tickets from Drygrass through to Arkon. The only thing that is abundant is the expectation of your success—which your contact defines as making sure that the troublesome tourists get safely to a waiting Imperial destroyer at Arkon (1315). How you do it is up to you—and so is how you'll spend the 100,000 credits contract money (it is, by the way, a "success only" ticket).

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The party in question is a diplomatic trade mission that is currently returning from Leh Perash space—where some very high-level discussions were held with a number of important Hiver commercial factors. Therefore, Margaret's concern with the mission's safe return is threefold.

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- Safe return of Moot members, who may be politically critical in the upcoming struggle for Imperial dominance.
- Safe return of her nephew for personal reasons.
- Secure communications regarding arrangements made for Hiver trade, which could be a key factor in Margaret's bid for ultimate ascension to the Iridium throne.

The league suspects that Margaret is up to something like this and also knows that the ship is probably exploring an alternate trade route linking Margaret's Domain and Hiver space—a route that will bypass the league and its tariffs.

A successful bypass would mean a drop in general commercial activity along Beyerly's Path and the Bruia Diagonal—the keystones of the league's economic security and continued independence. Therefore, the league's operations are designed to achieve more than the seizure of some interesting hostages; they are also attempting to prove that the "cost" of bypassing their ports may be greater than the tariffs for using them. If one ship can fall prey to "disaster," so can others.

Therefore, the Nullian League has planned two hijacking attempts—one an inside job at Xavid (1920), the other a direct assault at Mainline (1519).

All Aboard

When the teammates secure passage on Drygrass, they're going to run into a major consideration—no weapons are permitted, other than as stowed and locked items under the eyes of the crew. Attempts to circumvent this restriction are not likely to be successful; the Hinters (what natives call the Hinterworld sector) are free space, so there's no cavalry to come over the hill. Out here, security is a deadly serious business, and too much insistence on carrying weapons may get the team excluded from passage (captain's prerogative). Similarly, an unsuccessful bribe attempt will not only get the teammates excluded, but blackballed; the word will be out that they want to book passage *and* carry weapons. Only a foolhardy captain will carry them. Some facetious ship's masters might even suggest that the group try catching a ride with some pirates, who consider personal weapons part of "carry-on luggage."

The teammates will have a little more time than they anticipated, however, as the ship is hiring some extra replacement crew. While it will be a Difficult task, a character with Streetwise, Carousing, Liaison, or other interpersonal skills might be able to learn the cause of these unexpected crew needs. Apparently, the ship's purser was arrested for possession of narcotics, and the first engineer was killed in a

brothel brawl—hardly the sort of crew behavior that luxury liners like to brag about. As a result, the *Cunard's Canard* will lay over for a week after the characters arrive at Drygrass. If any teammates bother to check, they will also find that there are two openings for shipboard security positions. This will not only allow some teammates to have arms (and access to a lot more), but will provide them with some people “on the inside.” Whether or not the players realize this opportunity, they will learn on the eighth day that the captain has filled the remaining crew slots, and the ship will be under lift as of 1400 hours.

A Week in Hyperspace

The ship will make a routine jump in-system to Xavid, with no nefarious doings in evidence. However, an observant and inquisitive team may pick up a few key facts.

The most basic is the rest of the *Cunard's Canard* travel itinerary. From Xavid, she's scheduled to jump to Annex, from there to Mainline, then on to Varag (1417), G-R (1316), and Arkon (1315). These ports of call are only 2-3 parsecs distant from league space—a fact which should suggest that this is the area where a hijack attempt is most likely.

Another less available fact is that the new ship's purser has also been named the second navigator; apparently he has some excellent skills in this area. The shipboard scuttlebutt is that the captain is quite satisfied with the new personnel; in fact, they seem exceptionally well qualified.

A suspicious team (and being suspicious *is* part of their job) should be wondering how it is that specialized crew slots such as purser/navigator and first engineer (for a TL13 liner) were so fortuitously filled on Drygrass, which has a C starport and a tech level of 4. In general, Drygrass is not the sort of world that is a likely place to “find” qualified starship crew on short notice. But *don't* help the players along with this observation if they don't realize it themselves—at least not yet.

Another interesting facet of the trip to Xavid is the opportunity for the players to get to know the Imperial tourists and their entourage. Although only middle passengers (if any of the characters reveal their Imperial background), they will attract the camaraderie of this group—even the four Moot members. This affinity will be particularly strong if any of the teammates are high-ranking military or intelligence retirees and/or holders of high military honors: In these troubled times, Margaret's people are always on the look-out for promising recruits to her cause. In addition to half a dozen domestic/clerical assistants, the six tourists are:

Sir Reynold Artesian: Senior Moot member. He is in charge of the trade mission and will be the least accessible. He is silver-gray haired and rumored to be 107 years old—although anagathics reduce the apparent age to half that. He is a commanding individual, who will quietly confirm (if pressed) that yes, he is that same Sir Artesian who served with such distinction in the Fourth Frontier War.

Lady Iritiya Shamuugar: Senior Moot member. From the Vilani side of the nobility, she represents an important minority faction in Margaret's significant gathering of Solomani-

heritaged Moot members. Her well known talent for handling delicate negotiations and soothing ruffled feathers is matched by her ability to drive a shrewd bargain. She is a well preserved 78 years of age (she uses a limited regimen of anagathics as an aid to her genetic predisposition for graceful aging). Also, unknown to most, she is a crack shot with a pistol (Handgun-3), and was able to get the captain to acquiesce to her request to retain a body pistol while on shipboard. Rank hath its privileges.

Sir Seldon Fortesqu: Moot member, known to most as Selly. Selly is best known for his contagious charm and ability to have fun (Carousing-4). However, beneath his almost bon vivant exterior, Sir Fortesqu is a keen judge of human nature and an excellent negotiator (Persuasion-3). He is also something of an avid sportsman with a broad education (Education-D, Jack-of-All-Trades skill-2). In any tight situation, Selly is likely to have at least a level of 0 in the relevant skill. And he is not afraid to get in there and “slum it” with the bourgeoisie; he is both accessible and an extremely valuable ally in a fight.

Sir Atrabar Chin: Junior Moot member. At only 39 years of age, Sir ChinHia would seem impossibly young for his position. However, the quiet, diminutive fellow is a computer expert with a specialty in psychohistory and multivariate analysis of alien races and their economies. As such, he was indispensable to the Moot as an expert and is now a major asset to Margaret. The seemingly mild ChinHia is also a student of the martial arts (Martial Arts skill-3) and finds that this combines well with his outward mien—which successfully invites adversaries to grossly underestimate him.

Scandinav Sten: Security “consultant.” A five-term ex-marine commando major, Sten is nearly 100 kilograms of weathered rawhide and sprung steel. His specialties are in personal weapons, close combat, vacuum/0-G operations, and recon—just the sort of person you want to have around when you're travelling on a ship outside the comparatively secure boundaries of the Imperium. He is highly intelligent, but *extremely* suspicious. However, once an ally, he will be steadfast and tenacious.

Sir Tancred von Harrer: Special attaché. Tancred is Margaret's nephew, who managed to swing this assignment without his aunt's knowledge. Now 28 years old, Tancred spent one term in naval intelligence after graduating from the academy with honors. What the fellow lacks in experience (which is nonetheless considerable), he makes up for in brains (Intelligence stat of D). He is inventive and alert—and is the only one of the tourists who has some misgivings about passing this close to league space. He is fairly accessible and would be the only one of the trade mission likely to listen to a forthright appeal from the players regarding the mission's safety and the advisability of a change in plans.

Malek Toulouse: Head steward. Toulouse was originally nothing more than the ship's head steward, but the tourists made him an additional employment offer as their direct employee approximately eight weeks ago. He gladly accepted, and everyone has been happy with him—except

Sten, who has a "funny feeling about that guy." Malek is in his forties, fastidious and gifted with a dry wit—which he occasionally uses to mildly torment the suspicious Sten. But if players decide to accept the hard-nosed Sten as simply the butt of Malek's backhanded jibes, they may regret it.

An Attempted Annexation

If the players haven't begun to get suspicious of some of this cast of characters by the time they're preparing to leave Xavid, they deserve to get caught flat-footed. (If the referee has the pleasure of running this adventure for a particularly sharp group, a few additional crew and passenger NPCs can be added as red herrings to enhance the colorful nature of this adventure.) Additionally, the team should be asking a few important questions, such as how did the league learn about these tourists in the first place? How can the league know the *Cunard's Canard* travel itinerary so far in advance that it can plan a hijack operation? (The captain has been sharing the precise long-term itinerary with crewmembers only.)

On the day of its jump to Annex, the *Cunard's Canard*'s navigator will be found in his cabin, apparently near comatose as a result of a drug overdose. The captain will attempt to hush this up, inasmuch as a preliminary investigation will show the drug to be of the same type that the former purser was accused of peddling. As a result, the new purser/navigator is called to the bridge to handle the course plot for the jump.

Once the ship has moved out to 100 planetary diameters in preparation for its jump to Annex, a couple of ugly coincidences will occur. First, the engineering section will report a short in the back-up bridge circuitry. It will recommend that the jump be postponed and that qualified personnel be dispatched to handle the problem. Nothing will be found, but the warning lights are still showing red. Accordingly, the engineer will suggest—and the captain will agree—that for safety's sake, the jump should be handled from the auxiliary bridge, where all the circuitry reads green and ready.

This will result in the pilot and purser/navigator reporting surreptitiously to auxiliary flight control, all the while trying to avoid attracting the notice of the passengers (easier said than done).

However, once they are in auxiliary control, things will begin to change rapidly. The purser/navigator will eliminate the pilot (using lethal force if necessary), and the first engineer will cut all power to the bridge and seal all bulkheads. He will also power-down all the elevator shafts.

Meanwhile, the purser/navigator will lay in a course for a deep-space rendezvous point (hex 1821), where a league ship is waiting. This will take a few minutes, however—in which time the teammates might be able to get to the auxiliary bridge and foil these plans.

However, they'll have to figure out what's going on largely by putting fragmentary pieces together. The bridge crewmembers are the only ones who know for sure that anything foul is afoot. They're locked in the bridge, and their access to the shipwide intercom system has been cut off. An attempt to

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commander engineering will not work; the first engineer has enough time to watch his security monitors on all the possible access routes. He will use the antihijack gas freely and, if pressed, will expose selected areas to vacuum in order to counteract any attempts to regain control of engineering.

However, auxiliary control is accessible by a number of normal corridors and passageways. The teammates can prevent the hijack if they can:

- Figure out what's going on within a few minutes.
- Get to auxiliary control in time (remember, the elevators are *out*).
- Not give away their plans to the first engineer, who's monitoring all intercom communications.
- And also overcome the purser/navigator in auxiliary control.

If the group has taken the tourists into their confidence, they may have some help in this task—but they might also find the purser/navigator waiting for them with an autosnub handgun. They won't know it, but the purser/navigator will have been warned of their plans. His source is Malek Toulouse, who is a league plant and is the pipeline through which the league has gained its knowledge of the tourists and their mission.

If the teammates manage to catch either the purser/navigator or first engineer alive (which is unlikely, since both are well armed and ready to fight), they will learn that someone on the ship *is* a league plant, although these two do not know the identity of that plant.

Main Attack at Mainline

The attempt at the Xavid out-jump point is not the only operation that the league has dedicated to this objective. If the *Cunard's Canard* fails to show up at the deep space rendezvous at hex 1821, the league will move its overt attack plan into tentative active status. The moment the liner shows up at Annex, the league will consider the overt plan to be its last hope and will pursue it vigorously.

The overt assault will be mounted just prior to outjump from the next port of call—Mainline. The assault will be via four spaceside assault carriages (plastic, nonradar, reflective, three-man frameworks). These high-speed assault carriages will be continuously boosted to achieve high speeds and then guided by their troops to the target. Once at the target, the fireteam elements on board (strapped to the carriages in TL11 combat armor) will engage a powerful set of solid-rocket counter-boosters. This will slow them down enough to effect a rendezvous with the liner's hull.

One of the four assault teams will implant and detonate breaching charges at the hull section above the bridge (sparing key electronics), and jam the small craft bay by detonating a shaped charge which is designed to buckle the bay door.

Another team will blow access plates at two other points and commandeer auxiliary control. It will cut the oxygen level in the liner's air to 50 percent and reduce the ambient air temp to -5 degrees centigrade. This should slow up any would-be counterattackers to the point of near-hypothermia, with a worsening case of anoxia adding to their problems. In

the event that some hardy souls still seem determined to contest the hijacking, they will flood all decks with anti-intruder gas. In addition, the remaining two fireteams are on standby to actively counter any aggressive defenders—with priority targets being vacc-suited individuals. Once the demo charges have gone off, a nearby far-trader will move to assist and exfiltrate the assault teams and their hostages. The trader is a TL13 model with reduced cargo space and increased engine/power plant, giving it Maneuver 3/Agility 1.

If the PCs manage to rally a strong defense against these attackers, Malek will drop his cover and do everything in his power to ruin their efforts—up to and including taking Lady Shamuugar at gunpoint.

Alternate Routes

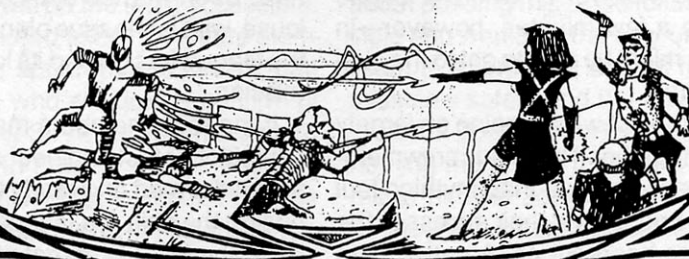
A potentially effective plan—but possibly even more dangerous—is for the PCs to commandeer the ship themselves. This may become particularly tempting after the Xavid attempt, since a smart group will realize that they probably haven't heard the last from the league. They could completely ruin the league's plans by jumping to Peterstadt, Normand, Undru, Edmund. From here there would be several safe paths by which to affect rendezvous at Arkon. But until arrival there, the team will be considered to be the hijackers and will not be trusted—even by those they have been sent to rescue.

Remember, the team is just a bunch of fellow passengers. The *only* one who *may* listen is Margaret's nephew, whose stint with Navy Intelligence has shown him that help occasionally takes on some very strange guises. Ω

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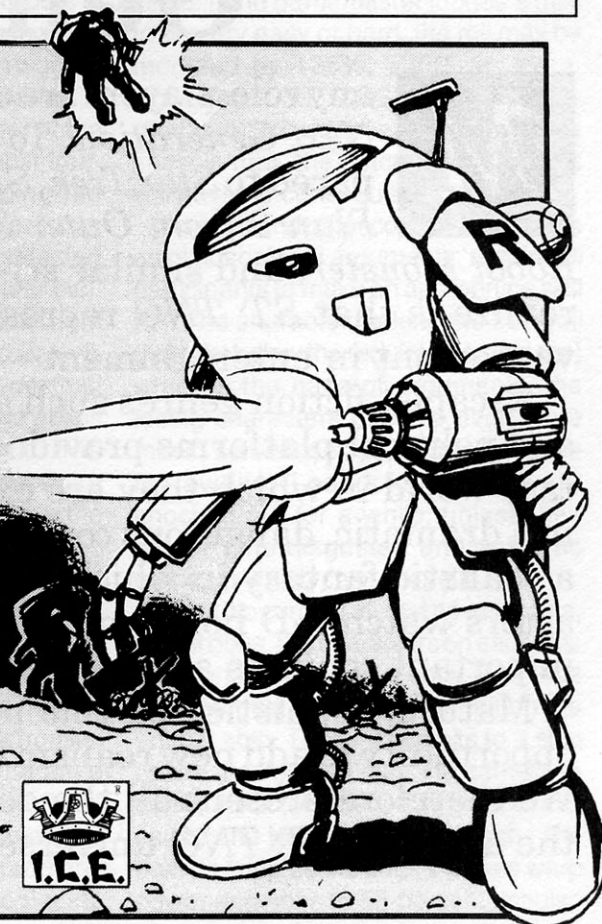
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The Next Generation

Many role-players are confused by *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. To some, it seems dull compared to *Star Trek, Space: 1999, Lost in Space, Plan 9 from Outer Space, Dune: The Movie, Robot Monster*, and similar sci-fi epics. What they don't realize is that *ST: TNG* represents a revolutionary advancement in entertainment—antiescapism.

Escapist fiction genres such as westerns, soap operas, and political platforms provide the audience with a fantasy world in which they are exciting, important people in a dramatic, dangerous conflict. Antiescapism provides a realistic fantasy in which slow-witted, confused characters watch 3-D holofilms and argue philosophy while important conflicts are decided by other people.

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UBERMENSCH

This race is the final product of human physical and sociological development, and the most common race in the next federation. Genetic manipulation and food additives have changed the human race in several important ways, generally improving physical attributes at the expense of mental ones. They personify the following improvements on the 20th-century human race:

Posture: Ubermensch all have perfect parade-ground posture and are permanently in the "attention" position. Clicking boot heels together after walking is optional.

Lean Muscle Mass: Ubiquitous use of the advanced drug "anabolic estrogen" now provides everyone with amazing muscular development and abolishes excess body fat. Unlike steroids, anabolic estrogen does not increase hostility and anger.

Ubermensch Disadvantages: Due to advanced machines and life in low gravity, Ubermensch have much less physical strength than 20th-century humans. Their muscles look good but are actually useless, and they are unable to engage in any physical activity more strenuous than walking or engaging in childish fantasies on the holodeck. Because of this, romance is limited to platonic relationships, and the population of the federation has begun to dwindle to the point that Starfleet Academy now takes only one applicant a year.

Mental Improvements (Meta-Logic): In the 20th century, humans suffered from mental flaws such as anger, superstition, and intuition. Now reasoning has been elevated beyond such irrationalities, beyond clear directed thought, and skyrocketed to the lofty plane of philosophical speculation, known as meta-logic. Players must master this advanced mode of thought to successfully play Ubermensch characters. The following examples illustrate the principle.

Situation One

An armed lunatic blazes into the control room, demanding control of the *Enterprise*.

Old Thinking: By returning violence

for violence, the scene erupts in exciting, confused combat: Gratuitous exploding control panels, Vulcan nerve pinch, cries of "Set phasers on stun!" "Get a security squad up here!" and "He's dead, Jim." The sensibilities of a sophisticated audience are greatly offended.

Meta-Logic: Everyone should immediately form an informal group therapy session to analyze the opponent to find the deep cause of his hostility, perhaps by recreating his childhood on the holodeck. The lunatic's mental wounds are healed, and the audience finds the show enlightening, spiritually elevating, and educational.

Situation Two

The *Enterprise* is caught in an energy-dampening field by omnipotent aliens who claim that humans are worthless worms, from their point of view.

Old Thinking: The commander of the *Enterprise* gives an impassioned sentimental speech about the unique virtues of the human race: capitalism, apple pie, sexual stereotypes, macho hostility, irrationality, and so on, then orders a futile attack. The aliens, realizing that humans are even dumber than worms, release the *Enterprise* and go away.

Meta-Logic: The commander of the *Enterprise* initiates a round-robin free-association session, discussing the merits and flaws of the human race, quoting one to 20 randomly selected Lipton tea bags, fortune cookies, etc., in an attempt to dissuade the aliens from their outmoded notions of good vs. evil. Failing in this, he orders the self-destruct device activated to convince the aliens that the human race deserves to live. The aliens, realizing that humans are even dumber than worms, release the *Enterprise* and go away.

KLINGONS

Klingons are nearly extinct, due to the wanton violence and ecological damage inflicted on them by *Star Trek: The Old Fogies*. The only survivors are terrorists, exotic dancers, and those who have joined the Federation. "Caffeine-Free" Klingons are required to take massive doses of anabolic estrogen, reducing their violent instincts, and replacing

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them with a driving emotional need to become bootlicking lackeys. In all other respects, they are identical to Ubermensch. (A Literary Note: In *ST: TNG*, the so-called "moral message" of the show has been changed. The Klingons are no longer a racist slur against Russians—they are a racist slur against black Americans).

ST: TNG GAME SYSTEM

In this section, we introduce the revolutionary Trivial Role-Playing System, appropriate to any game. All statistics, skills, and abilities are given as percentages. Performing a task, such as repairing the *Enterprise's* main drives with a Swiss army knife, requires a D100 roll less than or equal to the percentage listed. If the gamemaster judges a task to be very easy or hard, the roll may be modified by +25%, +30%, or more. However, if *ST: TNG* is run correctly (that is, in accordance with the way the show is run), the outcome of skill rolls will have no consequence to the plot.

Combat and other competitions, such as philosophical arguments, require all participants to make an appropriate skill roll. The character making the best roll (furthest below the required percentage) wins. In the case of arguments, the losing characters become even more meek, self-conscious, and submissive for awhile. Losers of combat are knocked out for a while, unless their player gets disgusted and quits the game, in which case they die.

Starship combat almost never occurs, but if it does, the characters on each side make starship combat rolls. The side with the best roll inflicts one hit on the enemy ship. The first two hits to a ship cause the lights to dim, the camera to tilt and the actors to stumble around, and cause one to 20 casualties each. The next hit cripples the ship; it loses warp power and goes to 50-percent impulse

power. One more hit destroys the ship, but this never happens unless *all* the players become disgusted and quit.

SKILLS

The major skills common to all characters are listed below. Individual characters may have special skills listed with the character descriptions.

Starship Piloting: This skill includes navigation, operating impulse and warp engines, and operating all electronic equipment (except for the subskill Open Hailing Frequency, which is a psychic ability available only to women and ethnic minorities).

Starship Combat: This skill includes firing weapons, conducting tactical movements, and announcing the number of casualties after each hit.

Starship Repair: This skill includes the ability to fix broken or battle-damaged systems, exceed the design specs of the *Enterprise*, and invent new ways to break the laws of physics during emergencies.

Personal Combat: This skill includes hand-to-hand combat and phaser use.

CHARACTERS

Following are important character descriptions.

Captain Retard

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 35; Dexterity, 35; Intelligence, 50.

Skills: Starship Combat, 30; Personal Combat, 20; Knowledge of 20th-Century France, 60; Ability to Engage in, and Force Others to Join, Endless Metaphysical Discussions, 70.

Special Abilities: Have Identity Crisis, 20; Advance Plot (before each commercial, roll on the following table).

SPECIAL ABILITIES TABLE

Roll	Result
1-15	Assert moral superiority
16-30	Eject saucer section
31-40	Send out away team
41-55	Deliver inspiring speech about human condition
56-65	Call committee meeting in briefing room
66-75	Call committee meeting in control room closet
76-90	Hang out on holodeck
91-100	Initiate autodestruct sequence

Vice-Captain Piker

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 45; Dexterity, 45; Intelligence, 20.

Skills: Starship Piloting, 20; Starship Combat, 20; Starship Repair, 35; Personal Combat, 35; Quote Saying from Lipton Tea Bag, 75.

Special Abilities: Antagonize Fellow Crewmember, 60.

Assistant Computer Datum

Race: None. Strength, 90; Dexterity, 90; Intelligence, 90.

Skills: Starship Piloting, 90; Starship Combat, 70; Starship Repair, 70; Personal Combat, 70.

Special Abilities: Recite Endless List of Useless Information, 90; Imitate Historical Figure, 25; Romantic Attraction, 90; Have Electronic Equivalent of Identity Crisis, 40.

Token Minority Worlf

Race: Klingon (Caffeine-Free). Strength, 80; Dexterity, 80; Intelligence, 20.

Skills: Starship Combat, 45; Personal Combat, 80; Starship Repair, 25; Open Hailing Frequency, 40.

Special Abilities: Intimidate Opponent (snarl, etc.), 50; Suggest Wanton Violence as Solution to Problem, 60; Have Identity Crisis, 20.

Security Thug Jar

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 80; Dexterity, 80; Intelligence, 40.

Skills: Personal Combat, 80; Open Hailing Frequency, 70.

Special Abilities: Intimidate Opponent, 5; Have Identity Crisis, 25.

Counselor Deanna Toy

Race: Obnoxoid. Strength, 20; Dexterity, 30; Intelligence, 50.

Skills: Personal Combat, 20; Open Hailing Frequency, 20.

Psychic Powers: Gain Obvious but Trivial Information, 80; Gain Important Information, 20.

Special Note: Toy's race, the Obnoxoids, have the racial skill Antagonize Everyone at 90 percent. But Toy has been treated with anabolic estrogen since birth, which has eliminated this skill, giving her a physiological/psychological profile identical to Uberrensch.

Chief Doctor Crusher

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 25; Dexterity, 50; Intelligence, 30.

Skills: Medicine, 80; Personal Combat, 20; Open Hailing Frequency, 10.

Special Abilities: Maternal Instinct, 40; Meek Submission to Macho Authority Figures (except Security Thug Jar), 40.

Curmudgeon (McCoy Clone) Polanski

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 25; Dexterity, 70; Intelligence, 45.

Skills: Medicine, 80; Personal Combat, 20; Open Hailing Frequency, 10.

Special Abilities: Ridicule Datum, 80; Assert Moral Authority, 40.

Chief Geek Wesley

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 15; Dexterity, 35; Intelligence, 60.

Skills: Starship Piloting, 25; Starship Combat, 20; Starship Repair, 95; Personal Combat, 15.

Special Abilities: Antagonize Everyone, 90; Adolescent Megalomania, 50.

Subsidiary Token Minority Gordy

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 25; Dexterity, 45; Intelligence, 35.

Skills: Starship Piloting, 50; Starship Combat, 45; Starship Repair, 80; Personal Combat, 40; Open Hailing Frequency, 25.

Special Abilities: Self-Pity, 40; Super Vision, 50*.

*By Super Vision skill we mean mechanically induced extraordinary visual specialty abilities ("If I had any supervision, would I be playing a silly game like this?").

Bartender First Class Whoopie

Race: Uberrensch. Strength, 25; Dexterity, 35; Intelligence, 85.

Skills: Serve Drinks with Stupid Names, 90; Personal Combat, 20; Open Hailing Frequency, 40; Uberrensch Psychoanalysis, 60.

Special Abilities: Wear Ridiculous-Looking Hat, 80.

RANDOM ADVENTURE/ SCRIPT GENERATOR

Gamemasters will find that no one can stand to play *ST: TNG* more than an hour every week or so (and in this, too, it is accurate to its prototype). In addition, all plot lines, romances, and conflicts vanish between episodes of the original *Star Trek*, never to be seen again—so why should the *ST: TNG* game be any different? The following charts will permit gamemasters (as well as aspiring screenwriters) to generate adventures that are just as exciting as the original show. Simply roll for one major conflict, one subplot, and as many gimmicks as you can tolerate.

MAJOR CONFLICTS

Roll Result

- 1-5 Hostile aliens attack *Enterprise*.
- 6-10 Hostile aliens with superior technological powers undermine Federation without directly attacking *Enterprise*.
- 11-25 Godlike aliens threaten *Enterprise* and/or Federation for no apparent reason, then depart equally mysteriously three minutes before end of episode.
- 26-50 *Enterprise* is used as a taxi to carry someone else on an exciting adventure which we never see.
- 51-70 Repeat plot of old *Star Trek* episode verbatim.
- 71-85 *Enterprise* comes upon primitive culture being destroyed, but crew dare not interfere.
- 86-100 Spend entire episode on holodeck to enable production crew to use existing film set for other series.

SUBPLOTS

Roll Result

- 1-50 Identity crisis, determine character randomly.
- 51-60 Kill off character of departing actor/actress.
- 61-70 Romantic interest blooms between two crewmembers, then fizzles out.
- 71-80 Klingon sex is described, discussed, or threatened, but never happens.

- 81-90 Naive/blatantly obvious moral message (such as "War is bad," and "People are still people even if they are slime monsters," etc.).
- 91-100 Hypocritical moral message (such as "TV is bad," "Feminism is best promoted through lower necklines," "Racism is bad," etc.).

GIMMICKS

Roll Result

- 1-10 Open admission that plot was solved by original *Enterprise* crew.
- 11-20 Fading celebrity guest star with little or no plot justification.
- 21-25 Reference to thousands of *Enterprise* crewmembers (who are never seen).
- 26-30 Costume change for female crewmembers.
- 31-35 Crewmember has pointless encounter with old friend/enemy.
- 36-40 Teleporter gains new godlike power (raising dead, matter duplication, cure fatal disease).
- 41-50 Endless parade of female crewmembers in background.
- 51-55 Put male crewmembers in skimpy skirts as an excuse to put female crewmembers in skimpy skirts.
- 56-60 Top six command personnel execute "The Exxon Valdez Gambit" by leaving bridge deserted (also known as "The U.S.S. *Stark Maneuver*").
- 61-65 Special effects cribbed from *Star Wars* out-takes.
- 66-70 Close-ups of plastic models cribbed from *2001: A Space Odyssey* out-takes.
- 71-75 Disgusting aliens cribbed from *Alien/Aliens*.
- 76-80 A crewmember nearly has sex, but then calls it off at last moment.
- 81-85 Holodeck-generated characters which are smarter than anyone else on the *Enterprise*.
- 86-90 Ugly aliens which are even dumber than the crew.
- 91-100 Cute, furry aliens suitable for merchandising, without plot justification. Ω

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R. M. 55

OPERATION CORMORANT

A Star Fleet Intelligence Command Mission Summary

John A. Theisen

M

Mission Code Name: Operation Cormorant
SECLAR: 5

Case/Contact Officer: Lieutenant Commander Richard M. Meryddin

Classification: Investigation/Recovery

Intelligence Sector/Base: Klingon and Orion Sectors, Intelligence Star Base 27

CASE BRIEFING SUMMARY

Hayden Morris is a senior design and applications engineer for Morris Magtronics, the manufacturer of several Star Fleet photon torpedo systems (including the FP-4, FP-5, and FP-6).

While working late one evening at his office on Alphosa, witnesses report he was unexpectedly visited by at least two Klingon/Human fusions. He immediately ceased work and left with them, without reporting where he intended to go. His last words to placate the security guards at the complex were, "Fear not, I shan't be gone too long." He has not been seen on Alphosa since.

When Morris failed to show up for work two days later, a bulletin went out requesting anyone who saw him to report to Star Fleet. Approximately three weeks later, an anonymous report did come in from a non-UFP merchant ship. Hayden Morris was allegedly seen on the planet Asparax, near the UFP/Klingon border.

Morris is currently working in secret on preliminary designs for a new photon guidance system, potentially a breakthrough in control and delivery technology. In addition to being a highly skilled and knowledgeable engineer, he is also an heir to the

Morris Magtronics firm. His absence from work will not only delay the project, but the information he possesses regarding classified weapon systems development is a substantial security risk to Star Fleet Command and the UFP.

It is vital that Morris be found and recovered, to determine the severity of the security leak, to minimize the loss, and to facilitate his return to work. The only lead at this time involves the single reported sighting on Asparax.

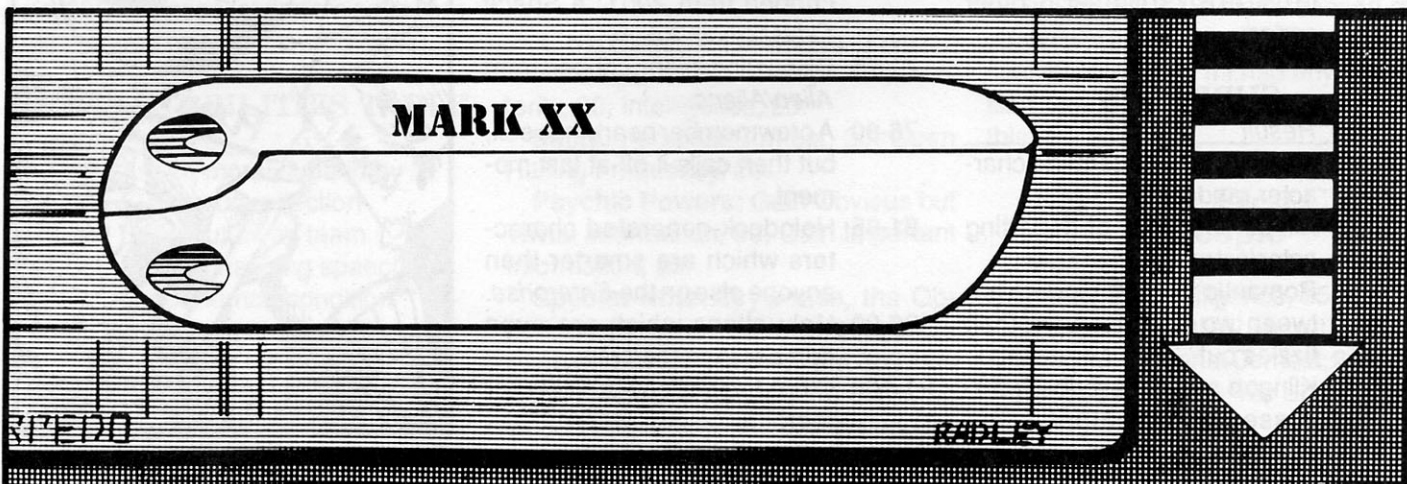
OTHER DATA

Asparax is the founding member of the Asparax Confederation, a loose-knit trade and defense coalition of four worlds situated between the Federation and the Klingon Empire. The Asparax Confederation currently permits trade between its members and all other worlds, except those from the UFP; any Federation vessels entering Asparaxian space are considered to be violating the Confederation's (supposedly) neutral status. Klingon and Orion vessels and trade goods are more than welcome, however. To date, Star Fleet commanders have been ordered to avoid contact until formal policy has been determined.

Extensive information on the Asparax Confederation and member-planet world logs appear in the *ST: RPG* adventure *Decision at Midnight*. Of course, the gamemaster is free to generate his own data, if preferred, as well as tactical maps, the actual reason for Morris' presence on the world, and the role of the Klingons.

CURRENT STATUS

Available for task group assignment. Ω



Vargr eat your favorite copy?
 Steppe tiger destroy the last issue?
 Don't despair—we have more.

Challenge Back Issues

25*

Traveller: Siege by John M. Ford, Deck Plans for the Fleet Escort *Lisiani*, Q-Ships, The Darrian Way of Life, Planetary Invasions, Traveller Sector Generator. **Twilight:** 2000: Twilight Miniatures Rules by Frank Chadwick, The Baltic Coast (A Looter's Guide).

29

Traveller: A Decade of Traveller, The Universal Task Profile, Scientists, Picking a Homeworld, Traveller News Service. **Twilight:** 2000: Equipment List, Weather, Inside the M1 Tank, Buildings: Optional Rules for Urban Locales. **2300 AD:** Trade in 2300, In the Cards.

35

Traveller: The Spice of Life, Fire Aboard Ship. **Twilight:** 2000: Citymaker. **2300 AD:** A World Invaded. **Space:** 1889: Victorian Times and Society. **BattleTech:** AFT 1B Afterburner. **Star Wars:** Team Recovery, H-Wing Fighters. **Renegade Legion:** The 9867th Renegade Armored Support. **Star Trek:** Spaceports in *Star Trek*.

30*

Traveller: The Warehouse. Stormriders, The Fall of the Imperium, There When You Need Them.

Twilight: 2000: Canada: 2000, Twilight: 2000 Equipment List, Shell Game. **2300 AD:** Stutterwarp, Bayern, IEX, Building the Perfect 'Mech.

36*

Traveller: The Green Hills of Earth, Starship Design Notes. **Twilight:** Red Maple, Equipment for Armor Crews. **2300 AD:** Devil in the Dark, Anatomy of a Missile. **Space:** 1889: Darkness Falls from the Air. **Star Trek:** Doppelganger. **BattleTech:** 'Mech Alternatives. **Warhammer:** 40,000: Sunstroke. **Paranoia:** Plan 9 from Out-R-SPC.

31*

Traveller: Hazardous Cargoes, Twisting Tech Levels, Wrong Way Valve. **MegaTraveller:** Designer's Notes. **Twilight:** 2000: USSR: 2000, Combat Examples. **2300 AD:** The Sung: Chapter 19, Spacesuits, Earth: 2300.

32*

Traveller: A World on its Own, Swift Water by John M. Ford. **Twilight:** 2000: Equipment for Armor Crews, Native Canadian Ranger Regiment, Small Patrol Craft. **2300 AD:** Cayuga-Class Close Escort, The Xiang: Chapter 19, Papers and Passports. **Star Wars:** Alone Against the Empire (A Solitaire Adventure).

37*

Traveller: A Body Swayed to Music, Portable Air Lock. **Twilight:** 2000: Tyger, Tyger, Burning Bright. **2300 AD:** Three Blind Mice. **Space:** 1889: From Above and Below. **Warhammer:** 40,000: The Undead of Space. **Star Wars:** Wookiees Amok. **Renegade Legion:** The 982nd Pursuit Wing. **Star Trek:** Warp Factor Equivalency Tables. **Star Fleet Battles:** Border Dispute.

26*

Traveller: Tournament by John Marshall, The Tuktaar Connection, Cargo: A Merchant Prince Variant. Striker Weapon System Revisited, Enhanced Sector Generator. **Twilight:** 2000: Twilight: 2000 Air Module.

27*

Traveller: Grandfather's Worlds, Journalism and the Stars, Church of the Chosen Ones. **Twilight:** 2000: Target 2000: The Hit List for WWII, Twilight: 2000 Consolidated Price List, The Mexican Army, The Inland Waterway. **2300 AD:** The North American Research League.

33

Traveller: Project Farstar, IRIS. **Twilight:** 2000: Haute Cuisine à la 2000, Twilight: 2000 Equipment List, USSR: 2000 Part II. **2300 AD:** Lone Wolf, North America 2300, Davout, Stutterwarp Revisited.

38

Traveller: Prize Court, Monitor-Class Scout. **2300 AD:** Star Cruiser Power. **Space:** 1889: Journey to Oblivion. **BattleTech:** Direct-Fire Artillery. **Star Wars:** Starfighters Down. **Star Trek:** Beta Antares Sector. **Renegade Legion:** Commonwealth Ships.

39*

MegaTraveller: The Hinterworlds. **Twilight:** 2000: Rifle River. **2300 AD:** The American Marines, French Lieutenant's Connection. **Space:** 1889: EtherShip Etiquette. **BattleTech:** Sky Eyes, The Waco Rangers—An In-Depth Look.

34

Traveller: Generating IRIS Characters for Traveller. **Twilight:** 2000: Twilight: 2000 Mobile Artillery: Mortars, The Compleat NPC. **2300 AD:** Thorez, INAP, The 2300 AD Revision. **Space:** 1889: Cloudship Design, Ironclads and Ether Flyers—Design Notes Before the Fact, The Canals of Mars, The Ether, A Smoking Flax.

28

Traveller: K'kree Starships: A Human Perspective, Across the Imperium, Double Feature, Behind the Scenes. **Twilight:** 2000: Ultralights: A Closer Look, Wilderness Travel and Pursuit, Air Module II. **2300 AD:** The Astronomischen Rechen-Institut.

Order now!

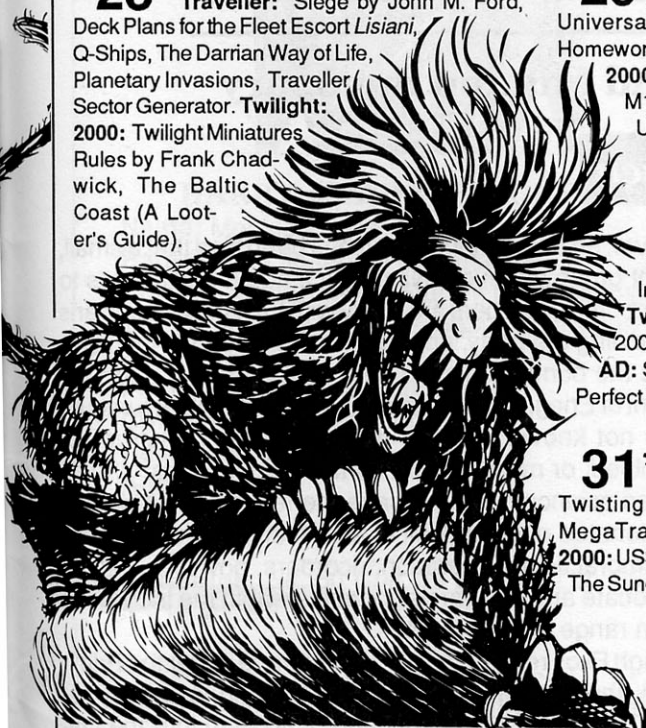
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**Issues with an asterisk are out of print.*



Operation PILE DRIVER

Star Fleet Intelligence Command Mission Summary

John A. Theisen

Mission Code Name: Operation Pile Driver

SECLAR: 5

Case/Contact Officer: Lieutenant Commander Brod Carou

Intelligence Sector/Base: Sector 3 Intelligence/Star Base 15

CASE BRIEFING SUMMARY

Since the visit of the USS *Enterprise* approximately 15 standard years ago, the planet Ekos has undergone gradual, but steady, sociopolitical change.

Under the new leadership of (former Nazi Party chairman) ENEG and (former Nazi Party secretary) Daras, the society of Ekos has slowly been reshaped into a humane, productive civilization. Members of the former resistance remain firmly in control, and the Nazi party has been outlawed since that time.

However, an anonymous report has been filed that a small, resurgent group of devout Nazis once again has access to a nuclear bomb. Members are angry with their fellow Ekosians for disbanding the party, and rumors indicate they intend to detonate the bomb within the next six months (or upon the retirement of ENEG, whichever comes first). Details are vague, and it is not known whether the bomb was constructed, reassembled, or merely found by the Nazi fanatics.

Ekosian science does not have the technology to locate an undetonated nuclear device, and even starship sensors may be impractical. Federation tricorders, however, can be used to locate any nuclear fissionables within the tricorder's detection range.

Although Ekos remains a UFP protectorate under the Prime Directive, the problem now facing that world is directly related to Dr. John Gill's introduction of Nazism into the culture. In an attempt to minimize interference—and avoid a





HARRY AMADEUS MONKLER

Name: Monkler, Harry Amadeus

Rank/Title: Lieutenant Commander

Current Assignment: Star Fleet Intelligence Command, Sector 3 Intelligence, Support Services Department.

Position: Ordnance Specialist

Cover Assignment: None

Race: Human

Age: 37

Sex: Male

SECLAR: 5

Attributes: Str: 60 Cha: 59 End: 69 Luc: 58 Int: 73
Psi: 21 Dex: 81

Combat Statistics

To-Hit Numbers: Bare Hand Damage: 1D10+5 Modern: 51 AP: 12 HTH: 51

Significant Skills: Rating

Communications Systems Operation, 21; Computer Operation, 30; Computer Technology, 45; Demolitions, 60; Electronics Technology, 27; Intelligence Procedures, 44; Life Support Systems Technology, 25; Mechanical Engineering, 36; Personal Weapons Technology, 23; Physical Sciences Chemistry, 36; Drafting, 27; Mathematics, 45; Social Science, Federation Law, 25; Space Science, Astronomy, 21; Transporter Operational Procedures, 21.

Service History: Technical Services Branch

1st Cadet Cruise, Plans and Policies Division. 2nd Cadet Cruise, Support Services Department, Sector 3 Intelligence. Support Services Department, Triangle Sector Intelligence, 2 years. Plans and Policies Division, 6 years. Support Services Department, Sector 3 Intelligence, 1 year.

Notes: Monkler shows a devil-may-care attitude outwardly, but he is deadly serious about his duties and performing them to the best of his ability.

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catastrophe that should never have been possible—a task group must be dispatched to Ekos. Orders are to locate and retrieve (or safely detonate) the nuclear device before it is used against the people of Ekos. If necessary, members of the task group may be forced to infiltrate the Nazi underground to accomplish this mission.

PERSONNEL

This SFIC officer will be assigned to operate with the task group for the duration of this mission. The gamemaster may permit the character to be played as a PC or an NPC, at his discretion.

OTHER DATA

Ekos (Technological/Sociopolitical Index: 556552-77) supports a humanoid culture similar to that of Terra during the first half of the 20th century. Approximately 20 standard years ago, Ekos was in a state of political and social upheaval due to a series of global economic problems. At that time, Dr. John Gill, the noted Federation historian, was a cultural observer on Ekos. He violated the Prime Directive by using Federation technology to raise a pseudo-Nazi party to dominance there. Dr. Gill's efforts were later subverted by party members seeking their own advancement. The subsequent intervention by an investigating party from the USS *Enterprise* helped narrowly avert a war between Ekos and neighboring Zeon, though Dr. Gill was killed during the resolution of the crisis. Ekos has since been protected from further contact, allowing the population of both Ekos and Zeon to work out their problems in a peaceful, cooperative manner.

The gamemaster should generate character statistics for ENEG, Daras, and other major Ekosian (and possibly Zeon) NPCs. Tactical maps and other background information related to the hidden nuclear warhead will also be needed. The exact nature and capabilities of the device (and defenses protecting it, if any) are left to the gamemaster's discretion and imagination.

Character statistics for Lcdr. Carou and/or other SFIC NPCs may be useful. The *Star Trek* television episode "Patterns of Force" or the novelization appearing in *Star Trek* 12 should be most helpful as a reference.

CURRENT STATUS

Available for task group assignment.

Federation Merchants'

Don't know where to
send your Star Trek
players next?

Log

Let your fingers do the
walking!
John A. Theisen

UFP/ITA Datanet Update

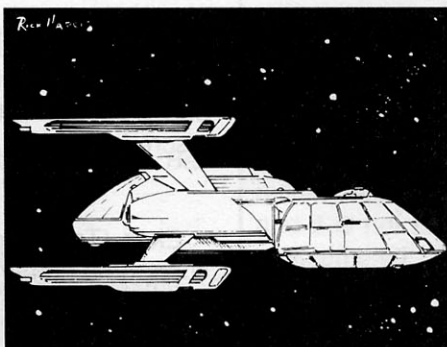
Starship Stolen

The freetrader *Soaring Deutchman*, a *Mission*-class MkIV commercial transport (ex-Star Fleet), was recently stolen from Daran Freeport on Daran V, according to its captain, Jacob "Blue Jake" Barrett III.

"I rented a gravcar for my crew to go into Daraniss (the city), and when we got back it was gone. We wasn't gone more than a couple of hours," Barrett stated. Upon further inquiry, he also admitted that he was several payments delinquent on the craft.

Officials responding from First Vulcan Interplanetary Securities and Loans, the human-space operating name for the powerful Kealek House and Cartel of Vulcan, refused to reveal the nature of Captain Barrett's credit rating or account, but did report that First Vulcan does not repossess loan collateral without due process.

Spaceport officials refused to comment on the vessel's disappearance or apparent security breakdown, but they reportedly are investigating.



Overdue in Port

The *Thor*, a *Zeus*-class robot freighter en route from Malla to Federation Deep Space Station T-11, is reportedly three weeks overdue.

The starship, operating near the UFP/Tholian border, was carrying agricultural supplies and luxury goods when it failed to arrive on schedule.

Star Fleet Command reports no known Tholian activity along the *Thor*'s flight path, but hostilities have not been ruled out. A search has begun. Anyone with information should contact Star Fleet Command.

Violations Up Seven Percent

Star Fleet Command recently reported that violations of navigational space near the Talos Star Group have increased by seven percent over the same period during the last reference Stardate.

A Star Fleet spokesperson attributed this rise to overall increases in the area's starship traffic, and noted that at least two more vessels will soon be assigned to patrol the area.

The Talosian Perimeter surrounding the Talos Star Group at a radius of 3.5 parsecs (11.41 light years) is monitored by vessels of the Merchant Marine Command.

The crew of any private or commercial starship entering the posted perimeter for any reason—accidental or intentional—may be subject to fines, suspension of merchants' licenses, imprisonment, and/or vessel confiscation.

In addition, the entire complement of any vessel that proceeds to enter within 3.07 parsecs (10 light years) of Talos is subject to General Order Number Seven, the only civilian death penalty remaining in the Federation.

Contents

This news has been compiled from three sources:

- The UFP/Independent Traders Association (UFP/ITA) Datanet.
 - The United Federation of Planets Stock Exchange.
 - Advertisements found in merchants' exchanges.
- The UFP/ITA has not verified the accuracy or legitimacy of such advertisements and assumes no liability for any errors or misrepresentations.

Foodstuffs Needed Urgently

A large shipment of imported foodstuffs en route from Meadow to the independent Triangle world of Satterfeld has been spacejacked, presumably by a warship of the Imperial Klingon States.

The shipment, of vital importance to residents of Satterfeld, had no special value, and it is not known why the IKS—or the Romulan Star Empire—might commit such an act.

The loss of this regular shipment has created severe temporary food shortages on Satterfeld, and unofficial reports state that residents will pay double the regular rate for up to 1400 SCUs of foodstuffs.

UFPSE Corporate Profile

Name: Westronix Intercomp Company
UFPSC

Symbol: WXItC

Home Office Location: Syrtis Major, Sol IV

President/CEO: Garmon Iseker

Chartering Organization: UFP Securities and Exchange Commission

Founding Date: 2/1008.20

Principal Divisions:

- Administration and Engineering Development *Division Head:* Rusonn Iseker
- Chief Product:* Picocomputer Computer Research

- Marketing & Technical Support *Division Head:* Shandra Looken *Chief Product:* Quality control, service, and publicity

- Transportation and Assembly *Division Head:* Cy Kapolnik *Chief Product:* Product manufacturing and delivery

Stock Profile: 3F97

Price/Date: Cr4.00 on 2/2404.01

Dividend: None

Balance Sheet, Year Ended: 2/2401

Cash/Assets: MCr3.22/MCr10.01

Liabilities/Ratio: MCr83.3/ 0.12

THE FIRM SPECIALIZED in manufacturing picocomputers and network interfacing systems for home and small business users.

Brothers Garmon and Rusonn Iseker founded the company with the financial backing of their father, Faron Iseker. With Faron's death in 2/18, Garmon took charge of the company, and it has been on the decline ever since. Westronix Intercomp, to be blunt, is in severe trouble.

THE UFPSEC IS PLANNING an audit, and Westronix may be placed in financial receivership within the next six standard months.

The corporation, while possessing a mediocre engineering and development staff, has been horribly managed by the Iseker brothers—with disastrous financial results.

For example, extensive promotional campaigns were launched during Reference Stardate 2/21 for a line of picocomputers which wasn't yet designed.

When the picocomputer design

prototype failed late in 2/22, closely followed by a component shortage caused by improper purchasing procedures, the company lost several tens of millions of credits.

During the same period, corporate salaries and expense allowances were tripled for senior executives, and two luxury starships were purchased for the private use of the CEO and his staff.

DESPERATELY AWARE of the problem but not knowing what to do, the Isekers continued to rule the company with an iron fist.

Though both executives have been relatively honest in their transactions to date, worsening conditions are pushing them near the edge. The prospect of an audit has made them doubly paranoid.

Industrial espionage, embezzlement, fraud, and murder are no longer impossible for either of them, if taking such actions might help save their company.

FML Classified Ads

Positions Available

INTERPLANETARY Rating: Pilots needed for weekly ice-shuttle run between New Siberia and New Sahara (Oeth system). Minimum Grade 4 with commensurate pay. Some overtime may be available. Merchant's Ticket a must. UFP/ITA or AOFW/ITA members in good standing preferred. Bring resume to Grand Senator Thallus, Chambers of Government, New Sahara.

CRUISE DIRECTOR: Vacancy for experienced cruise director or senior steward aboard *Sunshine-class* passenger liner *SS Bailey's Beads*. Min. eight years experience in related field or ex-SFC yeomanry duty. Other vacancies available. Competitive salaries, excellent benefits. Director of Shipping Personnel, Noble Liners Limited, Star Harbor, Wall.

Cargoes Wanted/Available

WANTED—AG GOODS: The Tasser family, agricultural broker on Satterfeld, is currently soliciting interstellar merchants for immediate delivery of foodstuffs and related agricultural products. This invitation is good for a limited time only. Bring samples of your wares—we offer fine prices for fine merchandise. Contact I. L. Tasser, Box TS, Satterfeld.

NEUTRONIC FUEL for Immediate Transport: 12,000 SCUs of neutronic fuel are available for immediate delivery from Egross (Alpha Vega 272—1.37N 3.22E) to Star Base 3 (0.51N 3.50E). Broken lots accepted. Minimum quantity of 100 SCUs. Will pay 30-percent premium. For more information contact Shipping Officer, Starminers Licensed Producers, 137B Waldstrasse, Grossburg, Egross.

Space Vessels/Weapons Wanted

STARSHIP WEAPONS Needed for Refit: Any parties possessing major shipboard weapon systems are invited to bid on supply and installation of weapons aboard two *Lotus Flower-class* and two *Baka Ré-class* freighters. Weapon models desired include the following: any Federation laser; Klingon KD-1, KD-2, or KD-10 disrupters; Romulan RB-1, RB-2, or RB-3 beamers; or any Orion disrupter. Modifications to be made in Triangle (so no UFP permits are required). We are offering 50/50 payment in your choice of currency, upon award and completion of the weapons modifications. Bids will be opened in nine standard weeks. Submit sealed bids, along with references, to Merchant Captain Solomon Urango of the Olive Trade Fleet, Starport General Delivery Locker N, Remfry.

Personals/Miscellaneous

REWARD: Author compiling text on famous contemporary Orion starship commanders needs research assistance. Anyone with info regarding whereabouts of Orion merchant captains Alemir Akalzed of Roulashakballi or A. K. Hygroziar of Tantrak Nightwalker, please contact me. Finder's fee offered. Drewlishk, c/o University of Deneb.

TO "GENTLEMAN Jeff" MacLeod: We know you're out there somewhere, and we hope you'll come back someday. We are only a stone's throw from Deneb, after all! But if you don't—well, we'll understand. Sometimes life is like that. No matter what happens, you'll be missed. Live long and prosper! Best wishes, from the entire gang at Jade Orion Spaceport, Denro IV. Ω



The Inquisitor Viest

Cliff Holmes

"Life in this universe is like a game of drama caught in a constant state of sudden death. As an inquisitor of the Imperium, you will enjoy this challenge."

—The Will and Way for Existence
by Gamera Fox,
Master of the Inquisition.

The chase ends after three long years. The ranks of the Adeptus Mechanicus, the Tech-Priests, must be ever scrutinized and purged of dangerous and susceptible minds. Tech-Priest Golan is one of the few who slipped the gauntlet and now endangers the innocent servants of the Imperium. You have pursued him from Rakal, where he stole from a tech base and unleashed a genocidal virus bomb, through nameless ports where Golan's further treacheries cost the emperor thousands of crucial workers, to the hiveworld Korl, where you anticipate his apprehension and questioning him as to his homicidal actions and of suspected domination by a hideous Warp Entity.

"Inquisitor Viest," the Imperial captain steps aside, "all exits are sealed."

Golan has allowed himself to be trapped in the sewer subsector below. His unwitting mistake all but completes your mission started too long ago.

You step into the dropshaft, and the blackened husk that serves as Korl's architecture swallows you. The clean metals are soon absent, and as you near the warm, dark understructure, all that is left is the ancient warped steelcretes and ironforms that originally gave this world form. A corridor extends out and then twists away. Your surroundings are disturbed by the sounds of human voices. It is nonsense chatter created by natives of these endless caverns. When you complete the travelway and turn, two citizens who appear to have neared complete degeneration halt their conversation. It is close, but the three of you can stand far enough apart to breathe. Conditions like this produce the worthless cityscum that wander the shunned places of hiveworlds. They stand in front of a door that most likely hides Golan. Dull and foolhardy, they seem willing to talk or perhaps rob you of your possessions.

Weigh your decisions!

(For vital statistics on yourself: Read 1).

Pass without giving them a chance to mislead your search: Read 20.

Speak with them: Read 9.

Use your bolt pistol to simplify matters: Read 21.

1 Name: Sixto Viest.

Profile: Zealot inquisitor.

Statistics: WS-5, BS-4, S-4, T-4, W-2, I-5, A-2, LD-8, INT-8, CL-8, WP-8.

Weapons: Bolt pistol, grenades.

Equipment: Portarack, powered armor, favorite volume of "Will and Way for Existence," by Master Inquisitor Gamera Fox. (Now return and make your decision.)

2 Your skills of directing weapon fire stands less than your enemy, and your mortality is lost.

3 With such failure at competence presented by an inquisitor of the Imperium, if the emperor even learns of your story, it is quickly forgotten.

4 You have bungled in an attempt to aid mankind, and therefore valuable time is wasted. Why would an ork containing useful knowledge be aboard a slaver ship in the sewers of a hiveworld. Go back to 29.

5 Fire and smoke clear away, and the small chamber becomes accessible. As you search the debris, Tech-Priest Golan is found. Fragments of metal seem to have freed the criminal from any chance of interrogation. Your mission has been put to rest.

6 Even through your thick gloves, the presence of the loose plating is detectable. There is a chance this could be Golan's hiding place. You are caught between using your personal strength to move the plate in order to preserve silence, or destroying this section of hall in order to pass beyond the plate after any surprises are revealed.

"Physical manipulation has tact": Read 7.

Lob grenade: Read 30.

7 Your fingers fumble at the cracks, but to no avail. You send a shoulder at the plate, and it gives without resistance. You find yourself amongst falling refuse, your final destination being the furnaces of Korl. This location is much too hot for the parts of your body not covered by armor.

8 The value of threats by any inquisitor strain the two enormously. Much like the rodents they have come to resemble, they take flight from you. This outrage is incalculable on any of your inquisition scales. Maybe they do know something.

Follow the fleeing scum: Read 31.

Press on past the door, confident in the knowledge that they aren't going to get very far: Read 10.

9 You ready yourself to weed through their ignorance.

"I am looking for a tech-priest," you state.

The squirming, greasy one pulls a finger from a filthy pocket and holds it at you. "Aha!" He exclaims. "Inquisitor Viest!"

The tall one seems strangely comfortable with the cramped area. He rubs a scarlet cloth across his head, smiles briefly, and looks swollen-eyed at the both of you. "Aha! Aha! The Priest! This one wants answers!"

The greasy one compares his sodden clothing to what you wear while saying, "Back from where you came, Viest. He has left the combs, leaving only memory and plague."

Has Golan released another bomb? By the looks of these vermin, Korl could use a few more bombs, but you must not let justice sway.

Heed their warnings and leave: Read 29.

Threaten them to tell the truth: Read 8.

Ignore them and try to get through the door: Read 20.

10 You press the soot-covered buttons to the left of the door. The door growls and hisses with effort as it slowly slides open. Driven by the fury of impatience, you use the strength-enhancing armor that covers your limbs to hastily move the barrier aside. There is a satisfying groan from the metal as you shove. Now what lies ahead is a long stretch of corridor. How far it lasts cannot be discerned through the minimal light managing to work past layers of filth covering the overhead lamps. There is a door immediately to your right.



Follow the corridor: Read 27.

Open the door: Read 17.

11 Carefully you slide back the small door. The tortured face of Tech-Priest Golan confronts you. He charges at you in quite and insolent manner. With speed as quick as the emperor's will, you throw an arm across his path.

"Oh! Inquisitor Viest! I am lost!" He cries most melodramatically. "I am not to blame. It was the dread Collix, a warp demon!"

You pull out the portarack with a satisfied smirk. You have done this many times before. "The truth will tell." Read 29.

12 The throbbing mass of gel glides across the floor at nightmarish speed. Your guts tighten with fear as the fight will be determined by the one who strikes first, and time has slowed to where it feels like your arm is throwing the grenade through dense liquid. In the end the overgrown virus lunges a suddenly formed appendage at you, but accidentally ingests the grenade you have thrown at it. You duck, and a low-pitched popping sound is heard. Taking your hand away from your eyes you see the blob is split open, with jelly adding a coat to the room's paint.

"Victory," you mutter. But Golan is yet to be found.

Enter the control room: Read 22.

Enter personnel quarters: Read 15.

13 The sound of the bloated virus spreading across the floor toward you becomes like the ripping of soft paper. Breaking your paralysis, you turn and fly from this engineered abomination. Nonetheless, a thick arm catches you, and you realize that these are your last moments. You marvel at the speed in which the armor is pulled away and your limbs devoured. The pain is set

aside in admiration for the Adeptus Mechanicus' weaponry genius.

14 The carnage in this room is unsettling, but you can't tear your eyes away from the ork bodies on the floor. Their skin has been stripped away, as well as a good portion of their innards. And you can't laugh because at the center of the circle of orks is a metal cylinder—obvious across its top is a gash probably made by a curious ork. And whatever was released may still be about the ship. Nothing else seems amiss.

There is an open doorway, presumably leading down to the slave quarters: Read 16.

A door marked as a control room: Read 22.

A door marked as the personnel quarters: Read 15.

Check the outside once again: Read 17.

15 Ork quarters reflect their society: Scum forming a layer over the trash lying about. Nothing new to you except for a tinge of Korl's own stench actually manages to remain distinctive even in here. You kick around, trying to find an ork in the mess, but no ork would ever be found lying in this garbage. They prefer to do their sleeping at their posts.

A sudden shuffling sound can be detected behind a supply room door. An ork readying for an attack? Doubtful, but possible.

You may:

Leave Immediately: Read 14.

Check the closet: Read 11.

Ravage the door and whatever is behind it with a sampling of your firepower: Read 5.

16 As soon as you enter, you realize it is extremely dark aside from the doorway. A churning sound comes from deep in the blackness, but you can't identify it.

Use your light: Read 28.

Turn slowly and quietly leave this area: Read 13.

17 Shock comes once in a great while to an emperor's inquisitor. Hiding

past the door is an ork slaver ship. Orks are known to dare the Imperium and spirit away with its loyal citizens, even on planets close to the emperor's own home. But for a slave ship to land undetected on an hiveworld through its air ducts is staggering to the pride of Imperial defense.

This particular ship looks in good shape. It is resting on a grated platform used for working on the massive ducts. Its ramp is open and inviting. To scout around or no? Passages from your training come to you:

"Thoroughness is success," so scout outside the ship first: Read 18.

"Waste no time; waste the enemy," therefore enter the ship: Read 14.

18 The ship is a stout, heavily armed, slaver class. Apparently ork engineers have been at work on vital parts of it because of the tiles removed from its hull. A well placed grenade would disable if not completely destroy the vessel.

Destroy the ship: Read 29.

Enter ship: Read 14.

19 The hole leads into an empty, gray chamber that has been overrun by slime. There is no sign of where the two have fled to. There is a noise, and you notice that the hole has been sealed from the outside. Trap! As you bring your bolt pistol to aim at the barrier, water crashes down on you, and the floor opens out from underneath you. You are flushed into a holding tank where, in less than a week, you are processed and purified into the finest drinking water on Korl.

20 They gawk as you push them aside and look for the opening mechanism on the door.

"Viest," says the tall one, "you have no manners."

His friend pulls a sawed-off shotgun from his belt. This impudence will be punished harshly. Read 21.

21 Your bolt gun erupts with destructive potential. The cityscums are impressed, but they have decided to hold their ground.

Roll a die:

If you rolled 1 or 2: Read 2.

If you rolled 3, 4, 5, or 6: Read 32.

22 This confusing clutter is not easily recognized as a control room. What weighs heavy in the room is the odor of ork.

"Come out, pig!" you command.

A trembling runt ork leaps from behind a console, pointing a bolter at you. His aim does not look like it would be accurate, but a bolter is dangerous no matter how shaky the user.

Try to speak to the ork: Read 23.

Fire immediately: Read 24.

23 "Do not dare to tempt my wrath!" you growl.

"Please! Oh please don't hurt me! I'll tell you anything. I'll give you our invasion plans. Just keep me alive!"

You may:

Tie him up and keep him as a prisoner: Read 14.

Don't listen to his tricks: Read 24.

24 The ork sees what you are thinking and pulls his trigger. As shells smack and crash to your side, you grit your teeth and activate your own weapon.

Roll a die:

If you rolled 1, 2, or 3: Read 2.

If you rolled 4, 5, or 6: Read 33.

25 Your report satisfies the master of the inquisition. Perhaps next time you will be more thorough.

26 You sit in the chamber of the master of the inquisition. The nervousness you experience is unique, his back-to-Earth attitude (presumably not just because of his physical location) unsettles your usual well tempered disposition. Gamera Fox, the master, smiles at you in an effort to relieve your anxiousness.

"You have proven yourself an expert in your field. Perhaps you will be remembered." You are satisfied with this compliment, a rare thing from Fox. Perhaps you will run across missions of greater importance than that of a renegade tech-priest.

27 You move ahead 90 steps to where this passage stops. You brush at the walls of this dead end—the thick grime falls away, but no door is revealed. Criminals have been known to hide themselves behind false walls. Time is passing, and Golan might sneak out behind you.

You must decide!

Search for a hidden door: Read 6.

Go back to the door you passed and check it out: Read 17.

28 The light comes just in time to reveal a churning mass of gelatinous matter coming at you like a wave. You dodge it, and it crashes into the wall. Without thinking you leap to the other side of the room.

This must be the thing that was kept in the container. The orks must have captured Golan, taken the container and released the gigantic virus.

You see it has collected itself and is ready to attack again. Your boots feel rooted to the floor, but you know you must act.

Lob a grenade at it: Read 12.

Run: Read 32.

29 Your mission has come to an end. If you:

Took the ork pilot as prisoner: Subtract 3 points (Read 4 for explanation)

Captured Golan: 5 points (alive) or 3 points (dead)

Destroyed the virus: 5 points

Anything else accomplished is only worth 1 point.

Compare your score and read.

1-4 Points: Read 3.

5-9 Points: Read 25.

10 Points: Read 26.

30 The blast pushes the plate in and out of sight. An acrid wind shoves itself over and around you. Garbage that would normally be routed down into the stabilizer furnaces is hitting you in an unpleasant manner. You retreat to the safety of distance. Once again you are advancing on the door along the wall. Read 17.

31 Like animals in flight, these foul vermin are difficult to keep up with. They make use of a secret door in the wall, and in the heat of pursuit you follow them through. You stop as the feet



of one of them disappears through a hole set into the opposite wall.

You don't like the looks of the hole, but you hear their voices within.

Follow them through: Read 19.

Go back to the door where the whole chase started: Read 10.

32 Read 13.

33 They fall without delaying you any further. You step across the bodies and concentrate on the door in front of you. Read 10.

34 The ork is caught by your barrage and is slammed back into a console.

"Victory," you mutter.

A further search of this room reveals nothing of interest. Read 14. Ω

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GRAND ALLIANCE



"Grand Alliance" is a fully computer moderated play-by-mail game which involves the battle of survival between human and alien races. Players represent either a member of the human race or of the alien race with the universe as a setting. The game is played on a map of three parallel levels where each level is composed of 240 planetary systems. Each player must solve military and political problems within their own camp before war can be waged effectively against the opposing race. Each side is faced with the same situations and problems to overcome.

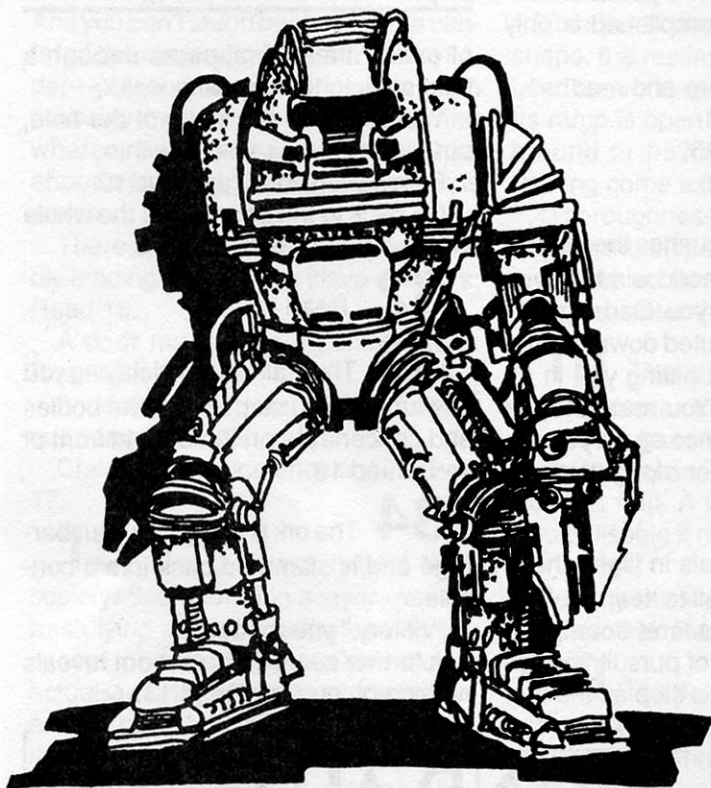
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CHALLENGE *Reviews*



Expendables

Stellar Games. \$10.00. Complete role-playing game in an 88-page, soft-cover booklet.

Xaxus III: Fire and Brimstone. \$6.00. Module for *Expendables*.

Expendables is a science-fiction role-playing game in which player characters are part of a special mission team sent to perform a job for The Company. Usually this job is to survey and thoroughly scout an unexplored planet, often one with a hostile environment or certain peculiarities which may make it dangerous. The game features

over 90 skills for characters (including psionics). Character sheets which facilitate character generation by supplying specific directions on the sheets are also provided (but they are not a joy to look at, as someone seems to have used almost all capital letters and no design sense in creating them).

Characters can be of certain specializations: engineer, medic, pilot, security specialist, xenotechnician, or mission specialist. Skill use is based on percentile rolls and is handled by brief, easy-to-understand rules. Situational modifiers are left to the referee's discretion—sen-

sible and more realistically usable than creating many modifier tables. The combat system is an extension of the skill use rules, but takes into account armor (it decreases damage) and cover (it also decreases damage). Optional combat rules give a short modifier table which allows for different target positions, moving targets, and changes the cover rule to a logical modification to hit, rather than to damage. Optional rules also provide for special damage (critical hits), two levels of initiative (group and individual), knockdowns, and stun damage.

A brief section provides guidelines to referees on planet generation, and another short appendix covers creature generation. For those of you who like a variety of equipment to choose from, a hefty (over 25 pages) equipment section runs the gamut from knives to power armor to space ships.

As a game system, *Expendables* seems competent, but is no gem. The main problem I have with it (poor cover art aside) lies with the premise of the game. It seems to have been intended as sort of a *Dirty Dozen* in space, which, I suppose, might have a certain appeal to some. The system sets player characters up right away as, well, expendable. This seems to be a system which lays itself wide open to the perennial "killer referee" syndrome. It seems that it would be too easy under the

game's premise to frequently design adventures that are too difficult for the experience level of a group of characters, or to design the type of adventure where if you do one thing wrong, the whole mission fails and/or everybody dies. After all, you knew you were expendable when you signed up for the mission, right? A second difficulty I have with the game is that the only type of mission presented—and the type which seems to be the core scenario of the system—is the "land on a planet, scout it, discover ancient alien artifacts, and deal with them" scenario.

Undoubtedly a good referee could provide varied fare for his players, but it seems sad that the system relies so heavily on one type of adventure. The first module for *Expendables*, *Xaxus III*, does not lay my fears to rest. It features a standard plot—land on planet with hostile environment, survey it for minerals, discover ancient artifact which leads to an ancient, abandoned building, which contains (gosh, gee-whiz!) a complete mineralogical survey already done for the team by (you guessed it) an ancient mining colony. Not only is the plot of the module clichéd, the exterior and interior art are so poor as to be laughable. In a nutshell, I would pass this game by. There are other systems with many elements to recommend them and a lot more originality.

By Julia Martin

Operation Overlord

3W. \$8.00. By C. W. Hess
A module for 2300 AD.

For those who have been asking for 2300 AD modules, here is a treat. 3W has been licensed to produce supplements for 2300 AD, and its first module is a continuation of the Kafer War series. The module features a gorgeous cover and an internal format almost identical to GDW's current 2300 AD releases. And C. W. Hess, who should be familiar to readers of **Challenge** has written this adventure.

The module includes the usual variety of NPCs, but in this case they are American Marines. As a bonus, a section in the back of the module provides information on generating American Marine player characters.

In the module, the PCs are part of an operation to eliminate the Kafer presence on Dunkelheim, where the Kafers have a citadel. The module includes a ground battle and an infiltration mission through an abandoned mine into the Kafer citadel, and culminates in the marine assault on the citadel. To keep referees informed on current events in the war, a two-page appendix details happenings and force dispositions as of June 2303.

Although somewhat rough in some details, Hess and 3W provide in this module a logical continuation of the Kafer War series which should provide enjoyment and fast-paced action for 2300 AD players. If you are involved in the series, interested in Kafer strongholds and fortifications, or intrigued by the American Marines, I would recommend this module.

Neuromancer

A *Cyberpunk Role-playing Adventure*. Interplay Productions. \$29.95 for Apple IIe/IIc, \$49.95 for Apple IIGs, \$44.95 for IBM. Computer role-playing game. Other versions are also available.

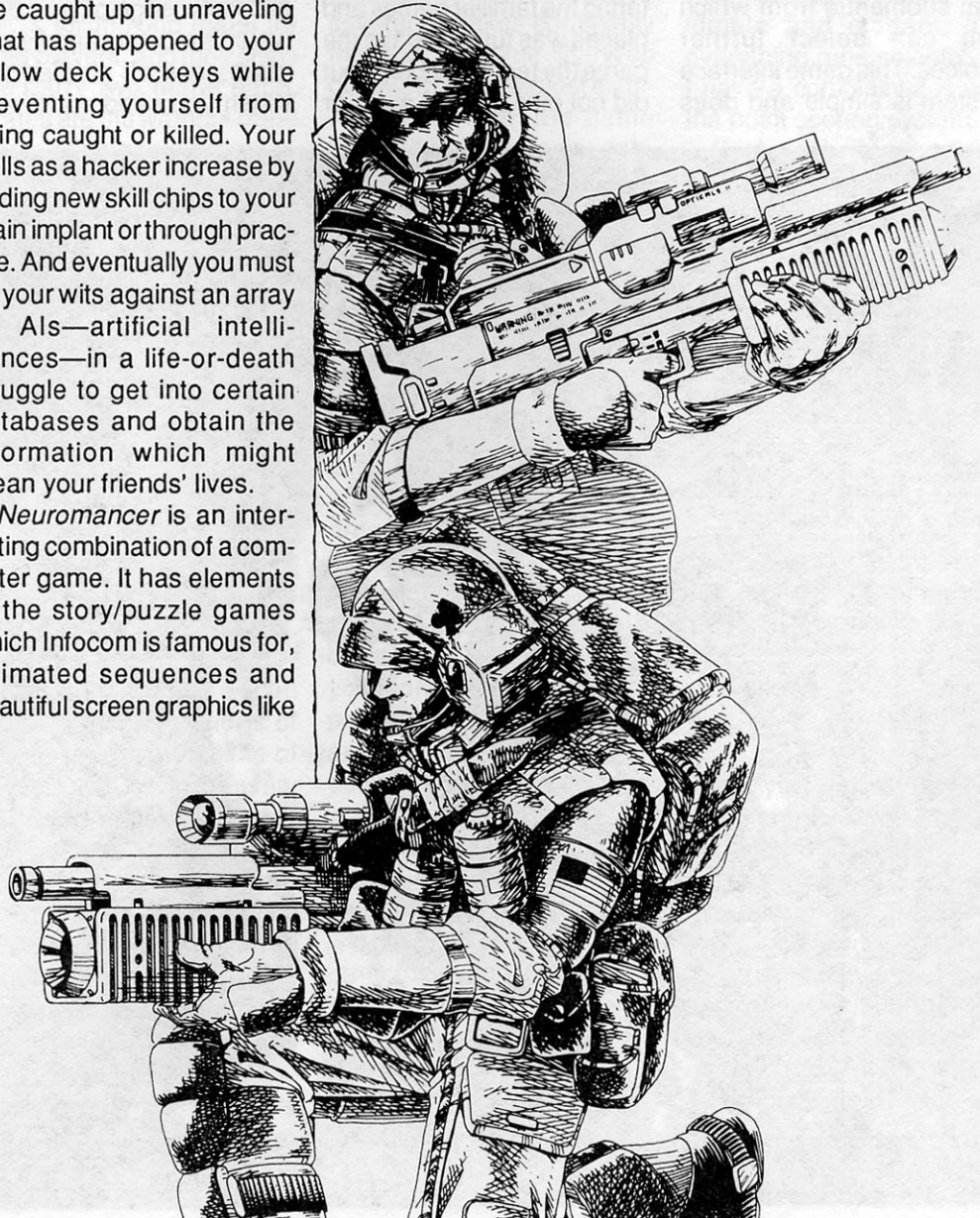
If you're looking for a cyberpunk computer game, here's the first one. In *Neuromancer* you play a down-on-your-luck cyberspace cowboy—a computer hacker of the future. In trying to make your fame and fortune, you run into some strange happenings in cyberspace and are caught up in unraveling what has happened to your fellow deck jockeys while preventing yourself from being caught or killed. Your skills as a hacker increase by adding new skill chips to your brain implant or through practice. And eventually you must pit your wits against an array of AIs—artificial intelligences—in a life-or-death struggle to get into certain databases and obtain the information which might mean your friends' lives.

Neuromancer is an interesting combination of a computer game. It has elements of the story/puzzle games which Infocom is famous for, animated sequences and beautiful screen graphics like

Reviews

an arcade game, and the variables of obtaining and increasing skills like *The Bard's Tale* and *Wasteland*. In fact, the programmers and designers of this game are the same ones who wrote *Wasteland* and *The Bard's Tale*. While you only play one character in this game, rather than a group, the excitement

is not diminished any, and many more elements than are present in the former two games are included in *Neuromancer*. Interaction with the other characters in the game is accomplished through word balloons, from which you select a response. Often what you say can have repercussions later—if you really



insult someone (sometimes a choice), they may have nothing to do with you when you need them later. While dialog is somewhat "canned" due to its multiple choice nature, some responses and inquiries can be customized when you seek specific information.

The main interface with the game is through eight icons: mode (amount on credit chip, time, date, and constitution level), inventory, talk, skills, walk, ROM construct (only usable after you manage to acquire one), and disk (for saving, quitting, etc.). Beneath the icon level are several submenus from which you can select further choices. This game interface system is simple and does

not require a lot of typing; the icons and their submenus adequately encompass all that your character can do in a game, and it is usually not hard to figure out how to use the interface to accomplish a desired action.

The delights of this game are the plot puzzles, which you arrive at from several different angles at once, not knowing which elements are important and which are not. Characters, places, and situations from the *Neuromancer* novel are part of the plot of the game, but the game does not "recreate" the series of events in the novel. Encountering the familiar names and places was fun and gave the game the feel of the book, but did not give the plot away or

even help unduly with solving any puzzles. Most headway in solving the puzzles is obtained by talking to other characters or by hacking into databases using a cyberdeck.

The screen scenes in cyberspace are well done and capture the descriptions of cyberspace in *Neuromancer*, if somewhat simplistically and repetitively. The actual act of breaking the ICE (intrusion countermeasures electronics) around the databases your characters wants into is portrayed as an arcade game where your decision-making speed, reaction time, and knowledge of your deck (your computer) and its programs are all challenged. When you send out a virus

program, you can see the ICE weakening, and when the ICE comes down and is broken, sometimes behind it lies an AI, whom you have to face in a similar, arcade-style manner.

While arcade games in a role-playing computer game are often disappointing because they seem jarringly out of place or against the spirit of the game, the action in cyberspace in *Neuromancer* fits well with the game and actually enhances the feeling that split-second decisions and moves are the meat and drink of deck jockeying.

I was delighted with the look and feel of this game and had great fun playing it. Although it probably has quite a bit of diminished enjoyment in replay, I would still highly recommend *Neuromancer*. Its price is on the low side of average for games of its type (the Apple II version), and I found it worth the money.

StarWeb

Flying Buffalo Inc. PBM game. Rules \$2.50, \$4.50+ per turn, \$10.00 setup.

A complete game will last roughly 18 turns.

StarWeb is arguably the best-loved, most widely known play-by-mail game in history. There have been over a thousand games run by FBI, with 15 players in each. So why review it now? The game has outlived any previous reviews, that's why. If you're a new gamer interested in a thrilling science-fiction PBM game, read on, my friend, read on.

The web is a series of 255 star systems connected by jump gates; each world is connected to two to five or even more other worlds, but you start with no map of the



entire web. You will begin with your homeworld—you will know the worlds connected to it, but you will have to travel there to learn about them and find which worlds are in turn connected to them. No two *StarWeb* game maps are alike, and FBI has become quite inventive in its various layouts. "Figuring out" the web's pattern, if any, is an art only acquired after several games.

Worlds are numbered (W29), have connections listed (62,124,166,175), and have an owner listed (Iapetus, or "—" if there is no owner). The physical information listed about each world tells you how many industries and mines there are, and how much metal is stockpiled. One mine produces one metal per turn, and an industry can use up a metal in a turn to produce one ship. There must be one population to run each industry and each mine, but this is rarely a problem. After seven turns of continuous ownership (W29 is on its seventh turn) a world's mines will increase by one, but if the world changes hands at any time, the counter restarts at one.

Multipurpose starships are built by industry and then attached to some maneuver unit. Ships can be attached to a world as either I-ships or P-ships (ships protecting industry or population, respectively), but these cannot move from world to world, nor do they fight as effectively. Keys (or fleets) are devices which can move through the web. You will start the game with five keys, but you will accumulate more as you explore outward from your homeworld. Any number of ships can be attached to a key you own. Combat among

ships is calculated simply. Two ships firing destroy one target ship, unless the target ships move away, which halves casualties, or if the firing ships are I-ships or P-ships, which also halves casualties. Ships can also pick up one metal and move it about, usually back to your homeworld, which has far more industry than mines to support it.

On this basic framework, *StarWeb* has built six different player types which you choose from when you start your game. Empire Builders gain points for owning worlds and territory. Merchants gain points for moving metal for other players, and their ships can carry two metal each. Pirates are the warriors of the game, gaining points for plunder and having the ability to capture enemy ships and keys without a single shot provided the pirate outnumber all enemies at a world more than three to one. Artifact collectors are only interested in the myriad artifacts found about the web, and they will have to trade to gain them from other players. Berserkers are not living creatures at all, but robots bent on the destruction of anything that lives. Finally, Apostles are religious or political players who can convert the populations of any world to their points of view, gaining points for every population they turn.

In brief, fleets can move three worlds per turn, provided the entire route is known. At first, you will be concerned with building a map and a small empire as you expand, capturing new worlds and keys in the wilderness. However, the real game begins when you encounter the other players in the game; *StarWeb* is a game

Reviews

of diplomacy. Once you become a member of the interstellar community, you will begin plying your particular trade to gain points and ultimately win the game.

Tips for new players: A PBM game is an expensive proposition, not only monetarily, but in your investment in time, as well. There are several mistakes commonly made by first-time *StarWeb* players that can almost eliminate them from the game before it really gets moving.

First, be aggressive in your initial expansion. There is always the possibility that you will run a fleet into a black hole from which it will not return. But these are rare, and you will never start next to one. You will need all the worlds and keys and artifacts you can lay your hands on, and early in the game they are simply there for the taking. Other players are turns away, and you can keep them at a good distance by expanding quickly. Even if you don't need worlds for points, you need something, and worlds can be traded for other things later in the game.

Second, many first-time players get the impression they can "go it alone" to win the game. They can't. You will have to get in touch with other players, become allies with some, enemies with others. For me, this is the best part of the game, the diplomacy and trade with other players. If you don't get in touch with other players when they present them-

selves, you will eventually be gobbled up by other alliances in the web. Most other players will have played before, so learn from their experiences by befriending one and becoming an ally.

Evaluation: Disappointments? There weren't many for me in the game I played. The game systems are simple and elegant, and everything runs smoothly. If I have a complaint it is with the point scoring system.

Each turn you get a list of all players you're in contact with and a list of scores. Though they don't tell you which score goes with which name, it can usually be figured out. So once a game gets past turn 11 or so, those with the best scores become targets. Alliances built on good faith, established with logical cooperation of player types and having lasted many profitable turns, disintegrate as the others figure out that player x has y points and will win on turn z; it's dogpile time! This seems a function of both the point total system and the attitudes of the players, and to me was a bit disappointing.

StarWeb is an enjoyable game that can be played over and over again. The decade or so it has been running is, in itself, testimonial to how great a game it is. *StarWeb* has definitely stood the test of time on its own merits as a great science-fiction PBM game; I highly recommend it.

—*Star Web* review by
Timothy B. Brown Ω

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MANY BACK ISSUES of the **Journal**, out of print **Traveller** adventures and supplements. Send SASE for list. Ted Arlauskas, Box 1640, Gloucester, VA 23061. (41)

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VARIANT, discontinued RPG fanzine including **Traveller** deckplans, character classes, equipment. All 16 back issues only \$5.00, plus \$1.00 postage. Sample issue \$1.00. Gary Reilly, 395 Wimbeldon Road, Rochester, NY 14617. (40)

MEGATRAVELLER software for Atari ST (color machines only). Alien word generator, plus random world/subsector generators. All stand-alone STOS Basic programs. All three for £6 (£7 overseas) including disk, postage, and packing (we do not accept blank disks). Overseas orders sent air mail. Simon Ward, 8 Kentmere, Greenways, Spennymoor, Co. Durham, DL16 6UB, UNITED KINGDOM. (40)

SPREADSHEET Templates: Apple II Appleworks spreadsheet templates for **MegaTraveller**, craft design, **Spacemaster** starship design, **2300 AD/Star Cruiser** ship design. Send \$2.00 for each spreadsheet; \$3.00 for a disk or send own disk (3 1/2 or 5 1/4); plus SASE to Glen Allison, 1306 W. Pearl, Pasco, WA 99301. (39)

PREPUBLICATION editions of *Battles*, the only wargame that teaches principles of strategy on a tactical scale. Send \$17.95 (\$15.95 plus \$2.00 S&H) to Perry

N. Jones, 35 Bates St., No. Brookfield, MA 01535. (39)

TRAVELLER supplement 9, **Fighting Ships**, in excellent condition, plus Compuserve's *Mega Wars 1* commander's manual (including poster-sized space chart and four poster-sized space vessel blueprints). Make an offer for one or both to Marty Kloeden, Box 5335, Springfield, VA 22150-5335. (39)

MANY TRAVELLER and related products. Send SASE for list of available items or send want list. \$5.00 for miscellaneous **Traveller** grab bag, post paid. Wes Allison, 901 S. Boulder Hwy. 34, Henderson, NV 89015. (39)

TRADE

FREE MEGATRAVELLER material. Exchange your work with other referees. Over 10 megabytes of vehicle designs, deck plans, complete star systems, planets (*World Builders' Handbook*), and spreadsheets. All spreadsheets for Excel on Macintosh, deck plans both hard copy and MacDraw. For details send SASE to Rob Prior, 33 Bayshore Drive #12, Nepean, Ontario K2B 6M7 CANADA. (42)

I WOULD LIKE to trade the following items: *Dr. Who RPG* (boxed set), *Countdown*, (*Dr. Who* module), *The Warriors of Batak* (Task Force). I am interested in swapping for *SpaceMaster RPG* boxed set (Iron Crown), and *Akasha Outstation* (Iron Crown), but make me an offer. Jimmy Nugent, 512 N. Resident St., Wharton, TX 77488. (40)

SWAP IDEAS and materials for **MegaTraveller**, **2300 AD**, and **Twilight: 2000**. I've been running a **Traveller** campaign for four years and am now switching to **2300 AD**. If you'd like to swap designs, scenarios, or ideas for any of these RPGs, contact Mark Reilly, Box 2, Union Building, Newcastle University, Shortland N.S.W. 2308, AUSTRALIA. (39)

T-TECH EXCHANGE. Free exchange of **MegaTraveller** ship, vehicle, robot, equipment designs, etc. You send me yours, I'll send latest T-Tech package with designs from other participants. SASE for more info. No cost, no prices, just trade! T-Tech Exchange, C/O Philip Athans, 7783 Kensington Lane, Hanover Park, IL 60103. (39)

WANTED

JOURNAL 14, 16-20, 22-23, Travellers' Digest 6-8, 11-13, High Guard 1-5, Alien Module: K'kree, IISS ship files, FCI consumer guide. Please send info to Paul Sanders, 612 S. Patton Ct., Denver, CO 80219. (42)

A **PARTNER** for the making of a sci-fi role-playing game. A good imagination is needed! For info, write to Ray Schmidt at PO Box 561, Oakton, VA 22124, or call (703) 385-9258. (42)

CHALLENGE 36 and/or 101 Robots. Please send price and shipping costs to Peter Davies, 26 Martin St., Lincoln LN5 7TX ENGLAND. (42)

TRAVELLER ALIEN module 4, Zhodani, in very good condition. Maybe trade for other **Traveller** item(s)! Also looking for GDW's **Trader** program disk for C-64. Is there such a thing—has anybody converted it? Send info to Who, 605 Penitencia St., Milpitas, CA 95035-4222. (40)

ISSUE 25 of Challenge. Either original or photocopy (just **Twilight** information). Am willing to pay reasonable price. Call (213) 377-5435 or write to Tyson Harper, 31042 Hawksmoor Drive, Rancho Palos Verdes, CA 90274. (40)

OUT-OF-PRINT Traveller stuff, supplements, adventures, magazines in good condition, or clear photocopies. Please send your list to Arne Rassek, Berliner Str. 23, 3005 Hemmingen 1, WEST GERMANY. (40)

ALL DECK PLANS for Star Trek: RPG, especially USS *Enterprise* NCC-1701 (preferably by FASA, but Ballantine is acceptable). Send no photocopies. Good price will be paid for best condition. Can purchase from U.S./Canadian sources through relatives in Canada. Graham Todd, 36, Deerswood Road, West Green, Craw-

ley, West Sussex RH11 7JN, UNITED KINGDOM. (40)

PHOTOCOPIES of old FASA material: *Aslan Mercenary Ships*, booklets only, deckplans for *Adventure Class Ships 1 & 2, Fenris, Valkyrie, Ththys & Vlezhdath*. Patrick J. Hoyer, 343 Washington St., Holliston, MA 01746. (40)

FANZINES

AMATEUR gaming magazine including **Twilight: 2000** and others. Copies cost 50p each. Send large SASE to Sam Bowden, 50 Argyle Road, Ealing, London W13 8AA ENGLAND. (42)

CONVENTIONS

LEHICON II, March 2-4 at the Sheraton in Easton, PA. Events include classic **Traveller, AD&D** (both editions), *Car Wars, BattleTech, Harpoon, Starfleet Battles, Star Trek RPG, Call of Cthulhu*, wargames, boardgames, and roleplaying games of all sorts. For more information, send SASE to Lehicon II, c/o the Lehigh Valley Area Gamers Association, PO Box 1864, Bethlehem, PA 18016-1864. (42)

OWLCON, March 9-11 at Rice University in Houston, TX, sponsored by WARP and RSFAFA. Tournaments will be held for *Runequest, Paranoia, Call of Cthulhu, Car Wars, Traveller, Diplomacy, Illuminati, Civilization, BattleTech, Star Fleet Battles, ASL, World in Flames, and AD&D*, plus open gaming and other tournaments. For more information, contact RSFAFA, Owlcon preregistration, PO Box 1892, Houston, TX 77251. (42)

GUILD FEST '90, March 17-18 at the State University of New York in Binghamton. Events will include

Cyberpunk, Spelljammer, Car Wars (or *GURPS Autoduel*), *Paranoia, AD&D*, and many others. For more information, write to Gamers' Guild, c/o Suny Binghamton, Box 2000, Binghamton, NY 13901. (42)

EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN '90, March 24-25 at the Southern Illinois University Student Center in Carbondale. This convention offers a variety of events, including an **RPGA AD&D** tournament, miniatures judging, and a games auction. For more information, send a legal-sized SASE to SIU Strategic Games Society, Office of Student Development, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-4425, or call John P. Hults at (618) 457-8846. (42)

JAXCON SOUTH '90, April 20-22 at the downtown Civic Auditorium in Jacksonville, FL, sponsored by the Cowford Dragoons. Games scheduled include *Civilization, Ghostbusters, Seekrieg, Napoleonic* miniatures, *BattleTech, Call of Cthulhu, WRG, AD&D, Illuminati, Space: 1889, Sniper, Traveller, Element Masters, Warhammer 40,000, Robotech, Star Wars, Micro-Armor*, and others. Guests of honor will include Rich Sartore, designer of *Seekrieg*. Contact Jaxcon South '90, PO Box 4423, Jacksonville, FL 32201. (42)

NOTICE: Seeker has changed its address to PO Box 519, Mtn. Home, ID 83647, phone (208) 587-2986. (42)

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CHALLENGE *In the Future*

JANUARY

GDW's January releases include **Canal Priests of Mars** and **White Eagle**. **Canal Priests of Mars** is Marcus L. Rowland's revelation of the secrets of the cult that has dominated Martian canal traffic for centuries. **White Eagle** is the fourth (and final) component of the **Return to Europe** series for **Twilight: 2000**. Loren K. Wiseman has integrated the vehicles of **NATO Vehicle Guide** into this adventure as he pits the adventurers against those who would plunge Poland into chaos.

FEBRUARY

For February, GDW has scheduled Lester W. Smith's **Deathwatch Program**. This **2300 AD** adventure builds on his **Earth/Cybertech** background to create four separate adventures for hackers in the vast cyber network that girdles the Earth 300 years from now.

February also marks the initial release of GDW's **Space: 1889 Adversaries** blister packs. The initial four blister packs will be a variety of ships for **Space: 1889** and the **Sky Galleons/Ironclads and Ether Flyers** systems. This month's items are: HMS *Intrepid*, *Swiftwood* kites, a Martian *Heavenly Archer* and a zeppelin. Our modelers here loved the idea of detailed ships to expand their **Sky Galleons** games.

Our 24-page spring catalog (which details everything in the GDW game line through June of 1990) will be available in mid-February. Write and ask for your copy.

MARCH

For March, we plan a lot of interesting items. **MegaTraveller's Fighting Ships of the Rebellion** details more than 35 ships of the Imperial Navy, with complete ship pro-

files, background, and illustrations.

Twilight Encounters is a boxed set with pregenerated encounter situations, a revised encounter system, and a preview of the revised and expanded second-generation **Twilight: 2000** combat system. You're going to love this one.

UK Sourcebook covers the United Kingdom, with background, statistics, and adventures for **Twilight**.

Next Issue

Challenge 43 will mail to subscribers March 12 and should be on game store shelves by April 9. We have an exciting issue next time, including:

MEGATRAVELLER

"Trouble in Paradise," a **MegaTraveller** adventure.

SPACE: 1889

"Ye Can Always Tell a Yankee, But Ye Canna Tell 'im Much": American Characters in **1889**.

"Secret of the Ancients," by Lester W. Smith.

TWILIGHT: 2000

"Sheltie Holiday" by Loren K. Wiseman.

2300 AD

New equipment for **2300 AD** and *Cyberpunk*.

AND MUCH MORE!

Call of Cthulhu, *Renegade Legion*, *Space Hulk*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*—it's all here in **Challenge**!

Feedback Results for Challenge 40

Heavy Weapons Guide Preview	3.89	Marc-Class Passenger Liner	3.00
The Stoner 63 Weapon System	3.86	Charles-Class Commercial Transport	3.00
More Weapons for Space: 1889	3.37	Shasta-Class Robot Freighter	3.00
A Simple Conversion Guide for Flying Vessels	3.14	New Lynn-Class Passenger Liner	3.00
3G Conversions for MegaTraveller	3.00	Garrison Duties	3.12
Portable Weather Station	3.49	Emperor's Bag of Tricks	2.94
Helipack	3.57	Commonwealth <i>Swiftsure</i>	3.03
Magniviewers	3.86	TOG <i>Onager</i>	2.91
<i>Hercules</i> Space Tugs	3.78	Blaster Weapons of the Rebel Alliance	3.12
Taser	3.60	From the Management	3.39
Claw-Glove	3.77	Traveller News Service	3.82
Match	3.60	Reviews	3.56
Riding the Wave	3.77	Classifieds	3.82
Cellular Launcher	3.57	Challenge 40 cover art	4.02
M17A1 APC	3.66	Challenge 40 as a whole	3.86
The <i>Stahlhammer</i>	3.82		
GDW System Overview	3.53		
Anatomy of a Space Mine	3.68		

We look forward to hearing your opinions on **Challenge 40**. Ω



BATTLETECH is taking one giant 'Mech-step forward in time.

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THE YEAR IS 3050.

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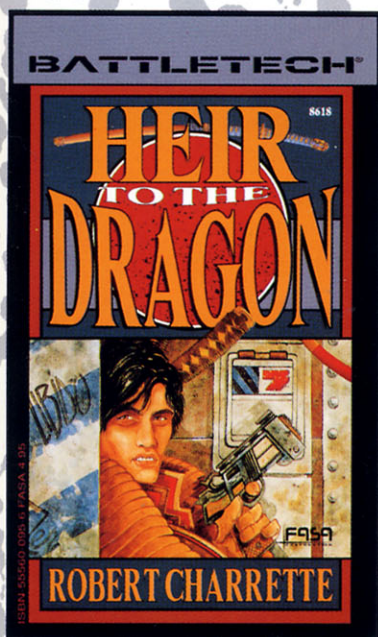
ComStar unveils a huge 'Mech army to garrison its thousands of installations throughout the Inner Sphere.

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A flash of steel, a thin crimson line, and a foamy gurgle of confusion marked the beginning of Takashi's rule and the passing of Theodore's grandfather.

What follows is an odyssey through the back rooms and dark alleys that honeycomb the formidable houses of power in Combine space. It is Theodore Kurita's 20 year journey to power, and at every turn he must prove himself. Any misstep could prove fatal, not only to himself but to his people, his empire, and possibly the Inner Sphere.

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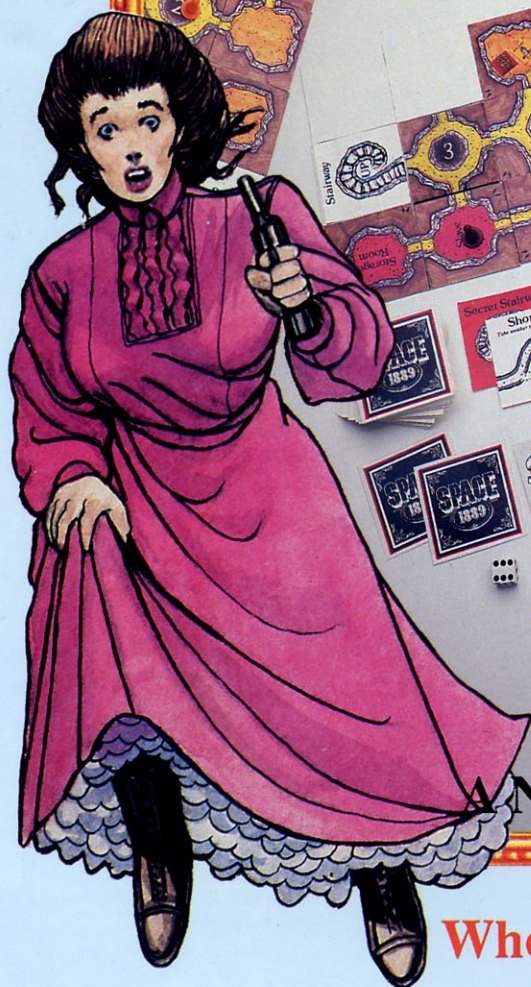
FLY SWIFTLY through the mountains and locate the kraag of the brutish High Martian potentate, King Gnaashriik. Then you (and a hand-picked team) stealthily enter, search, and make your rescue. If you are quiet enough and quick enough, you will be out before the High Martians discover you. There is no way you could have known that others would be here too, each looking for his own treasure. And the invasion of their domain has stirred the beastmen into a blood frenzy. Now you wonder if you'll ever leave the Temple of the Beastmen alive.

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