

Traveller

addendum equipment & weapons

by

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(illustrations by author)

I think almost everyone is in agreement on **TRAVELLER** being the best SF role-playing game published to date. I have had a lot of fun with it, and during all those campaigns, I have had the urge to add various equipment and weapons to the tables in my **TRAVELLER** notebooks, weapons and equipment that appear in several of my favorite SF novels and stories.

Probably the most obvious thing missing from the **TRAVELLER** rules is laser pistols. Goodness! Everyone from Hawk Carse to Luke Skywalker has had a laser pistol, or at least some sort of beamed energy handgun at his or her disposal. In my universe, the average character can be expected to be able to purchase, on a suitably high technology planet and with the proper permits, a laser pistol that will do anything a laser pistol out of traditional SF ought to do: burn BEMs, drill holes through the baddies, and just generally make the Galaxy safer for the Good Guys (or Bad Guys, depending on your character's moral standards).

A laser pistol has a DM of +1 at close range, a +3 at short range, -3 at medium range, -4 at long range, and at very long range (in atmosphere), no hit is possible. But in vacuum, with no air to be ionized by the blast and thus diminish the beam's energy, one could, at least in theory, make a hit at even very long range. Thus, DM at very long range, in vacuum only, is -8. A character will have to be very very lucky or very very good, and most likely both, to make a hit.

Laser rifles and carbines should really be treated in a similar manner when in vacuum. Lasers should, after all, be much easier to aim since there is no problem of ballistics and most especially no recoil (in zero gee there is little or no ballistics problem to consider with normal guns, thus characters used to aiming above their targets in gee fields, may or may not have their reactions confused when firing standard firearms in vacuum where the bullets do not drop; lasers and characters using them will not be affected by zero gee. A laser beam is a straight line on planet, or

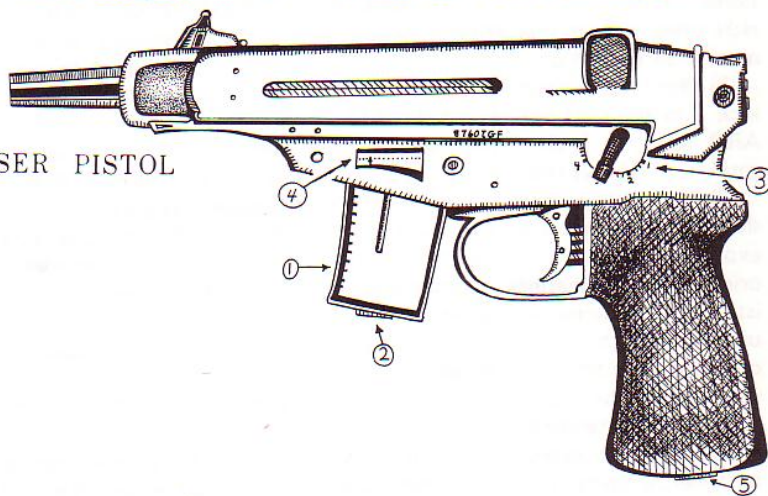
off. But, all this is up to the individual Game Master. And anyway, if a Game Master is creative enough in his planets and societies, not many characters will want to adventure out in the cold, lonesome vacuum of space.

A laser pistol requires a dexterity of 8, has a required dexterity DM of -3, and an advantageous dexterity level of 11. The advantageous dexterity DM is +2.

A laser pistol costs 2,000 CR and masses 1500 grams. It contains an internal, un-removable, rechargeable energy clip which contains enough energy for 10 full strength shots. The large and bulky powerpacks of the laser rifles and carbines may be adapted to fit pistols (an adaptor is needed), or a powerpack may be bought especially for a laser pistol. This powerpack is identical to that of the laser carbine, except that the purchaser has the option of the powerpack being either in the standard backpack form as

in the case of the long laser weapons, or in a broad belt which is more easily concealed under clothing. This belt will not interfere with the use of a vacc-suit. Many times characters will wish to use laser rifles or carbines while in vacc-suits. This is something I don't usually allow without special preparation by the character. Consider: it is traditional for vacc-suits to have their lifesupport systems in the form of backpacks. It was like that in SF in the 30's, and on the Moon in the 70's. So where does the backpack for a laser rifle or carbine go? On the chest? But, that is traditionally reserved for suit controls and communication devices. Where then does one strap the powerpack to a laser weapon when in a vacc-suit?

The pistol's belt powerpack solves the problem, and I also allow laser carbines and rifles to be plugged into such powerpacks, provided they have suitable adaptors attached. A belt-pack does not inter-



BASIC LASER PISTOL

1. Ten round clip
2. Recharging port for clip
3. Blast intensity setting
4. Charge indicator
5. Port for attachment of 50 round powerpack

ferre with either the wearing of the vacc-suit or the movements of a character. For a character trying to lug around a laser rifle and its backpack powerpack in a vacc-suit, I generally decrease his vacc-suit skill by "1".

Laser pistols do 4D damage (the same as laser carbines). But, laser pistols have adjustable fire controls, and a character can decide before he pulls the trigger just how many dice (up to the maximum allowable of 4D) damage he wishes to inflict on the target. For instance, the pistol user might decide to thumb the weapon to its lowest setting and only do 1D damage on the target, or thumb the selector to the maximum 4D, and inflict 4D damage if the target is hit.

The idea here is that a hit by a 4D blast will many times kill, while lesser blasts will sometimes only reduce one of an opponent's attributes to "0", thus rendering him unconscious. The equivalent of Mr. Spock setting his phaser on "stun". I recommend all laser weapons be given the ability to vary the intensity of their shots, since this sometimes adds a very interesting feature to the game.

Each combat round, a character can change the intensity of the weapon's fire. It is much too confusing to make a player take a combat turn to change the setting on his weapon, and anyway, unlike Spock's badly designed phaser which needs both hands to change the intensity setting, it is only logical to assume the weapons of the future will be as well designed as those of today: a mere flick of the thumb or trigger finger should be all that is needed to switch settings on a weapon. (A Game Master who is a realism nut might add a DM of -1 for the slight wavering of the weapon as the little switch is flipped to a new setting, but certainly no more.)

Each die of potential damage is considered to be energy. I.e., a laser rifle powerpack contains enough energy for 100 5D shots, or potentially 500D of damage. A laser pistol's internal energy clip holds 10 shots as mentioned before, each shot (if it connects) being worth 4D damage. Therefore, if a character wanted, he or she could dish out the contents of his pistol's self-contained clip in 10 4D blasts, or 40 1D blasts, or anything in-between.

Suppose Dirk Broadbent is walking down a jungle trail and is suddenly confronted by a small, deadly Vagan spider-snake. Should he whip up his laser pistol and blow said spider-snake away, taking along with it 4D worth of his precious laser clip's energy supply (which is already half depleted from a previous run-in with some screaming nergabats earlier in the day) not to mention also blowing

away half the rare bornoeclyptus tree from which the spider-snake was dangling, and thereby enraging the environmentalists of Vega III--or should he quickly flick his power setting to 1D and blow the critter's head off, thus saving his pistol's precious energy and keeping the environmentalists off his back (that is, unless they find out he has shot a specimen of the near-extinct spider-snake)?

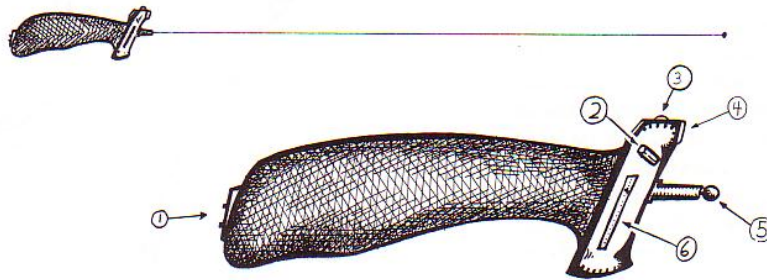
Remember, Dirk still has 40 miles of jungle to traverse before he makes it to the nearest Federation outpost, and saving energy in his small clip could be very important. I like this idea of variable power for lasers because it adds to the game's potential for recreating the almost cliché, but nevertheless enjoyable situation of the protagonist having an almost all-powerful weapon, but having to carefully conserve the use of its limited energy supply.

In an emergency, a laser pistol's internal clip can be recharged in one combat round by plugging it into a powerpack from a laser rifle or carbine or even pistol. Though for the rifle and carbine powerpacks, an adaptor is needed. Laser pistols are normally recharged at one's leisure at any electrical power source and cost is only 25 cr or so . . .

Another weapon I like, this one taken

from Larry Niven's books, is the variable sword. This weapon consists of aommel and hilt similar to that of a normal sword, but contains a battery, force-field generator, and an almost microscopic metal filament. The filament is unwound by pressing a stud on the grip, and given rigidity by the force-field it can slice through almost anything, from human beings to gun barrels. The Game Master must use his common sense in deciding upon just what a variable sword can and cannot cut through. Such a sword is very light, strong, and durable. A very strong man could cut through anything short of hull metal with one. But variable swords take a lot of energy, and can only be used for 10 combat rounds before recharging is needed (much like laser rifles, though only at about one tenth the cost). Base weight is 400 grams, length is 15 mm retracted to 1200 mm fully extended. It does damage against most targets, including armored humans. Nothing short of full battle armor has any effect on its destructive effects. Unlike other cutting weapons, strength does not determine one's ability with a variable sword. Variable swords require a dexterity of 8, and have a required dexterity DM of -3, an advantageous dexterity level of 11, with an advantageous dexterity DM of +1. If the user's dexterity is less

STANDARD VARIABLE SWORD



1. Recharge port
2. Safety catch
3. Energize button
4. Laser beam projector for night fighting
5. Knob for day fighting (you see, the "blade" is virtually invisible and something is needed to show its location)
6. Charge indicator

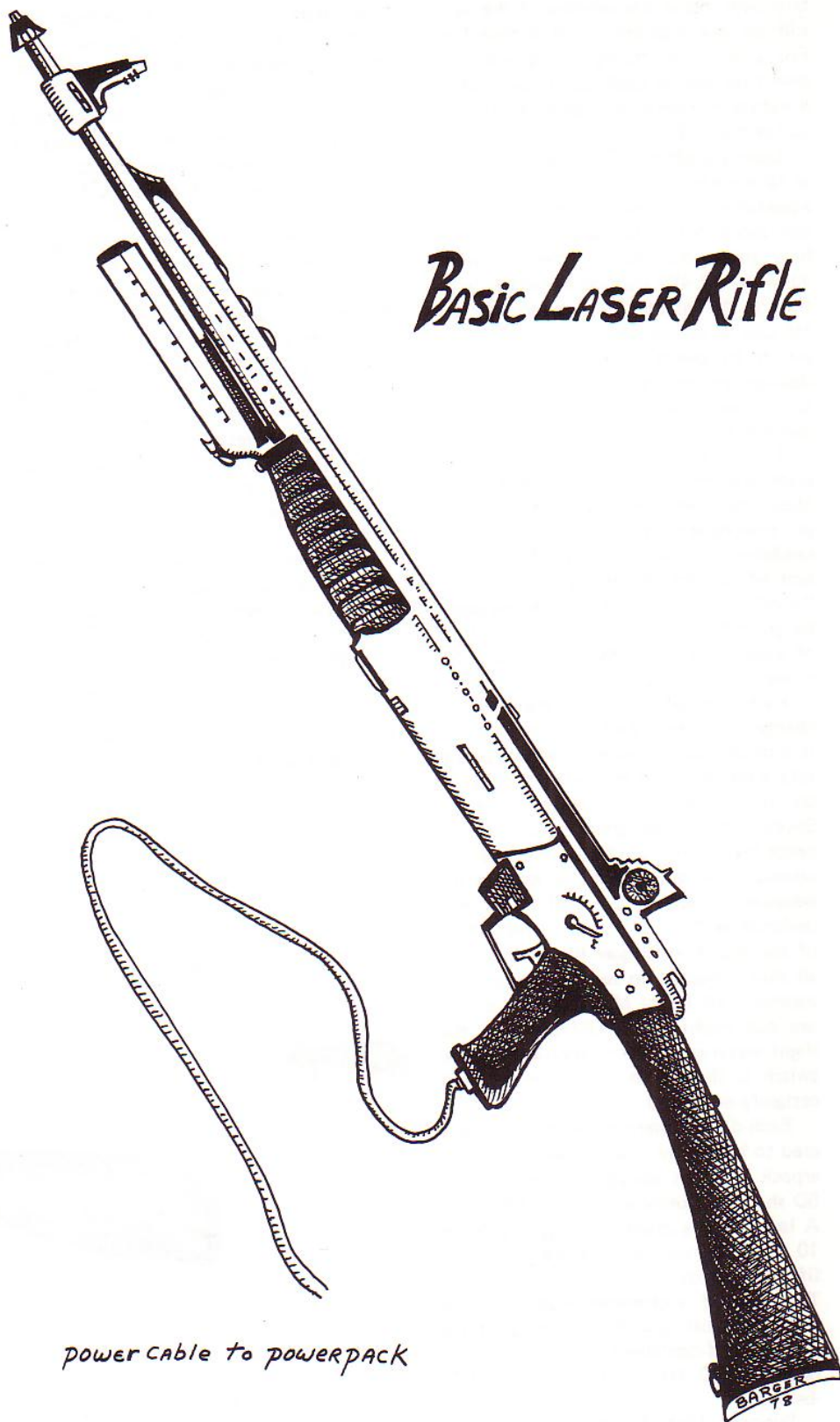
than the required 8, each combat round conducted at close range requires that character to make a saving roll to keep from cutting himself with the weapon's nearly invisible blade. Roll 8+ with expertise a positive DM. If the character cuts himself, it is only 1D damage, rather than the full 4D. Close range DM is -1, short +4, and farther than that, forget it.

Variable swords are easily hidden and concealed. They are illegal for civilian ownership on all worlds, though similiar instruments can be found in industries which use a similiar principle and can be stolen, bought, or converted. The variable sword is the standard side arm of all Marine officers of rank Major or higher, and all scouts who survive three or more terms, (or such is the case in my universe).

And last but not least, a major piece of equipment that no self-respecting asteroid miner or space pirate would be without: a skin-tight vacc-suit.

A skin-tight vacc-suit, or vac-skin, is simply that: a second skin of super-strong, super-tight bodystocking from the neck to toes (and individual toes in the garment for each of the wearer's toes too, else they be uncomfortably scrunched up as in a too tight pair of shoes). Each character's vac-skin must be tailored to his or her individual body, and only he or she can wear it. It takes approximately 30 minutes to struggle into a vac-skin but when worn, it increases the wearer's vacc-suit skill by "1". This is because such a suit allows a character complete and unrestricted freedom of movement, and as an added bonus, it can be worn under any other clothing.

A vac-skin can be used with all standard makes of space helmets and life support systems, but it offers less than adequate insulation from heavy radiation and in such cases reflec should be worn over the vac-skin. Vac-skins are temperature controlled, but do not come with helmet or life support. There is a deluxe model which comes completely outfitted, from magnetic boots and helmet and life support, to laser pistol and sanitary attachments. A deluxe vac-skin can be worn for an indefinite period of time without discomfort. A punctured vac-skin is quickly sealed with a patch/bandage, since the suit can hardly be punctured without human skin and tissue also being punctured. Price for a regular vac-skin is 15,000 cr, while a deluxe model costs 30,000.



POWER CABLE TO POWERPACK