

FREELANCE TRAVELLER

The Electronic Fan-Supported Traveller® Magazine and Resource



Issue 009
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Jeff Zeitlin

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Jeff Zeitlin, Shannon Appelcline, Sebastian Messiah, Martin Carter, Sarah Diamond, Scott Diamond, David Billinghamurst, Dave Redington

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Freelance Traveller is published monthly in PDF form by the editor. The current issue is available from the Freelance Traveller web site, <http://www.freelancetraveller.com>.

From the Editor



It looks like we’re starting off another issue with an apology; although your loyal editor has been working a normal schedule, he’s apparently not fully recovered from his hospital ordeal from late July and last month, and much-needed sleep has been cutting into the time that he’d normally spend putting the magazine together. Hopefully, next month’s issue will be back on schedule.

As you’ll see in this issue, the *Fifth Imperium* column has a limited remaining lifespan. We’ll be sorry to see Shannon go, but we understand perfectly that burnout happens, and the only way to deal with it is to get away from what you’re burned out on, and come back to it only when you’re ready. It does leave us with a potential gap, though, and so we’d like to hear from anyone who thinks they’d be interested in writing two or three pages—or more, if you like—each month, on anything *Traveller* that interests you. Each offer will be considered as a regular column in *Freelance Traveller*, and if we get enough

offers, the “schedule” can be relaxed so that any columnist need only write for every alternate month, and we can alternate between columns.

We’d also like to see more reviews—our editor has a large backlog of products to review, and really doesn’t want to overwhelm any one issue with too many articles over his own byline. Since he’s also going to be an occasional contributor of material other than reviews, he’s been limiting himself to one review per issue—but between the wealth of pre-Mongoose material, and the new stuff coming out each month, from both Mongoose Publishing and secondary licensees, the backlog is almost inevitably going to increase. So, pick some of your favorites—and least favorites—and review them for us!

Finally, *artwork*. Up to now, *Freelance Traveller* has generally been a lot of “grey” pages, with very little artwork other than the alternate-month *Burrow-Wolf* chapters. Please help us change that, by sending us artwork (or links to artwork) of all types, anything *Traveller*, that you have the right to share.

Reign of Discordia—Traveller Edition

reviewed by Jeff Zeitlin

Reign of Discordia—Traveller Edition. Darrin Drader
Mongoose Publishing: <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com>
168pp, hardbound
UK£25.00/US\$34.99

Reign of Discordia, the Traveller Edition is a conversion of the Gun Metal Games True20 setting of the same name. This edition is released under Mongoose's Flaming Cobra imprint, as an alternate setting for the Mongoose *Traveller* ruleset.

On the Shelf

A maroon cover is graced with a large picture whose style is not atypical of "pulp" SF. The product title is at the top in a white, square/blocky but readable font, and the *Traveller* name-and-arrow logo is below the picture.

Initial Impressions

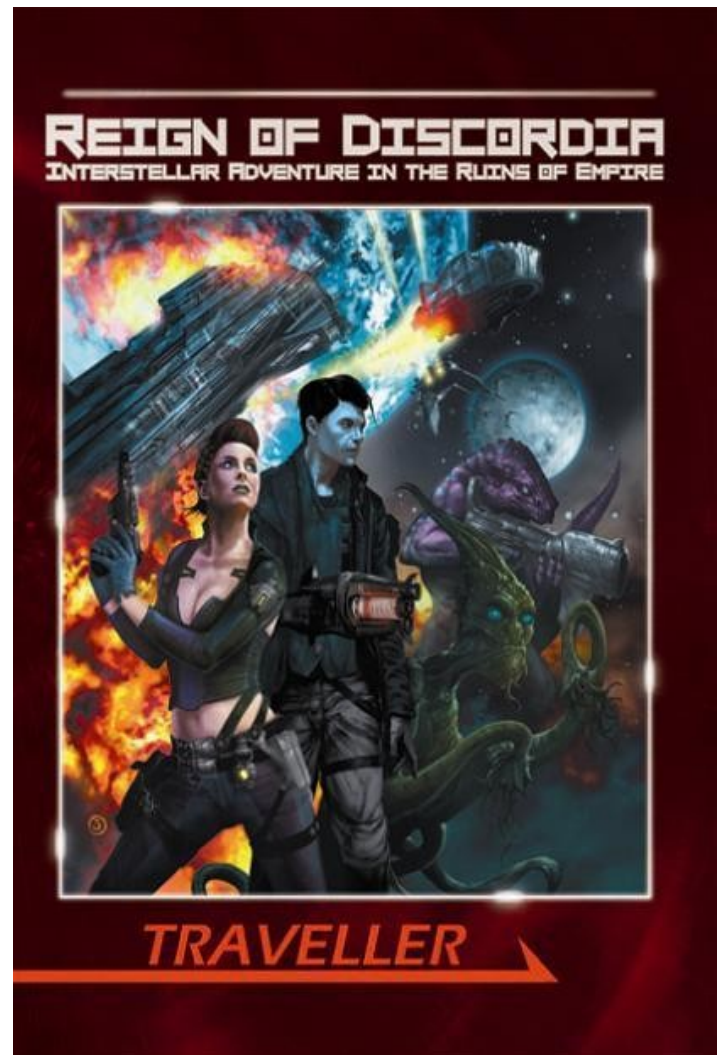
Reign of Discordia is inarguably a setting book; this core volume is quite definitely rules-light. There is one-half of one column on one page that describes what the referee and players need to be aware of when using other *Traveller* material, and more isn't needed. The rest of the book is chock full of source material, covering well what any referee will want to know about a setting, with very little wasted verbiage.

On Closer Inspection

While the hardest of hard-core gearheads might find this volume lacking in crunchy goodness, just about anyone else will find the depth and breadth of the material here more than adequate. An introduction by the author outlines what his goals were in the creation of *Reign of Discordia* and its translation to *Traveller*.

Setting-historical background, including discussion of key technologies, follows, providing a good overview of the setting.

This is followed by twenty-nine pages of world descriptions, averaging two worlds per page, grouped by ownership. Few of the worlds profiled are complete nonentities, and none of them are



merely generated UWPs to fill in blank spaces on a map—if nothing else, the available information serves to underline a setting enigma.

Eight pages of racial descriptions, each at about the level of an early JTAS "Contact!" article, give the reader an overview of the various major races of the setting (and "major" here refers to raw political hegemonic power, rather than some arbitrary theoretical technological criterion, as in the OTU setting).

Nine pages of equipment follow, some of which may have "standard *Traveller*" equivalents, some not. There is a paragraph or two on a minor modification of the rules; plasma weapons in *Reign of Discordia* do have non-negligible recoil.

Fifteen pages of organizational profiles covers organizations of all of the major races, and the background (religious, commercial, political, criminal, etc.) of each. Two pages of "one-line" NPCs are in-

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cluded at the end of this section.

The next fifty-three pages are starships, in the form that we've come to know from other Mongoose Traveller items—a stat block and brief description, followed by deck plans—and, as usual, the plans are not in a miniatures-useful scale (and on the larger ships, it's virtually impossible to discern the deck plan 1.5m squares). These ships represent both current construction and remnant Empire construction.

Six pages (including the aforementioned one-half of one column on using other *Traveller* products) give some useful information and ideas for running campaigns in *Reign of Discordia*.

Nine pages outline Rover's Beacon, a spaceport suitable for use as an adventure setting, rather than just a place to bring a starship to for fuel. These are immediately followed by fifteen pages of an adventure which begins and ends there. Finally, a page of one-line NPCs for the adventure, and a one-page index round out the volume.

Artwork is nether simple drawings nor fully

photorealistic, though there is a strong sense of three-dimensionality to it.

The choice of body font could have been better; Rockwell, being both slab-serif and monoline (all strokes the same thickness) appears quite heavy, even in the unbolded form, and is more difficult to read in large blocks than would be a more common text font such as Times or Bookman.

Conclusion

Reign of Discordia is quite definitely an interesting alternative to the standard Third Imperium setting. Adventures for all tastes, from military to mercantile to political, are accommodated by the setting, in such a way as to allow the PCs to Make a Difference. Although common space opera tropes can be found throughout the setting, Mr Drader has managed to avoid leaving the reader with a "ho-hum, it's been done before, just a new coat of paint over the same old same old" feeling.

If you are looking for a post-imperial space opera setting, you could do far worse than purchasing this book; money spent on this is most definitely not wasted.

In A Store Near You

The Gun Shop

Powerguns

by Scott Diamond

Editor's Note: Scott Diamond's PowerGuns do not appear to be an adaptation of the weapon by the same name from the Hammer's Slammers setting book from Mongoose Publishing.

The powergun series (colloquially known as "blasters") all operate on the same principle of forming a controlled plasma reaction and directing to the target in a compact pulse resulting in both kinetic and heat damage. When directed at tissues the heat is such that it causes explosive rupture due to the fluids turning to steam, and massive burn damage extending from the surface of the wound.

A bridging technology between the development of a more practical high energy weapon than a laser rifle or PGMP-12, the powerguns have found favor among military forces which are not battle dress

equipped and cannot use the PGMP-13 as a result. They have the advantages of lighter weight, easily managed ammunition that doesn't require cumbersome backpacks, and they are better suited to a wider variety of missions, both onboard ships and on land. This shipboard use was one of the primary considerations in the development of these weapons since it provides Imperial Fleet Marines with a personal energy weapon with the power to penetrate Combat Armor and Battle Dress, but not blow a hole through the side of a bulkhead or hull. None of these weapons create spillover damage as do the P/FGMPs so they are better for room and corridor clearing on ships, or in close assault situations since they don't pose the threat of friendly fire casualties from fragmentation.

Because of the success of the design the TL-15

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versions are the standard small arm of the Imperial Fleet Marines (the Line Marines continue with the FGMP-14/15) with the FGMP-15 reserved for landings and as a squad support gun onboard ship.

The basic principal the powergun operates on is that a magazine containing both the charged slugs containing the materials used for creating the plasma bolt, as well as a battery sufficient for powering the weapon and a reservoir of nitrogen is inserted into the weapon. The weapon is charged by racking the receiver action back to insert the first slug; this also initiates the laser firing system in the chamber. Pulling the trigger causes a laser to fire, initiating the plasma reaction, and a magnetic field accelerates the bolt through the barrel and directing it towards the target. Immediately after firing, the recoil (which is considerable for a weapon of this size – comparable to a 12mm pistol cartridge in the pistols and a heavy caliber rifle round in the rifles) causes the internal action to unlock the chamber and allow the next slug to be loaded while a jet of nitrogen is shot through the barrel to cool it. The rifles fire 2cm bolts, while the pistols fire 1cm bolts. All are semiautomatic and with few moving parts.

Power Pistol-13



The 1cm bore TL-13 Power Pistol is the first of the powergun line to be developed and has an integral laser dot (variable from IR to visible light mode by the operator) sight for targeting. The weapon uses a ten round magazine inserted into the grip, re-

quiring one round to swap out during reloading. One round is fire per pull of the trigger.

One aspect of the pistol designs was that trying to panic fire the weapon for suppression caused jamming due to higher heat buildup than the coolant reservoir can handle. As a result, if the weapon is used for panic fire then it can also be assumed to now be inoperable until fixed by a gunsmith. The operator may clear the jam, but it takes complete disassembly of the weapon to do so, in addition to the time to cool down without damaging the gun further.

Len: 250mm, Wt, Unloaded: 700g (loaded mag 300g)
Base price: Cr3000 (loaded mag: Cr100). TL13

Power Rifle-13



The first assault rifle based on the powergun design, the TL-13 Power Rifle is a semiautomatic assault weapon with a recoil-dampening stock, electronic battlesights (thermal imaging, IR laser designator, and telescopic zoom), and uses a 20 round box magazine loaded in front of the pistol grip. The magazine contains a larger battery and coolant reservoir than the pistol version and operates on the same principals – just with greater force and recoil along with increased damage to the target.

In order to better reduce the chances of jamming due to overheating in a rapid fire situation (like panic or suppression fire) the rifles have been designed to use a side aperture to eject residue and allow for extra cooling. When the weapon fires any residue inside the chamber is ejected out the side aperture and there is also a sliding panel in the side of the receiver to allow the operator to open the chamber manually for cooling without total disassembly. When the last slug is fired both of these apertures are opened auto-

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matically to cool the interior; they close automatically when the new magazine is inserted and the weapon is again ready to fire.

Under-barrel grenade launchers are available as an option for these weapons which use standard RAM grenades in three-shot magazines. These are not popular among the troops issued these weapons since the recoil and heat of the gun itself has sometimes caused malfunctions of the launcher resulting in misfires and premature firing of a grenade. Common practice is to not load the grenade launcher if the rifle is so equipped until ready to use a grenade to avoid such mishaps.

Len: 900mm, Wt, Unloaded: 6000g (loaded mag 500g)
Base price: Cr9000 (loaded mag: Cr300). TL13

Power Pistol-15



The 1cm bore TL-15 Power Pistol is the most powerful handgun currently available. The pistol operates the same way as the TL-13 version but has a more efficient system for generating and firing the bolt of plasma resulting in greater penetration and damage to the target. The weapon is slightly heavier and larger than the earlier version, and suffers from the same cooling issues as the earlier design when used for rapid fire. The same rules are in effect for weapon malfunctions as a result.

The weapon comes equipped with an integral laser sight (configurable by the operator for IR or visi-

ble light modes), and is the standard sidearm of the Imperial Line as well as Fleet Marines. Known as a Tannhauser (“The fight’s over when the Tannhauser sings!”) and sold as such by Norge Interarms, the weapon is heavy and expensive, but much favored by mercenary unit officers as a deadly manstopper.

Len: 280mm, Wt, Unloaded: 800g (loaded 10-rd mag 350g)
Base price: Cr8000 (loaded mag: Cr175). TL15

Power AutoRifle-15



The ultimate word in the powergun line, the TL-15 Auto Rifle version is an improved design that allows the operator to select either a single shot mode, or a 5 round burst. The advancements made in the plasma ignition and firing system have also increased the damage and penetration of the weapon, which is truly fearsome in burst mode. The rifle is equipped with a recoil-dampening stock containing a gyro-stabilizer to aid in controlling the weapon in burst mode, an electronic battlesight (thermal image, IR/visible light laser designator, and telescopic zoom), and uses 20 round box magazines or 50 round drums.

Because of the heat issues common to powerguns in order to safely use the auto burst mode the drum magazine must be used. It contains not only a larger battery pack, but a large enough reservoir of coolant to keep the weapon (just barely) within safe heat limits. It is recommended that burst mode be used with discretion regardless.

No provision is made for attaching grenade launchers. Currently this is the weapon issued to Imperial Fleet Marines stationed onboard warships and used as a personal weapon supported by an FGMP-15 as a squad-level support weapon when acting as ship security.

Len: 950mm, Wt, Unloaded: 5500g (loaded mag 500g, drum 1500g)
Base price: Cr13,000 (loaded mag: Cr300/Drum Cr1000). TL15

PowerGun Dexterity Requirements and Modifiers				
Weapon	DM	if	DM	if
Power Pistol	-2	DEX 5-	+2	DEX 10+
Power Rifle	-2	DEX 6-	+1	DEX 10+

Notes

Dexterity modifiers are cumulative with all other modifiers on PowerGun tasks.

Power Rifles cannot be used at Close range due to risk and poor handling characteristics.

Range Modifiers								
Weapon	Range	Close	Short	Medium	Long	Very Long	Chances to Hit	Damage
Power Pistol-13		+1	+2	0	-5	-9	1	3D
Power Rifle-13		N/A	-1	+3	+1	0	1	6D
Power Pistol-15		+2	+3	0	-4	-8	1	4D
Power AutoRifle-15		N/A	-1/+2	+3/+5	+2/+3	0/+1	1/2	8D

Armor Modifiers							
Weapo	Armor	None or	Mesh	Cloth	Ablat	Reflec	Combat
Power Pistol 13		+3	+2	+2	0	+3	-4
Power Rifle-13		+4	+3	+3	+1	+4	-2
Power Pistol-15		+4	+3	+3	+1	+4	-3
Power AutoRifle-15		+7	+5	+5	+3	+6	-1

I use a “stepped” TL-vs-Combat Armor/Battle Dress rule to show the improved protection against all weapons at increasing TLs of these armors vs weapons of lower TL. As shown in the table below, the modifiers should be *added to the target (to-hit) number*, rather than modifying the player’s roll.

Tech Level Target Number Modifiers for Combat Armor and Battle Dress						
Armor	TL	11	12	13	14	15
Combat Armor		0	+1	+2	+3	+4
Battle Dress		<i>Not Available at these TLs</i>		+4	+5	+6

PowerGun Statistics for <i>Striker</i> and <i>Azhanti High Lightning</i>					
Weapon	Shots	Effective (8+)	Long (10+)	Extreme (12+)	Number of Targets
Power Rifle-13	20	200 (15)	400 (11)	2000 (5)	1
Power AutoRifle-15	20/50	200 (15) +2	400 (11) +1	2000 (5) +1	1/2
Power Pistol-13	10	30 (6)	75 (3)		1
Power Pistol-15	10	50 (8)	100 (4)		1

Less Dangerous Game

Bughunter

by Martin Carter

Characteristics

Terrain: All

Category: Carnivore

Type: Pouncer/Chaser

Size: 0.25kg

Weapons: Teeth & claws, 1D6-5 wounds

Special: 1D3 wounds if ingested

Armor: None, 1 hit point

Incidence

This small creature is found in almost every terrain type on its homeworlds, its incidence limited only by availability of prey, and since it feeds on a wide variety of insects it is particularly widespread. In common with its insect prey, it is found on many worlds throughout known space.

Physiology

Its hairy, eight-limbed form resembles a large tarantula, having a bulbous abdomen and combined head and thorax. It uses six limbs for locomotion and two for manipulation. The two forelimbs have crab-like pincers. One pincer limb, predominantly the right one (though 'left handed' examples are known) has one jaw thinned and elongated, resembling a knife blade, whilst the other jaw is vestigial. The other limb has a standard two-jawed pincer.

The bughunter has two eyes, with good binocular vision like many predators. Its 'hearing' is limited to sensing vibrations through its feet and perhaps its body hairs. The feet on its six legs have a combination of tiny retractable claws and sticky pads, allowing it to climb most surfaces despite its weight. It does not spin a web, having no silk glands, but it tends to nest in dark enclosed spaces.

The normal pincer is used for picking up hard-bodied insects, while the blade is used partly as a skewer for picking up soft-bodied insects, but primarily for winking insects out of crevices.

Bughunters are capable of fairly rapid movement, achieving speeds of up to 2 metres per second over distances of several metres, but they tire quickly and are usually content to browse corners and crevices sedately.

Feeding and Predation

Bughunters feed on any insects they can catch, which frequently rules out many flying species purely on the basis of opportunity, and microscopic prey may not be worth harvesting. Their digestion seems to be unaffected by venoms or irritants within the prey species.

They have few natural predators. Their body hair is brightly coloured in yellows and reds as a warning of danger and their body fluids have strong emetic properties. Most would-be predators seem able to determine the bughunter's unpalatable nature by smell. This is undetectable to humans, who nevertheless find bughunters inedible.

Human interaction

Contrary to its intimidating appearance, the bughunter is effectively harmless to humans. Generally, it will run if it feels threatened and does not retaliate unless attacked. It rarely considers disturbance or even handling to be an attack, though surprising it whilst it is asleep is the activity most likely to trigger retaliation. Therefore it is best to examine shoes and bags before inserting hands and feet.

The blade, although wicked-looking, is not significantly sharper or stronger than human fingernails, and is a limited threat to human skin. The teeth, although stronger, are generally used only for eating and are not venomous, whilst the pincer has only the strength of tweezers, so although its teeth and blade are capable of causing minor damage, documented cases of significant injury are rare. Any injuries incurred are likely to be limited to the type of minor punctures and scratches associated with small pet rodents.

Bughunters are sometimes kept as pets, particularly amongst the lower echelons of society or amongst itinerants, as they are particularly useful in reducing insect pests common to less salubrious accommodation, though the fact that humans tend to find their form repugnant limits their domestication to those individuals who have greatest need of their services.

Onderneming-class Colony Transport

by William Ringland

The Onderneming was a TL11 colony startup ship designed during the Interstellar Wars period. It was named by the Dutch architect who designed it (the name means *Venture* in English), though later crews and passengers often shortened it to simply 'Onder'. While not the largest colonial class, its low cost and general versatility made it fairly ubiquitous anywhere the Terrans were eager for a foothold. After the first few Interstellar wars, ships like the *Ondernemings* were built during peacetime operations in the same manner as the wartime Victory Ships of old Terra, often with workers putting in volunteer 'shifts' two or three times a week at almost no pay to mass produce these early seedpods of humanity.

Convoys of up to 50 *Ondernemings*, plus escorts, could be encountered in stellar clusters distant from Earth, weaving through disputed or unclaimed systems, scooping, refining and moving on, sometimes even using deep-space refueling depots to bridge 3 parsec gaps. These flights of *Ondernemings* would travel to anything marginally life sustainable, pre-designated for colonization by venture capitalists, General Colonial Inc., or the Terran Confederation Navy, drop off anywhere from 44 to 2200 colonists, simple bases, supplies, vehicles, and head back for more.

The *Ondernemings* carried two sub-craft: a Chafer-class cargo shuttle, and a 30-ton ship's boat.

Ships that were severely damaged on the way or at the colony endpoint would get converted into makeshift orbital transfer stations, orbital weather/traffic control satellite stations, or anything else the colonists could salvage and put to use, often with the ship's original crew heading home on another ship of the convoy.

If a colony was off well-travelled trade routes, one or more of the *Ondernemings* on convoy would be assigned as permanent resupply ships, often constituting a world's sole contact with the rest of humanity. Several early colonies were completely forgotten because of the later loss of these *Ondernemings*.

In areas where footholds had been established, *Ondernemings* were converted into liners for more conventional, subsidized colonial 'buildup', carrying at least one whole cargobay full of GenAssist cloning facility equipment for on-site rapid-growth, along with the personnel to set up or operate such machinery once it was delivered.

Much later in the period, older *Ondernemings* would be sold off to free traders and small, but growing, interstellar shipping and transport firms, gaining often outlandish 'company' paint jobs and even heraldry in some cases.

Author's Note: The ship's boat is the only thing that has not been statted out. Essentially, it works out to TL11 30ton ship's boat, 3G, 30 passengers with 6 tons cargo, model 2/bis computers and costs MCr 29.3 as an established production model with the same sensors and comm system as the parent ship.

Onderneming Colony Transport

(Circa 2185 AD)



Upper Deck

1. Bridge
2. Captain's Stateroom
3. Fore Lift
4. Crew Common Area
5. Crew Staterooms
6. Passenger Common Area
7. Passenger Staterooms
8. Fuel Purification
9. Aft Lift, Locker
10. Power Plant
11. M-Drive Access
12. Environ/LS
13. Port Cargo
14. Starboard Cargo

Class ID: Onderneming Colony Transport, TL11, MCr 278.45

MCr 222.77 in quantity

Hull: 900/2250, Disp=1000, Config 4SL, Armor 40E

Unloaded=7847 tons, Loaded=12,842 tons

Power: 25/50, Fusion=2250 Mw, Duration 30/90

Loco: 18/36, Maneuver=1; 27/54, Jump=2

NOE=40k[h, Agility=0

Commo: Radio=Systemx3, Maser=Systemx1

Sensors: Passive EMS=Interstellarx1, Active EMS=Far Orbitx1

ActObjScan=7+ActObjPin=7+

PassEngScan=7+

Off: -

Def: DefDM=+4

Control: Computer=Model 4x3, Panel=Dynamic Linked x625,

Special=HUD x6, Environ=Basic Env, asic LS,

Extend LS, Grav Plates, Interior Comp

Accom: Crew=11 (2 Bridge, 2 Engineering, 4 Flight, 1 Command,

2 Medics), 12 Staterooms, 40 Low Berths,

Subcraft=1x 95 ton Shuttle (Chafer Class),

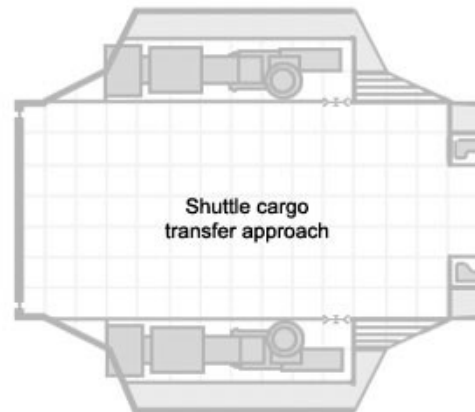
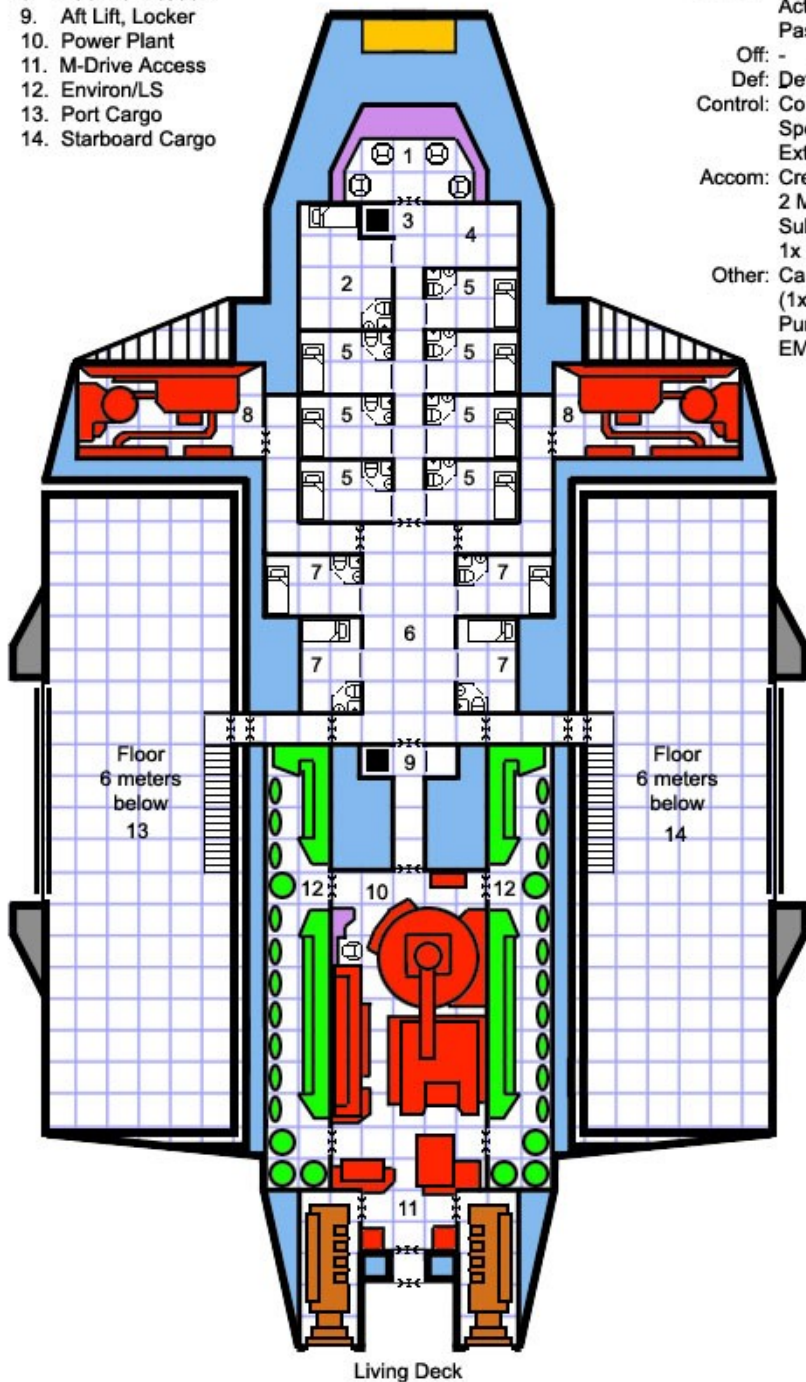
1x 30 ton Ship's Boat

Other: Cargo=4995kl (370 tons), Fuel 2835kl,

(1x Jump 2=2025kl)Integral fuel scoops,

Purification Plant=24 Hours, ObjSize=avg.,

EML=Moderate



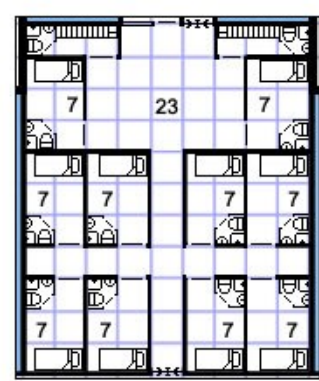
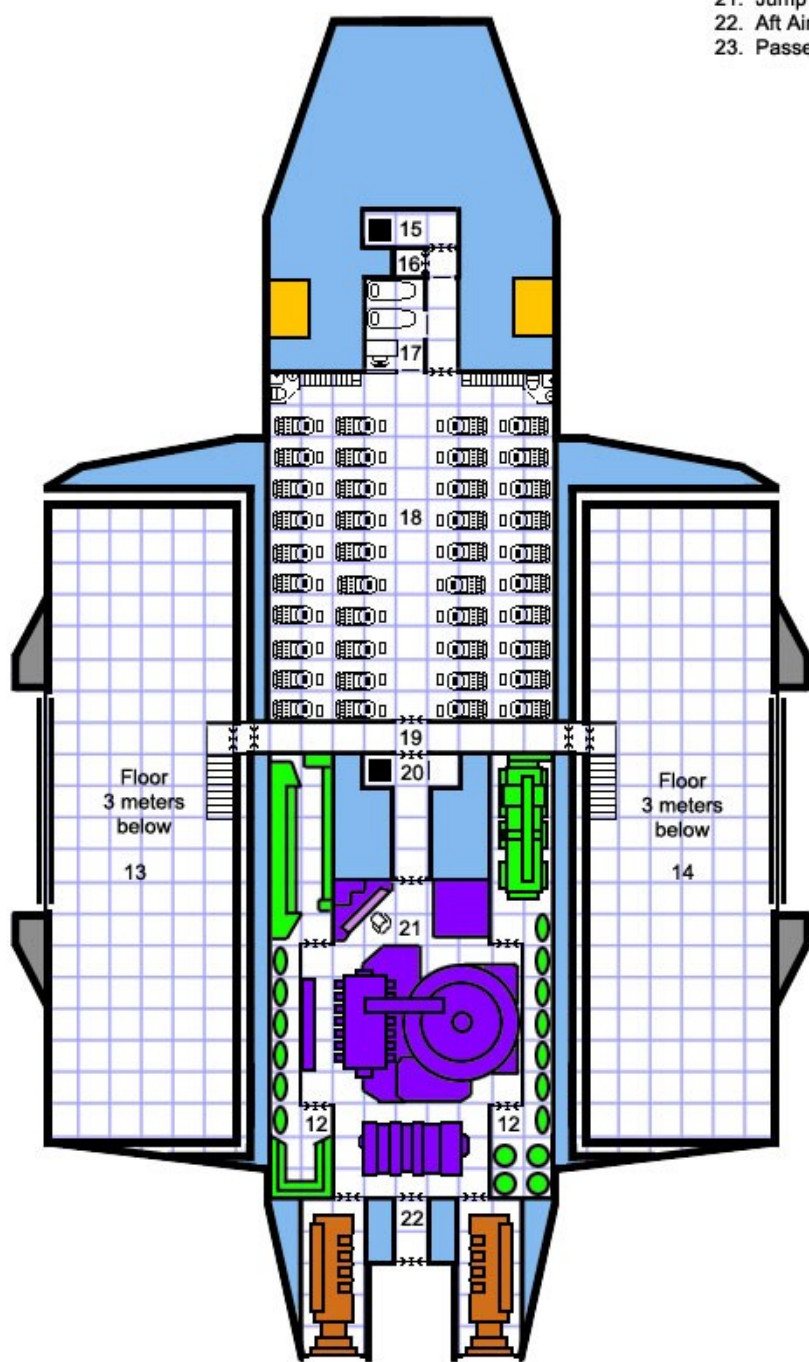
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Onderneming Colony Transport (Circa 2185 AD)



Middle Deck

- 15. Fore Lift
- 16. Locker
- 17. Infirmary
- 18. Low Berths
- 19. Lateral Access Corridor
- 20. Aft Lift/Locker
- 21. Jump Drive
- 22. Aft Airlock
- 23. Passenger Living (Liner Variant)



Liner Variant
(replaces low berth chamber)

Colonist Deck



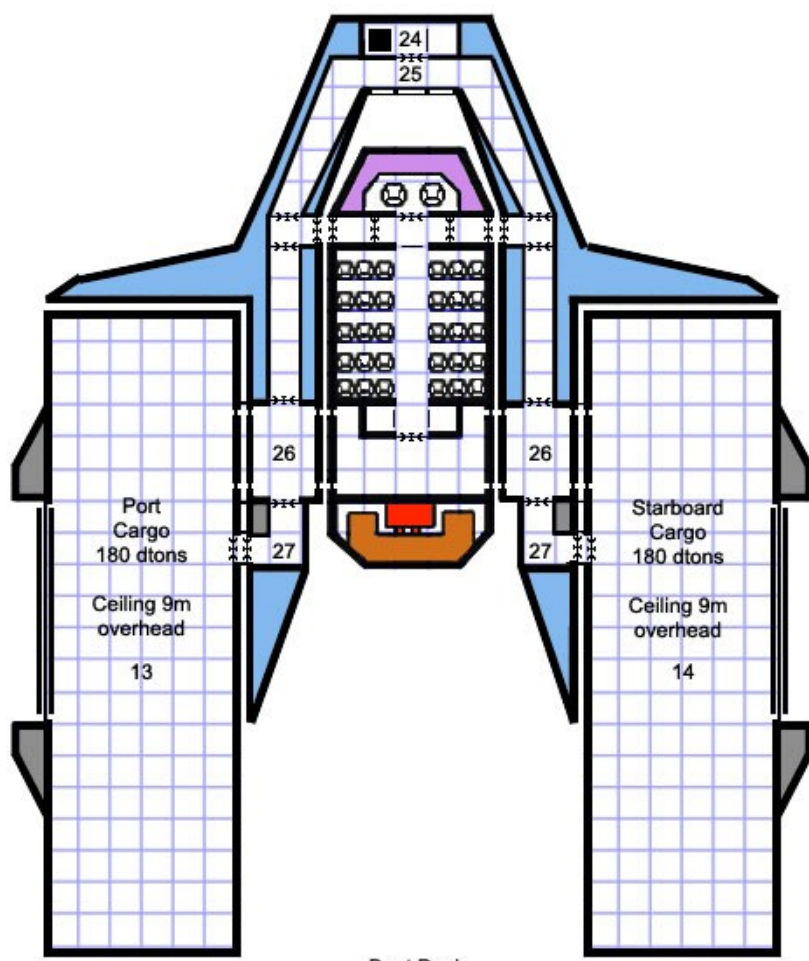
Onderneming Colony Transport (Circa 2185 AD)



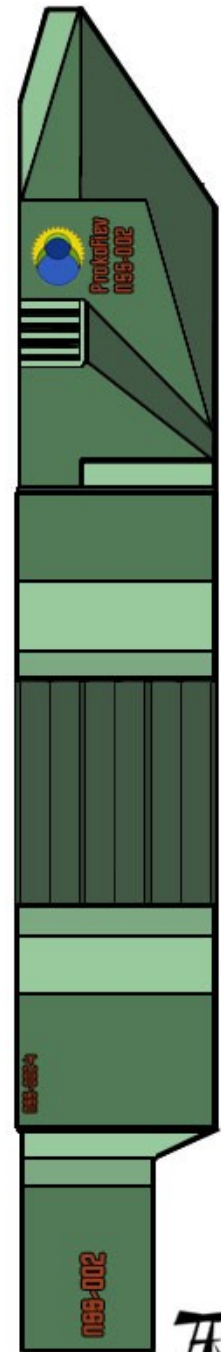
Front View

Bottom Deck

- 24. Fore Lift/Locker
- 25. Boat Access/Foyer
- 26. Boatlocks/Storage
- 27. Cargo Bay Access/Lock



Boat Deck



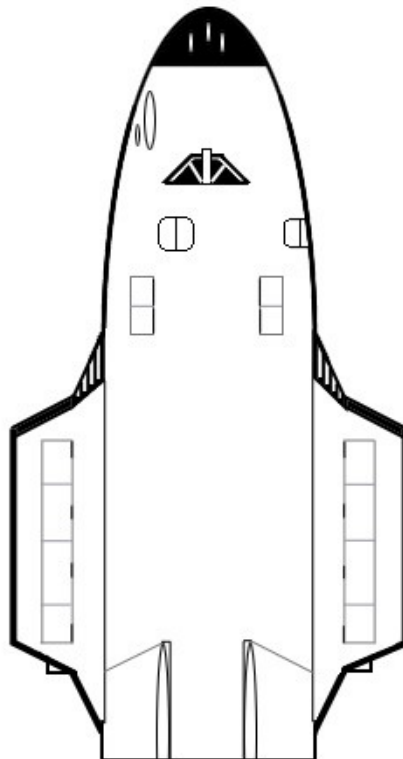
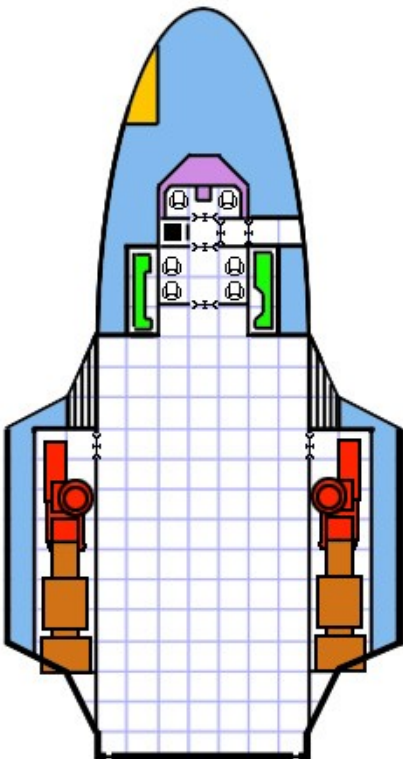
Side View



Chafer Class Shuttle

TL 11, complimentary subcraft of the Onderneming class light colony transport.

Craft ID: Chafer Shuttle, TL 11
MCR 41.33 in quantity
Hull: 86/215, Disp=95, Config=1SL, Armor 40E,
Unloaded=902.5 tons, Loaded=1577.5 tons
Power: 8/16, Fusion=660Mw, Duration 30/90
Loco: 8/16, Maneuver=3, NOE=150kph, Agility=0
Commo: Radio=Systemx3, Maser=Systemx1
Sensors: ActiveEMS=Far Orbitx1, PassiveEMS=Interstellarx1
ActObjScan=7+, ActObjPin=7+, PassEngScan=7+
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Control: Computer=2/bisx3, Panel=Dynamic Links x121,
Special=HUDx2, Environ=Basic Env, Basic LS,
Extend LS, Grav Plates, Inertial Comp
Accom: Crew=2 (1 Pilot, 1 Command), 6 Roomy Seats
Other: Cargo=675kl (50 dtons), Fuel=237.6 kl,
ObjSize=Small, EML=Faint



Variant Ship Life Support Rules for Mongoose Traveller

by Sebastian Messiah

I find the Mongoose *Traveller* Life Support rules to be lacking. The system, as presented in the Rulebook, lacks granularity, assumes monthly re-supplies and thus ignores the possibility of deep, long-range space forays that might last for many months, or even years, without return to civilized space, and simplifies the matter to a simple exercise of economics. It also fails to provide answers to what will happen when a starship's life support systems are forced to supply sustenance for more beings than it was originally designed to.

This simple system, while adding a bit of extra math to the game, will hopefully help sort the conundrums indicated above. It will also provide a means of extending the life support of a ship for crews wishing to do so. These rules were extrapolated from the notes on page 142 of the *Traveller* rulebook, the standard life support costs and the stateroom occupancy rules. While they may change the game somewhat, I believe they remain faithful to the concept of how starship life support systems are suppose to work in the Traveller Universe.

New Concept: The Life Support Unit

The "Life Support Unit" (or "LSU", henceforth), is an abstract measuring unit that represents the minimum materials and consumables necessary to maintain an average human being (or an equivalent sophont or life-form) alive aboard a starship for one week. It includes food, water, atmosphere, pressure, temperature, recycling, etc.

Each ship will be able to "carry" a maximum number of LSUs depending on its design. The total number and nature of living beings aboard will determine how many LSUs are lost per week. At properly equipped starports extra LSUs may be purchased, much the same way one purchases fuel, up to the maximum LSU limit for the ship. It is also possible to buy extra equipment that will increase the maximum LSU limit of a vessel without any re-design

required; this shall be explained further bellow.

Starship Autonomy

First, it is necessary to determine just how many LSUs a starship is able to carry. This will determine the maximum possible autonomy with its current crew before a replenishment of life support consumables is required. The formula below calculates this:

$$[\text{Maximum LSUs} = \text{Staterooms} \times 48]$$

So your typical Type-S Scout ship, with its total of 4 Staterooms has a maximum LSU capacity of 192. $[4 \times 48]$

A brand-new ship will, of course, come with a full complement of LSUs. A second-hand (or third, fourth, etc.) ship will have a random number of LSUs remaining in its stores, roll two dice per stateroom and multiply the result by four.

$$\text{Remaining LSUs on 2nd-hand Ship} = [2 \times \text{Staterooms}]d6 \times 4$$

To determine how long a starship can maintain its crew and passengers alive for, we need to determine the weekly expenditure of LSUs. Dividing the remaining LSUs of the ship by this number gives us that period in weeks.

Different People, Different Needs

This is where it gets more complicated. The same way that food and beverages differ a lot in quality between what is found aboard a modern-day nuclear submarine and a luxury ocean liner, each being aboard the starship might have different needs according to its nature. This means in the number of LSUs each consumes per week can vary. Each living creature on the ship will fall under one or more of the categories indicated bellow.

Crewmembers: this category includes everyone, from the captain to a passenger on a working passage, that has a working role inside the ship. As all work under a military, or quasi-military, structure, efficiency is paramount and luxury is dispensable. A non-crewmember might also fall under this category, for example, a friend of the PCs taking a free ride aboard their ship that does not demand the same conditions as a paying passenger.

Doing It My Way

Crewmembers consume the absolute minimum LSU to keep them healthy, alive and in working condition, 1 LSU/Week.

Middle or High Passengers: passengers expect a minimum (or a whole lot) of comfort for their money, and to ensure conditions aboard the ship are as similar as possible to a non-closed environment, the life support system must work overtime. This will ensure they are provided with much more palatable food, remarkably stable pressure and temperature conditions and “clean” air, fully devoid of troublesome odours that crewmembers have long since become immune to. Such luxury (from a crewman’s perspective) does not come without a price; each of these passengers devours a full 6 LSUs/Week.

Low Passengers: technically dead, or at least as near to it as possible that they might still be brought back, low passengers do not consume any LSUs.

Refugees: not necessarily a “true” refugee, but most often found under this class on account of being one, a refugee is anyone aboard the ship that exceeds the maximum number of lifeforms it was designed to carry comfortably at any given time. For each starship this number limit is determined by the formula below:

$$[\text{Maximum Lifeforms} = 2 \times \text{Staterooms}]$$

It is easy to see that the maximum number of beings a starship can carry without need of overdriving the life support system is equal to having all its staterooms in double occupancy.

With no more available staterooms, there is nothing to prevent someone from “roughing it” aboard a starship with no vacant staterooms by settling on the cargo hold. But what will be the effect on the ship’s life support system of providing for a living creature pressure, temperature, breathing air in an area that was not properly designed for it? And what will be the effect be on the food processing and recycling systems when they have to work beyond their normal parameters and specifications to account for the extra creatures? The answer is that each refugee will spend 2 LSU/Week, equivalent to twice the LSUs require for a human or human-equivalent crewmember resid-

ing in a stateroom.

So, a Type-S Scout with its 4 staterooms, carrying 20 people aboard would have 8 “crewmembers” (with each stateroom in double occupancy) and 12 “refugees” in the cargo hold for a total weekly LSU expenditure of 32. $[8 \text{ crew} + (12 \text{ refugees} \times 2)]$

Physical space is not usually an issue. One displacement ton can carry a whole lot of people when all you need is a spot on the ground to sleep. A Type-S, even with its minute cargo space could carry a small village; a Free Trader could hold an entire extended tribe of over a hundred. However, scheduling meal times and bathroom trips might be a bit of a chore...

Exotics: exotics are creatures that have very specific life support needs and/or those that vary considerable from the human norm.

Examples include lifeforms that are used to extreme high or lows of temperature or pressure, breathe exotic atmospheres, need rare trace elements for their respiration, or have radically different biological make-ups, such as a silicon-based lifeform. An exotic consumes an extra 5 LSUs/Week in addition to what a normal lifeform of its class (crewmember, passenger, refugee) would require. If the creature is considerably larger than a human (see below) the LSU consumption multiplier is applied *after* all other modifiers.

The larger the lifeform, the greater its life support requirements. If it breathes more, eats more and...well, excretes more, it will put extra strain of the ship’s life support system. For simplicity, humanoids down to Droyne size and dog-sized animals (not lap dogs) count as human for LSU consumption. Anything smaller than these (a cat, rabbit, pet parrot) is not factored in for the LSU consumption equations. Aslan or similarly-sized humanoid creatures also count as a normal human despite being bigger.

The number of LSUs consumed per week for a creature considerably larger than a man is multiplied by the ratio (rounded) of the creature’s mass to that of the average human (treat the average human mass as 100kg).

Doing It My Way

For example: a bovine beast of roughly 500kg mass would consume five times the required LSU of a normal human, or 5 LSUs/Week. If this bovine was a sophont paying passenger he would consume a staggering 30 LSU/Week. $[6 \text{ (passenger)} \times 5 \text{ (size)}]$

And should he need argon for breathing and considerable amounts of colloidal silver in its food, the total weekly LSU consumption would be a whopping 55! $[(\text{passenger}) 6 + (\text{exotic}) 5] \times 5 \text{ (size)}]$

Weekly Consumption of LSUs	
Class	LSUs/Week
Crewmember	1
Refugee	2
Low Passenger	0
Middle Passenger	6
High Passenger	6
<i>Apply the following modifiers, in order, after determining the base requirement above</i>	
Exotic Requirements	+5
Size	$\times (\text{Creature mass} \div 100\text{kg}; \text{rounded})$

LSU Costs

LSUs are bought and replenished at a starport much the same way fuel is. But it is not a simple matter or replenishing air and buying food. A fully-working life support system requires precious or rare metals, high-tech filters, exotic chemicals and nanotechnology components that are either spent, or lose their efficacy over time. Furthermore, since LSU purchase includes the replacement of technical parts, the class of ship determines the minimum class of Starport where it may “refuel” LSUs. Non-Jump ships can top up LSUs at any starport of class C or above, Starships require a class B Starport or better, while Capital Ships can only acquire LSUs at class A starports.

The price of each LSU is variable, and like all other products subject to the economical laws of supply and demand. To determine the price per LSU at any particular starport, roll two dice and multiply the

result by ten.

Price per LSU: $2d6 \times 10 \text{ Credits}$

Minimum Starport Quality for LSU Replenishment	
Ship Class	Starport Class
Non-Jump	C (Routine)
Starships	B (Good)
Capital Ship	A (Excellent)

Increasing Autonomy

Under this system the maximum life support autonomy for every player character type ship is 6 months for full double occupancy of staterooms, or 1 year for full single occupancy.

Six months to one year, not counting with extra LSU expenditures for passengers, should serve for the needs of most player character crews. But what happens in a campaign dealing with deep forays into uncharted space, where high-tech civilization and life support replenishment might not be available for years? Read on...

New Ship Equipment:

Extended Life Support Module

Extended Life Support modules (ELS, henceforth) are the standard method of augmenting the autonomy of a ship without need for any redesign of its architecture. ELS modules are self-contained mechanisms/stores roughly 14 cubic meters (1 displacement ton) in volume that increase and extend the capacity of the life support system, and can be lodged in the cargo hold much like a standard cargo crate. Every module can hold the equivalent of 12 LSUs. For every four full modules in the hold, add one to the maximum lifeforms aboard the ship for the purpose of determining Refugee status.

Each module takes up one ton in the ship’s cargo hold and costs Cr62,000. It takes one day to install a ELS module in the ship’s hold, and this can be done at any class of starport where the ship is able to purchase LSUs.

Doing It My Way

An Example

Let us take the Type-S from the *Traveller* campaign where I currently play: the “Reggie”, a second-hand starship leased by the IISS to retired Senior Scout Paigo Pian.

First, determine how many LSUs the ship has remaining; with 4 staterooms I get to roll 8 dice: 6, 5, 4, 3, 3, 2, 1, 1 for a grand total of 25. Multiplying this by four I get a round 100 for the current LSUs of the ship.

The complete list of entities aboard the “Reggie” and their class and LSU requirements can be seen to the right.

100 LSUs divided by 6 is 16.6, so the “Reggie” should be able to operate for more than 16, but not quite 17, weeks before needing to replenish LSUs (at a Class B or better starport). The final LSU info for the “Reggie” appears to the right.

Complement Aboard the “Reggie”

Entity	Class	LSUs/Week
Piigo Pian	Crewmember	1
Tensher Wolf (“Tiger”)	Crewmember	1
Curtis Tyrone	Crewmember	1
Johannes “Slew” Barton	Crewmember	1
Pakea Dimiigur	Crewmember	1
Rolf Edmundsun	Crewmember	1
Total Weekly LSU Consumption		6

Summary LSU Data: Type-S “Reggie”

Staterooms	4
Maximum Lifeform Carrying Capacity	8
Maximum LSU Capacity (No ELS modules)	192
Current LSUs	100
Weekly LSU Expenditure	6
Remaining Estimated Autonomy	16.6 weeks

Multimedia Gallery



Battledress images by MAG





This column is intended to be a referee's guide to Mongoose's *Traveller*, the fifth incarnation of the *Traveller* game system. Often it'll talk about the many printed resources out there and available to the gamemaster, supplementing my own reviews on those topics, but sometimes it'll offer more specific advice for GMing the game.

Editor's note: The initial Fifth Imperium column was published on the RPG.Net website in July 2009, and appeared in Freelance Traveller's initial issue in November 2009. This column originally appeared on the RPG.Net website in August 2010.

#12: My Rules, Part Three: Dramatic Flourishes

In the previous articles in this series, I talked about some of the changes and additions that I've made to the crunchy rule systems of Mongoose's *Traveller*. This week, I plan to talk about the other side of things: how I've tried to improve the dramatic/storytelling side of the game, largely with ideas that originated in one way or another on the *2d6 Feet in a Random Direction* podcast.

The RP Mechanics

Out of necessity, anything here is clearly bolted on, because Mongoose's *Traveller* is a 33-year old game system, with the polish and mechanics updated a few years ago, but which has never undergone any core changes in how it actually tells stories.

Everything here is pretty simple too, largely intended to push things slightly in the other direction. Don't expect anything big or amazing.

Drama Dice. Traditional games like *Traveller* don't account for the fact that it's sometimes crucial to be able to succeed at a very important task—or at least to have a considerably improved chance at succeeding.

Enter Drama Dice.

Players earn Drama Dice when they do something that's good for the RP of the game. Often it's something stupid (or at least disadvantageous to the character), but in character. Sometimes it might be something particularly clever or funny or just cool.

When a Drama Die is earned a physical die is handed to the player. I like to use very mottled Chessex dice for the purpose, because they look unlike most anything else at the table.

A player may add a Drama Die in to any task roll he's making, allowing him to roll 3d6 instead of 2d6. I'd probably allow Drama Dice to be added to damage too. Once a Drama Die is used, it comes back to me.

I usually give out a couple of Drama Dice during each game session, meaning that there are usually a few opportunities for players to succeed at something really important.

Next Time On ... I have a few different RP tools that I sometimes use to close up sessions. One of these is "Next Time On ..." I go around the table and ask players to give me a simple hook that might be used in the next session.

The general idea is that they're supposed to tell me things that would be important or interesting to their characters, but more often I get hooks or vignettes that they think are generally cool.

My most memorable "next time" occurred over in my D&D game, where one of the players said, "A giant wheel of cheese rolling down the street." That led to an entire fun fracas in a marketplace, where at one point the opponents tried to flatten the PCs by rolling a giant wheel of cheese at them.

Returning to *Traveller*, I've sometimes had "Next Times ..." suggest a good portion of an adventure, such as when a player suggested "Mind Flayer-like aliens" and I came up with a plot thread for *Farewell to Nexine* that involved the players trying to hunt down an unknown alien race on the planet.

You just have to take everything as suggestions and make sure the players won't be upset when you only use half of their suggestions.

Character Goals: This is another tool that I sometimes use to close up sessions. Basically, I go around the table and ask each player, "What's your character's more important, immediate goal at this point?"

It serves three purposes. First, it gets players

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Fifth Imperium

(Continued from page 17)

thinking about their characters beyond the immediate moment of gameplay. Second, it gives me pretty good hooks for thinking about future adventure design. Third, it makes sure those adventure impact those characters.

Sometimes what I get isn't very helpful, as when a player says they really want to get a skill up to level-0. But sometimes it suggests an adventure. Last time I asked, Dave W. said that he really wanted to recover the lost cargo that they learned about on Nexine. So, when I return to Nexine two adventures hence, I should build that in.

(Though it's quite possible Dave W. won't be there for the session, it'll be great if he is, and if not he'll be able to move his character forward when he does finally return.)

Next Time On ...

My goal in this column has always been to translate some of the real work I'm doing with Mongoose *Traveller*—whether it be cataloging articles in the rpg.net Game Index or preparing and running adventures for my home campaign—into specific advice. However, I've decided that my *Traveller* campaign is coming to at least a temporary end, after two more sessions, as I've been feeling increasingly burned out with it.

Hence, I'll be bringing this column to an end too. However, before I do that I do want to finish the many topics that I've talked on. So in coming months expect to see some discussions of more genres, a few more plot hooks, some notes on setting campaigns in the Spinward Marches themselves, maybe a look at *Traveller* fiction, and definitely an index of everything that's been written.

So, keep watching this space through at least the end of the year.

Less Dangerous Game



Sketch of the Red Spiny Runner during its mating display

(Article begins next page)

Less Dangerous Game

The Red Spiny Runner

by Sarah and Scott Diamond

Classic Traveller Statistics

FOREST Terrain

Animal	Weight	Hits	Armor	Wounds	Weapons	A	F	S
1 Carnivore Hunter/Siren	20kg	10/8	mesh	<i>Special</i>	<i>Special</i> , Teeth	A0	F6	S4

Wounds and Weapons

Stinger (Quills): The quills do 1D3 physical damage each (roll 1D6 to see how many quills are contacted) and the venom does 1D6 temporary damage per quill. Each combat round the target must roll END or less on 3D6 to avoid being rendered unconscious. If the total amount of damage from the venom exceeds at least two attributes, then the target will die from respiratory paralysis unless an antidote is given. The temporary venom damage wears off in 1 hour per point inflicted during which the victim experiences excruciating pain and difficulty breathing due to extreme rigidity of the abdominal muscles.

Teeth: The bite of the Red Spiny Runner does 2D6 physical damage, with no other effects.

Description

The Red Spiny Runner is a large mammal-like reptile that is found living in the giant trees on the planet of Gehenna where it primarily preys on the ubiquitous Devil Squirrels and similar small prey items. They lay eggs in clutches of 4 and are a high-energy burning, hot-blooded predator. As carnivores they prefer live prey, but in captivity they can be conditioned to eat dead prey items that have been warmed up and moved about as if they were alive.

The Red Spiny Runner has a leathery skin under a coat of fine, brown-green feathers. The broad head, with the mouth that almost splits the head in half when gaping, is covered with a heavy, bright green bony “helmet”. The reason for the coloration is not known and both males and females have it. The eyes are deeply set within the bony covering and well protected. The animal has three nostrils and long, prehensile clawed toes on its feet which help it move at high speed through the branches.

Under the feathers of the Runner are 20cm bright red quills that the animal can erect at will – usually when alarmed or defending its territory. When warning off a threat or rival the animal will violently shake its torso, rattling the quills. As an interesting side note on adaptations, the Rattlerat (which lives in the same areas as the Runner) mimics the rattle of

the Runner’s quills while creeping through the underbrush in order to frighten away predators it senses are nearby.

The hollow quills are attached to muscle-encased bulbs of venom in groups of three. When the quill is pressed against the bulb discharges its load of toxin, but the Runner has no control of how much is used – it’s all or nothing. The toxin is created by the Runner when it licks the poisonous sap of the Doro Tree, which is then metabolized into a morphine analog. The toxin is for defense and doesn’t usually kill the animal stung, but instead leaves it in a daze and uninterested in continuing the attack due to the “high” from the toxin. Too much toxin can, however, cause respiratory paralysis, and humans stung suffer anaphylactic shock and extreme pain from the allergens contained within the venom. Without access to the sap the Runner has no means to produce venom and the animal is relatively harmless – except for the nasty bite.

A nocturnal hunter, the Red Spiny Runner’s hunting techniques are twofold: the primary method is to search about with its especially sensitive sense of smell until it finds a nest of Devil Squirrels inside a branch or log, then it digs them out. The bony covering of the skull protects it from the squirrels’ poison spurs.

(Continued on page 20)

Less Dangerous Game

(Continued from page 19)

The second method involves hiding in a dense thicket of vines and leaves along a path used by the squirrels and mimicking the croaking call of the male squirrel attempting to attract a mate. A male or female will then come along to investigate and the Runner will lunge out and eat it.

The only sexual dimorphism among the Red Spiny Runners is the fantastically long and brilliant tail feathers the males grow during a one month mating season. The male slowly waves his tail towards any females while releasing a pheromone to attract her. The males will mate with more than one female, and after the season is over the feathers are shed.

The Red Spiny Runner can be domesticated, and while not exactly affectionate they are tolerant of handling (though it is advised to keep small children and pets away from them), and highly curious about their surroundings. Its northern cousin, the Black-Quill Runner is smaller, non-poisonous, and can be kept as an affectionate pet since it seems to actually enjoy human company.

The commercial uses of the Red Spiny Runner are both the venom and the feathers. The feathers shed by the male retain fragrant oils that are used in high end perfumes and can fetch as much as 500Cr per gram of crushed feathers (about the amount found from 3 Runners).

The toxin is used in pharmaceuticals because of its non-addictive quality as a painkiller. It also finds its way into the illegal narcotic market where it costs as much as 1000Cr per dose. For both of these effects the toxin must be processed to distill its morphine analog and remove the pain-inducing allergens.

While the Red Spiny Runner was discovered and first identified by the Lady Victoria Challenger of the Imperial Scout Service during the initial survey of Gehenna, its northern cousin was discovered by the eminent Prof. Manuel Dombrowski, famous for not only having discovered the magnificent chameleon Dombrowski's Lion on Kimpali (also known as the "Kimpali Cheshire Cat"), but for having been devoured by his most famous discovery.

Multimedia Gallery

Battledress images by MAG



Essay Question

Essay Question is designed to allow our readers to share their experiences and ideas in playing or refereeing *Traveller*, or in designing things to be used in campaigns. Each issue, we'll print one or more questions, either submitted by one of our readers, or invented by the Editor. Readers are invited to send their answers (and their questions for future issues) to us at questions@freelancetraveller.com; we'll print a selection of the answers received in each issue.

This month, we didn't receive any answers to our previous questions—but we're going to add two new questions, and repeat the questions that haven't yet been answered.

New questions for this month:

Which of the *Traveller* rule sets do you prefer? Why?

What *Traveller* setting do you prefer? Why?

Previous questions, not yet answered:

What is your favorite type of “one-off” adventure? Why?

What is your favorite type of campaign adventure? Why?

Someone has just asked you “What is *Traveller*?”. It's obvious that they want a better answer than “It's a SF/space-opera role-playing game, like D&D is a high fantasy role-playing game.”. How do you answer them?

Other questions previously appearing in this column can be found on Freelance Traveller's website, at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/features/columns/eq/>.

We encourage our readers to answer any question that has appeared in Essay Question, past or present, previously answered or not. We also encourage our readers to propose new Essay Questions to questions@freelancetraveller.com.

Multimedia Gallery

The BurrowWolf: A Traveller Graphic Novel

We continue our presentation of *The BurrowWolf: A Traveller Graphic Novel*, created by David Billingham and Dave Redington. The previous chapter appeared in the July 2010 issue, and is also on our website in the Multimedia Gallery. As usual, we will post the portion that appears in this issue of the magazine on our website when next month's is-

The BurrowWolf: A Traveller Graphic Novel

sue is released. You can also see it in a much more elegant presentation at Dave Redington's website, http://web.me.com/dredington/Traveller_Art/BurrowWolf/BurrowWolf.html. That site may also contain chapters not yet released to *Freelance Traveller*, and some background information and images (like the one below) that are not part of the graphic novel. The actual chapter starts on the next page. We hope you enjoy it.



The BurrowWolf

ADVENTURES IN THE BORDER WORLDS

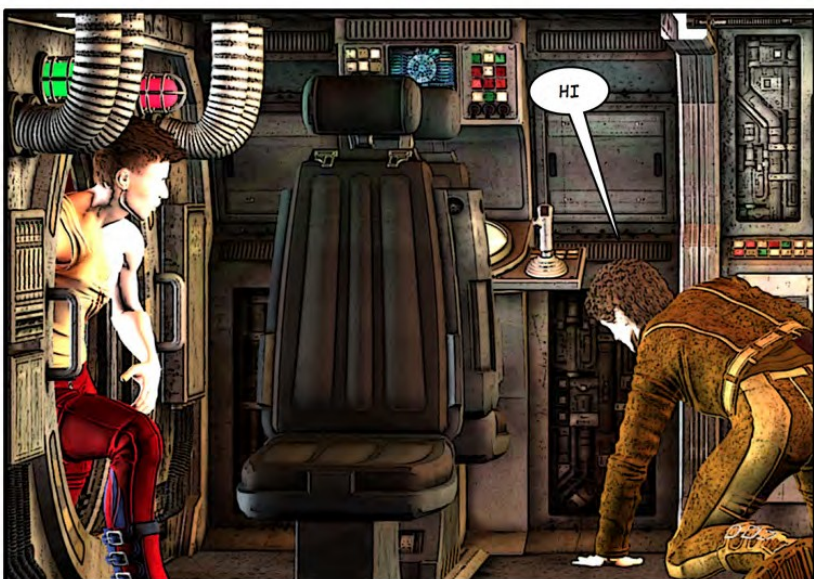
Chapter Three



A Traveller webcomic. Story by David Billingham. Art by Dave Redington

Chapter Three: Down to the Realspace Interface

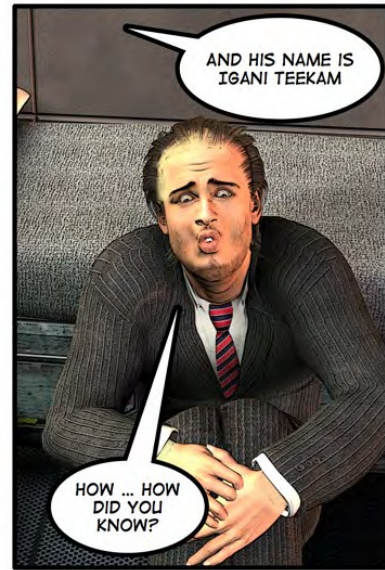
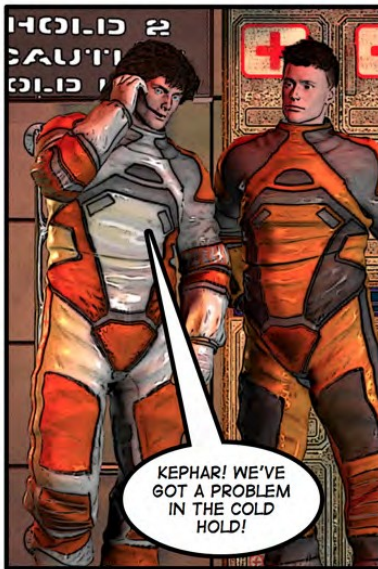
BurrowWolf - Elapsed time in Jump:
Five hours fifty-one minutes.

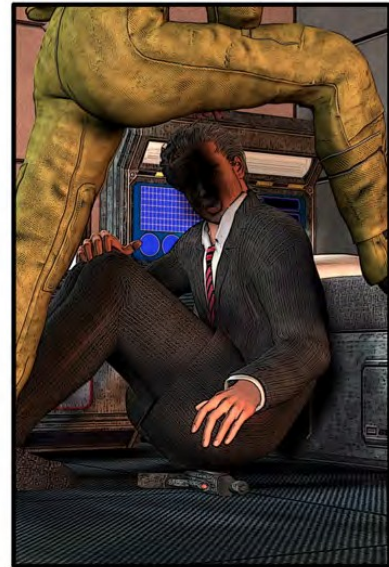


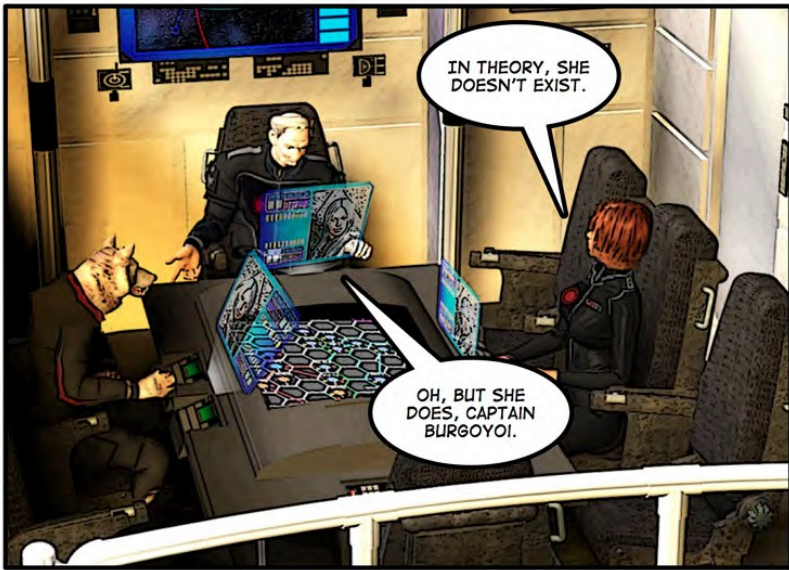
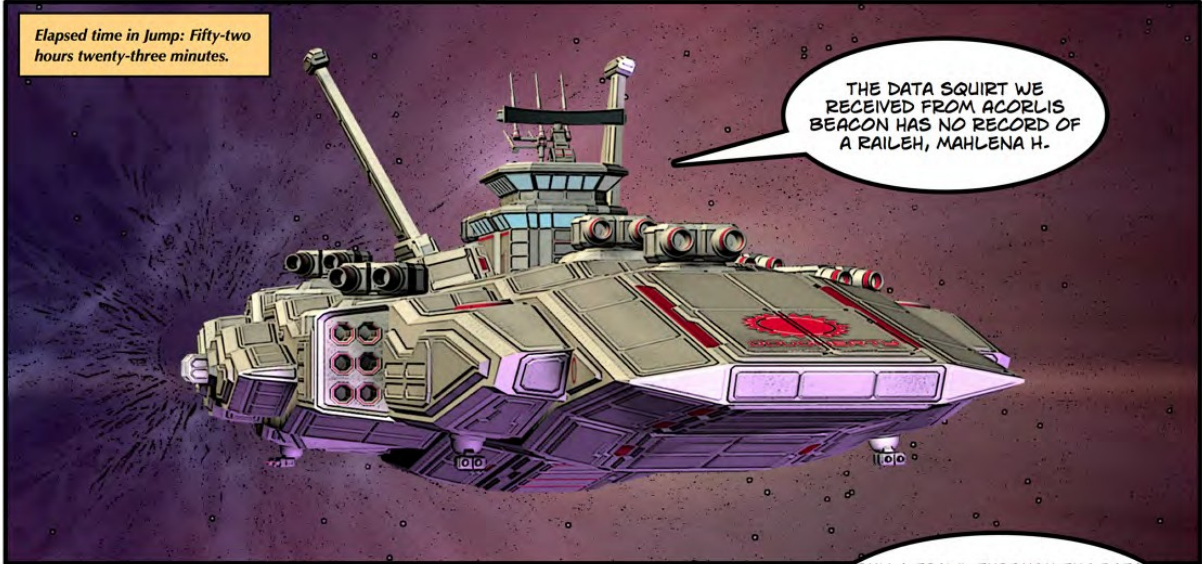


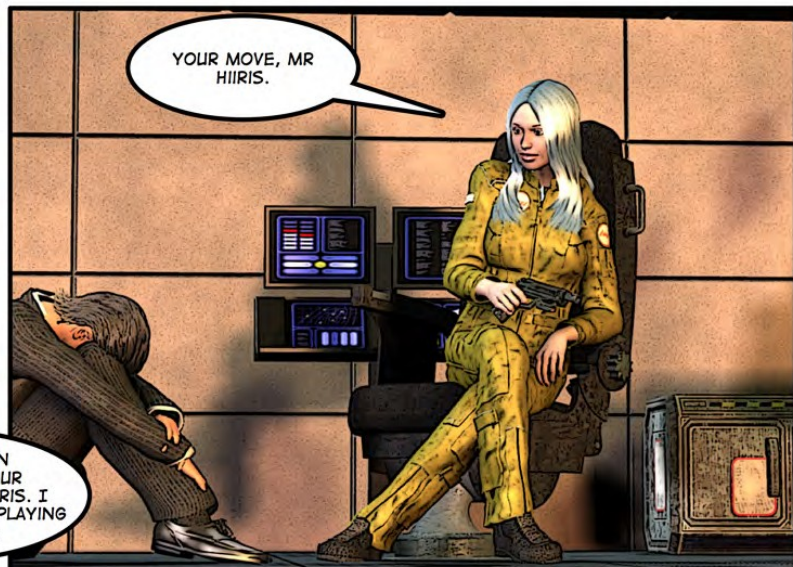












Continued in November issue...

Feedback

We'd like to hear what you think of Freelance Traveller, both the magazine and the website!

We want to know what you think of the basic idea of Freelance Traveller as a magazine, not just a website; what you think of the articles we publish, and how we can make our magazine better and how we can make our website better.

We want to know what kind of articles you want to see, and what you *don't* want to see.

We want to know what you think of our look, and how we can make it better.

Please, give us your opinion! We've provided several ways you can do so:

You can send e-mail to us at feedback@freelancetraveller.com.

You can use the feedback form on our website, at

<http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/feedback/ftfbf.html>.

If you're a member of the SFRPG Forums, we monitor them, so you can post comments in the **Traveller Fanzines** section, at <http://www.sfrpg.org.uk/phpBB3/viewforum.php?f=36>. Please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

If you're a member of the Citizens of the Imperium forums, we monitor them as well, so you can post comments in the **Lone Star** section, at <http://www.travellerrpg.com/CotI/Discuss/forumdisplay.php?f=13>. As with the SFRPG forums, please tag any commentary about Freelance Traveller with the string "[Freelance Traveller]", or reply to our message announcing the issue.

Traveller on the Internet

Freelance Traveller sponsors a channel for Traveller fans on the Undernet IRC network, and RPGRealms sponsors one on the Otherworlders IRC network—and the two channels are “bridged” so that if you're visiting either, you can see what's going on in the other, and talk to people there. For more information about both channels, see our informational

IRC: The #Traveller and #LoneStar channels

pages at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travnet.html#IRC> and <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/travchat/index.html>. Come talk “live” with other Traveller fans about anything at all, Traveller or not. It's generally quiet in both channels—but you can change that, and make both channels “jumping” places to hang out!

Traveller on the Internet

After a long absence due to technical problems that turned out to be somewhat expensive and time-consuming to fix, the Freelance Traveller forums have returned! Because of the way they were implemented originally, no messages or user profiles were lost, and you can pick up where you left off when we had to take them off-line to identify and address the problems. They're at the same address, <http://forums.freelancetraveller.com>, and there is no change whatsoever in the ways you can access them—or, sadly, in the admitted deficiencies in the

The Freelance Traveller Forums

software—that's another long-term project that we're working on as we have the time. If you're visiting the forums for the first time, please see our FAQ at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/infocenter/forums.html>, and our Acceptable Use Policy at <http://www.freelancetraveller.com/ftforumsaup.html>.

We're currently looking into an alternative web interfaces, but don't let the current one stop you from participating—we also support email and usenet-style (nntp) access.

