

The
JOURNAL

Vol. 1

of the Travellers' Aid Society



TRAVELLER

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of the Travellers' Aid Society

Vol. 1

CREDITS

Authors

J.P. McManus, Loren Wiseman,
Daniel Perez, L. Crede Lombard,
Jerry Stoddard, Roger Moore,
Marc Miller, Frank Chadwick,
Christopher Griffen, L. John
Marshal, J. Andrew Keith, William
H. Keith, Jr, Steve Sowards, Peter
Rasmussen, Kevin d. Knight,
Martin Dougherty

Editor

Matthew Sprange

Graphics & Layout

Sandrine Thirache

Cover Illustration

Shen Fei

Interior Illustrations

Maia Anderson, Sandrine
Thirache, Tomislav Tikulin,
Takashi Tan



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CHARTED SPACE



SUSAG

Although no two megacorporations are exactly alike, there are enough similarities between them to allow a study of one to serve as a study of all. The following general survey of the history, organisation and activities of SuSAG will serve to illustrate how megacorporations operate and delineate their powers and limitations.

HISTORY

Schunamann und Sohn, AG, LIC was founded in 252 by Gustav Schunamann, a professor of biochemical engineering and his son Reinhardt, a doctor of medicine. A few years earlier, the elder Schunamann had resigned his position at the Imperial University to pursue private research. The result of this research was the discovery of a radically new technique for the isolation of various forms of the psionic drug, psioniline. Schunamann patented the process and licensed it to several manufacturing concerns. By 252, using the royalties which had accumulated, the Schunamanns purchased a near bankrupt pharmaceuticals company which carried an old Sylean charter (and was thus automatically entitled to a limited Imperial charter) and renamed it Schunamann und Sohn AG, LIC (retaining the archaic AG). Shortly afterward, Schunamann announced a new, more efficient process (which he had evidently discovered years before) and the new company, commonly known as SuSAG, rapidly drove almost all competing drugs off the market.

The company's early years were stormy ones. The Imperial University brought suit against SuSAG, charging that Schunamann had developed his processes while at the university, and thus they belonged to the government. Other parties brought numerous additional lawsuits. SuSAG defended itself successfully from all these attacks, but they instilled in the corporation and the Schunamann family a paranoia which was to heavily colour the firm's actions for the first two centuries of its existence. This paranoia, although lessened over the centuries, can still be detected in some of SuSAG's actions to this day.

Perhaps because he was a researcher at heart, Gustav established a policy of devoting large sums to exploratory research, and SuSAG's well-equipped laboratories rapidly attracted some of the best minds in the Imperium, another characteristic of SuSAG which persists to this day. Gustav's heavy emphasis on research brought the company numerous new products



and manufacturing processes, which laid a strong foundation for future growth. The discoveries were not always in the field of pharmaceuticals, however, and the company began to diversify into medical products in general, and later into related areas such as chemistry and genetic engineering. The deep-set paranoia of the early years prevented SuSAG from selling or licensing any discoveries to other companies. Many good ideas languished in the company files for years, because SuSAG did not have the resources to develop them, and did not want any other company to benefit from them.

SuSAG's dominance of the psi-drug market caused it to be hardest hit by the PsionicsSuppressions of 800-826. The manufacture and sale of all psionic drugs was declared illegal, all manufacturing plants within the Imperium closed down, and all stockpiles confiscated. Although SuSAG had considerably diversified its activities by this time, the suppressions nearly destroyed the company. The massive loss of revenue forced a number of emergency measures on the company, including sizable loans from other megacorporations. As part of the arrangements, large blocks of SuSAG stock were transferred to other firms.

Up until that time, the Schunamann family had retained over 75% of SuSAG stock, and the forced transfer caused considerable loss of revenue to them. Eventually, some of this stock was reclaimed, but significant amounts are still retained by others, most notably Hortalez et Cie (9%), GSbAG (5%), and Sternmetal Horizons LIC. (3%). The resulting change in the board of directors was ultimately beneficial for SuSAG, since it diluted the paranoid tendencies of the Schunamann family which had dominated the board up to that time.

Although it took decades to recover from the damage done by the Psionic Suppressions, SuSAG resumed a slow, steady growth, gradually

expanding into new markets, such as synthetics, industrial chemicals, and (most controversially) chemical and biological warfare agents for the Imperial military. SuSAG is responsible for a number of major advances in anagathic research, and is one of the largest suppliers of anagathic drugs in the Imperium. In addition, through a number of factories located outside the Imperium (owned by a chain of subsidiary companies), SuSAG has continued the manufacture of psionic drugs, some of which illicitly find their way back into the Imperium, where they bring premium prices because of their quality and purity. SuSAG does not engage in smuggling of these drugs into the Imperium.

Throughout its development, SuSAG made it a policy to purchase control of numerous subsidiary companies. Often it was cheaper for SuSAG to acquire an existing company in order to move operations into a new region of space or move into a new field; SuSAG would buy a company to engage in operations to which SuSAG did not wish to have its name associated. The companies outside the Imperium which manufacture psionic drugs are owned through a long and complex chain of holding companies, dummy corporations, and interlocking directorates.

Major subsidiary companies are under the control of the board of directors, lesser companies are under the control of the divisional vice-presidents or regional general managers.

ORGANISATION

SuSAG is organised in a similar fashion to most other limited Imperial corporations; that is, there is a board of directors, a president, and numerous vice presidents. One vice-president is responsible for the control of each of the seven divisions of the company: the pharmaceuticals division, the medical and surgical products division, the industrial chemicals division, the genering division, the CBW (chemical and bacteriological warfare) division, the research division, and the extra-Imperial division. Each divisional vice-president has a number of executive assistants who are not directly in the chain of command. These assist in the administration and operation of the division, but do not set policy.

Under the divisional vice-presidents are the division's numerous regional general managers. The most important operating officers of SuSAG, these RGMs and assistants control the operations of a SuSAG division inside a particular region of space. A region may range in size from a few systems in the heavily populated regions of the Imperium around the Core sector, to several subsectors in more sparsely populated regions. Note that the boundaries of a region belonging to one division often do not completely coincide with those of another. In frontier regions, one person may occupy

the position of RGM for several divisions. In more densely populated areas, there are several RGMs, who may consult with one another, but only have authority over their own division's activities. This system could lead to interdivisional rivalry, but seldom does, since each division rarely competes directly with another. Many times, however, subsidiary companies will be working at cross-purposes, sometimes actually engaging in trade wars with other SuSAG subsidiaries. Naturally, these are ended as soon as they are discovered, but with an entity as large as SuSAG, it is difficult to keep track of who is and who is not on your side.

Advertising

An overall advertising policy is set by the board of directors. Individual divisions each have an advertising executive, responsible for overseeing the advertising for that division. Subsidiary companies coordinate their advertising efforts with those of SuSAG.

Security

Many megacorporations contract out all but the most important security measures to independent security companies. SuSAG maintains unusually large and well-equipped corporate security forces which handle all aspects of their security requirements. There are many reasons behind this; many of SuSAG's products are compact, extremely valuable, and easily resold on the black market. Because of the value of their manufacturing processes, SuSAG manufacturing plants and research installations are often the target of industrial espionage by rival firms. SuSAG's CBW installations are often the subject of raids by terrorists seeking to steal CBW weaponry, or sabotage by anti-CBW activists. The company's undeservedly poor reputation for safety, particularly in its CBW plants, causes a great deal of vandalism at all SuSAG installations.

These factors, combined with the company's extreme distrust of any outside agency, explain SuSAG's extensive security establishment.

Most security forces are under the direct control of the various RGMs, and operate only in the region to which they are assigned. The board of directors, however, maintains several units of wideranging troubleshooters, who are assigned to particular sensitive areas of very important installations.

Mercenaries

In spite of its desire to keep everything in house, SuSAG often hires mercenary units for actions with which it does not wish its name (or that of a subsidiary) associated. By company policy, mercenaries can only be hired on the authority of the RGM, but this is usually done through several intermediaries (usually SuSAG security personnel).

THE DIVISIONS

The operations of SuSAG's various divisions are outlined below.

Pharmaceuticals Division

This division manufactures and markets medical drugs for treatment and prevention of various pathological conditions, therapeutic drugs such as anagathics, veterinary and horticultural drugs, surgical drugs such as anesthetics and muscle-relaxants.

Medical and Surgical Products Division

This division manufactures and markets non-pharmaceutical medical and surgical products such as diagnostic equipment, surgical instruments and supplies, and prosthetic devices such as replacement limbs.

Industrial Chemicals Division

This division manufactures chemicals used by other companies in manufacturing processes. Several subsidiary companies provide chemicals of extreme purity for scientific applications.

Geneering Division

This division manufactures geneered organisms for specific industrial and agricultural applications.

CBW Division

This division manufactures chemical and bacteriological weapons and defences exclusively for the Imperial military and its allies. Despite the fact that all such plants are located on isolated, uninhabitable worlds, this division has a very poor reputation for safety.

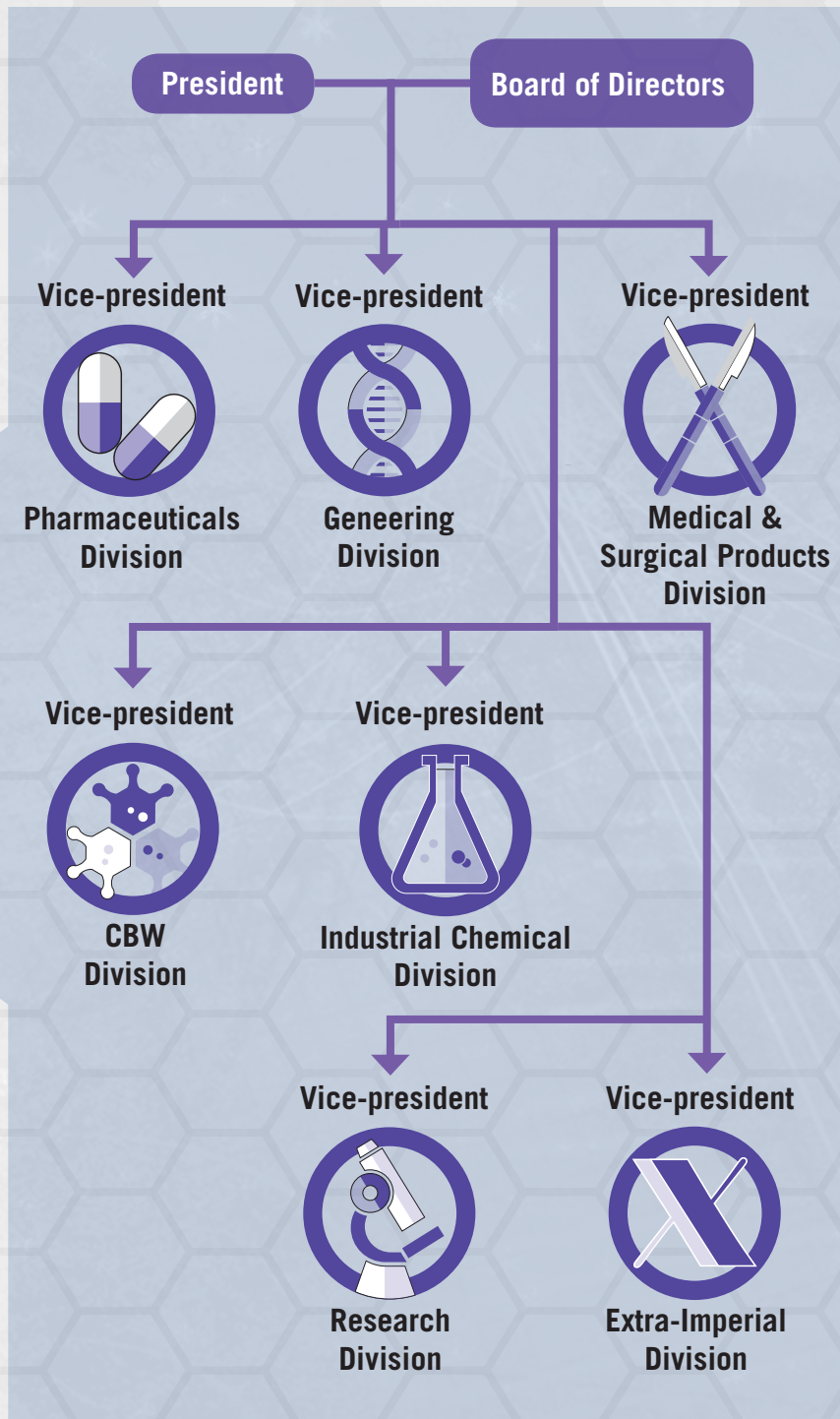
Research Division

This division is not engaged in manufacturing, but conducts a constant search for new products and new ways of making old products.

Extra-Imperial Division

This division is in charge of all SuSAG activities outside the Imperium, which includes those of all SuSAG subsidiary companies. Many of these activities would be illegal if carried out inside the Imperium, such as the manufacture of psionic drugs.

Because of the lack of reliable protection for its installations and products, SuSAG security teams assigned to extra-imperial duties are as heavily



equipped as most planetary military forces. They are often assigned company starships for the protection of extremely valuable facilities (such as the psi-drug factories).

POLICIES AND GOALS

SuSAG's main goals are to make money, retain its position of power relative to other megacorporations, retain control of its current markets, develop new markets for old products, and develop and market new products. SuSAG has a great desire to improve its poor public image, and spends billions of Credits annually on advertising with this in mind.

SuSAG facilities engaged in the manufacture of extremely valuable or dangerous products (such as its pharmaceutical, psi- and CBW plants) are located in remote and sparsely populated areas whenever possible. This was done to minimise potential deaths in the case of an accident, and to facilitate protection of the plants and their products. Psi-drug plants are especially vulnerable because of the high value of their product on the black market, and receive especially high levels of protection by corporate security. CBW plants are usually assigned units of the Imperial military for protection, but company security at these plants is also heavy.

CORPORATE & GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

The Imperium has the power to tax megacorporations and regulate their actions. SuSAG's power, in certain areas, is probably equal to the Imperium's. Active hostilities, however, would be bad for business. SuSAG maintains that a stable interstellar government is good for business, and that keeping the Imperium in power is in their own best interests. For this reason, SuSAG never actively opposes the Imperium, or works for its downfall. This does not mean that no SuSAG division ever violates the law, merely that they keep violations to a minimum, and try not to get caught.

Outside the Imperium, SuSAG still exercises restraint in opposing Imperial interests.

By Imperial law, SuSAG is required to comply with whatever local laws are in effect. As a general rule, SuSAG prefers not to overtly oppose a legitimate planetary government. Usually, the firm has sufficient covert influence to persuade a government to exempt it from most restrictions. Unlike most other megacorporations, few worlds are under SuSAG's direct control. This is due to a company policy, promulgated to help SuSAG'S

public image. Corporate control of a world is usually resented by the populace and, in SuSAG's case, could lead to outright rebellion. However, SuSAG retains covert political and economic control of a number of worlds throughout the Imperium and beyond, through subsidiaries.

THE SPINWARD MARCHES

SuSAG's presence in the Spinward Marches dates from the acquisition of a chemical facility on Mora in 427. Expansion proceeded rapidly, and all divisions were active in the Marches by 600. Massive stockpiles of CBW weaponry and countermeasures were sold to the Imperium at the start of the Third Frontier War (none were used), and at the war's end a CBW plant was established on Shirene (Lunion subsector). SuSAG has other major facilities in Rhylanor, Fornice and Trin. SuSAG subsidiaries have facilities in most non-Zhodani systems. Each SuSAG division maintains offices at Class A and B starports in the Marches. SuSAG maintains no offices and owns no subsidiaries in territories under Zhodani control, but some trade was done before the recent war. The extra-Imperial division maintains a large psi-drug manufacturing facility at Tarsus, as well as other (non-psi drug) facilities in the Zamine and Collace systems.

District 268 is considered an important enough region to rate an RGM all its own.

THE SOLOMANI RIM

SuSAG has an extensive presence in the Rim, dating from the acquisition of Inidu from its original owners in 425, just before the admission of the Easter Concord into the Imperium. All divisions of SuSAG are active in the Rim, and its offices can be found at all Class A and B starports in Imperial space.

Inidu is owned by SuSAG's R&D division, and the populace is employed by SuSAG. The extra-Imperial division, through subsidiary companies, has installations on dozens of worlds within the Solomani Confederation. SuSAG's affiliation with these companies is kept hidden from the public at large, because of the bad feeling that would be generated by an Imperial firm controlling Solomani companies.

Manufacture of psi-drugs is illegal in the Solomani Confederation, and SuSAG runs no psi-drug plants there (although, as with the Imperium, smuggled SuSAG psi-drugs are sold on the black market).

BESTIARY

BUSH RUNNERS

(*Suffitifer andrewsii*, et al)

Adult bush runners weigh approximately 50 kg and are between 1.4 and 1.5 metres in length. Physically, they resemble a cross between the Terran kangaroo (*Macropus* and others) and the etan fruit-lizard (*Fructoraptor*). The skeleton is calciferous, internal, and differs from the typical Terran vertebrate only in minor details.

Bush runners are bipedal, using a muscular pair of hind legs for locomotion, a smaller pair of forearms for food acquisition, and a long tail as a balancing organ during running, a third leg when assuming an upright posture, and a weapon when threatened.

The head is a typical arrangement of brain surrounded by a bony cranium upon which are laterally paired sensory organs (eyes, nose and ears), as well as a ventrally located mouth. The teeth are arranged in common fashion for omnivores (dental formula 2·1·2·2) and faced on their grinding surfaces with a silicate material rather than the enamel of Terran organisms.

Respiration is the usual O_2/CO_2 exchange accomplished by paired lungs located in the upper body cavity. The circulatory system is closed, the heart four-chambered, and blood gases are transported by a copper-based haemoglobin, which makes the blood blue in colour.

Bush runners are omnivorous and eat fruits, nuts, grubs, and such small animals as they can catch. They are usually found on the edges of forested



NAME	Bush Runner
HITS	19
SPEED	9 m
SKILLS	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Melee 0, Recon 1, Survival 1
ATTACKS	Tail (2D)
TRAITS	Armour (+1)
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Hunter

regions, semi-forested savannahs, and areas such as bogs where fruit-bearing plants grow in profusion.

They congregate in family groups of two parents and 6-12 juveniles in various stages of development. There are two sexes, which pair for life, producing 2-3 young per season. Depending on the length of the local year, bush runners will have from 1 to 3 litters per mating season.

Bush runner meat is quite succulent and a deep blue in colour. Large quantities in a short period of time can be poisonous, however, so the meat is usually used as a colourful garnish for certain gourmet dishes. Adult bush runners of both sexes produce a musk from glands located in the tail during mating season; this musk contains a compound called suffitoleum, used in the manufacture of expensive perfumes. The compound has resisted all attempts at synthesis, and the musk of animals raised in captivity does not contain it. Therefore, on most planets which have bush runners, the animals are allowed to range free and hunted under strict licensing arrangements for the 2 to 5 grams of suffitoleum that can be recovered from each adult.



LOZIN

Lozin are amphibious carnivores native to the planet Suevanis, a world with high gravity, standard atmosphere, and oceans covering 40% of its surface. Hunting has endangered the species on Suevanis, but recent efforts to transplant the beasts to other worlds have proven successful. Lozin are endothermic, quadrupedal, bilaterally symmetrical organisms with webbed feet, a dorsal fin and both gills and lungs (features reflecting their amphibious nature). Their jaws are filled with a variable number of sharp, undifferentiated teeth. There are two sexes, which mate for life and bear 1-3 young per year.

While in water, they float near the surface with their extremities folded neatly under their body. Their colouring (light grey ventrally, shading to a dark blue-grey dorsally) helps to hide them from their enemies and prospective prey. They prefer to spend most of their time in the water of the warmer regions of a world, floating languidly on the surface, and emerge onto the land only to hunt. Lozin are generally encountered alone or with a mate, except for the few months each year when they are caring for the year's young. They are oviparous but retain the eggs in a special incubation pouch on their ventral body surface until hatching.

They hunt by concealing themselves near the water's edge and lying motionless until their prey comes within range. Then, in a surprising burst of activity, they rush forward and seize the victim, shaking and twisting themselves to tear loose great chunks of flesh. Rarely, they scavenge the kills of other predators.

For obvious reasons, commercial fishermen have hunted the Lozin to near extinction on their home world. Recently, however, advanced technology has developed a number of nonlethal controls over the Lozin. The



NAME	Lozin
HITS	30
SPEED	7 m
SKILLS	Athletics (strength) 2, Melee 2 (natural), Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1
ATTACKS	Teeth (2D)
TRAITS	Amphibious, Armour (+2), Camouflaged, Large (+1)
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Pouncer

areas of primary commercial aquaculture activity on Suevanis are now surrounded by a barrier of sonobuoys, which broadcast ultrasonic sounds. These sounds make Lozin extremely uncomfortable, and have been quite effective in reducing commercial losses.



LUUGIIR


(Aeromedusae globosus domesticus)

Also known by a number of galanglic names – blimp, balloon-head, goodyear, drifter, floater, and gasbag, among others – the Luugiir is found on many worlds throughout the Imperium and adjacent regions. Domesticated by Vilani colonists sometime early in the First Imperium, the animal became a common and popular pet, and was spread throughout Vilani space. Its original homeworld is no longer known, though it is probably one of the low-gravity, dense atmosphere worlds included in the earliest Vilani interstellar sphere of influence.

The Luugiir is invertebrate-like, resembling in some respects a Terrestrial jellyfish; its position on the evolutionary scale, however, is much superior, and it has been surmised that the animal's homeworld never developed vertebrate-like forms.

Luugiirs earn their names from their highly unusual nature. Through a mechanism which continues to fascinate xenobiologists to the present day, these animals generate and store hydrogen gas in large bladders, turning them into organic balloons.

The Luugiir spends a large portion of each day resting in or floating just above small pools of water, lakes, streams, and the like. The creature takes in water, which is broken down into component hydrogen and oxygen. The hydrogen is stored in the creature's gasbag, giving it buoyancy; photoreceptive surfaces on the upper surface of the animal absorb energy needed for this organic electrolysis process from sunlight. The Luugiir also has a limited sort of 'manoeuvring jet'; air from its lungs can be expelled under pressure to give it some control over direction though, for the most part, the floater just drifts with the wind. Four grasping tentacles tether the beast on convenient plants or rocks until it is ready to let go. Domesticated Luugiir are sometimes fitted with a collar attached to a long thin cable, to keep them from being blown away. Others are provided with a network of cables suspended from poles, to which they anchor themselves during high winds.



NAME	Luugiir
HITS	6
SPEED	1 m
SKILLS	Melee 0
ATTACKS	Tentacles (D3)
TRAITS	Large (+1), Poison (Difficult, Death, 2D minutes), Slow Metabolism (-2)
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Trapper

The Luugiir's main source of food comes from small flying creatures. A filter-feeder, the Luugiir drifts through clouds of such animals, consuming them. Domesticated animals will eat almost anything released into the air, and are easy to care for.

Luugiirs have a natural defence against predators, in the form of four specialized 'stinger' tentacles. These inject a fast-acting venom which inhibits the involuntary muscle action of most animals. The poison causes respiratory failure, seizures, and death within 2-12 minutes for humans. Domesticated Luugiirs, however, usually have their poison sacs removed, in the same way as the scent sacs of a pet Terrestrial skunk can be rendered ineffective. Luugiirs can be trained with patience and (in the case of those with intact stingers) caution. In certain rare cases, floaters have been trained to attack on command, and are used by assassins or guardians of valuable property. Despite their size (a Luugiir usually ranges from 0.75 to 1.5 meters in diameter), floaters are light, since most of their body is the gas bag and associated systems. The body proper, containing the animal's vital organs, is suspended below the gas bag, where the eight tentacles come together. Total body weight rarely exceeds 3 kilograms, although larger animals have been reported.



Luugiir are bisexual and oviparous. The mating flight of a pair of Luugiirs is a spectacle of rare grace and beauty. The animals usually form one lasting pairbond, and hatch two young Luugiirs each year. Luugiirs are approximately as intelligent as a Terrestrial housecat, but exhibit the loyalty, affection, and faithfulness of a dog (an early Solomani account of the animals refers to them as a 'sort of aerial airedale'). They are popular as pets; their excellent senses and characteristic moaning warning cry make them fine watchdogs.

Some Luugiirs have returned to a wild state, and can be encountered on many worlds where the atmosphere is breathable and the competition from more efficient aerial forms is not severe. They are mildly dangerous, because of their stingers, but can be avoided by exercising a modicum of caution.

MINIPHANT

(Microe/phas var.)

During the earliest days of expansion into space from Terra, a number of worlds were settled whose terrains challenged the best overland transportation systems. Dense jungle growth and swamplands foiled roadbuilding, and local vegetation sometimes proved nearly unkillable. Since the colonies had (initially at least) very low technologies, one solution to the problem was to use specially bred beasts of burden. These animals could be sent to the colonies in embryonic form, and soon became the low tech alternative to the truck and ATV on many worlds.

One of the animals developed for this program was generated from the Terran Indian elephant (*E/phas indicus*). These beasts were ideal for overland travel in forests and lesser swamps. Later colonies carried the animals to other colonies, and over the years, numerous varieties were developed. The most popular of these are several species collectively referred to as miniphants, so-called because of their smaller size and mass. Miniphants were bred for tractability and high intelligence. They stand an average of 2.05 metres at the shoulder; males weigh 1,800 kgs, females weigh 1,600 kgs. No tusks are present, but miniphants compensate for this lack when lifting loads by having more powerful trunks. Miniphants have an extremely good sense of smell by nature, and superb hearing. The visual sense is not exceptional, and geneering was only partially successful in eliminating a tendency towards nearsightedness. The grey hide of a miniphant is as tough as cloth armour but is very sensitive to touch. The trunk is even more sensitive and susceptible to injury, but makes a fairly effective manipulative limb.

There is a fair chance of running across miniphants on worlds with Tech Levels 0-3, and they can be found on some higher Tech Level worlds in remote and backward regions, employed as cargo handlers, pack and



NAME	Miniphant
HITS	62
SPEED	5 m
SKILLS	Athletics (strength) 3, Melee 0, Recon 0, Stealth 0, Survival 2
ATTACKS	Headbutt or Trample (4D), or Branch (5D)
TRAITS	Armour (+6), Heightened Senses, Large (+3)
BEHAVIOUR	Herbivore, Grazer



hauling beasts, and mounts. In addition, many worlds keep them in zoological collections, where they are popular exhibits.

The cost of upkeep for a miniphant is about Cr150 per day, including 50 kg of hay and vegetable supplements and 50 litres of water.

Miniphants, like many other elephant species, have some powerful abilities to aid their survival. Though they cannot tolerate cold weather, miniphants adapt well to higher temperatures to the limit of human tolerance. All swim exceptionally well. Their feet are padded in such a way as to permit them to move quite silently. Because of their foot structure, it is difficult for them to get stuck in the mud; the foot expands when it strikes the ground, and reduces its diameter when lifted.

Miniphants will rarely attack unless wounded or provoked. The usual tactics involve charging the victim and delivering a butt with the head, trampling with the feet, or seizing a tree branch or similar object in its trunk and flailing away.

While miniphants cannot speak, they can understand spoken commands readily, even when given in whispers. A large number of commands may be learned and will be retained for a long period of time, though few tasks of exceptional complexity will be known. Miniphants make slow but patient learners. They have emotions as humans do, play games and practical jokes, and are amiable.

If used as a pack animal or mount, miniphants can carry up to 350 kgs comfortably or pull up to 2,000 kgs in a wagon or cart.

TREE KRAKEN (LAND SQUID)

(*Hexapoda srrenii*, *H. silvans*)

The tree kraken is native to the planet Forboldn in the Spinward Marches, but can be found on many small, low gravity worlds. An adult tree kraken weighs 6 kilograms and resembles an octopus, having a central body sensory cluster and six radiating tentacle-like arms.

The internal skeleton is rudimentary, consisting of a cartilaginous stiffening of the body to permit lung sacs to function, serve as attachment points for the muscles, and permit leverage for the three part mandible located at the base of the arms.

The arms of the kraken consist of a stiffened central support structure surrounded by a muscular sheath. The arms end in 2-7 (depending on species) smaller appendages, while the ventral surface of the arm and ends of these smaller appendages are equipped with a disc-shaped sucker-like organ covered with hundreds of small, razor-sharp tooth-like structures.

Eyes are paired, operate stereoscopically, and permit the kraken to detect the faintest movement at several hundred metres. Range judgement is extremely good.

Respiration is accomplished by 3-8 (again, varying with species) lung sacs located in the body mass, each with its own connection to the atmosphere. To function, the inner lining of each sac must be kept moist, requiring the kraken to remain in regions of high humidity, such as marshes, swamps, or jungles. Tree krakens have a closed circulatory system and are endothermic.

The kraken attacks its prey by leaping upon it from a height, usually a tree, but often a cliff and occasionally a roof. The arms wrap around the prey, immobilising it and the disc-shaped structures abrade the skin and other tissue into small fragments which are conveyed to the mouth. After feeding, the tree kraken climbs to a high place for protection from other predators, and goes into a digestive torpor, from which it emerges several hours later.

Krakens are hermaphroditic, and reproduction is accomplished by budding. During the six week mating season, two krakens will meet, and exchange genetic material by means of two tube-like structures located above the eyes. After fertilisation these structures swell to several times their normal size and grow arms, eventually (after 8-12 weeks) becoming fully developed

miniature krakens. When fully developed, the young detach themselves and go their own way. This is accomplished when the parent is in a state of torpor after feeding, as krakens will eat their own young.



NAME	Tree Kraken
HITS	19
SPEED	3 m
SKILLS	Athletics (strength) 1, Melee 0, Recon 0, Stealth 2, Survival 1
ATTACKS	Teeth (1D)
TRAITS	Heightened Senses, Small (-1)
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Pouncer

TREE LION

(Platapedalsi arborus)

Tree Lions (also called drop spiders or shovel spiders) are trapbuilding carnivores native to Jesedipere in the Aramis subsector of the Spinward Marches. Scattered to a number of worlds early in the human colonisation of the region, Tree Lions can be found in subtropical forest regions on several worlds in the Aramis and Rhylanor subsectors.

A typical Tree Lion specimen appears as a small, bilaterally symmetrical, 10-legged arachnid-like creature with a tough, leathery hide covered with bristle-like hairs. The foremost pair of legs have developed into two chitinous, shovel-like apparatus. The remaining legs are equipped with grippers adapted for hanging and climbing. All Tree Lions lead an arboreal existence, descending from their home trees only to build and maintain their unusual traps. A single home tree may support two to three Tree Lion nests, depending on the size of the tree. A typical nest will contain a male/female pair and several young, which are hatched from egg-sacs.

A Tree Lion will build its trap in the soil directly beneath its nest, utilising its specially adapted forelegs to scoop out a shallow, conical pit about a metre in diameter. It will then spend several hours spinning a fine network of thick silken strands cross the interior of the pit. Each strand is coated with an adhesive substance which exudes an odour of decaying meat. Small animals investigating the smell become trapped, and as they struggle, alert the Tree Lion via two 'shroud lines' leading from the edge of the pit to the nest. Once alerted, the Tree Lion descends and administers a paralysing bite. Prey is then wrapped in silk and carried to the nest.

Tree Lions do not normally pose a hazard to Travellers, as their venom is relatively mild, but they can prove irritating and distracting. Traps can be spotted with an opposed Recon check against the Tree Lion's Stealth skill, and a Traveller falling into a trap can free themselves with a successful Athletics (dexterity or strength) check.



NAME	Tree Lion
HITS	5
SPEED	4 m
SKILLS	Melee 0, Recon 0, Stealth 0, Survival 1
ATTACKS	Bite (D3)
TRAITS	Camouflaged, Poison (Difficult, Paralysis, 1D minutes), Small (-3)
BEHAVIOUR	Carnivore, Trapper

SEEDSPITTER

(Pseudotupaia gigans)

The seedspitter is a small, moderately intelligent animal native to the forests and uplands of certain worlds throughout the Imperium. Externally, the seedspitter resembles the Terran shrew, but is larger, massing about 3 kgs (about the size of a small domestic cat). It has reddish-grey to reddish-brown fur, a domed head and an elongated nose.

At one time the seedspitter secreted an irritant poison similar to a bee's venom into a chamber located behind its upper lip. It would fill this chamber with venom, constrict it rapidly, and squirt the irritant out through an opening in its upper lip, with sufficient force to propel it one or two metres. The irritant could paralyse small animals (a part of the seedspitter's diet).

As time passed, the animal learned to pick up fruit seeds or small stones with its tongue, insert them into its poison cavity, and propel them at predators. The seedspitter developed this skill to the point where it only secreted enough poison to lightly coat the seed and lubricate its passage out of the chamber.

Because of its affectionate nature and appealing appearance, (the upturned corners of the mouth give the appearance of a perpetual smirk), the seedspitter is a common pet on starships, where it helps in pest control. Seedspitters are easily trained to do tricks such as hitting a target, or 'juggling' seeds by repeatedly spitting them into the air, catching them, and spitting them again. Well-trained animals can keep four or five seeds in the air at once.



NAME	Seedspitter
HITS	3
SPEED	7 m
SKILLS	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Survival 2
ATTACKS	Bite (1)
TRAITS	Small (-3)
BEHAVIOUR	Omnivore, Trapper

THE ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLE

Numerous civilian all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) exist, but the iconic 8-wheel design remains the market leader. Offering a combination of mobility, carrying capacity and affordability, these workhorses can be encountered on many worlds and are sometimes pressed into service as paramilitary vehicles.

The standard model is produced, with local variations, by a great many manufacturers. It is pressurised and capable of operating in a variety of environments, though 'all-terrain' is something of a misnomer. Extremely broken terrain, vertical cliffs and wide crevasses would defeat a standard ATV – or any other ground vehicle for that matter.

The ATV runs on eight independently steerable wheels, each of which is separately powered by an electric motor. This gives extremely fine control when needed and allows an ATV to extricate itself from soft or uneven terrain that would strand a lesser vehicle. An ATV can circle in a little less than its own length, though its ends will overhang this circle slightly. It can completely reverse direction in its own length if the driver is skilled and willing to take the time to make multiple turns.

Maximum road speed varies depending on the model and its loading, but is typically around 250kph. This is a very high speed for a heavy vehicle, and eats power at a rapid rate. It is safe however; crosswinds and minor bumps in the road do not trouble an ATV unduly, and the computerised driving system keeps the ATV stable.

On flat off-road terrain, a maximum speed of 150kph or so is attainable, but may not be advisable unless the ground is known to be very flat. It is more common for an ATV to travel at 60-80kph at most on flat terrain, and much more slowly if there are obstacles to be driven around or over.

The eight large tyres are filled with a foam-like gel which gives them a very low density. Tyres also act as an extra layer of shock-absorption and are self-sealing if punctured. Most ATVs carry a reservoir of gel which can be pumped into depleted tyres, enabling a damaged ATV to more or less continue to drive on two to four damaged tyres providing their outer skins remain at least partially intact.

The low-density wheels also contribute to buoyancy in water, and on some versions propulsion is by means of wheel rotation. Other variants mount a waterjet or sometimes propeller drive. All are fully amphibious without preparation and will right themselves if upturned. Operations on open water are possible, but an ATV is not a seagoing vessel. It can cross a large and reasonably calm lake or make a short open-sea transit but will

be tossed about by wave activity and may roll in a beam-on sea. Being repeatedly inverted will not structurally harm a sealed ATV and will not sink it, but loose objects inside will be flung about and personnel will suffer terribly.

Power is normally supplied by an advanced fuel-cell system good for 900 kilometres at steady cruising speed and nominally 600 kilometres if pushed hard. The plant has power take-offs in the form of both electrical sockets and rotating shafts for power tools and camp equipment. It can be replenished from any standard power source, such as a starship's reactor or dedicated heavy-vehicle charging point.

The standard ATV has a powerful set of lights plus low-light, thermal and radar driving assistance, and a longer-range terrain-mapping radar set which can be used for route-planning, map-making or survey purposes. All sensors feed into a computerised driving and mapping system which greatly improves average off-road speed by indicating the easiest or fastest route ahead, and automatically controls traction and torque supplied to the wheels when struggling through difficult terrain. With the full driver-assist package running, an ATV is extremely easy to drive, though rather ungainly and slow. More experienced users tailor the assistance package to their own capabilities to get the best performance out of the vehicle.

The driving compartment has two seats for a driver and co-driver, and a side access hatch. There is also a roof hatch with a rather basic sling-seat to allow a crewmember to obtain a good vantage point or just enjoy the view. The driving compartment is separated from the main section of the hull by a bulkhead and can function as a secondary airlock – albeit a very inconvenient one – if necessary.

The main compartment is divided into two sections, usually referred to as 'living' and 'working'. On the standard ATV these areas are divided by a simple retractable screen, and are very basic in terms of equipment. The living area contains seating for six and a folding table, whilst the working area is normally set up to hold a variety of equipment depending upon the current mission.

Although the vehicle is pressurised, it is not well optimised for operations on airless or hostile worlds. The rear door is turned into an airlock by deploying a flexible 'baglock' inside the working compartment. This takes up some space and can require moving equipment if it has not been used for a while. Similarly, the standard ATV is not really suitable for long-term operations. There is a tiny toilet cubicle, not really worthy of the title 'fresher' and a basin that supplies water for washing and cooking.

There is no galley facility aboard a standard ATV, but a boiling vessel provides hot water for drinking, washing and reconstituting dried ration packs. Living out of an ATV of this sort is often described as 'one small step up from sleeping rough', which is a little unkind. However, those forced to do so for any length of time generally agree that it is a most

STANDARD 8 WHEEL ATV

Armour

Front	6
Sides	6
Rear	6

Traits

ATV



TL	12	Passengers	7
Skill	Drive (wheeled)	Cargo	2.5 tons
Agility	-2	Hull	60
Speed (cruise)	High (Medium)	Shipping	10 tons
Range (cruise)	600 (900)	Cost	Cr155 000
Crew	1		

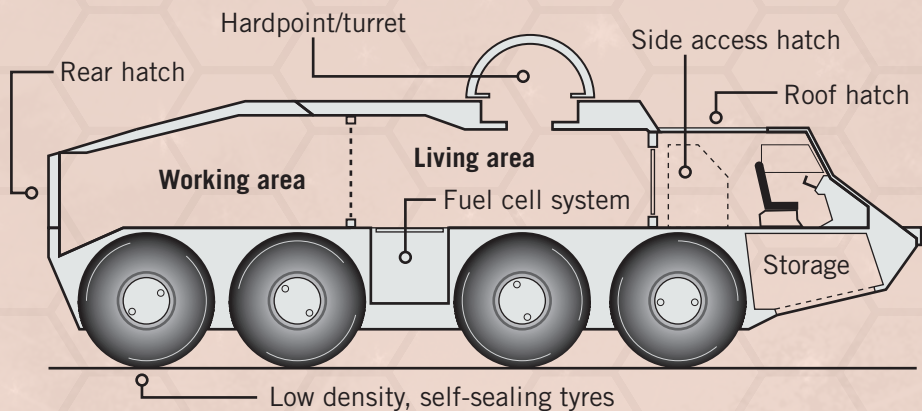
Equipment

Autopilot (skill level)	-	Aquatic Drive, Communications System (improved), Computer/1, Life Support (short term), Navigation System (improved), Sensor System (improved), Small Turret
Communications (range)	500 km	
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2	
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1	
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-	
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-	

uncomfortable experience – not least since the sleeping arrangements consist of nothing better than reclining the seats as far as possible.

The standard ATV has a hardpoint for a weapon or large system on the roof, and can be fitted with a small turret at need. Most are not armed, but occasionally ATVs are pressed into service as very lightly armoured combat vehicles. There is a fair amount of internal stowage, but large items of equipment are normally carried in bins or lockers on the outer surfaces of the vehicle. The power plant is located under the main hull, and can be accessed by way of an internal hatch if necessary.

A standard 8-wheel ATV costs Cr155000. However, many users choose to purchase various accessories. ATVs are sometimes encountered as



workhorse vehicles on new colonies or small installations, swapping between roles as necessary.

Outer Gantry: An ATV can be fitted with a railed gantry and panels that create a wider flat area. This allows personnel to ride outside the vehicle when conditions allow, and conduct experiments or work from the safety of an elevated position. A gantry costs Cr10000 to fit, or Cr20000 for a folding version that does not make the vehicle any wider when closed down.

Construction Pack: A construction pack consists of a small 'dozer blade at the front of the vehicle and a light backhoe at the rear, along with hand-held heavy tools such as drills and saws capable of cutting or smashing rock. The pack essentially turns an ATV into a construction and earthmoving vehicle – albeit not a very good one. It costs Cr75000 and takes around two hours to fit or remove.

Camp Pack: A camp pack is normally carried by vehicles operating on habitable worlds. It consists of large awnings on the sides and rear of the vehicle plus lights, heaters and proximity sensors intended to create a quick and easy outdoor camp. A more advanced version uses silvered reflective materials to protect against stellar radiation and heat, and has plastic tents rather than awnings. It can be used to create a 3-cell 'shirtsleeves' working environment on an airless world, accessed through the cab doors and rear airlock, plus a semi-rigid airlock leading directly outside from the rear tent. A basic camp pack cost Cr 5000; the airless world variant costs Cr 40000 and includes air reprocessing equipment for the tented compartments.

Securing/Stabilising Pack: Normally used on low-gravity worlds or those with very turbulent wind conditions, the stability pack consists of a set of retractable feet and outriggers which can rest on solid ground or be driven into a looser surface to prevent the vehicle from tipping over. The pack is added as a workshop modification and cannot quickly be removed. It slows the vehicle by 25% in all terrain but permits laborious crossings of very dangerous areas by a creep-and-secure method or extended operations in

4 WHEEL ATV

		<u>Armour</u>	<u>Traits</u>
		Front	10
		Sides	10
		Rear	10
TL	12		ATV
Skill	Drive (wheeled)		
Agility	-2		
Speed (cruise)	High (Medium)		
Range (cruise)	600 (900)		
Crew	1		
		Passengers	3
		Cargo	500kg
		Hull	30
		Shipping	5 tons
		Cost	Cr112 000

Equipment

Autopilot (skill level)	-	Aquatic Drive, Communications System (improved), Computer/1, Control Systems (enhanced), Life Support (short term)Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved)
Communications (range)	500 km	
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2	
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1	
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-	
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-	

places where an unsecured vehicle would be in grave danger. The pack costs Cr70000 to obtain, which includes fitting.

4 WHEEL ATV

The 4-wheel All-Terrain Vehicle is essentially a scaled-down version of the standard model, used for scouting ahead of an expedition or utility tasks in rough terrain. It shares many components in common with its larger cousin, and can be driven just as easily. Rough-terrain performance is not quite as good, since although the vehicle is lighter, it also has greater ground pressure.

Layout is much the same as a standard ATV, with a 2-seat cab at the front and working compartment in the rear. A smaller version of the standard fuel cell power plant is located under the working compartment. The primary difference in terms of construction is the greater armour of the 4-wheel ATV. Small ATVs are sometimes used as security vehicles for frontier outposts and small colonies. In that role they are generally known as scout cars, patrol vehicles or a variety of similar terms that attempt to conceal the fact that they are essentially just an off-road vehicle, possibly with a gun on the top.

LARGE ATV

The standard 8-wheel ATV is designed to provide transportation over a short period of time – two to three days at most – and in a limited radius. Six to nine hundred kilometres is entirely adequate for operations around a base or landed starship, but for long-range exploration and lengthy deployments a larger and more capable vehicle is needed. The large ATV is a scaled-up version of the standard one, with twice the internal volume. This translates to roughly 30% more length and width, and slightly increased ground pressure. Performance is equivalent to the standard ATV, but the large version is much better equipped and has an effectively unlimited radius of operation thanks to its fusion power plant.

The large ATV costs almost ten times as much as the standard version. Most of this cost is incurred by the hostile environment protection package which seals the vehicle against vacuum, insidious and corrosive atmospheres, and the fusion power plant which replaces the fuel cells of the smaller ATV. A few users prefer a conventionally fuelled variant, in which case the vehicle is Cr200000 cheaper and gains 10 Spaces for equipment or cargo – provided it can be squeezed into the underfloor reactor compartment.

Armour is a little better than a standard ATV, though this is more for micrometeorite protection than combat. The hull and windows will withstand small arms fire for a while, but can be penetrated by a sufficiently determined opponent. In an actively hostile situation, the ATV's best defence is its ability to maintain a good off-road speed as it retreats.

Layout of this bigger vehicle is very similar to that of the standard ATV. The cab is almost identical, other than a small space behind the driving seats where the reactor maintenance hatch is located. This area is invariably filled with improvised storage racks, as the reactor will run for decades without refuelling.

The living section contains a tiny fresher and even smaller mini-galley, with a configurable table and seating or 4-person bunking area depending on which panels are folded out. On long journeys with a full crew of eight hot-bunking, an ATV can become claustrophobic and quite unpleasant. This can be alleviated by time spent working outside or just parking for a while to allow the crew a little downtime.

The working area is normally configured when the ATV is bought, and can contain scientific equipment, prospecting gear or whatever else the operators decide to fit. This area can be arranged as a living space with additional furniture. The latter can be improvised from whatever is lying around, or a kit can be bought for Cr2000.

It is common for ATVs being used primarily as transportation to have one area set up for bunking and the other for eating, socialising, and sitting around complaining about how the driver cannot seem to miss a single

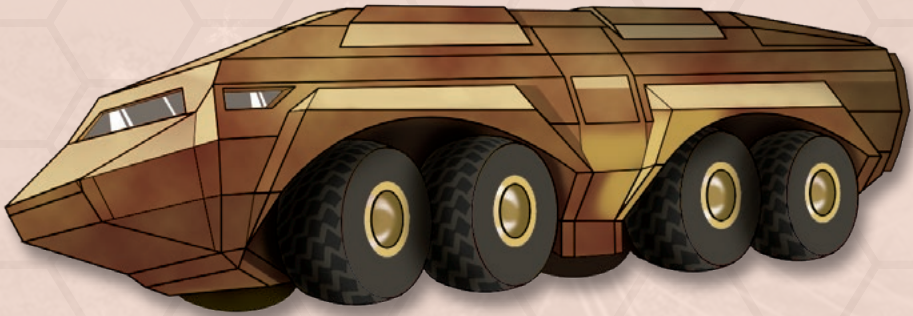
LARGE ATV

Armour

Front	10
Sides	10
Rear	10

Traits

ATV



TL	12
Skill	Drive (wheeled)
Agility	-2
Speed (cruise)	High (Medium)
Range (cruise)	Unlimited
Crew	1

Passengers	7
Cargo	0.5 tons
Hull	120
Shipping	20 tons
Cost	Cr949 000

Equipment

Autopilot (skill level)	-	Airlock, Aquatic Drive, Bunks x 2, Communications System (improved), Computer/1, Control Systems (enhanced), Fresher, Fusion Plant, Life Support (short term), Mini-Galley, Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved), Vacuum Protection
Communications (range)	500 km	
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2	
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1	
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-	
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-	

bump. Access to the living and working area is normally by way of the rear airlock, which can be used as a normal door. The lock on a large ATV is a ‘proper’ airlock rather than the flimsy plastic one found on other ATVs, and has decontamination and dust-removal facilities as well as stowage for vacc suits.

GRAV-ASSISTED ATV

The grav-assisted ATV is not a true grav vehicle, but can use lifters to make short hops of up to 50m in height and 2-300m in length. The vehicle has limited manoeuvring capability whilst airborne but is very clumsy, imposing DM-2 on Drive checks.

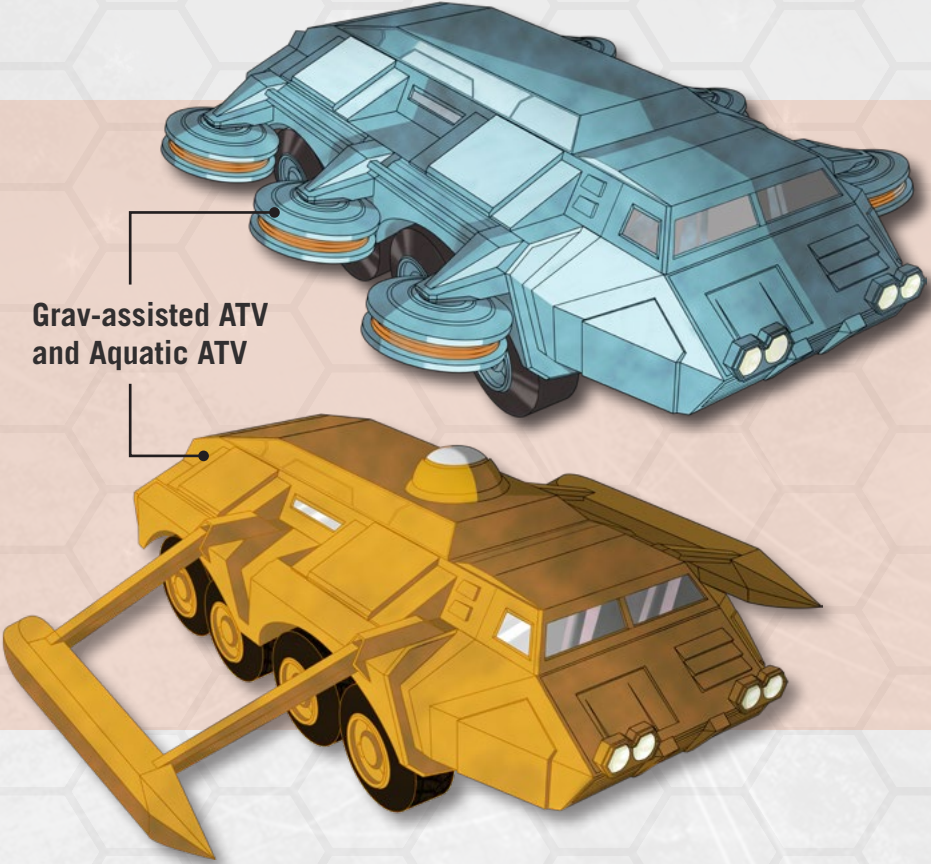
More commonly, the grav unit is used to reduce ground pressure and allow crossings of extremely loose or weak materials such as dust pools on a moon or an extremely swampy region on an Earth-like planet. The grav

GRAV-ASSISTED ATV

		Armour	
		Front	10
		Sides	10
		Rear	10
		Traits	
		ATV	
TL	12	Passengers	3
Skill	Drive (wheeled)	Cargo	500kg
Agility	-2	Hull	120
Speed (cruise)	High (Medium)	Shipping	20 tons
Range (cruise)	Unlimited	Cost	MCr1.18
Crew	1		

Equipment

Autopilot (skill level)	-	Airlock, Aquatic Drive, Auxiliary Grav Drive, Bunks x 2, Communications System (improved), Computer/1, Control Systems (enhanced), Fresher, Fusion Plant, Life Support (short term), Mini-Galley, Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved), Vacuum Protection
Communications (range)	500 km	
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2	
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1	
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-	
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-	



The image shows two futuristic ATVs. The top one is blue and has four large, circular, orange-rimmed thrusters or stabilizers extending from its sides. The bottom one is yellow and has a large, flat, rectangular outrigger extending from its front-left side. Both vehicles have a boxy, armored appearance with multiple windows and lights.

Grav-assisted ATV and Aquatic ATV

unit increases the cost of the vehicle and reduces its crew capacity by half. It retains the living area more or less unchanged from other ATVs and inserts the grav drive mechanism into the rear of the compartment, with lifters and associated machinery around the base and sides of the vehicle, replacing some equipment lockers.

AQUATIC ATV

Any ATV can survive being submerged or overturned in water – though this would not be pleasant for the crew. The aquatic version is designed to be stable on the surface and capable of submerging. This is achieved by means of large retractable outriggers which rest against the flanks of the vehicle until deployed. The outriggers greatly increase stability in rough water and prevent the craft from rolling over. They are also used as ballast tanks, flooding to trim the ATV for submergence.

In addition to its own waterjet propulsion system, the ATV can use jets in the outriggers whilst submerged. Top speed is around 25kph on the surface of calm water and 7-8kph underwater. Small fins assist with

control but most attitude control is by way of the water jets. The ATV is clumsy when submerged, but can drive along the bed of a river or body of water almost as well as on dry land, and at up to 20% of land speed. A secondary underwater sensor package is installed.

An aquatic ATV can operate safely at depths of up to 50m, and with increasing risk at up to twice that. Crush depth is usually around 250-350m, but much depends on the age of the vehicle and how recently its seals have been replaced. Leaks begin to occur after 100m is passed, possibly sooner if maintenance has not been kept up to date.

The working and living areas are narrowed, creating room for the outriggers to be carried against the hull. The seating/bunking area is moved into the rear of the compartment, leaving a very narrow galley and a fresher, plus some storage space in the front of the compartment. This has the effect of reducing the capacity of the vehicle to four crew and passengers.

AQUATIC ATV

TL	12
Skill	Drive (wheeled)
Agility	-2
Speed (cruise)	High (Medium)
Range (cruise)	Unlimited
Crew	1

Traits

ATV

Armour	
Front	10
Sides	10
Rear	10
Passengers	3
Cargo	500kg
Hull	120
Shipping	20 tons
Cost	Cr1 099 075

Equipment

Autopilot (skill level)	-	Airlock, Aquatic Drive, Bunks x 2, Communications System (improved), Computer/1, Control Systems (enhanced), Fresher, Fusion Plant, Life Support (short term), Mini-Galley, Navigation System (improved), Sensors (improved), Underwater sensors (improved), Vacuum Protection
Communications (range)	500 km	
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2	
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1	
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-	
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-	

ADVENTURE

THE SHIP IN THE LAKE

Location: Hazel (C645747-5), Trin's Veil subsector, Spinward Marches

The world of Hazel was surveyed for mineral deposits long ago, and found to be unviable as an extraction site. It was passed over for investment during the Spinward Marches' early growth phase, and remained a backwater ever since. Recently, the mining megacorporation Sternmetal Horizons has become suspicious that early reports were falsified and has attempted to obtain new survey data of its own. These efforts have been hampered by local guerrilla activity.

An expedition to a promising site was lost when their vessel was sunk by rebel forces, and the megacorporation wants a freelance team to quietly retrieve the survey data they were carrying. This means diving in a wreck of a local passenger steamer in a region where the government has lost control to guerrillas. Sternmetal Horizons has been warned to stay away from Hazel, and for political reasons wishes to be seen to comply – at least, until it is sure something there is worth the legal wrangles.

HAZEL

Hazel is located one parsec from Trin, one of the most important worlds in the Spinward Marches. If it had possessed good mineral resources it might have become a supporting industrial centre and enjoyed rapid early growth, but lacking them Hazel was relegated to always being a backwater. The world is not really on the way to anywhere and does not receive much passing trade, but for a time it did enjoy slight popularity as a tourist destination.

Hazel's atmosphere is listed as being tainted, but the 'taint' actually takes the form of local bacteria which cannot survive for long away from their parent world's ecosphere. Although these bacteria can cause a range of unpleasant respiratory infections, a simple inoculation is available which renders the recipient immune for a period of several weeks. Thus Hazel is safe to visit for anyone who has taken the correct medication or built up an immunity over years.

Although the starport and its associated startown are rather bland, most of Hazel's small cities are picturesque and tend to lie in areas of considerable natural beauty. Tourism provided much-needed revenue, and in particular a water-based tourism industry sprang up. The cities of Cocta and New Okayama, lying on opposite ends of Lake Okayama, were particularly popular. Cruise ships (inevitably called 'steamers' even

- Rebel Camps
- Small towns / villages
- Old mine / quarry
- Steamer wreck



Cocta

Village/
small town

Lake
Okayama

New
Okayama

Starport
& startown

10 miles

though they used more advanced engines) plied back and forth along the lake carrying holidaymakers who spent their Credits in the cities or aboard steamers.

The boom was short-lived. The tourism economy was already waning when a large-scale rebellion broke out, making the region north of the starport/capital dangerous to visit. Attacks on offworld tourists, intended to harm the world's only industry and force the government to the negotiating table, all-but-killed the trade and drove the local economy into deep recession. Today, the steamers mostly rust at their moorings, though a few still operate in the safer regions to the south of the starport, and one or two are used as gunboats by the rebels.

THE REBELLION

The rebels have been in arms for a decade now. They have gained control of a modest area around the north end of Lake Okayama but have little support beyond it. The government, for its part, lacks the means to strike back at the rebels in an effective manner. This is largely due to logistical problems – the ten million or so people of Hazel are spread out in small cities with little infrastructure connecting them, and the government lacks the means to conduct an effective campaign far beyond the confines of the cities. Rivers and lakes are generally used for troop movements – such as can be attempted – aboard converted civilian craft and basic gunboats.

Both rebels and government forces have access to locally produced TL5 firearms, which typically means bolt-action or semi-automatic rifles and bulky machineguns. The thin atmosphere makes conventional air power a problem, and neither side has access to much in the way of grav transport. The war is thus fought between foot patrols landed by riverine craft, with the occasional raid in greater strength by one side or the other. A weary stalemate has descended, with neither side willing to enter into serious negotiations.

MINERAL RIGHTS ON HAZEL

The early survey reports were indeed falsified. Hazel's mineral deposits are patchy and not particularly good, but there are a few areas with easily accessible resource fields, information on which has been suppressed. The reason for this was apparently to create a reserve for major industrial corporations on Trin, who intended to open up the world when they saw the need. The expansion of interstellar trade made this unnecessary, but maintaining the reserve status of Hazel became a habit.

Trin's major industrial concerns naturally have the ear of the ruling elite, which includes the subsector duke. Outside concerns are discouraged from investigating Hazel's possible mineral wealth by various means; smaller companies are generally swatted away by difficulties in the marketplace or with legal obstructions dropped in their path. Larger corporations are subject to more subtle influence which has worked well enough until now,

but Sternmetal Horizons is not a firm to be discouraged by a few layers of red tape and vague hints that a favourable contract might go elsewhere if they keep digging.

Having lost one survey team already, Sternmetal is unwilling to risk any more of its personnel on a low-key mission, but there is insufficient evidence to merit sending a major security force capable of keeping local guerrillas at bay. The middle road, for now, is to use deniable independent assets to find out if there is any point to committing greater resources. A band of Travellers fits the bill admirably.

LIBRARY DATA

The following information is widely available through data terminals and standard encyclopaediae.

Planetary Mineral Surveys

Much can be done from orbit, with terrain mapping, densitometers, and the latest in predictive modelling software. However, all this technology indicates likelihoods rather than certainties. A corporation that commits the sort of resources necessary for a major extraction project – or even a small ‘proving’ site – on the strength of orbital surveys alone will sooner or later lose a great deal of money.

This means that at some point there needs to be a groundside presence, with samples taken and analysis performed. A survey team can be directed to promising sites by orbital data, but it is their work that will influence the final decision to commit. The next stage is usually a ‘wildcat’ extraction operation, bringing up minerals on a small scale to demonstrate viability of the deposits. Even with the best surveys available, no more than six out of ten wildcat sites prove viable, but this is still better odds than using orbital data alone.

THE SITUATION

Sternmetal Horizons has the political and economic clout to overcome obstacles if it chooses to do so, but there are expenses to be met and political issues to be dealt with if it goes ahead with exploitation of Hazel. Proof that it is worth the time, trouble and money will be required, and it seems likely that proof is lying on the bed of Lake Okayama. Sternmetal does not want to antagonise the government of Hazel but would prefer to keep its options open regarding the rebels – it may be simplest to bribe the de facto controllers of the region rather than fight them or have a war going on around the extraction operation. Negotiations are likely to be much trickier if Sternmetal-backed mercenaries have been exchanging fire with rebel patrols. A band of Travellers, on the other hand, can be written off as a bunch of trigger-happy yahoos trying to make a quick Credit in the middle of a war zone.

Thus Sternmetal Horizons approaches the Travellers. The deal is a success-only contract, with a payment of Cr200000 if the Travellers can locate the survey data obtained by a Sternmetal prospecting party lost seven years ago during a guerrilla attack on a Lake Okayama steamer. The steamer's rough location and course is known, but the details of the sinking are not. What Sternmetal has been able to discover is that it was attacked by rebel gunboats whilst attempting to rescue offworld tourists and local civilians from the city of Cocta at the north end of Lake Okayama. Cocta remains in rebel hands and should be considered too dangerous to visit, though other communities on the lake's shore may be neutral in the conflict.

It is known that the survey team boarded the steamer, which began to cross the lake when it was fired upon and badly holed. According to reports, the rebels ceased fire when it became apparent the steamer was not a government vessel but a non-combatant, though other sources say it was pounded into scrap. It seems that the steamer made some progress down the lake before suffering rapid structural failure and sinking with great loss of life. The survey team went down with the ship.

If the Travellers can enter the sunken wreck and bring up the survey team's records and instruments, they will receive full payment. An additional Cr10000 is payable for the bodies of the five-strong survey team if they can be recovered and preserved in some way. The precise location of the wreck is worth Cr100000, but no other outcomes are considered a success. Sternmetal's representative does not say so, but the firm wants proof the rebels killed their team, just in case it proves useful in future negotiations.

OUTFITTING AND TRANSPORT

Sternmetal Horizons will arrange for the Travellers to be conveyed to Hazel aboard a scheduled passenger ship, and for suitable cover stories to allay suspicions. They will have to get from the starport to the lake using their own resources, though that should not be difficult. It is quite common for tourists to rent boats or hovercraft to see the sights, though there are restrictions regarding destinations.

Once clear of the starport, the Travellers will receive a package drop containing any equipment they chose not to carry through starport customs. Hazel has Law Level 7, so the Travellers will not be permitted to bring in guns through the starport. Diving equipment would not provoke suspicion if the Travellers seem like the types who enjoy underwater exploration, or it could be dropped outside the city. The drop will be made by a free trader crew who have been paid well to kick a bunch of crates on one-use grav landing units out of their airlock and then depart the system. No backup will be available after this point.

In addition to their own weaponry and equipment, Sternmetal Horizons will provide personal armament for any Traveller who wants it. This amounts to basic body armour such as a flak jacket, a handgun, and a larger weapon such as an assault rifle, combat shotgun or submachinegun, with a modest

amount of ammunition. Equipment will be 'clean', with no connection to crime, and can be kept. It is a deliberate hodgepodge to avoid suspicion that this is a corporate operation. Note that the weaponry on offer is of a personal-combat nature and superior to what the locals have. Gauss guns, plasma weapons and the like are not available from Sternmetal Horizons and the firm does not really want the Travellers deploying them on its behalf, even deniably.

Once preparations are made, it is a simple matter to reach Hazel and disembark at the starport. Traffic is down since the tourism boom of 15-20 years ago, but there are still a few families keen to enjoy a holiday amid the scenery of this apparently peaceful world. A few professionals seeking employment are also passing through the port.

Customs checks are not vigorous unless the Travellers do or say something suspicious. It would be possible to smuggle small illegal items through customs if the Travellers have prepared well, though their patron would discourage it since the Travellers will be receiving all they need after they clear the starport area.

BEYOND THE PORT

Few tourists go north to New Okayama these days, since it is on the fringe of the disputed zone. The world government downplays the severity of the rebellion but allows tourists to go north only under the protection of armed guides, whose main function is to warn offworlders they will be arrested if they proceed further north than the fringe of the conflict zone, and call for backup if they are ignored. There are several reasons why restrictions are in place, starting with a genuine desire to keep visitors safe – dead tourists are not good for business! The government also wants to keep foreign journalists out of the war zone and prevent the rebels gaining offworld contacts that might bring in weapons or establish sympathy among populations of nearby worlds.

If the Travellers claim to be heading somewhere other than northwards they will be allowed to proceed unhindered, though transportation might be a problem. If they want to go north they will be assigned a guide (possibly more than one) who offers good, respectful advice and genuinely tries to ensure the Travellers have a good time. This might make it difficult to pick up equipment, but that is a problem the Travellers will have to solve using bribery, deception or perhaps more drastic means.

Heading north by river or overland by road or rail is not much of a problem, though to avoid suspicion the Travellers may have to stop off at the odd small town and act like tourists. Once they reach the southern end of Lake Okayama, however, things start to change. The people they encounter seem more troubled and there is less fun to be had for tourists. Guides will become increasingly insistent that the Travellers proceed no further, but can be talked into 'just another couple of days' before turning back south.

The Travellers can get away with this long enough to obtain a boat of some kind and start messing about at the southern end of Lake Okayama.

Guides – if they are still present – will become suspicious if the Travellers go farther north. Whether their intentions are to contact the rebels or they are just entitled offworld jerks, the guides are adamant they must stop, and will warn the Travellers that they will be reported and arrested, or even fired upon by the government's forces if they continue. If the Travellers have ditched their guides, local officials will be even more suspicious of them and a response will become inevitable unless the Travellers avoid the main towns.

OPERATING AROUND THE LAKE

There are numerous boats to be hired, borrowed or stolen around the lake, but the referee should remember this is a conflict zone. Intruders intent on theft may meet a violent response... or be greeted warmly by someone who thinks they are offworld sympathisers come to help the rebel cause. Travellers might even be contacted by representatives of the rebellion, who present a catalogue of mistreatment and injustice and ask for help. There are opportunities for the Travellers to become involved in the rebellion on one side or the other, and also the possibility of getting shot by one or both sides.

Every D3 days the Travellers are in the vicinity of Lake Okayama, there is a 1 in 6 chance of an encounter with forces of one side or the other. Both rebels and government troops are nervous and trigger-happy when



in disputed countryside, but a careful and diplomatic approach might enable the Travellers to blag their way through both sides. Government forces will be deeply suspicious of an armed party, however, and rebels might covet the Travellers' weapons sufficiently to attack them.

An option for exploring the lake is to seek out one of the many derelict pleasure steamers rusting at their moorings in small towns around the lake. Some have been co-opted as gunboats – big, ungainly craft with a couple of machineguns or a light artillery piece strapped to the deck – but most just lie in fading splendour. With a few days' work one of these craft could be returned to working order, providing a mobile base to explore the lake. Of course, there is a possibility that one side or the other will stumble upon the Travellers, or that someone will betray them.

FINDING THE WRECK

The sunken steamer lies in about 50m of water near the northern end of the lake. It is a testament to the determination of her crew that she got so far despite being riddled with holes, but when she went down it happened fast. Finding the wreck could take a while.

Each search the Travellers attempt takes D3 days. The wreck will be located on a roll of 12+ on 2D, with the following DMs:

- If the Travellers have obtained reliable information about the last hours of the steamer's career, and calculated a search area: DM+2
- If the Travellers have basic underwater sensors such as a portable sonar unit or remotely-operated vehicle with cameras: DM+2
- If the Travellers have good underwater sensors: DM+4
- For each search already made: DM+1

Once the wreck is found, instruments and records must be retrieved. This could be done using a remote vehicle or by diving on the wreck. It is a tricky and hazardous business requiring entering the wreck and searching the surrounding lake bed. There are many bodies as well as jagged sections of hull and debris to be avoided, and the possibility exists that rebel watercraft might approach whilst a Traveller is underwater.

INTERVENTION

If a patrol is encountered during the search or the retrieval, it will consist of 2D personnel armed with rifles, or a smaller number in a boat armed with a machinegun. Whether the patrol investigates or simply opens fire depends on circumstances; it is possible that a boatload of armed rebels might just drive past with a cheery wave and a few friendly insults if the Travellers look like they belong in the area.

Although the Travellers were offered weapons for the mission, Sternmetal Horizons would prefer they carried out the retrieval without violence. This is entirely possible using a combination of stealth and deception,

though many Travellers may resort to gunplay at the slightest provocation. Once this happens, additional units will be pulled into the area, possibly resulting in an escalating clash between government and rebel forces.

Escalation will take the form of more patrols or single gunboats hurrying to the area. A more coherent response will materialise eventually, but neither side is very organised nor expecting more than the usual desultory skirmishing.

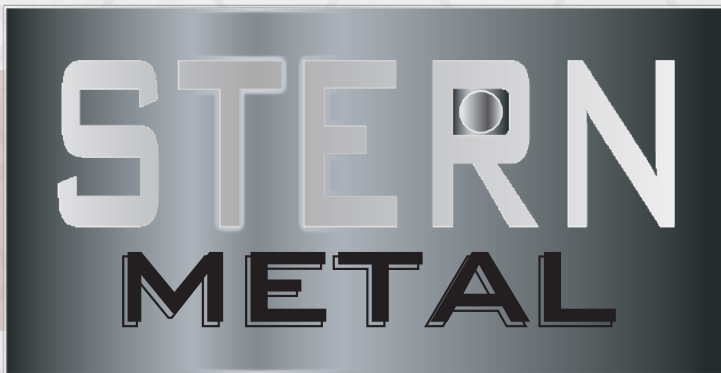
MISSION COMPLETION

The Travellers will need to get back to the starport and offworld with the retrieved survey results. They will be arrested if they try to bring their weaponry back through customs, and might face questioning if they are known to have been in the vicinity of a major clash triggered by persons unknown... or they try to bring preserved bodies through the port.

It is entirely possible for the Travellers to get in and out again without much more than a few ripples on the surface of Lake Okayama. On the other hand, there is the potential for starting the largest maritime battle Hazel has ever witnessed. Everything depends on the actions of the Travellers.

Once the data is in the hands of Sternmetal Horizons, the mission is complete and payment will be made. Sternmetal may choose to begin prospecting in the target region, and may want the Travellers to return to Hazel, especially if they are familiar with one or both sides in the conflict. Whether Sternmetal chooses to help the government crush the rebels or cuts a deal with both sides depends upon circumstances, but the Travellers have an opportunity to influence the decision if they choose.

It is possible that gunboats will continue to clash on Lake Okayama for years to come, and patrols may be sniping at one another in the forests nearby for another generation. Subsequent events are, as always, at the discretion of the referee.





CENTRAL SUPPLY

>> ROBOTS SECTION <<

Remotely Piloted Reconnaissance Unit

The Remotely Piloted Reconnaissance Unit, or RPRU, is known by a variety of colloquial names; most notably Spy-Eye. It is a sphere, about 50 cm in diameter, whose surface is studded with lenses, microphones and other detection devices. The device is primarily used for visual observations but has much broader capabilities.

Optical equipment includes a primary and several secondary cameras capable of operating in the normal spectrum or low-light conditions. A bank of thermal sensors complements them and can be used to create a composite image. It is possible to bring multiple cameras to bear on the same point, though some of the secondary cameras are positioned so as to constantly give all-round vision using fish-eye lenses.

The RPRU is also equipped with a bank of directional and general microphones. Some are specialised for certain frequencies; others are designed to give the device a basic direction-finding capability. A RPRU can eavesdrop on a normal conversation around 50 metres away and could detect it and point out its origin from three to four times that distance. The unit can also detect ultrasonic and low-frequency vibrations.

A laser microphone is also fitted. This is normally used to listen to sounds through glass or similar materials but can also be used to measure vibrations in the ground or walls, which has applications from earthquake detection to determining what size of vehicle is passing on the far side of a wall. The RPRU's olfactory sensor can detect particles in the atmosphere down to concentrations of 1 part in 100,000, and can track a known scent almost as well as a dog or similar animal.

The RPRU is propelled by a gravitic unit, with a maximum speed of 200 kph in normal flight and 60 kph when in nap-of-the-earth (NOE) low-flight mode. The device has a maximum flying time of 5 hours.

The RPRU can be directly controlled or sent to carry out a preset reconnaissance with limited autonomy to avoid obstacles and get into designated areas. When flying within line of sight of the operator, it is guided through a maser beam, which is extremely hard to detect. In other conditions it receives instructions on UHF frequencies, out to a maximum of about 30km depending on local conditions.

If control is interrupted the device reverts to a pre-selected instruction which may be one of several options. The device may be commanded to carry out a specific flight pattern, return to the operator, conceal

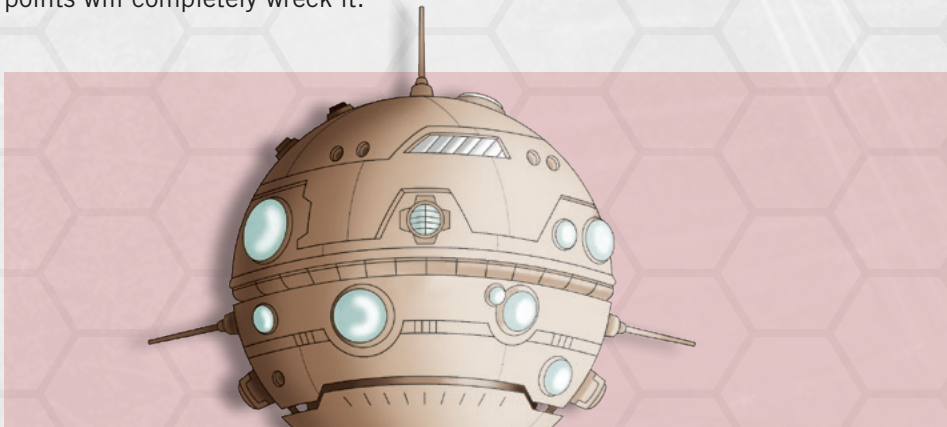
itself and await further instructions, or return after a pre-set time. It can also be instructed to operate semi-autonomously in the event of control interruption, but more commonly if autonomous operation is desired the unit will be told to do so from the outset.

The RPRU is programmed and operated through the Control and Reception Unit (CRU). This consists of a control panel, and three fold-out display screens. The CRU is carried in a small and rugged attaché case. It weighs 3kg and costs Cr15000, whilst the RPRU weighs 12kg. The Cr75000 price for the RPRU includes a charging station and maintenance tools. It becomes available at TL11.

Devices of this sort are frequently used by forward observers and reconnaissance personnel in military and mercenary units, with charging stations and control units sometimes mounted in light vehicles. The user interface is simple enough most Travellers can fly an RPRU and get some information from its sensors, but the Electronics (remote ops) skill is required to utilise the full capabilities of the unit.

An RPRU moves silently and has no detectable heat emissions. All its detection systems are passive and will not reveal its presence, but guidance and communication signals are detectable. The laser is unlikely to be detected as it is directional but many users choose to select autonomous mode and shut down the real-time information relay when operating a unit covertly. An RPRU that suffers catastrophic damage will make a burst transmission of everything it has recorded whilst operating covertly, unless it has been instructed not to do so or is unable. If so, the unit will have to be directly recovered or data retrieved from surviving electronics by a second RPRU or drone approaching to close range.

An RPRU is a small target, imposing DM-2 on attempts to hit it when moving normally. If instructed to evade it will bob about unpredictably, increasing the penalty to DM-6. It has Protection 4 but is quite fragile if this is penetrated; 6 points of damage will disable an RPRU and 12 points will completely wreck it.





CHARTED SPACE

EMPERORS OF THE THIRD IMPERIUM

The Old (or First) Imperium spanned a large portion of this spiral arm of the galaxy before Terrans ever reached the stars – it persisted for nearly two hundred years in the face of Terran expansion. Ultimately falling before the expansion of Terran humanity, it reincarnated as The Rule of Man. While Terrans were superb in their expansion to other systems and other worlds, their control of the stellar reaches already explored proved too little too late, and this Ramshackle Empire continued the pervasive decay present in the Old Imperium into an age of war and chaos called the Long Night.

This period of interstellar anarchy ended some 1,500 years later with the establishment of the Third Imperium. In a thirty year campaign which moulded public opinion at the same time that battle starships were convincing local governments, Cleon Zhunastu committed a family industrial base and a firm foundation of political support to the creation of an empire that would rival the glories of past ages. He succeeded in forming a government that controlled, with a velvet-gloved fist, nearly a hundred subsectors.

In the 1,100 years since the assumption of Cleon I, the Emperor's List has been a convenient reference to the events in the growth and development of the Imperium.

Cleon I: First of the Zhunastu dynasty and first Emperor of the Imperium. Born 57 PI (*Pre Imperium*), proclaimed hereditary emperor for life in the first year of the Imperium. Died of natural causes in 53.

Cleon II: Only issue of Cleon I. Also known as Cleon the Weak. Born 21, pro-claimed emperor 53, abdicated 54. In point of fact, recent study indicates that the term weak may be an unfair description of Cleon II. Apparently unsuited to devious palace politics, but still recognising the need to consolidate the power of the fledgling Imperium, Cleon abdicated in favour of his brilliant chancellor, Artemsus Lentuli. Vitaly concerned with the welfare of his former realm, Cleon spent the rest of his long, active, colourful, and from all accounts, happy life on the frontier as a self-appointed, and extremely effective, one-man fire brigade.

Artemsus: First of the Lentuli dynasty. Born 17 PI, proclaimed emperor in 54, died of natural causes in 166 at the then incredible age of 183, demonstrating the characteristic natural longevity of the Lentuli line.

Martin I: Eldest son (an elder daughter preceded him, though did not pursue a career in government) of Artemsus. Born 12, proclaimed emperor 166, died of natural causes 195. The Solomani Hypothesis (that the humans of the galaxy are all descended from one genetic stock, spread by some ancient race for reasons unknown; and that the source of that stock was Terra of Sol) was proposed in 114 and received immediate, though somewhat uninterested acceptance.

Martin II: Oldest issue of Martin I. Born 53, proclaimed emperor 195, died 244 of natural causes without issue.

Cleon III: In the dynastic crisis caused by the death of Martin II without direct issue, Cleon Zhunastu, great-great-great grandson of Cleon II by direct first issue, appeared as the most legitimate claimant to the throne. Born 201, proclaimed emperor 244, assassinated 245. Also known as the Mad, it appears that while Cleon's claim to the throne was flawless, he was not.

His behaviour in office soon convinced surviving members of the government that he was a homicidal maniac, and a decision to dispose of him was made and implemented in short order.

Porfiria: Fourth in the re-established Lentuli dynasty, Porfiria was the oldest issue of the grand-nephew of Martin II. Born 201, proclaimed empress 245, died of natural causes in 326.

Anguistus: Oldest issue of Porfiria. Born 246, proclaimed emperor 326, died of natural causes 365.

Martin III: Second issue of Anguistus (a preceding infant died in childhood). Born 289, proclaimed emperor in 365, died in an air/raft accident in 456 at the age of 167, having outlived his only issue. In memory of this deceased son, the title Martin IV was never used by an emperor.

Martin V: Grandson of Martin III, oldest issue of Martin IV. Born 357, proclaimed emperor 456, died of natural causes 457.

Nicholle: Oldest issue of Martin V. Born 401, proclaimed empress 457, assassinated 475.

Cleon IV: Generally believed to be responsible for the assassination of the Empress Nicholle and the murder of her immediate family, Cleon IV was a distant relation in the Zhunastu line and based his claims to legitimacy

on that. Generally regarded as an interloper now, Cleon IV is considered to be the first of the non-dynastic emperors. Born 423, proclaimed emperor 475, assassinated 555.

Jerome: Ascended the throne by right of moot election. Born 525, proclaimed emperor 555, assassinated 582.

Jaqueline I: Ascended the throne by right of moot election. Born 561, proclaimed empress 582, assassinated 606.

During the reign of Jaqueline, extensive expansion of the Rimward Fringe of the Imperium took place, due primarily to her economic policies which depended on cost-effectiveness. Sol-Terra was reintegrated into the Imperium in 588.

The Imperial Sunburst is the symbol of the Third Imperium established by Cleon I, the first Emperor, when the empire was proclaimed.



Olav: First of the Emperors of the Flag. Olav halt-Plankwell, as Grand Admiral of the Marches, defeated the massive incursions of the Out-World Coalition in the First Frontier War (589-604). Upon return to the Core, Olav personally murdered the Empress Jaqueline I and proclaimed himself emperor by right of fleet control. Born 532, self-proclaimed emperor 606, killed in battle 609.

Ramon I: As Olav's chief-of-staff, Ramon was able to convince large portions of the fleet to attempt an overthrow of Olav. In the Battle of Tricanus 5 (609) Ramon's forces were apparently defeated, but Olav's flagship was destroyed with all hands in a final closing action. Born 560, proclaimed emperor by right of moot election 609, assassinated 609.

Constantus: Born 562, and self-proclaimed emperor by right of assassination in 609. Killed in battle 610.

Nicolai: Defeated the forces of Constantus in the Battle of Rakakaka (610). Born 559, proclaimed emperor 610, assassinated 612.

George: Born 558, self-proclaimed emperor by right of assassination 612, assassinated 613.

Numerous emperors of uncertain status and unlikely heritage ruled fragments of the Imperial Core from 613 through 615. None held a sufficient balance of power to be judged truly emperor, and the Home Worlds had formed a temporarily autonomous state. Nevertheless, no break in the Imperium is judged to have taken place as the Imperial bureaucracy continued to function without interruption.

Cleon V: Born 565, proclaimed emperor 615 after the re-subjugation of the Home Worlds. Killed in battle, 618.

Joseph: Born 581, proclaimed emperor after defeating Cleon V in the Battle of Markhatch (618), killed in battle the same year.

Donald: Born 579, emperor after the defeat of Joseph at the Battle of Arakoine (618). Assassinated 618.

Catharine: Born 582, proclaimed empress 619, assassinated 619

Ramon II: Born 566, proclaimed emperor 619, killed in battle 619.

Jaqueline II: Born 569, proclaimed empress after defeating Ramon II in the Battle of the Nivzhine Belt (619), killed in battle 619.

Usuti: Born 558, proclaimed emperor after defeating Jaqueline II in the Second Battle of Arakoine (619). Killed in battle 620.

Marava: Born 551, proclaimed empress after defeating Usuti in the Third Battle of Arakoine (619), killed in battle 620.

Ivan: Born 580, proclaimed emperor after the defeat of Marava in the Battle of Sulgami (620), killed in battle 620.

Martin VI: Born 597, proclaimed emperor after the defeat Ivan in the First Battle of Zhimaway (621), assassinated 621.

Gustus: Born 581, proclaimed emperor 621, killed in battle 622.

Arbellatra: First of the Alkhalikoi dynasty (and occasionally considered to be 18th of the Emperors of the Flag). Born 587, served as Grand-Admiral of the Marches, and led the defeat of the Out-World Coalition in the Second Frontier War (615-620). Returned to the Imperial Core with strong fleet elements and defeated the remnants of the Central Fleet under Gustus in the Second Battle of Zhimaway (622). Proclaimed regent in 622 pending the location of a suitable surviving heir to the throne. Proclaimed empress in 629. Died of natural causes in 666.

Zhakirov: Oldest issue of Arbellatra. Born 624, proclaimed emperor in 666. Zhakirov's marriage to Antiama in 679 marked and cemented an alliance between the Alkhalikoi dynasty and the business interests of the Imperial Core; it broke the power of Solomani interests at court, and ultimately led to the Solomani Rim War (990-1002).

Margaret I: Oldest issue of Zhakirov. Born 684, proclaimed empress in 688, died in a tunnel collapse without issue in 736.

Paulo: Second issue of Zhakirov. Born 684, proclaimed emperor 736, died of natural causes in 767.

Tomutov I: Oldest issue of Paulo I. Born 712, proclaimed emperor 767, abdicated 768, died of natural causes 801.

Paula II: Oldest issue of Tomutov I. Perhaps best known for her steady hand at the helm of state during the PsionicSuppressions of 800-826. Born 752, proclaimed empress 768, died of natural causes 836.

Tomutova II: Third issue of Paula II (preceding heirs died before ascending the throne). Born 782, proclaimed empress 836, died of natural causes 908.

Margaret II: Oldest issue of Tomutova II. Born 824, proclaimed empress 908, died of natural causes 945.

Styryx: Oldest issue of Tomolin (oldest issue of Margaret II, b. 901, d. 944). Born 920, proclaimed emperor 945, abdicated 989 in the repercussions of the mismanaged Third Frontier War (979-986).

Gavin: Oldest surviving issue of Styryx. Born 946, proclaimed emperor 989, died of natural causes 1031.

Paulo III: Oldest issue of Gavin. Born 981, proclaimed emperor 1031, died of natural causes 1071.

Strephon: Oldest surviving issue of Paulo III. Born 1049, proclaimed emperor 1071. During his reign the Fourth Frontier War (1082-1084) erupted; clever public relations turned it to Strephon's advantage, although he physically had little to do with it. The long delay in communication with the front meant that his orders held little sway, and the armistice arrived almost as soon as the news of war. The conflict, however, has been called the False War, and it resolved little of the continuing tension between the Zhodani and the Imperium.

ALIEN



THE DYNCHIA

The Dynchia (pronounced DIN-chee-ahl) are a minor humanoid race originating in a region trailing of the Old Expanses sector. Most sources cite their homeworld as being Melantris, in the subsector of the same name, but there is some conflicting data on the subject. Dynchia (the same word is used as both singular and plural) are about 2.2 metres in height and weigh about 100 kg, being slender and long-limbed. Skin tones range from pale to bronze-tan; hair colour is usually brown or black, but white or silver-white is also common. Hair fibres are soft and silky, and hair runs in a bushy mane down to the small of the back. Facial hair is non-existent.

The Dynchia are generally thought to have been engineered by the Ancients from human stock, which would make them a minor human race. Experts are divided on this subject however, due to various anomalies in the genetic makeup of the Dynchia. The Dynchia have six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, but the most striking difference between the Dynchia and the rest of Humaniti is their jaw structure. Rather than possessing separate teeth, the Dynchia have a single fused structure which also includes the bones making up what would be the upper and lower jaw on a human. The dental structure is optimised for the consumption of meat, with fang-like protrusions and a powerful, tearing bite.

Culturally, the Dynchia are very different to most other species in that they appear to have no instinct to possess territory and nor instinctive protectiveness towards females. Generally speaking, a tribe or even a whole species can survive the loss of a large proportion of its males, but the loss of child-bearing females is a threat to long-term survival. A protective instinct is thus useful to primitive societies and then painfully unlearned as technology evens traditional gender roles. The Dynchia have no vestiges of this instinct, suggesting that no unlearning was necessary – males and females must have operated equally throughout even primitive history.

The lack of territorial instinct manifests itself as social rather than place identity. A Dynchia will not consider themselves a citizen of a particular world, but of a clan which is in turn part of a tribe. Locations have no real significance, though good resources or a favourable climate will be appreciated as much by a group of Dynchia as any other species. Dynchia have fought over resources and against outsiders in their history, but a settlement that provides what a group needs will always be acceptable even if it means leaving what others might consider to be their homes.

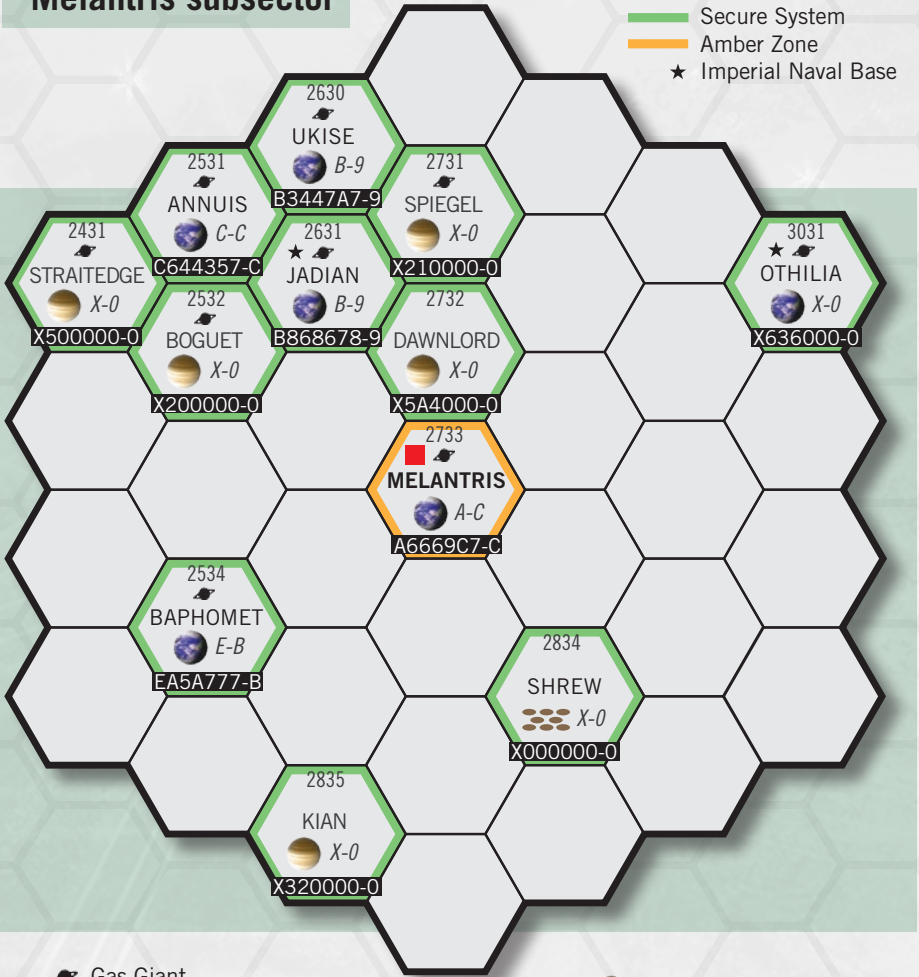
HISTORY

Solomani contact with the Dynchia came in the latter days of the Rule of Man, probably around -1820. Long-distance traders encountered the

Melantris

Melantris subsector

- █ Secure System
- █ Amber Zone
- ★ Imperial Naval Base



- Gas Giant
- B-6** Starport Class & Tech Level
- █ Other Naval Outpost/Depot

- Planet (dry)
- Planet (water present)
- Asteroids

Dynchia, who at that time had achieved TL8, and were beginning to reach into space. Within a few years, the Dynchia had begun to make use of jump technology. The collapse of the Rule of Man ensured the Dynchia were not absorbed; instead they developed at their own pace and came to dominate a small region known as the Comitia.

Those Solomani who had settled in the area were orphaned by the collapse of their empire and found themselves living alongside an expanding interstellar power. Most adapted without trouble, and within a few generations the local Solomani population were Dynchia in all but appearance.

The rise of the Third Imperium brought human traders back to the region, but the Imperial core was sufficiently distant that no attempt to annex or control the Dynchia Comitia was made. By the time reliable links were formed, around 802, the human population of the Comitia identified far more with their local culture than some distant empire, even if they had the same number of fingers and toes as its rulers. There was little sympathy for the Third Imperium among the humans of the Comitia, but little animosity either.

Technological growth was slow within the Comitia, not least due to the great care taken by the Dynchia to use the resources of their worlds in a careful and complete manner without causing serious environmental damage. The maximum Tech Level reached by member worlds is 12, with many regions well below this. However, the Comitia had a large and well-developed industrial base when contacted by the Third Imperium, and proved a useful trade partner. Relations have remained cordial ever since, with no reason for conflict and a modest amount of mutual gain from trade.

SOCIETY

Dynchia society is organised as multiple nations, made up of tribes. Nations and tribes are not territorial and may live intermixed in the same area or be scattered over a number of worlds. Loyalty to tribe and nation is strong, but somehow not a cause for division. Rather than wanting another nation to be brought down, Dynchia are more likely to want to excel in some way that forces members of the rival nation to admit they are outmatched.

The same applies to family groups within a clan, and clans within a nation. The result is noisy competition but is generally good-natured or at least kept within limits. Damaging other clans and tribes weakens the nation as a whole; damaging a nation weakens the race as a whole and ultimately harms everyone. Conflicts do happen but they are minor and rare. On the other hand, the Dynchia are quite willing to fight hard against outsiders or alien threats.

Dynchia cities and other settlements tend to be carefully planned and extremely well regulated, with near-total use of recycling. This not only minimises ecological damage but also creates a very efficient economy which requires less resources for basic functions than an equivalent society elsewhere. Although expensive to create, a Dynchia colony will always be viable in the long term; growth is thus slow but sustainable.

A similar attitude exists to technology. The capabilities of any new technology are carefully explored and developed to their absolute maximum. The overall advancement of the Dynchia is a very mature TL12, with devices built in a way that makes them as efficient or effective – or both – as possible. Whereas many societies seem to rush from one breakthrough towards the next, the Dynchia seem intent on wringing

every last drop of potential out of what they know before moving on to something new. As a result, although Dynchia starships and equipment may not be as advanced as those of some other species they are very well made – it may ‘only’ be a TL12 starship but it is the best TL12 starship anyone could make.

There are officially twelve nations of Dynchia, though humans within the Comitia are considered a ‘sort-of-nation’ and sometimes treated as a thirteenth. All nations are represented in the great council of the nations, including the human contingent, and whilst debates are often quite vigorous there is a collective tendency towards the good of the Comitia as a whole which guides the words and actions of all council members. The result is usually a moderate and widely acceptable compromise to any problem, contributing to the slow but steady advancement of the Comitia as a whole.

All Dynchia go through a series of trials upon reaching adulthood. These are arduous and dangerous, with around 7% of young adults being killed at some point. Successful completion determines the status of the individual in his clan, which will be further modified by the deeds of his life. Although Dynchia society as a whole is unwarlike, they have a warrior ethos on an individual basis. Whilst large scale conflict is extremely rare and never pressed to an extreme, skirmishes between small groups or challenges between individuals are quite common. Status within the clan is often determined by fighting prowess, and the status of a clan within a tribe can also be influenced by how well its members are regarded as warriors.

Personal integrity and honour are highly prized by all Dynchia. Honour comes in part from accomplishment, but only if that accomplishment is seen as worthy and fairly gained. Thus someone who climbs a difficult mountain without assistance wins honour; merely getting to the top is worthless and claiming you did it the hard way when in fact your friends dropped you off in an air/raft is a grave dishonour. Claiming honour falsely is a disgrace in Dynchia society. Stopping short of completing an action that would bring great honour for humble and selfless reasons is considered by many to be greater than actually accomplishing the deed. A Dynchia mountaineer who turns back from the summit to help a casualty might be lauded more highly than the rival who was the first to get to the top of an unconquered peak.

Ancestors are venerated, and all Dynchia have the chance to become one of the great ancestors if they live a virtuous life and retain honour. Dishonour, even of a secret sort, will make it impossible for an individual to become a venerated ancestor. Dynchia therefore sometimes go to great lengths to make up for some failing – which might be imaginary or trivial to everyone else – and will occasionally be encountered trying to atone for a dishonour nobody knows about.

GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

The government of a Dynchia world is always a charismatic oligarchy, regardless of other characteristics of the system. It is ruled by a council made up of the highest ranking members of the nations present, in proportions based upon the percentage of the population who are members of that nation. This can be confusing to outsiders, who may mistake a nation for world population or vice versa. The fact that members of several nations may be present on a world means that its effective and fair governance is important to multiple nations, and thus the common good of the race as a whole is promoted.

The system is repeated at lower levels of government; the highest ranking members of each tribe or clan form a council to rule and guide the local population. At the highest level, the most senior member of the most senior clan in each nation is known as its prince and has a place on the council that rules the Comitia as a whole. The human 'nation' has a representative on this council who is always consulted and asked to offer advice, but does not have a vote.

The military of the Dynchia answers directly to the ruling council and has no loyalty to nation, clan or tribe. It is organised along conventional lines with ground forces, space forces and a marine force capable of operating from starships. All Dynchia are potential combatants with at least some training as warriors, creating an enormous pool of available personnel from whom the few formally organised military units are recruited. Other formations are raised on a temporary basis as necessary.

The Dynchia are warriors rather than soldiers, favouring individual or small-group action in support of an overall aim rather than elaborate battle plans. Ground forces are made up for the most part of lightly equipped infantry and grav cavalry using fast and lightly armoured vehicles. Hit-and-run harassment tactics are most common, which gradually morph into an encroachment and finally overwhelming assault from all sides.

Warfare against the Dynchia has been described as 'trying to fight the sea'. Sometimes an enemy force will melt away like the tide going out, but more commonly a series of small waves laps up against enemy positions and falls back a little less each time until the defenders are inundated. Defensively, the situation is much the same. It is possible to exterminate a Dynchia force but getting them to surrender is virtually impossible. Their leaders will negotiate a reasonable peace treaty and honour it, but if seriously threatened the Dynchia fight to the very last.

Space forces operate in much the same way. Ships are, for the most part, small and fast with more weaponry than protection. Tactics are similar to those used in ground combat, eroding an enemy's strength and isolating installations until they can be overrun one by one. The space

forces receive the vast majority of the military budget and enjoy a local technological superiority over most potential enemies.

DYNCHIA TRAVELLERS

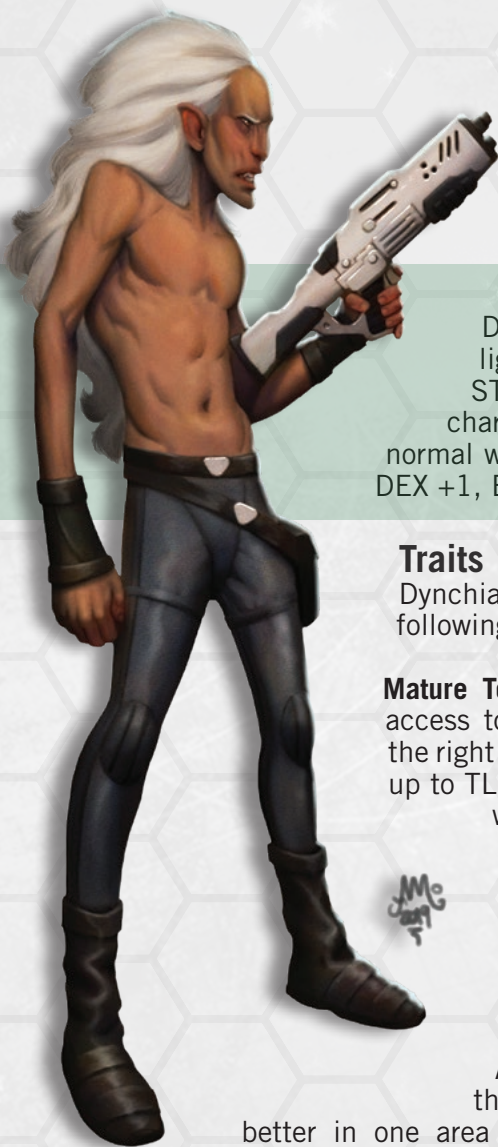
Dynchia can be encountered almost anywhere in Charted Space, though they are most common around their home region. Their career structure is similar to that of most other spacefaring races, and most careers are available within their home society. Dynchia struggle to fit into a hierarchical command structure based on different values to their own, and generally do not join military or highly structured organisations outside their own society. They would be entirely at home in the Imperial Scout Service, aboard a free trader or in a loosely organised mercenary group, but joining an Imperial corporation or similar organisation would mean taking orders from someone whose status is not defined by clan affiliation and performance in the trials. Some Dynchia can make the adjustment, but most find the situation uncomfortable or downright incomprehensible.

Dynchia lack any real sense of gender specialisation, and cannot understand why some societies would define a person by their reproductive capabilities. This causes bafflement more often than friction, but Dynchia can get into trouble in highly sexist societies because they genuinely cannot understand why some people are treated differently to others. They do not go around telling others to be less sexist – they cannot understand sexism and thus do not really oppose it as such – but will become genuinely confused and ask questions that may upset members of more differentiated societies.

A similar situation exists with racism. Dynchia are perfectly well aware that human members of their society are not the same as the Dynchia, but see them as ‘a tribe who joined us and are part of our society’ and cannot understand how physical differences are important – what matters is whether you are part of the Comitia or not. Overall, the Dynchia are rather innocent about matters like racism and sexism, and just plain do not understand them.

Careers

All standard careers are available within Dynchia society. DM-2 applies to any Traveller attempting to enlist in the Army – it is small and takes only the very best applicants. Outside the Comitia, Dynchia can join any career with a loose command structure without penalty, but suffer DM-2 on enlistment, commission and



promotion rolls in highly organised careers; the Army, Navy, Marines or merchant lines larger than a free trader crew.

Characteristics

Dynchia Travellers are quite lightly built, and generate STR by rolling 1D+3. Other characteristics are generated as normal with the following modifiers: DEX +1, EDU +1

Traits

Dynchia Travellers all possess the following traits.

Mature Technology: A Dynchia with access to a workshop and who has the right skills can modify any device up to TL12 to make it more like the way his own people would have built it. This is a lengthy process requiring a rebuild and possibly redesign involving few of the original components, and will cost 50-150% of the item's original price. At the end of the process the item will be around 10%

better in one area which might be aesthetic or functional. A g/bike, for example, could be made 10% faster or might gain 10% better acceleration; a weapon might gain 10% more ammunition capacity or the ability to deliver an extra point of damage. Alternatively, it might just look better than a normal item.

Warrior People: All adult Dynchia have passed their trials and are confident of their own abilities. They may lack confidence in

those who have not been through similar ordeals and be outright contemptuous of entitled layabouts who expect everything to be just given to them. DM-1 applies to all social interactions with someone of dubious honour or who lacks proven capabilities. In addition, all Dynchia gain one level in Gun Combat or Melee before starting a career.

Naming Dynchia

A Dynchia name follows a simple pattern: ‘xx of yy, called zz,’ where xx is the personal name, yy is the current place of residence, and zz is an honorific name, bestowed upon completing the trials.

The tribe of the individual is noted by the ending of the personal name; thus, Astolian is a member of the Lian Tribe, Estravel is of the Avel Tribe, and so on. The Twelve Tribes of the Dynchia are: Lian, Avel, Erol, Kirest, Nast, Otir, Kila, Sime, Tros, Rhes, Saro, and Dera.



BURST LASERS

Aimed as a midpoint between pulse and beam lasers, burst lasers are a rapid-firing turret weapon that have gained some popularity with the Trojan Reach and beyond. Using smaller but more numerous capacitors designed to be charged and discharged in quick succession, the burst laser can fill an area of space with powerful but short-lived laser beams.

Weapon	TL	Range	Power	Damage	Cost	Traits
Burst Laser	10	Medium	4	1D	MCr0.75	Auto 3

TRAVELLING

SMUGGLER'S LUCK

A tramp trader can make a decent living simply by plying the trade routes, jumping from star system to star system, buying low and selling high. However, mortgages, annual maintenance and unexpected repair costs can add up quickly. Starships are multi-million Credit investments and sometimes playing it safe earns you just enough to pay the bills with only the tiniest of profit margins. Even if a trader is getting by, the temptation to earn more Credits is difficult to pass up. Watching one's peers turn Megacredit deals in the trade of illicit goods makes dabbling on the dark side that much harder to resist. As one prominent trader on the Spinward Main so eloquently put it, 'We have a word for traders who don't deal on the down low from time to time: bankrupt.'

The trading rules in the Traveller Core Rulebook describe the basics of smuggling. Dealing in illegal goods fetches a premium price if one is willing to take the risks. Every system has a Law Level and exporting weapons and armour that transcend it is also classified as smuggling. Dealing in illegal goods and playing with the Law Level differential are not the only ways a smuggler can make a living, though.

The Imperium is an immense and diverse place. Whilst it merely takes one week to jump from one star system to the next, the cultural chasm between them can be immense. You might have a functional anarchy in one system and a religious dictatorship in the next. Goods legal on one world might be forbidden fruit a mere parsec away. Enterprising smugglers are experts in the restrictions of their interstellar region, leaving no stone unturned when it comes to available markets for illegal goods.

THE BASICS

After dabbling in the smuggling trade for a few months and getting a taste of those sweet Credits, enterprising smugglers look for a region that has all the pieces in place for a long and lucrative run. Whilst above-the-deck free traders need only find a nice, long jump-1 main, smugglers search for a few other things.

First of all, you need not operate on a jump-1 main at all. A region with variation in its astrography is considered preferable. Smuggling is not nearly as reviled as piracy, but visiting the same places over and over again and following the same pattern repeatedly is asking for trouble.

An interstellar region with travel choices is best. A smuggler needs to mix it up and jumping off the main from time to time keeps them from becoming predictable.

Another desired characteristic is what those in the smuggling trade call 'topography' but not the kind that refers to mountains. Topography means a significant variation in Law Level between adjacent systems. Law Level differentials of 5+ are preferable. Law Level 0-2, especially on an industrial world with a decent Tech Level, means weapons, armour and other high-tech goods are abundantly available. Ideally, two or more systems within 1-3 parsecs will have Law Level 7+, indicating that they strictly prohibit weapons and armour of just about any type. A good smuggler can make bountiful profits in a region of this sort. No need to limit it to just weapons and armour, either; many oppressive systems limit access to all sorts of technology including communications gear, recording devices, entertainment holos, and other items. There are many types of contraband. You just have to do your research.

One must be careful, though. Big differentials are well and good but the larger the differential, the greater the temptation to make a killing. Wise



smugglers know how to make judicious use of high Law Level markets. A world with Law Level 10+ is an authoritarian system. Whilst these make fine markets for illegal weapons, armour and other goods, they also tend to have greater levels of surveillance, more frequent patrols, and much stricter punishments for criminals. Smugglers doing business on worlds with oppressive governments must exercise caution. Many subscribe to the credo that it is best to have a middleman in such systems, someone who really knows the territory. Sure, a middleman takes part of your profit but you still can make a killing and you do not have to risk your neck to do it.

SHIP OF CHOICE

Smugglers face an important decision when they select which type of ship to use for their operation. There are a lot of choices and it is important to evaluate each of them before deciding which one works for you.

Engaging in interstellar trade means occasionally being boarded. A trader can be subjected to an inspection in just about any star system, but can count on a highly intrusive inspection on worlds with a Law Level 8+.

Being boarded for inspection is not the end of the world if you are a crafty smuggler, but it is best to avoid it if possible. Smugglers have many tools to hide illicit cargo from inspectors but if one is carrying a particularly hot cargo, it might be best to prevent an inspection from happening at all. No matter how good the take might be, sometimes it is not worth the stretch. When a patrol is hot on a smuggler's case, they might have to flee a system and seek to sell an illegal cargo elsewhere.

Some patrols will even pursue a ship beyond their own star system if they have extended jurisdiction and a good inkling where the smuggler is going. For this reason, many smugglers prefer to operate jump-2 ships. It is by no means a requirement but is considered a worthwhile luxury. When being pursued, it is much easier for a patrol craft to predict the destination of a jump-1 ship than it is a jump-2 vessel. A smuggler with a jump-2 ship has more options when they have a tail they want to shake. Firstly, they can jump two parsecs to any location with a star system or fuel cache. Sometimes it is best to put as much distance as possible between your ship and an eager pursuer.

Even if you do have jump-2 capability, a smuggler might play the part of the jump-1 trader and make a one-parsec jump. This is essentially hiding in plain sight. Making a one-parsec jump under pursuit can be like hitting the reset button. Even if the pursuer follows the smuggler and correctly guesses which system they are jumping to, the smuggler can always play the part of the innocent trader who is merely proceeding to the next stop on their run.

The third option is to make a microjump. Jumping from one location to another in the same star system might seem a waste of valuable time and a parsec's worth of fuel, but if a patrol corvette is hot on your tail, a week in jump is better than a decade on a penal colony. Furthermore, in some cases there is a viable second port or freeport in the system, giving the smuggler a second chance to offload hot cargo without even leaving the system.

For those smugglers who believe jump-2 is a necessity, the far trader or Soho-class are spacecraft of choice. Both classes are known jump-2 ships and their transponders will be pinging away their identity for anyone who wants to know. The Soho is the most ideal as it foregoes passenger staterooms for more cargo space. If you are carrying illicit cargoes, you do not want nosy passengers sniffing around.

It is considered to be preferable to fly a known jump-2 ship. The mere fact that the smuggler has so many choices puts many patrol ships off the trail. So whilst the Type-A2 far trader is a jump-2 ship, it is often mistaken for the ubiquitous jump-1 free trader for obvious reasons. Only the most astute patrol craft commanders may bother to check the power signatures of a ship to discern the difference.

Alternatively, a smuggler may indeed operate a jump-1 ship, but will almost universally employ a fuel bladder to cross two- and sometimes even three-parsec gaps to enhance his escapability and add a little unpredictability to travel destination. Jump-1 ships usually have larger cargo holds which means greater profit over the long run. By using a fuel bladder when you think you might need it, you have the flexibility to stay out of trouble without having to sacrifice so much cargo space.

THE COLLACE ARM

A fine example of a place where a smuggler can make a good living is along the Collace Arm in the District 268 subsector of the Spinward Marches. The region lies beyond the Imperial borders and features two star systems that rise above the rest in power and influence: Collace and Trexalon.

Collace is a high-population, industrial world with aspirations of becoming the subsector capital should the Imperium ever annex the region, and has already done what it can to tie the knot having successfully attained Client State status. Trexalon by contrast is fiercely independent and wants nothing to do with the Imperium. The Trexalonians see the Imperials as having an intrusive presence and do whatever they can to prevent further Imperial incursions into the subsector.

The two systems are in a cold war with one another. Collace is focused on building its economy and establishing a growing influence in the region whilst Trexalon strives to maintain independence, evangelising its neighbours with that self-same spirit, and to subversively undercut Collace whenever and wherever it can. Trexalon is very careful not to allow the conflict to get violent lest it attract Collace's benefactor from getting involved, and is well aware that should the Imperium will it, Trexalon could be glassed over or reduced to so much dust with the dispatch of a few destroyers. They find that keeping a low profile enables them to pursue their interests whilst sabotaging Collace's.

The two systems are frequently at odds with each other, getting into one conflict or another in proxy trade wars along the Collace Arm. This region has all the features listed earlier, and more. You have a great deal of topography with both high- and low-Law Level systems in close proximity to one another. In addition, both Collace and Trexalon have a tendency to exert political and low-level military will over many of their neighbours. This creates a lot of situations in which various goods have become illegal or restricted where they otherwise would not be.





Collace and Trexalon also have embargoes in place on each other's goods. Trexalon has many agricultural and pharmaceutical products in short supply on Collace. Likewise, Collace has greater expertise in atmospheric processing and terraforming gear that could make life easier on dry Trexalon. Whilst trade is prohibited between the two worlds, smugglers make a pretty penny buying and selling embargoed products to each party.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Smugglers have an array of tools and equipment at their disposal. Some have already been detailed in High Guard:

- **Popup Mountings** (page 24 of High Guard): Whilst it is not illegal to have weaponry on civilian ships in most star systems, the appearance of an unarmed ship can divert suspicions of patrol craft. 'Nothing to see here! Just an unarmed trader!'
- **Concealed Compartments** (page 45 of High Guard): Up to 5 percent of a ship can be designated as concealed at a cost of Cr20000 per ton. Such compartments provide DM-2 to Electronics (sensors) checks and DM-4 to Investigation checks.

THE COLLACE ARM

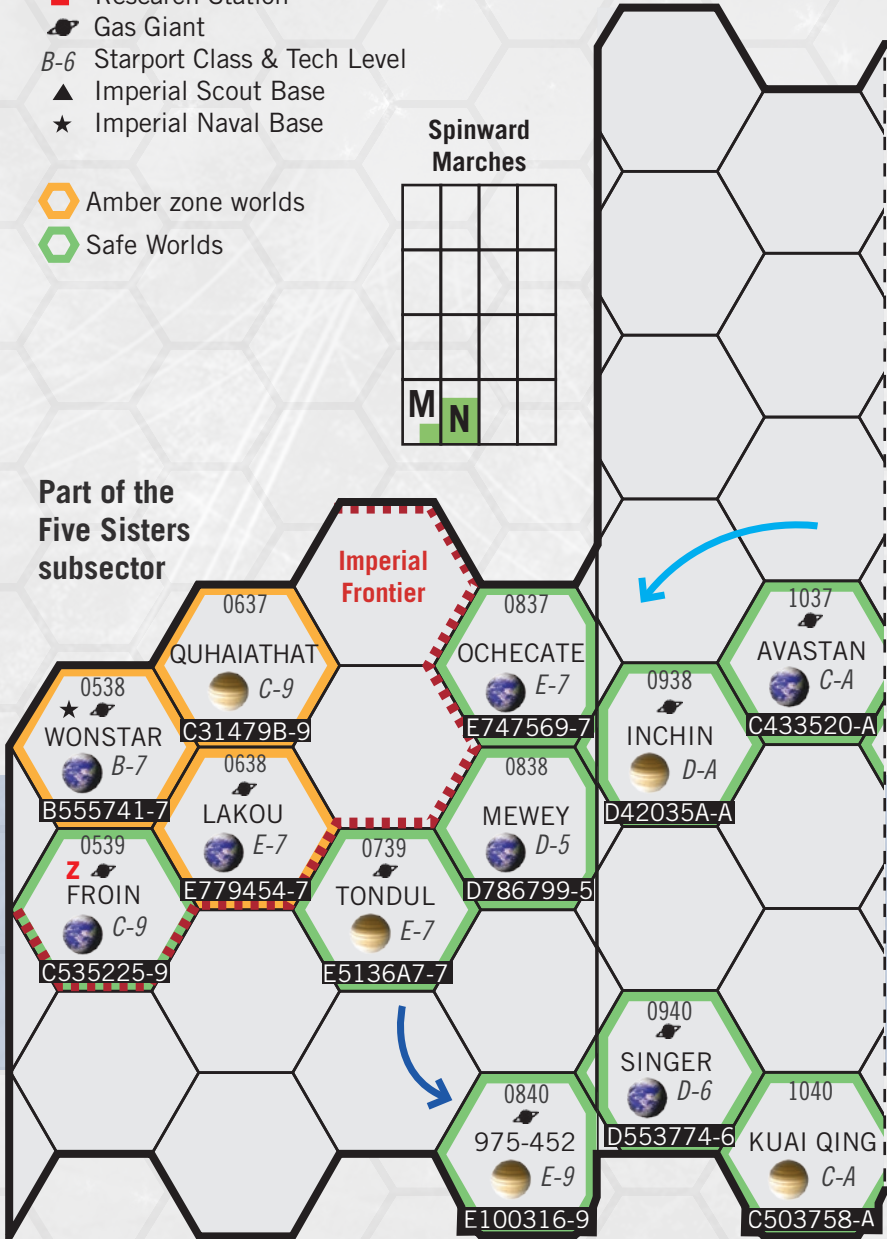
-  Planet (dry)
-  Planet (water present)
-  Research Station
-  Gas Giant
- B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level
- ▲ Imperial Scout Base
- ★ Imperial Naval Base


-  Amber zone worlds
-  Safe Worlds

Spinward
Marches

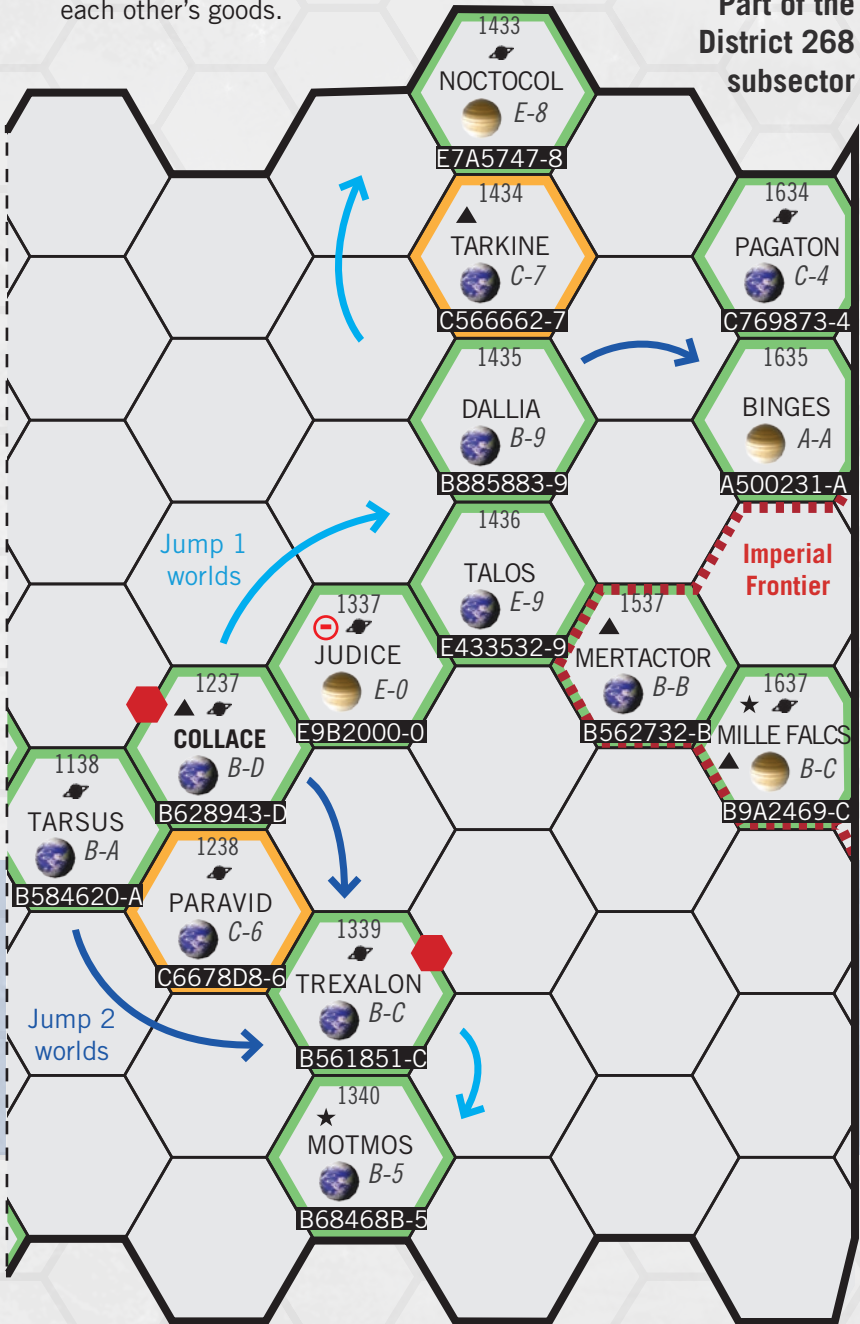
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Part of the
Five Sisters
subsector



 Collace and Trexalon have embargoes in place on each other's goods.

Part of the District 268 subsector



- **Fuel Tank Compartments** (page 45 of High Guard): Similar to concealed compartments but located within a ship's fuel tanks, these compartments float inside the tanks and are even more difficult to detect, providing DM-4 to Electronics (sensors) checks and DM-6 to Investigation checks.
- **Early Jump** (page 48 of High Guard): Advanced jump drives can be equipped with modifications that allow a ship to jump 10 percent closer to a gravity well. This key technology has enabled many smugglers to get away from a patrol just before being boarded.

In addition to the above, some smugglers use the following to further disguise and contain their illegal cargoes.

Fake Drive Components: Fake drive components in the engineering section can serve as containers for small but valuable caches of goods. This costs Cr5000 per ton and provides 80 percent of its space for storage (for example, a five-ton fake drive component can store four tons of cargo). Including life support costs Cr10000 per ton, and enables the storage of passengers or prohibited livestock. Fake drive components are usually equipped with a heating element to ensure the temperature on their exterior surface resembles the real thing.

Faux Cargo Modules: The Imperium and other polities use standard cargo modules in various sizes. Faux versions of 1-, 5- and 10-ton cargo modules are available, providing 90 percent of their available space for cargo storage. The remainder are facades visible to inspectors when opened. Often a façade depicts items that inspectors are unlikely to investigate further such as common grain, dangerous chemicals, or fragile industrial goods. Faux cargo modules cost Cr2000 per ton.



ADVENTURE

EMBASSY IN ARMS

Location: Aramanx (B657974-7) Aramis subsector, Spinward Marches

This adventure is intended for a group of Vargr Travellers, probably in service to the Kforuzeng faction, though it can be adapted to other Travellers. The embassy of Lanax, one of the many powers on Aramanx, is threatened with attack during civil unrest. Amid a volatile political situation the Travellers are tasked with evacuating and protecting the embassy staff and others sheltering there. Ideally, they are to avoid increasing tensions by refraining from violence, but this may not be possible.

ARAMANX

Aramanx is a balkanised world at the edge of the Towers Cluster of the Aramis subsector. Its population of two billion people is divided among eight major (and at least twenty minor) mutually hostile nations. Aramanx has become known as a the 'powder keg of the Towers Cluster', with clashes becoming increasingly common in recent years.

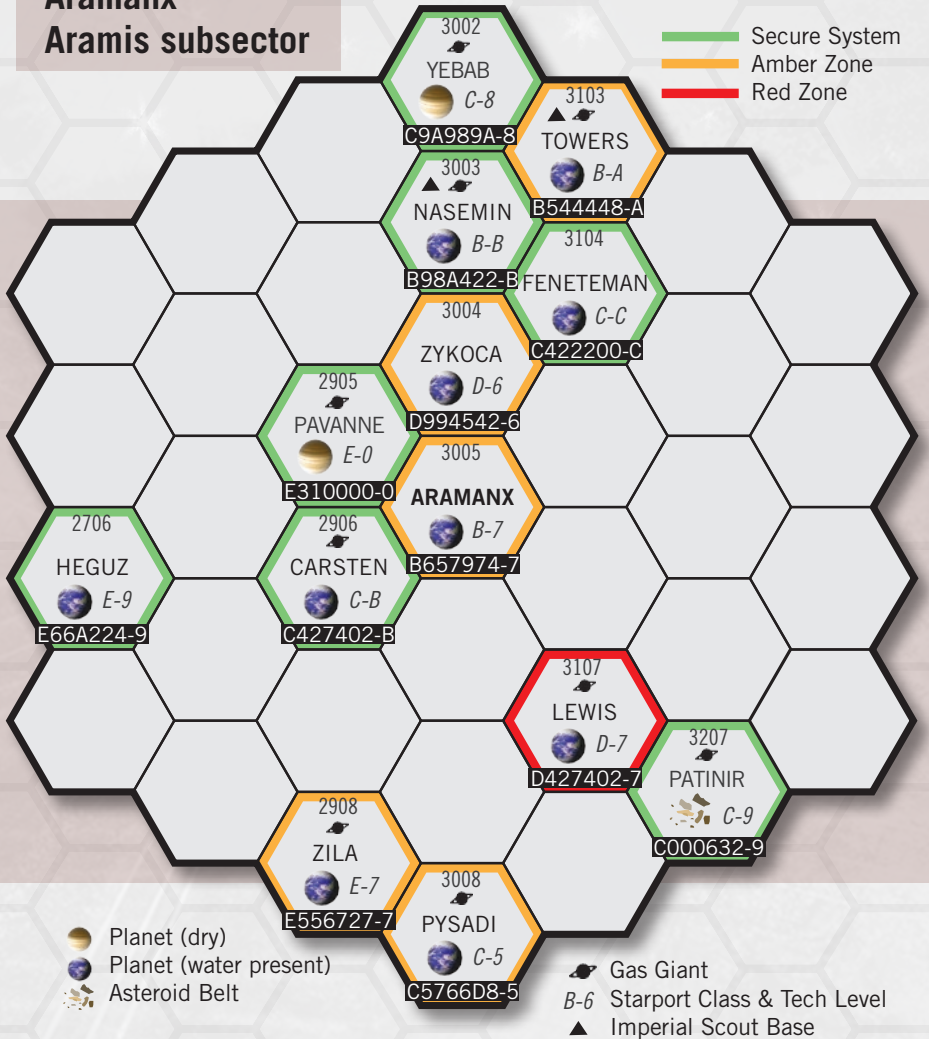
Recent efforts to reduce tensions have been at least partially successful, and some states have pulled back from the brink of outright war. A state of watchful tension exists in many areas, with occasional punitive raids and border clashes which are quickly brought under control. It seems that most states want to avoid the all-out global conflict that seems to be the inevitable result if the powder keg ignites.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

Sternmetal Horizons LIC, an Imperial megacorporation, has been backing the expansion of Lovrenyi, one of the smaller but more heavily industrialised nations. Sternmetal has invested heavily in the nation, and introduced a small but well-equipped mercenary contingent to supplement the Lovrenyi armed forces. Their long-term intention is to help Lovrenyi unify the planet into a single government which would be heavily indebted to Sternmetal. The world could then be forced to accept terms favourable to the megacorporation's complete domination of the local economy. This plan, which has been in progress for some time, has proved ultimately unsuccessful. Lovrenyi extended its frontiers and coerced several nations into its sphere of influence, but became bogged down in a guerrilla war in one of their recent conquests. This gave other nations on Aramanx a chance to hire off-world mercenary forces of their own.

Aramanx

Aramis subsector



THE SITUATION

The Republic of Lanax has obtained the services of a battalion of Vargr mercenaries, part of the Kforuzeng band. These mercenaries, equipped to TL10, have been employed in a number of strikes and border raids, and are the best military unit available to Lanax. Their presence is one of the reasons Lovrenyi has slowed its expansion and until recently seemed willing to negotiate with Lanax instead of invading.

Recently, tension between Lovrenyi and Lanax has increased, as a result of civil unrest in the former. Units in the service of the Republic recently crossed the Lovrenyi frontier, and there has been a surge of anti-Lanaxian fervour among Lovrenyi's volatile citizenry. Riots have broken out in Lovrenyi's capital city, focused primarily on the Lanax embassy compound.

Forty citizens of the Republic, four Kforuzeng security specialists, and a Kforuzeng Emissary have been cut off from the outside world by these rioters, who maintain what is essentially a state of siege. Whilst the Lovrenyi government officially deplores the situation, they are doing little to discourage the rioters beyond setting up roadblocks to limit the rioting to an area within a few blocks of the embassy compound.

The embassy guards are armed and prepared to resist attack, but the political dimension is complex. Almost any move Lanax makes could trigger a conflict no one wants. Even sitting tight and waiting the crisis out could be catastrophic; the general population of Lanax considers the situation to be humiliating. Demands for decisive action are increasingly loud and, in any case, doing nothing might be seen as a sign of weakness that could harm the strategic situation.

The best solution seems to be an evacuation of the embassy compound, but this must be carried off rapidly and without a major confrontation. Ideally, the government of Lanax wants to distance itself from the decision to retreat from its embassy by making it seem the mercenaries chose to undertake the evacuation on their own initiative.

The Kforuzeng mercenaries have a reason to go along with this plan. Five of their number are at the embassy and will be in extreme danger if it is attacked. Thus it has been arranged that the mercenaries will 'unilaterally' launch a rescue bid to bring their own people out, and will of course pick up the embassy staff at the same time. The government of Lanax will then condemn the reckless actions of the mercenaries in the same manner as Lovrenyi has condemned the rioters.

The operation must be carried out quickly, with no loss of life and a minimum of violence. The mercenaries are to enter Lovrenyi and reach the capital, secure the compound perimeter against possible interference from rioters or Lovrenyi troops, and bring the embassy staff out – and they must do it without starting a war.

MERCENARY FORCES

The Kforuzeng force consists of forty mercenaries supported by six *g*/carriers, each mounting a gauss cannon. The force is equipped to TL10 standards but fairly light in composition – it is an infantry formation intended to strike hard and fast against lower-tech opposition and then withdraw. Artillery, tanks and air support other than the *g*/carriers are not available.

A force of this sort tends to have a few non-combatant specialists available including lawyers and cyber-warfare experts. These might be helpful in some circumstances but the Tech Level of Aramanx is too low for much in the way of data warfare and legal arguments will not impress the rioters. This is very much a situation for decisive action carried out too fast for anyone to react.



STAGING THE RESCUE

The capital of Lovrenyi is 270 kilometres from the border with Lanax. The trip can be made in an hour by *g/carrier*, though it would be advisable to take a more roundabout route to avoid flying over populated areas or air defence concentrations. The nations of Aramanx have very limited detection and tracking equipment; staying low and avoiding obvious trouble spots will generally suffice to remain undetected until the final approach to the capital.

The embassy compound is large enough to land two g/carriers at a time without undue difficulty, and more could be crammed in with increased risk. The arrival of grav vehicles will be noticed sooner or later, but the Travellers might manage to delay detection long enough to get the evacuation going.

The mercenaries will be spotted on a straight check result of 8+ made every 10 minutes. This increases to 10+ if the landing is made at night. Once they are noticed, it will take some time for a response to emerge. At first this will be nothing more than a few curious civilians or individuals with an anti-Lanax disposition, who will probably do little more than throw the odd rock over the compound wall.

The response will escalate, especially once it becomes apparent the embassy is being reinforced or evacuated. Rioters will start trying to climb over the walls or to break open the gates, and grow in number. The Travellers might find themselves attempting to defend the compound with non-lethal methods, or they may have to resort to using weapons.

The rescue is a violation of Lovrenyi sovereignty and will draw a response from local police, then the military. The Travellers need to be away before this happens, as open conflict with Lovrenyi troops in their own capital will almost certainly trigger the war they are trying to avoid.

If the embassy has been forewarned a rescue force is en route, it will take 2Dx5 minutes to load the vehicles. The process might be a great deal slower if the mercenaries neglected to inform the embassy they were coming, and it is possible that someone might get left behind.

The last stages of embarkation are likely to be made under a hail of rocks, bottles and perhaps fire from whatever weapons the rioters have available. A determined but disorganised attempt will be made to storm the compound, which will draw in local troops if any have arrived but not yet engaged in hostilities – firing on the locals will require a response even if the troops are trying to de-escalate the situation.

It is also likely that the g/carriers will be pursued at least as far as the Lanax border. This does not necessarily mean fire will be exchanged – the situation might be a fraught high-speed standoff between local fighter pilots ordering the g/carriers to land and mercenaries offering spurious excuses not to in the hope of delaying the first shots until they reach the border. If they can manage it without opening fire, the pursuers will break off rather than violate Lanax airspace, and the resulting diplomatic incident will stop short of open conflict. If, on the other hand, the Travellers blast their way in and out, war is virtually inevitable.



CHARTED SPACE

VARGR CORSAIRS

Within the Imperium, there is a tendency to characterise the Vargr as an assorted collection of petty states and freebooters, and there is a large body of popular mythology that would have it seem that the Vargr are nothing but pirates and raiders. The myth is as pervasive as distortions of the taming of the American West or the everyday life of a law enforcement officer in much earlier days.

In reality, of course, the corsair bands that operate within the Vargr Extents are nowhere near as pervasive as popular imagery would have us believe. Still, the corsairs remain a major factor in Vargr society – far more common than the occasional pirate encountered within the Imperium, for example. The fragmentation of the Extents is partly to blame for this, amid a welter of small states and independent worlds, it is far easier for a corsair vessel to slip out of reach than is true for a gigantic interstellar state such as the Imperium, where despite local freedoms, the Imperial Navy forms a common, ever-present counterweight to freebooters everywhere.

This is not, however, the sole reason for the presence and continued success of pirate bands within the Vargr Extents. The fact is, corsair bands are symptomatic of the whole Vargr mental outlook. Impulsive, easily talked into independent action by highly charismatic leaders, the Vargr seem to naturally gravitate towards the concept of raiding. As long as there are individuals interested in mounting raids who can attract even a handful of followers, there will be Vargr corsairs, for the Vargr have few checks and balances that could prevent such a leader from doing as they please, when they please.

When we speak of Vargr corsairs, we tend to lump them all into one general category. This is another misconception, for Vargr corsairs are complex and varied. As with so many other aspects of Vargr society, it is difficult to speak in generalities of a race which is prone to far more variation in virtually every aspect of their culture than even humans. The 'typical' Vargr corsair band is a myth; there is no such organisation. Nonetheless, many bands have things in common, and it is possible to arrive at a few particular generalisations that will at least be reasonably consistent among corsairs in Vargr space.

THE CORSAIR BAND

Vargr corsair groups come in all sizes. There are raiders who get together to crew a single ship, go out raiding, and disperse when the voyage is done. There are also long-standing organisations who rival small Vargr interstellar governments in scope, power, and naval strength. Most fall somewhere between these two extremes.

The small fry/single ship operations that are mostly comprised of 'part-timers' in the business for a quick score can be easily dismissed from consideration. They are nuisances at worst, capturing an occasional merchant ship or raiding a poorly defended world for a comparatively small take. They have no real organisation, no permanence, and usually fall prey to government forces, larger corsair bands, or even, at times, their own victims, in reasonably short order.

It is the larger, better organised groups – and particularly the very widespread and powerful bands at the upper end of the spectrum – that really make up corsair bands of popular story. These outfits do have a degree of permanence (as much as any Vargr institution can be said to



have, that is), and they are generally very well organised indeed. Each one of the middle-sized bands has a capacity to expand to become one of the major corsair operations, though the outward pull of all Vargr institutions makes it a rare thing for such an event to take place.

As an example of middle and upper range corsair operations, consider the history of one such band, the **Kforuzeng of the Firgr subsector**, and its interaction with other bands of comparable size.

The Kforuzeng have existed for a number of years, originally an amalgamation of small fry who got together to mount a few raids and wound up staying together under the leadership of a highly charismatic ship captain. As success followed success, this first leader built his authority and organised the band along a fairly typical semi-military structure. The Kforuzeng have changed little since that time, though there have been a number of changes of leadership and many shifts in the internal balance of power and authority.

The original Kforuz band had perhaps ten ships, mostly corsairs and similar vessels. As time went on, they absorbed other independents peacefully, as ship captains and crews were attracted to the Kforuz leaders whose charisma, boosted by success in various endeavours, was getting higher all the time. By the time they had doubled from their original size, the Kforuzeng were a far-ranging organisation whose operations spanned the Firgr subsector and some adjacent territories.

By this time, the Kforuz could be reckoned as the strongest – but by no means the only – corsair power in the region. The extent of their operations was now to the point where they had to either continue to grow, or collapse under their own weight. This is an important aspect of most corsair operations. Large bands are so subject to the characteristic splintering of Vargr factionalism that the band must continually gain new successes in order to survive. It is a circular process, for the need for new successes requires the band to extend operations further afield, requiring more equipment, new bases of operations, money, and personnel. But the increases in economic commitments and added followers require, in turn, even greater successes.

The Kforuzeng solved this as most growing bands do, by recruiting heavily and organising mercenary operations to supplement their raiding. Kforuz mercenary units began serving various governments within their sphere of influence, and even found employment within the Imperium upon occasion. Like most corsair groups, the Kforuz offered both ground forces and starships for mercenary service, but ships were

still at something of a premium. Twenty ships could not properly support operations across three subsectors and parts of others. Nonetheless, the Kforuz leadership displayed ingenuity in making the most of what they had. They ran the Vargr equivalent of a protection racket; by way of example, consider the case of their relations with Tukera Lines, the Imperial megacorporation.

Tukera ships crossed the Kforuz sphere to travel to the Thoengling Empire, an important trading partner. Kforuz ships staged several raids on Tukera vessels travelling this route, causing unacceptable losses. Shortly thereafter, a representative of the Kforuzeng approached Tukera with the offer to hire out Kforuz ships to escort the Tukera ships. Tukera agreed, and now pays a subsidy to the Kforuz in exchange for 'protection' from piracy in the region. Tukera, not being fools, realised that paying the Kforuz off would cost less than adding their own escort vessels to the run, while the Kforuzeng profit by earning about as much money without risk as they would have earned by continuing their raiding.

At this stage, the Kforuz could be considered the foremost of the middle-sized corsair bands on the Imperial-Vargr frontier. Two smaller bands shared the same sphere – the Aegzaeng and the Uekuez. For a time, the Kforuzeng began coordinating operations with these two groups; then, in a ruthless and bloody move, they took over the Uekuez. The takeover was accomplished through an ambush of the Uekuez leadership during negotiations for a joint venture, and was followed by a ruthless purge which enabled the Kforuzeng to absorb the Uekuez fleet and a few of their lower-echelon personnel. Most Uekuez leaders were either killed or forced to flee with their families out of Kforuz range entirely; many refugees settled on Jesedipere in the Aramis subsector, under the protection of the Imperium.

A few years later, the Aegzaeng were next. This takeover did not even require much bloodshed; the Kforuzeng were planning a takeover and many Aegzaeng pulled out early, joining the Uekuez refugees. Others defected to the Kforuzeng voluntarily, earning a place (albeit lower than they had enjoyed before) in the hierarchy of the expanding Kforuz organisation. These two takeovers elevated the Kforuz into the realm of a 'great power' among corsairs.

However, the larger the Kforuzeng got, the more distant leaders were from their followers. This weakened the bonds that normally make corsair bands more stable than governments. The first time the Kforuzeng suffered a major setback, a major shift in organisation and power could be expected to inevitably follow. Factions and splinter groups would be sure to emerge.

ORGANISATION

The usual corsair band is organised along military lines; the larger the band, the more formal the hierarchy. At the height of their power, the Kforuzeng were a far-flung force, with a well-structured organisation based on the Imperial model. A close parallel would be the structure of the typical Imperial Marine task force, but without some of the more sophisticated elements of these units. This organisation was consciously copied by the Kforuzeng because of the flexibility of the force command concept, well suited to the needs of corsair mercenary ground units.

At their peak, the Kforuzeng also had at least 35 starships, ranging from 100 tons to 1,000 tons in size. Most were built along the lines of the 400 ton Ruguelka corsair, but there were also merchant vessels, scouts, and even two captured military vessels. For a time, Kforuz efforts were concentrated on the construction of a very large warship, the Ozarr, which was to be the core of a true fighting fleet and would have elevated the Kforuzeng to pre-eminent status. The Ozarr was never completed, due to setbacks in the Kforuz plans.

EQUIPMENT

Equipment for the Kforuzeng was and is somewhat more standardised, thanks to their superior economic base, than is generally true of most corsair bands. Still, the Kforuz have acquired equipment from a variety of sources, and there are inconsistencies. Combat armour is commonly issued to raiding forces and ship's troops; mercenary combat units are more often equipped with cloth armour. Laser weapons are common, but by no means the universal service weapon.

Kforuz mercenaries generally employ g/carriers, air/rafts, and grav platforms, while raiding vessels normally include g/carriers and platforms for ground side raids. Other equipment appropriate to the role of the particular unit is almost always available. As a general rule of thumb, the Kforuz are equipped to about TL10-12 (depending on specific circumstances). Vargr corsair forces rarely have sophisticated cavalry or





Laser Pistol

Laser Carbine

artillery units, relying on speed and surprise rather than combined arms for advantage. Mobility is provided by their ships or lightly armed vehicles; firepower comes from ships or local combat forces (mercenaries). As yet, even the largest Vargr corsair bands are organised as light, mobile infantry.

Single-ship raids are more apt to be aimed at human interlopers or across the Imperial frontier, for a number of reasons. First, there is less competition from the larger rival outfits; secondly, small raiding groups are more apt to be embarked on a 'spur-of-the-moment' raid, and such raids are often stirred up by opportunities (who see easy pickings along the frontier) or the occasional fanatic supporter of Kaenguerradz, the doctrine of Vargr racial superiority.

FINAL NOTES

Vargr corsairs prey equally on whatever targets present themselves – merchants, undefended planets, and even, at times, each other. They know no particular limitations regarding race; Vargr corsairs will attack a Vargr ship as willingly as a human one under most circumstances. However, some smaller corsair bands show decided racial preferences in their targets.

Throughout history, men have shuddered at the coming of raiders and corsairs. Whether it was the barbarian hordes of Attila the Hun, Vikings gliding out of the sea in their longships, fast-moving Barbary xebecs rowing towards a becalmed merchantman, deadly raiding vessels of the Sky Raiders, or the Reavers of Reavers' Deep, corsairs have had a place from the fall of the Vilani Imperium to the Fifth Frontier War. They remain a challenge to be met; but to Vargr, they are a symbol of glamour and charisma, a powerful drawing card envied more than hated even by their Vargr victims.



HIGH GUARD

SOHO-CLASS LIGHT FREIGHTER

The Soho-class light freighter is a variant on the millennia-old Empress Marava-class far trader. First introduced more than a century ago by General Development Company, the vessel blurs the line between civilian and military. The designers envisioned a vessel capable of operating in the frontier regions of the spinward side of the Great Rift – where there may be no convenient naval vessel if someone has ill-intentions. The class has really shown its value in the Trojan Reach due to the endemic piracy issues there.

To achieve their goal, the GeDeCo architects had to make sacrifices. The first to go were the convenient side cargo airlocks, although the loading belt did remain. Now all cargo had to be loaded/unloaded through the front cargo hatch, exposing the hold to the elements. The other major system to be removed were the staterooms and low berths used to carry passengers. This class was intended to haul cargo, not be a people mover. However, provisions were made in the power system to provide the capability for portable staterooms to be installed in the cargo hold.

The removal of these items allowed for the addition of multiple upgrades that greatly enhanced the survivability of the vessel. The interior hull of the ship was reinforced, providing approximately ten percent more structural integrity. The output of the manoeuvre drive was doubled, allowing for faster translations between safe jump points and planetary orbits. This served not only to speed delivery of cargo, but decrease the amount of time a hostile has to intercept the vessel. Finally, the ship was wrapped in seven and a half centimetres of crystaliron armour to shield occupants, cargo, and vital systems.



Defensive modifications were not the only upgrades slated for this variant. The weak double beam laser turrets were removed, the first being replaced by a triple pulse laser turret that took advantage of technological upgrades made since the weapon's introduction. Enhanced focusing crystals allowed for an effective range of almost fifty-thousand kilometres while improved capacitors provided a more consistent output. The second turret's replacement consists of a heavy pulse laser barbette that takes advantage of the same technological improvements.

To support both of these enhanced weapon systems, other modifications were made. The sensor suite was upgraded to military specification with enhanced detection and tracking arrays. A more powerful computer, capable of running auto-evasion and fire control software, replaced the basic system of the Empress Marava-class. Automatic repair software was also added, along with the requisite drones, to speed recovery in the event of damage.

Foremost among new customers were shipping and mercenary concerns looking to use the vessels as Q-ships. As these original vessels aged, they were much sought after on the secondary market by small merchants looking for proved ruggedness and inherent safety. By 1100 Imperial, there were thousands of these vessels plying the spacelanes.

Laser Barbettes

Popular with military craft in the early stellar Tech Levels, laser barbettes provide a heavier hitting energy weapon than the turrets they are derived from. By the mid-stellar Tech Levels, these weapons are superseded by more powerful particle and fusion-based barbettes. Civilian craft, however, still find use for laser-based barbette weaponry.

Using technology identical to their turret-based brethren, pulse and beam laser barbettes retain the advantages and disadvantages inherent in their smaller versions. However, they cannot be used for point defense fire, as with any other barbette.

WEAPON	TL	RANGE	POWER	DAMAGE	COST	SPECIAL
Pulse Laser Barbette	9	Long	15	3D	MCr6	DM+2 to attack rolls
Beam Laser Barbette	10	Medium	15	2D	MCr3	DM+4 to attack rolls

SOHO-CLASS LIGHT FREIGHTER

TL12		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	200 tons; Streamlined; Reinforced	-	17
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 6	15	5.1
M-Drive	Thrust 2	4	8
J-Drive	Jump 2	15	22.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 120	8	8
Fuel Tanks	J-2; 5 weeks of operation	41	-
Bridge	Holographic Controls	10	1.25
Computer	Computer/20	-	5
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Weapons	Triple Pulse Laser Turret (long range, high yield)	1	6
	Pulse Laser Barbette (long range, high yield)	5	9
Systems	Fuel Processor (40 tons/day)	2	0.1
	Fuel Scoop	-	-
	Loading Belt	1	0.1
	Repair Drones	2	0.4
	Docking Space (4 tons)	5	1.25
	Air/raft	-	0.25
Staterooms	Standard x 6	24	3
Software	Jump Control/2	-	0.2
	Fire Control/2	-	4
	Library	-	-
	Manoeuvre/0	-	-
	Evade/1	-	1
	Auto-Repair/1	-	5
Common Area		6	0.6
Cargo		59	-
	Total:		101.753

CREW

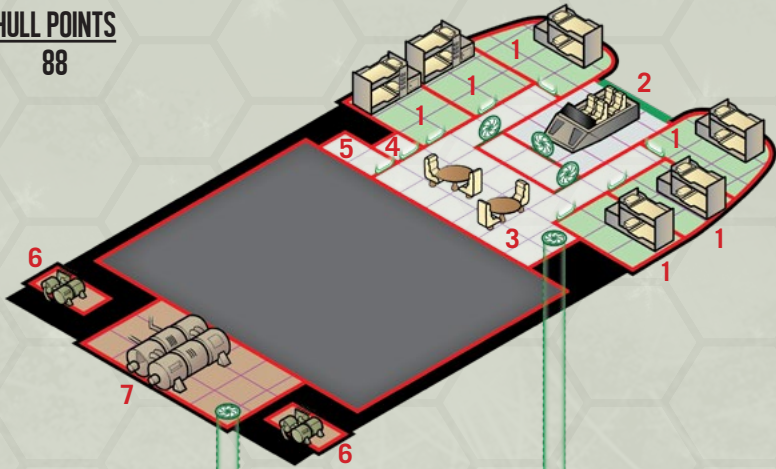
Captain, Pilot, Astrogator,
Engineer, Gunners x 2

RUNNING COSTS

Maintenance Costs: Cr8479/month
Purchase Costs: MCr101.753

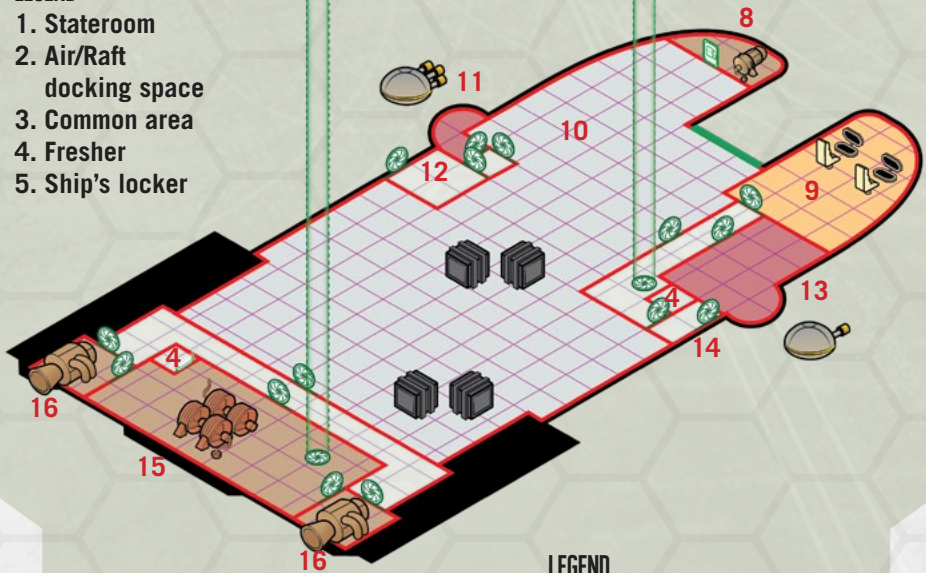
HULL POINTS

88



LEGEND

1. Stateroom
2. Air/Raft docking space
3. Common area
4. Fresher
5. Ship's locker



LEGEND

6. Fuel processor
7. Jump drive
8. Sensors
9. Bridge
10. Cargo hold
11. Triple pulse laser turret
12. Drones
13. Pulse laser barbette
14. Air lock
15. Power plant
16. Manoeuvre drive

POWER REQUIREMENTS

Basic Ship Systems	40
Manoeuvre Drive	40
Jump Drive	40
Sensors	2
Weapons	28
Fuel Processor	2

CHARTED SPACE



“Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin, Vilani Repository of All Knowledge. Concise History by Working Group on Vilani History Documents Subcommittee, Kasiiga University Press, Ishimaga, Vland (Vland 1717) 001-1105.”

A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE VILANI

(-100,000 to -2204)

The Vilani name for their Imperium was Ziru Sirka – the Grand Empire of Stars. They were able to create their great empire for one basic reason: They reached the stars first.

EARLY HISTORY

The Vilani first explored space in about -10011. They ventured out into their own star system (from their homeworld, Vland) in a region of space about 300 parsecs closer to the galactic core than Terra. They visited every world in their system, colonised a few, and put scientific bases on the rest over a period of about a century. By -9811, the Vilani had reached a point culturally and technologically where they were ready to reach for the stars. They launched sublight interstellar colonisation missions aimed at the nearest stars. Tauri, a mere 2.17 light-years away, was the first system visited, but several more were explored in rapid succession. Over the course of the next 500 years, the Vilani created a small interstellar community of six systems, each with its own colonies and scientific stations.

The first Vilani contact with intelligence took place in -9301 when an expedition to Tahaver discovered a race of aquatic mantas with a nontechnological culture. The mantas, although intelligent, were easily dominated by the Vilani, and over several hundred years became a servant (some say slave) race, being assigned to fish herding and kelp gathering in Tahaver’s vast seas. This first contact with an intelligent race set the tone for future contacts between the Vilani and other intelligent beings: The Vilani seemed naturally suited to rule and to exploit others.

The dramatic key to the expansion of the Vilani was their discovery of the jump drive in about -9226. A research team working on the outer fringes of the Vland system created the first working prototype and demonstrated its effects with a harrowing jump to the nearby Tauri system. The Vilani now had the key to interstellar travel.

JUMP DRIVE

Of course, luck also had a hand in the future of Vland. The elementary jump drive which the Vilani discovered was capable of transporting a starship across the vast interstellar distances at a speed of about 170 times light speed – a full parsec in about a week. But the range of the jump drive (at least the elementary jump-1 drive which they discovered) was limited to about one parsec. Since the average distance between stars is more like two parsecs, ships were greatly restricted as to which stars could be their destinations.

Vland, however, is one world in an immense chain of star systems, each of which lies within one parsec of the next – the Vilani Main. This Vilani Main became the highway over which Vilani ships travelled. Within 10 years, starships had been built and sent to every system within 20 parsecs. By -8912, the Vilani sphere had reached about 10 parsecs in diameter.

EXPLORATION AND EXPLOITATION

Between -8912 and -5914, the Vilani explored, exploited, and settled virtually every world they contacted. Initially, their emphasis was on exploration and contact, but over the centuries, Vilani settlement inexorably followed. Worlds closest to Vland were settled first, but the star catalogues were bulging with worlds ripe for colonisation and exploitation. Barren worlds were exploited for immediate gain; their resources were strip-mined and shipped off to feed Vland's growing industries.

Inhabited worlds were exploited as well, but on a more subtle basis. Exploration revealed a number of technologically primitive races on worlds within 60 parsecs. None had developed interstellar travel; few had advanced even beyond the Iron Age. All were ripe for domination by the Vilani. The Vilani imposed their culture, their law, and their interstellar economic community on all the worlds they encountered. The subject races made few objections: the rewards were far too great when compared to the sacrifices they were called upon to make. Vilani help (or interference) gradually brought the subject races to a high technology level. The Vilani culture had no concept of a 'prime directive' banning interference with local cultures. Instead, Vilani culture and technology were handed out wholesale to bring the many non-Vilani races forward. Early Vilani conquests were not military; they were more subtle exercises in economic subjugation.

THE COMING OF THE BUREAUX

This 3000-year period of exploration and exploitation was perhaps the most vital in Vilani history. But an empire more than 60 parsecs across is difficult for any government to rule. By -5994, a starship took more than 60 weeks to cross Vilani territory from border to border. It was impossible for the careful, constant control that the Vilani believed in to be exercised across such vast distances. Over the course of several decades, the Vilani homeworld government established three subordinate governments – the Bureaux – which were each assigned a portion of the overall territory to govern, defend, and exploit.

Makhidkarun controlled the territory in the direction of the galactic core. Naasirka received territories nearer to Vland, and Sharurshid, controlled by interstellar merchants, was assigned territories in the direction of the galactic rim.

Each Bureau was a complete interstellar government operated for a profit, responsible for the welfare of its citizens, control of its subjects, and defence of its territory. Each Bureau had rights of taxation, defence, and legislation in its territory. A Bureau's fleets protected its shipping and trade; its armies defended its installations and conquered new worlds if necessary. Mutual assistance agreements allowed the Bureaux to call upon each other for help. But while each Bureau was a self-sufficient government controlling vast numbers of worlds, all three were nominally responsible to a central ruling council on Vland, the Igsiirdi.

The Igsiirdi ruled Vland. It received tribute (or taxation) payments from the Bureaux and used the funds to administer public works on Vland. It also allocated newly discovered territories to the Bureaux. The three Bureaux appointed the Igsiirdi's members, and in practice, it served as a forum within which the Bureaux could communicate, interact, and eventually reach decisions governing them all.

THE CONSOLIDATION WARS

Although Vilani territory was 60 parsecs in diameter in -5994, Vilani influence was felt far beyond their established borders. Cultures on the fringes of the Vilani sphere received the benefits of Vilani technology without being subjected to them. Many such cultures acquired jump drive technology and explored territories even farther beyond the limits of Vilani exploration. It was inevitable that clashes would occur between the Vilani and these independent cultures.

In -5423, the Vilani discovered jump-2 technology and could travel directly to worlds two parsecs distant. Moreover, because of accidents of stellar placement, many jump-2 routes took significantly less than half the time to run than comparable jump-1 routes.

Vilani ships after -5423 had at least twice their previous speed and a vastly enhanced strategic mobility. The Vilani kept the jump-2 drive a jealously guarded secret for millennia: The drive immediately gave the Vilani the weapon they needed to keep the rest of the universe under control. In -5394, after several centuries of sputtering conflict, the Igsiirdi (expressing the will of the Bureaux) launched the Consolidation Wars and committed all of Vland's forces to subjugating the many states on the fringes of the Vilani Empire. When the wars ended in -4039, the Vilani had almost tripled the size of their domain. Consolidation brought a marked change in the texture of Vilani society. Before, it had stressed peaceful expansion as neighbouring worlds were assimilated in a trade community and absorbed into Vilani society. Now, armed might and superior technology were used to force any and every neighbouring culture into the fold. Over the next 1,000 years, the Vilani conquered all of civilised space and absorbed enemies, allies, and neutrals alike. The Vilani jump-2 advantage virtually assured their ultimate victory in the Consolidation Wars.

The Igsiirdi directed the course of the Consolidation Wars. The Vilani Bureaux faced small interstellar states, but each Bureau had a separate military. The Igsiirdi arranged coordination, shared the burden equitably, and prevented over-expansion. The Igsiirdi also allocated conquered territory to the Bureaux. Territory was not allocated to a Bureau upon its discovery. Instead, it was assigned to a governing Bureau once conquered, although the Bureaux generally agreed before the fact how such territories would be distributed.

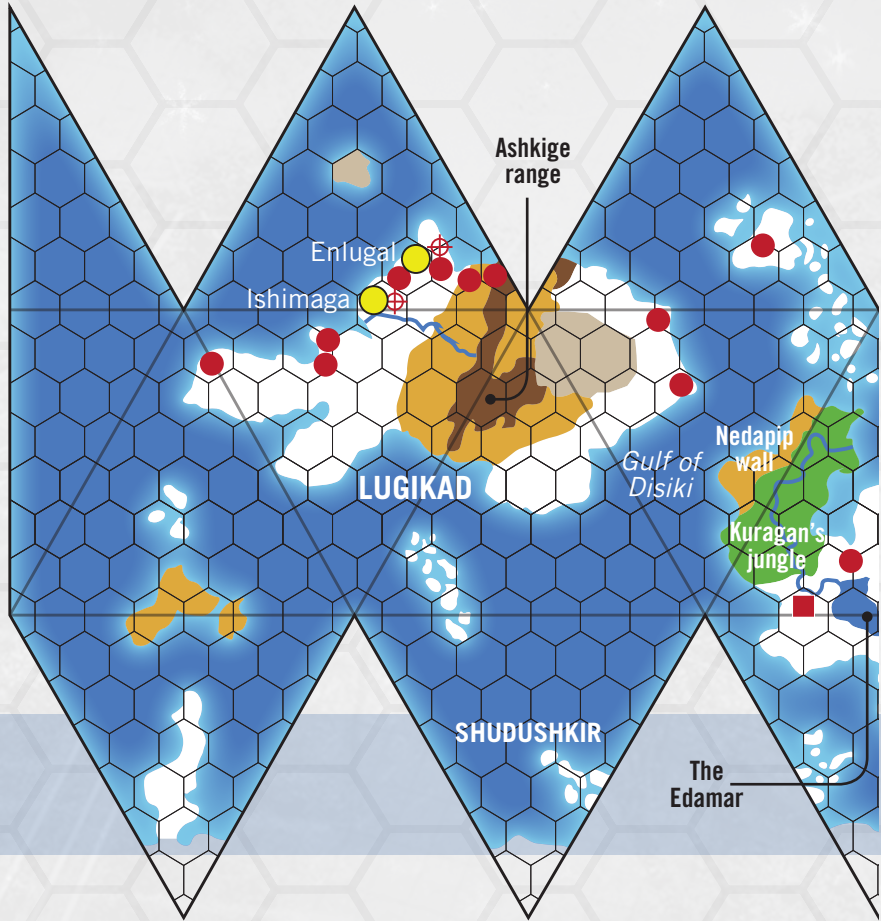
The Igsiirdi managed the absorption of conquered states. Interstellar states continued to exist as subject states. They were absorbed into Vilani society as much as possible. Races that were unable to fit into Vilani society were severely restricted.

THE GRAND EMPIRE OF STARS

Vland extensively colonised between -5215 and -3994. The last Consolidation War ended in -4039. Vland had expanded until no uncolonised civilised states remained on its borders. Beyond those borders were only uncivilised worlds and empty systems. In -4039, the Igsiirdi declared the Ziru Sirka. The Vilani calendar dates from this point. The

VLAND (1717 VLAND)

A967A9A-F Hi Cs [Vilani]



Mountains



Rough or Hilly Terrain



Desert



Downport

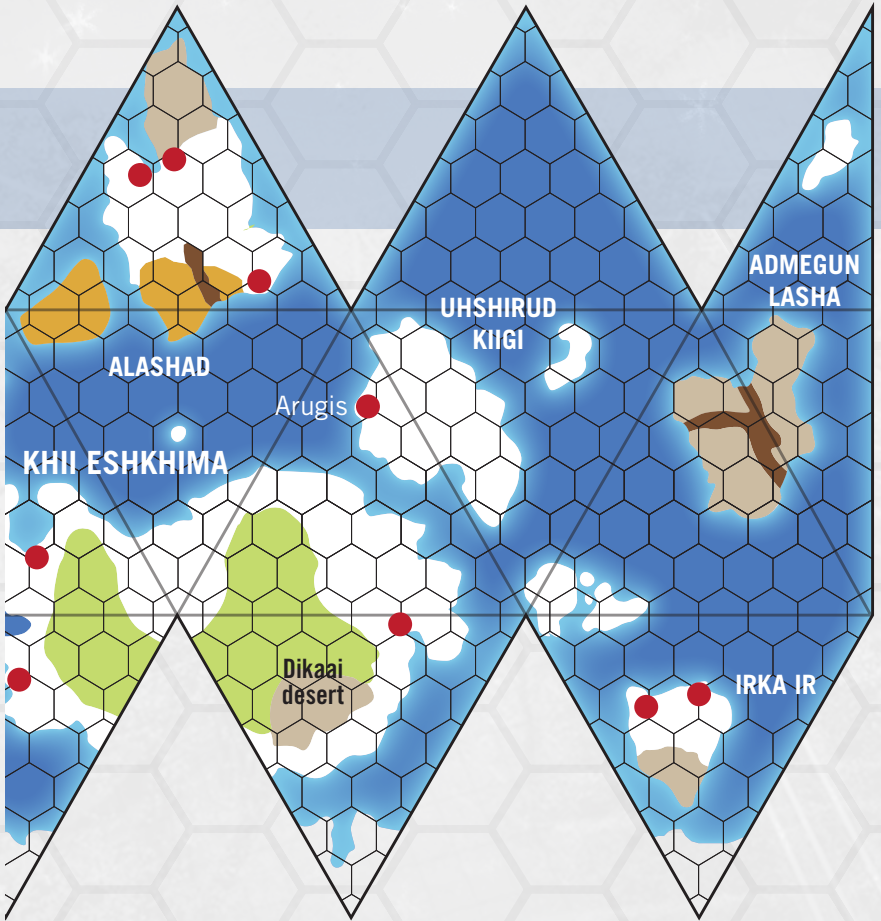


Hero of Vland Monument



City

- Sector capital
- Homeworld of the Vilani branch of Humanity
- Interstellar trade focus for millennia before the Third Imperium
- Located on the Vilani Main



Forests



Landmasses

1 hex = 1285.7 km



Towns



Lakes and Rivers



Pack or Sheet Ice

peace imposed by this Imperium lasted for nearly 1,200 years, but the cost to the Vilani and their subject races was immeasurable. The Ziru Sirka initially had no emperor. Within 10 years, the chairman of the Igsiirdi (elected for life by the council) was the ishimkarun – the shadow emperor – an unidentified leader who accepted or rejected the decisions of the council. The ishimkarun ruled through published proclamations, never appearing in public. Upon his death, the Igsiirdi elected a successor from its members.

With cultural maturity, the Ziru Sirka reached a pinnacle of interstellar diplomacy. Client states under Vilani protection or patronage numbered in the thousands. This stability led to raised world tech levels, living standards, and trade levels. At its height (-3516), the First Imperium contained over 15,000 worlds (worlds garnered from absorbed conquered states, settled regions which graduated from ‘territorial’ to ‘sector government’ status, and continued colonisation of explored space).

STAGNATION

Vilani culture achieved stability at the cost of stagnation. Maintaining centralised control over this vast expanse created a cultural rigidity. The three Bureaux became increasingly identical. The old Vilani culture which developed during the First Imperium adhered to a rigid caste structure. Hereditary positions became commonplace in all three Bureaux. Each citizen had a specific and set place in the universe, and it was each citizen’s duty to remain in that place. Society could not afford to let individuals do as they pleased.

The Ziru Sirka began a long decline about -3016. The many subject races of the Imperium grew restive, impatient with the imposed culture the Vilani insisted upon. Imperial power was waning and stretched thin, and the Ziru Sirka could no longer afford to absorb new interstellar states. The Imperium had been safe as long as no exterior threat arose but now, despite all efforts, technology had leaked across the borders to aid new interstellar states developing outside of Vilani control. Many threats pushed at many different places along the border. Some detached small portions of the Imperium; Imperial reactions crushed others.

THE CRUMBLING EMPIRE

Around -2716, it was clear even to insiders that the rigid Vilani culture was, in reality, brittle. The young governments took larger and larger chunks of territory, often with the open acceptance of the local citizenry. The texture of Vilani culture was decaying. Officials in the fringe territories began to fabricate their reports rather than reveal the truth

to their superiors. Appeals for help or support cost heavily in personal power, so officials simply reported success. Meanwhile, local governors took to hiring and equipping 'barbarians' from outside the Imperium for personal power plays. Civil wars, mutinies, and insurrections became increasingly common.

The Imperium used diplomacy to play off enemies against one another where it could, but there was still substantial territorial shrinkage over the centuries, and it gradually lost territory along its coreward and trailing marches. A movement away from the established, civilised territories started as the Ziru Sirka began to fail.

About -2416, the wolf-like barbarian Vargr began pillaging the Imperium's civilised territories in the direction of the galactic core. Between then and -1717, Vargr fleets were a significant factor in the Imperial retreat out of coreward territories. Other border territories were in revolt, and even some interior territories were becoming unruly in their demands for self-government and less rigid controls from above.

It was against this background of a decaying empire that the first Imperial contact with Terra took place. In -2403, Terran explorers encountered the Vilani at Barnard's Star. The Terrans were understandably surprised to learn that someone else already owned the stars. The Imperium, on the other hand, dismissed the Terrans as simply another barbarian race of little consequence.

ARRIVAL OF THE TERRANS

Terrans, during this period of vast interstellar colonisation, were pursuing their own history while confined to their home world. It was not until the 1960s that Terrans ventured into space, and not until 2000 that they were actually exploring space on a permanent basis. The Terran Confederation dates as a centralised world government to the signing of the Treaty of New York in 2072 (although it was not officially called that for another century). This treaty allowed the placement of the armed forces of the major nations of Terra under the centralised control of the United Nations (until then, a loose organisation of nation states, with no governmental authority). In 2090, Terrans invented the jump drive.

Initially, it was used only within the solar system: Since the range of a jump-1 drive was insufficient to reach the nearest stars, it was used only for intrasystem jumps. Terrans remained restricted to the solar system for 43 more years, and this long incubation period worked in their favour. They developed an extensive variety of jump-capable ships

and had produced them for decades when they finally ventured to a neighbouring star system.

MEETING THE VILANI

An expedition placed intermediate refuelling supplies and travelled to a nearby system, Barnard's Star, early in 2113. It encountered a Vilani mining outpost there. The tales its members heard of the Imperium's size staggered them. Joint international expeditions met with the Vilani and explored nearby systems, and it came as a shock to the Terrans that most of the worlds beyond a few parsecs away were already claimed. More than a dozen human races had already colonised the worlds around Earth. A quick effort was made to settle Barnard's Star even as Vilani prospectors were working on that world. Individual nations built starships and expanded their armed forces. Outposts were quickly reinforced and strengthened.

INTERSTELLAR WAR

The first interstellar war between the Imperium and Terran Confederation began when a Vilani trade caravan ignored Terran traffic control signals. Fortunately for the Terrans, the Vilani scarcely knew that a war was going on, as the UN exercised only tenuous control over the national squadrons. This war, considered a Terran victory, began the period of Terran ascendance and led to strengthening of the central Terran government. In 2123, representatives from the Terran colonies were admitted to the General Assembly. The Terran government then changed its name to the Terran Confederation.

The peace that concluded the first war was both uneasy and short. The second through seventh wars were marked by seesaw exchanges of territory, mostly confined to the Dingir and Sol subsectors. The Terrans applied every force they could bring to bear on their enemy (for example, in 2132 the Terran Navy began purchasing robots, mainly heavy-duty construction types for making temporary structures used as advance bases). The Terrans believed that their successes in gradually expanding their territory were entirely of their own making. After winning the first three wars, they finally realised the Grand Imperium's immensity. They also realised that they could win in spite of that size.

Other problems than the Terrans preoccupied the Vilani central government. Vilani power, even at this late date, was sufficient to crush the Terrans had it been applied but the Vilani fought these initial wars with only the forces available to the affected provincial governor. He was

charged to win wars and maintain the empire's power on a limited budget. Appeals to the emperor were avoided because they cost heavily in personal power. The local governors often compromised, agreed to some territorial concessions, and then reported victory.

A MAJOR VICTORY

The eighth interstellar war finally broke open the frontier and ended in the first major Terran victory. After the capture of Dingir, Terran Grand Admiral Manuel Albadawi exploited Vilani confusion by reaching beyond Dingir to seize and fortify other worlds of the Imperium. The Treaty of Ensular (which ended the war) ceded all of the Imperium rimward of Vega to the Terrans. This series of interstellar wars ended when the Grand Imperium collapsed, as much from its own weight, age, and decadence as from the Terran victories; it collapsed when its leaders lost the support of the people and the will to resist.

TERRAN OCCUPATION

The Terrans moved quickly to occupy the remaining Vilani territory. Many Vilani subject races, such as the Vegans, welcomed the Terrans. Terran naval officers were dispatched throughout the Grand Imperium and between 2302 and 2317, over 100,000 naval officers were sent to take control of the reins of government, direct local bureaucracies, and maintain peace and order. The Terran officers carried their technology with them, including robots. Terran naval officers occupied key posts in the Vilani bureaucracy, which was otherwise retained intact. In some cases, Terran ensigns administered whole worlds, and mere commanders ruled whole subsectors. Vilani military forces were incorporated into the Terran forces.

The conquered territories were under military rule from 2302 to 2317. During this period, the Terran Navy learned to deal effectively with the Vilani and be sympathetic to the Vilani people. That the Vilani openly accepted the Terrans made it easier to view them as friends deserving of respect and protection. The Terrans had to administer an immense empire that had already admitted it could not do the job itself. If the bureaucracy had collapsed (and trade ceased), hundreds of worlds would have died as supplies were cut off.

THE RULE OF MAN

In 2317, the Terran Secretariat voted to transfer control of the conquered territories directly to Terra and incorporate the Grand Imperium into the Terran Confederation. Such a move would have made every Terran a

millionaire, but at an untold cost to the citizens of the Imperium. Admiral Hiroshi Estigarribia, the commander-in-chief of the Terran Navy, realised that the Confederation government could not possibly control the vast territories of the Imperium. He proclaimed himself regent of the Vilani Imperium and protector of Terra, with both states now united in the Rule of Man. Nearly all of the fleet sided with Estigarribia because it was composed mainly of colonials (who were under-represented in the Terran Confederation government) and because of his careful preparation.

The Confederation was dissolved without significant resistance and the Terran fleet headquarters at Dingir became the capital of the Rule of Man. The bureaucracy remained centred on Vland, although arrangements were made to gradually transfer it elsewhere. Upon Estigarribia's death, his chief of staff succeeded him and crowned himself Emperor Hiroshi II. Estigarribia did not actually assume the crown, but his government is known as that of Emperor Hiroshi I. Hiroshi II transferred all government functions from Dingir and Vland to a more centrally located world, renamed bilingually Hub/Ershur.

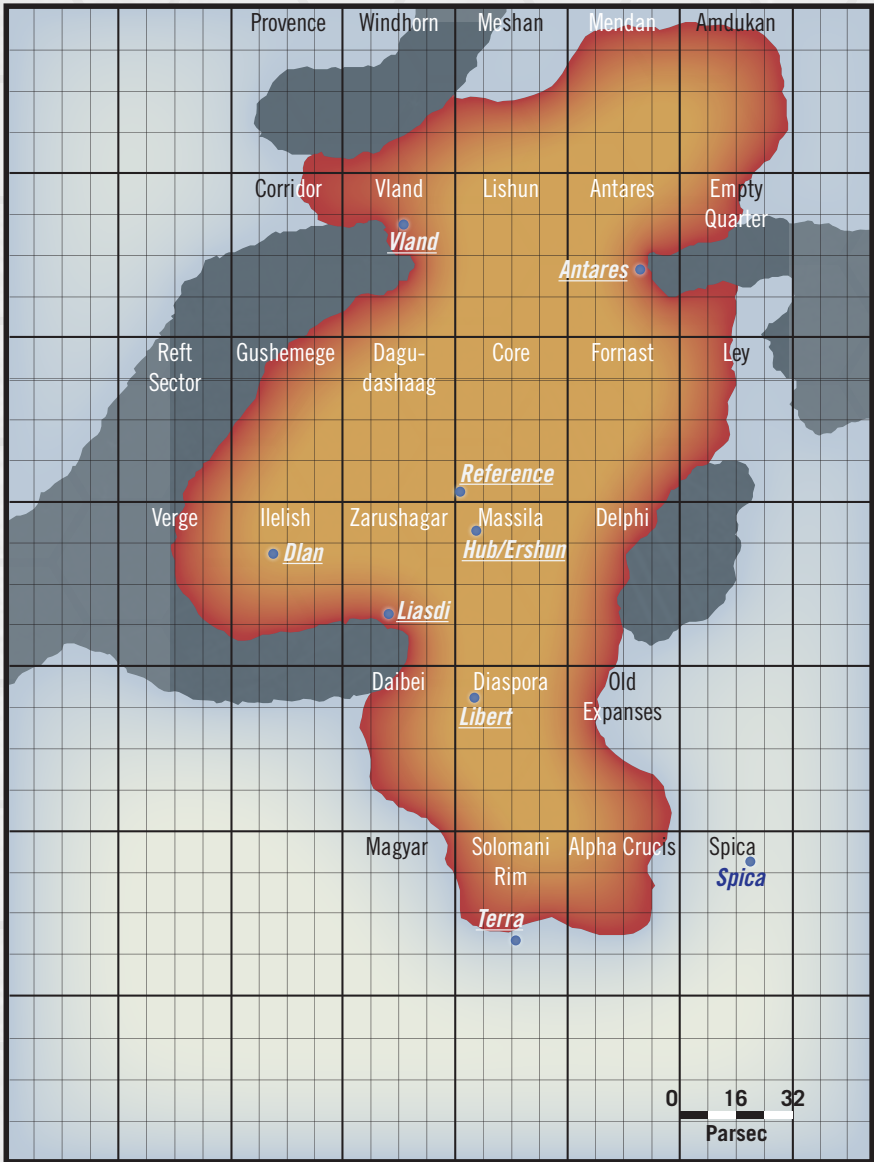


The Rule of Man: a short-lived interstellar empire formed after the conquest of the Vilani Imperium by the Terrans, also known as the Second Imperium.

THE FALL OF NIGHT

This world remained the capital of the Rule of Man for the next 400 years. Unfortunately, Terran rule was no more enlightened or progressive than that of the Vilani. From a tight, paternalistic economic empire, the pendulum swung to a disjointed military empire. Neither was really tenable over such a large domain. The drift toward disintegration was too strongly rooted in the fabric of the Ziru Sirka and all too soon the Long Night, the inevitable result of centuries of oppressive rule, descended over the stars which had been the Ziru Sirka.

IMPERIUM



Circa -3516

The borders of the Ziru Sirka at its height. Further expansion was restricted by astrology, other cultures, and Vilani stagnation.



HIGH GUARD

DELPHINUS-CLASS STARLINER

High Passage on a typical liner usually comes with a promise of luxury and adventure but Travellers are often disappointed with the cramped accommodations, mediocre food, indifferent hospitality staff and smug fellow passengers. Shipbuilding firm General Products LIC has created a new offering for the jet set that promises a much more enjoyable and luxurious interstellar travel experience.

The Delphinus-class pleasure yacht conveys Travellers to their desired location with opulence and efficiency. Its aerofins ensure a smooth transition from close orbit to atmosphere and enable the flight crew to engage in exciting aerobatics should passengers desire a thrill. Framed by a lush biosphere, the central recreation area contains a full galley and holographic gaming space for virtual sports and immersive entertainment experiences. The ship's Intellect software is programmed to respond to the passengers' every need and works in concert with a steward to ensure a pleasant transit between the stars.

Perhaps the most unusual feature of the Delphinus is its integral aquatic drive. Employing cutting-edge military spacecraft technology but with civilian passengers in mind, the ship is reinforced for underwater operations including a top speed of 10 knots and an operating depth of 150 metres. Passengers need not be concerned about the fragility of the ship's light frame. Crystaliron struts and advanced polymer viewports reinforce the hull's integrity during underwater operations, ensuring a safe and enjoyable submarine voyage. The ship is also designed to cruise on the water's surface. When floating, retractable platforms can be extended from beneath the hull so passengers can step outside, enjoy the sunset of a binary pair or fish the seas of an alien world.

Critics have cited the ship's light hull, energy-inefficient thrusters, late jump drive and tight bridge accommodations as unnecessary design sacrifices. General Products has adamantly denied cutting corners on this spacecraft, pointing out that each feature of the ship is designed with the customer in mind. The light hull accommodates larger viewports and enhances the ship's in-atmosphere performance, the thrusters give passengers a thrill with their loud and boisterous roar, and late jumps give passengers the time to make a few goodbye calls, get settled, wind down, and enjoy the view enroute to a 150-diameter limit whilst having a light meal and cocktails. The compact bridge design provides more space for the rec room and clearly establishes the ship's identity as a luxury conveyance, refusing to waste copious amounts of space for technical components.

The Delphinus offers the features and luxury of a yacht and the performance of a courier at an affordable price.



Underwater Operations Kit (TL7)

Most starships have the ability to float on liquid water and a limited ability to dive beneath its surface to a depth of around 50 metres. The underwater operations kit includes add-ons and a drive that enable a spacecraft to dive to depths of up to 150 metres and travel underwater at a speed of up to 10 knots. There are two prerequisites: the hull configuration must be streamlined or standard, and the ship must have fuel scoops. The aquatic drive adds a pump and exhaust system to the scoops that facilitates submarine travel. The kit also enables the ship to travel on the water's surface, but at only half the speed.

The underwater operations kit costs MCr0.02 per ton of hull and consumes 1% of the ship's available tonnage. A more comprehensive underwater operations kit is available at TL8 that costs MCr0.05 per ton of hull and requires 2.5% of the available space. The TL8 kit enables the ship to travel to a depth of 1,000 metres and travel at up to 20 knots. Both kits consume a negligible amount of power but require an operational power source.

DELPHINUS-CLASS STARLINER

TL12		TONS	COST (MCR)
Hull	100 tons, Streamlined, Light Hull	-	4.5
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (Budget: Energy Inefficient)	2	3
J-Drive	Jump 3 (Budget: Late Jump)	12.5	14.0625
A-Drive	Aquatic Drive, 10 knots, 150m depth	1	2
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 60	4	4
Fuel Tanks	4 weeks of operation	31	-
Bridge	Small Bridge, Holographic Controls	6	0.3125
Computer	10/bis	-	0.24
Sensors	Civilian	1	3
Weapons	Double Turret	1	0.5
Systems	Aerofins	5	0.5
	Biosphere	0.5	0.1
	Fuel Scoops	-	-
	Gaming Space	3	0.018
Staterooms	Standard x 2	8	1
	High x 2	12	1.6
	Emergency Low Berth x 1	1	1
Software	Manoeuvre/0	-	-
	Jump Control/3	-	0.3
	Library	-	-
	Intellect	-	1
Common Areas		6	0.6
Cargo		6	-
		Total	37.733

CREW

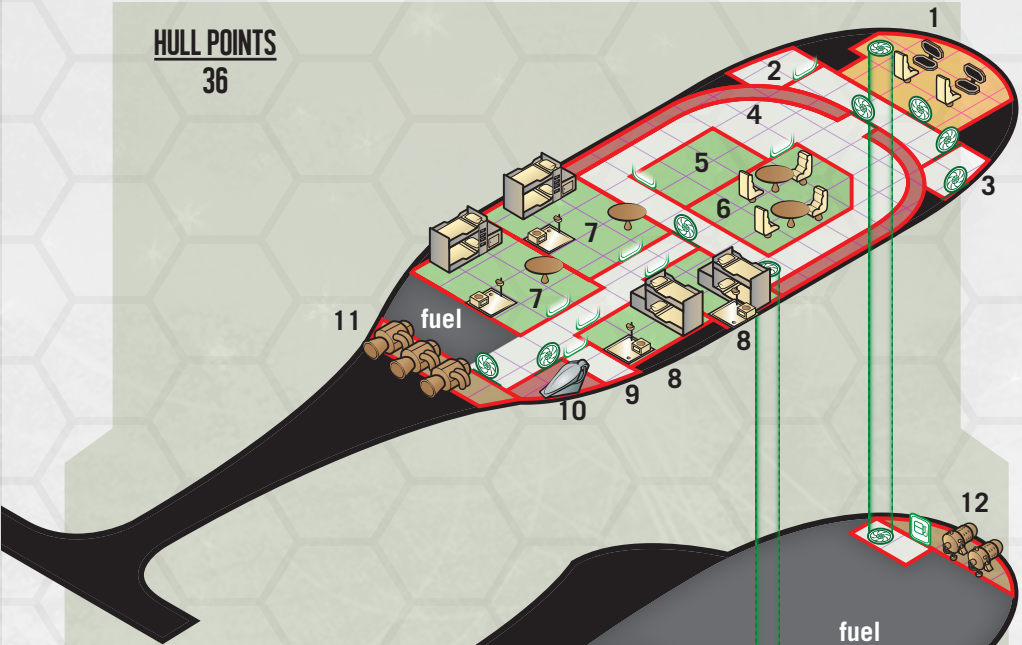
Pilot, Astrogator, Engineer,
Steward

RUNNING COSTS

Maintenance Costs: Cr3144/month
Purchase Costs: MCr33.9597
(including 10% standard discount)

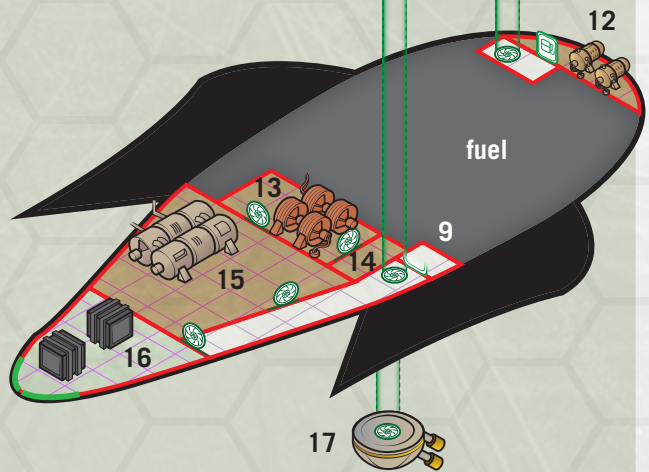
HULL POINTS

36



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Ship's locker
3. Air lock
4. Biosphere
5. Gaming space
6. Common area and small galley
7. High Stateroom



LEGEND

8. Stateroom
9. Fresher
10. Low berth
11. Manoeuvre drive
12. Sensors
13. Power plant
14. Aquatic drive
15. Jump drive
16. Cargo hold
17. Double turret

POWER REQUIREMENTS

Basic Ship Systems	20
Manoeuvre Drive	26
Jump Drive	30
Sensors	1
Weapons	1



CHARTED SPACE

WITHIN THE TWO THOUSAND WORLDS

So, Human, you wish to know something of the thoughts and philosophies of The People? An odd request, that, but then, yours is an odd race, one with motivations and reasonings difficult to scent. Of what possible benefit could a knowledge of our philosophies be to you? We, The People, have our place, in the Cosmos, as do you, and there could be no advantage to either of us in sharing the viewpoints of positions so vastly sundered.

Xaxk! Fortunate it is that you have approached us instead of another family group with your request. Old K'graxk now – do you know them? No? They cannot tolerate !xengri, and claim they can catch their stench at 10 kilometres. They'd never have stopped to bandy philosophy with you! But then, their family isn't as widely travelled, doesn't have that cosmopolitan... how do you say it... *savoir faire*... for travel and experience ours has. We, we're tolerant of the lower species. After all, they have their place and can't help being what they are, is it not so?

And, of course, we can tell that you are not g'naak. There are, after all, respectable limits even for the cosmopolitan! No entity who has consumed meat would be allowed within the portals of this embassy, a fact we believe all those of your species are well acquainted with.

Are you fully aware of what K'kree olfactory senses reveal to us? We can demonstrate. You have recently consumed several beakers of water infused with the oils of a dark, coarsely powdered vegetable bean. We recognise the particular odour from other Humans we've conversed with, but don't recall the name. It is a mild stimulant to your species is it not? Also... yes... you have dined last night at the cafeteria here at the embassy. Mba roots in treer sauce, yes? A bit bland for our tastes, but that seems to be a K'kree dish favoured by many visiting Humans.

Oh, yes, we have little trouble reading the simple things about other species. Mmm... Further, we detect in you... behind the tainted water and mba roots... hmm... fear? Not very strong. Perhaps we should call it, instead, nervousness. Understandable, of course, in a Human granted permission to interview a noble of our rank. Also, we detect recent sexual excitement... would that be the dark-maned female of your kind who accompanied you to the... what? But of course we know! We smell traces of her pheromones mixed with yours... they are easy to detect, and quite

unlike any other scent you produce. It is quite obvious to us, as obvious as that peculiar darkening of your facial skin just now. Ah... now we smell anger. You are angry? And surprised as well. You should not be so. Where you have sight as your primary sense, the K'kree count first the sense of smell, and if you don't understand such a simple fact, you have no chance at all of understanding The People.

What we fail to understand about Humans, despite our years of contact with them, is their preoccupation with this intangible you call 'privacy'. We understand the technical definition of 'individual', 'sole', 'alone', and many more, but full understanding of privacy escapes us. You see around us the other members of our family? Believe when we tell you that we should be most distressed to be separated from one another at any time, for any reason. Even discussing the concept disturbs us. You will notice the others here becoming concerned at my scent of agitation. We must take a moment to compose ourselves.

Now, to go on, we have studied this concept called privacy since we were first assigned here. Frankly, it amazes us that such natural functions as elimination or procreation could be regarded as activities best hidden from everyone. All creatures which ingest food must eliminate wastes, after all. What purpose is served by concealing the fact? Of all the scents of Humaniti, that associated with what you call 'embarrassment' – that sharp, almost spicy odour akin to the salty tang of fear which we perceive in you still – that is the hardest of your smells for us to comprehend.

My dear sir, we do *not* stray from the subject! To understand The People, you must understand what drives us, but Humaniti is so alien in thought and motivation, we scarcely know where to begin. Perhaps we can give you some glimmering of the wind-swept vistas of K' kree experience by examining a few of the most important concepts.

RIGHTNESS

K'lat'rr cannot be closely translated, but gives the scent of far horizons beyond rolling and unbounded prairie, red-golden backek releasing its flowerysweet pollen in waves before the gentle breeze, on which floats the dark, wet and ozone-tingling smell of recent thunderstorms, mingled with the wet and comforting scents of family close by. Can such a scene fail to excite you, to set both hearts pounding in joy and... and... rightness?

Rightness... belonging... these perhaps best describe K'lat'rr, which signifies that everything is in its proper place, in its proper order, as it should be. An old Terran songweaver spoke of 'God's in his heaven and

all's right with the world.' If by God he meant Ghik'keeriklk'ak T't'tkakh Xeng Kirr Tkexirr, he scented the concept with perfection.

POSITION

That brings us to t'ok, 'position', you might call it. Surely, even Humans can scent this, yes? One has only to observe life throughout the universe, how every organism, no matter how lowly, has its place within food chains and ecosystems and the broad scheme of things. In K'kree society, each has a place, each family a place, and there is little change. For over 7,700 years the government seat of Kirur has been an example of stability, of order, of k'lat'rr... steady, steadfast, unchanging.

Eh? Freedom? What does freedom have to do with anything? Freedom is a thousand bits of chaff before the stormwind, each swept its own way. Idiocy! There's a perfect example of how Humans try to understand The People through their own preconceived and biased notions. This freedom you Humans speak of seems to us bizarre, and sounds dangerous, if we understand aright the word. The function of a family's members is to join for the benefit of all. And each family joins with each other family for the benefit of the Herd and the Race, each with a place and position in the Grand Whole. Now, tell me, Human, where would we be if any common servant... or better, some non-K'kree kr'rrir... decided that it would be krurrinna? Unthinkable! What if we felt the freedom to strike you down where you stand? Nonsense! That's what our bodyguards are for after all... for their t'ok is to chastise at our command impropriety journalists who disrupt t'ok!

Your apology is accepted. Think nothing of it. Now, where was I?

ORDER

T't'k – 'order' – proceeds from t'ok – 'position'. A Human would say we are 'conservative', that we mistrust things new, and long delay adventures which could upset the natural order of things.

This is true enough, although the term conservative in this sense seems to have a negative connotation, as though change is always good, and that which holds back change is bad. Say, rather, that the new must prove itself before we embrace it, for to change merely for the sake of change is stupidity of the fouleststenched sort. T't'k gives us patience. The People have spread slowly across the stars, lacking that mindless wanderlust which brands other species we have met. This is not weakness, but rather it is strength. Given the precepts of t'ok and t't'k, it could be no other way.



THE GOOD OF ALL

If something is keek!kr, it flows from t'ok and t't'k to the good of all. It... it seems self-explanatory, but you Humans are so... so... we have no word. What? Ah, yes, individualistic. We have used that word before, but it is so depressing a concept. Each driven its own way, as chaff before a storm.

Keek!kr is derived from the very beginnings of The People. Primitive herds naturally evolved the idea whereby each acted first and always for the good of the whole, to ensure the herd's survival and prosperity.

Humans we have conversed with in the past have expressed surprise that in our society we have no warrior caste, drawing, we believe parallels to certain social insects with which they are familiar. In K'kree society, *all* adult males serve at least some time in our military... direct outgrowth from the age-old concept of keek!kr. In the primitive herds, the strong males banded together to protect the females, the aged, and the young from g'naak. Later, they banded together to hunt down the g'naak, to seek them out and destroy them, acting together to free the herd from

fear. This joining for the common good is so basic to our philosophy, it is difficult to explain. We've heard words used by Humans to describe this, words like 'selfless', or 'altruistic', but words such as these suggest that such behaviour is an alternative to the norm which simply cannot exist in K'kree thought or action. Keek!kr is simply another aspect of k'lat'rr and can only be explained as the way things are. That 'things' might be different among non-K'kree is one of the hardest lessons those of us who travel among other races must learn. We comfort ourselves with the knowledge that !xengr'ri cultures may yet arise to the K'kree level of social awareness. The spread of our culture has worked this miracle on countless civilisations... those we call kr'rrir... already, throughout the realm of the Two Thousand Worlds.

UPLIFT

Yes, it is true that The People concern themselves more with their own affairs than with the affairs of others. Is it not so with Humaniti? But we are more than willing to share the gifts of our culture with those around us... yes, more than willing! The Two Thousand Worlds are filled with examples who have enjoyed rrab!ak, that is, 'uplift', and have become kr'rrir.

Our missionary outreach began long ago... at the very beginnings of our history as a space-faring people. Indeed, it is doubtful that we would have created the Two Thousand Worlds without the need to uplift others. True, true, those efforts began almost reflexively, to protect The People from the g'naak we discovered lurking on the newly discovered worlds, but we take pride in what we did as well, extending the consciousness of these races, bringing them to the benefits of true civilisation and enlightenment. Our scientists have demonstrated that evolution will bring all races toward the K'kree norm given time. We are simply helping that natural process along, and reducing ages of blood-soaked misery and horror. We find hope for Humaniti in the fact that many of your people began to embrace vegetarianism before you left your homeworld.

MILITANT VEGETARIANS

Ah, yes. All Humans ask about that. Somehow, we think it is our army, our honoured kirunika!rra – one of your writers translated that word as 'pest control' – which most fascinates Humans. We gather that a scientist of Terra once, long ago before Terrans had ventured to the stars to meet other civilisations, proposed that intelligence would only develop among carnivores and omnivores, his reason being summed up in the asinine phrase 'how much intelligence does it take to sneak up on a blade of grass?'

How consistently you Humans misunderstand the workings of the cosmos.

It was the original g'naak, of course, those long-extinct predators of Kirur, which impelled the K'kree onto the path of intelligence long ago, and not the mindless questing for food. In a way, it can be said that these g'naak themselves gave us the edge with which we supplanted them, demonstrating our superiority and our worthiness to survive. The judgement of the universe is final. There is a saying among us: 'The People have the Two Thousand Worlds, the g'naak have dust.'

The People have been called 'militant vegetarians', an epithet which twists ironically to reveal truth. The term has no translation in our language; why translate what is, or build philosophies about what is self-evident? Certainly, we are vegetarians... and though we don't think of ourselves as 'militant', certainly we use militant means to induce rrab!ak among savages, for our security and for their well-being. Occasionally, when necessary, diseased cultures are eliminated, and for the same reasons. Can there be a nobler cause?

What shocks and surprises Humans is our dedication to this cause. It seems that Humans expect vegetarians to be meek and gentle, horrified at the sight of blood. This expectation would be amusing if it were not so outrageously pathetic. The K'kree are not bloodthirsty; we hunt neither for food nor for so-called 'sport'. Yet when we kill, we kill efficiently, without qualm or what you would call 'conscience' – another difficult concept, that – and in the cause of K'kree well-being, we kill enthusiastically. It has been theorised that carnivores and omnivores are forced to develop certain restraints upon their behaviour as they evolve social structures, restraints which prevent them destroying themselves. Herbivores such as The People know no such restraints; they have no need of them, and are far more dangerous in warfare.

We well remember a military campaign we served in some time ago. There was a Human military officer, a representative of the Solomani Sphere, observing K'kree military techniques on a world inhabited by unregenerate g'naak of the worst kind.

These... savages had rebuffed our every effort to uplift them. It seemed they claimed a biological need for... for meat, which they consumed... lightly singed. The living animals they preyed upon provided them with an amino acid unavailable in the native plant life. It was a simple matter to synthesise this compound for them, but they refused to learn to do it. Certainly, there were problems storing the chemical, but the truth of the matter was that the creatures *preferred* a diet of singed meat and resented our efforts to help them!

Eh! No, not primitives, not barbarians. They had a culture, of sorts, and a crude technological civilisation. They lived in cities... grotesque, alien monstrosities with kilometre-high needles and arches of a pink and white stone... and the contact families reported they had extensive literature, arts, music. But then, too, they actually *hunted for sport*. And they raised herds of... living animals for food... excuse us, the memory is most painful.

We are composed again. The war was a savage one. Their cities were reduced to radioactive glass, their fortresses saturated with tailored biologicals and radioactive dusts, yet still they fought on as small bands in the mountains and jungles and swamps, forcing us to eliminate them a handful at a time.

We had found an isolated shelter in the mountains. They had tried to conceal their scents as well as their visible traces, but we located them in spite of their efforts. The Human was with us as we burst into the cave, to find a female and a pair of young, feeding. One of the young had blood smearing its mouth; the other was feeding on a whitish blood-like secretion from the female. Such horror! Such hideous stench of death and burnt meat! We killed them all, of course, quickly and cleanly, with our feet, to save ammunition, since they were unarmed.

What was amusing... is that a proper use of the word? What was amusing was the reaction of the Human observer, this supposedly hardened warrior, who fled the cave before we'd finished, and was later found being quite ill nearby. That proved a grand amusement among our troops; you know, of course, how we nurse our own young?

Carnivores cannot match herbivores for sheer ferociousness. Carnivorous semi-sophonts take note; behold yet another example of innate K'kree biological superiority, a survival trait which will in time bring the spread of the K'kree cosmic view across the galaxy!

MANIFEST DESTINY

This brings us at last to the final concept, a system of belief rooted in K'kree culture since earliest times.

Religion? You might call it that... although it is less religion as you know it than belief and faith. Perhaps the lower classes accord it the aura of religious belief; for we nobles, of course, fact is enough. The Human terms which best fit it are 'manifest destiny', and it simply acknowledges the glorious destiny of the K'kree and our culture's principles in the cosmos.

Perhaps you are aware that The Two Thousand Worlds... the name for our empire... derives from a term indicating the night sky of Kirur? The term has nothing to do with how many worlds we hold.

Yes, with the unaided eye, it is possible to see about that many stars at one time... and it is our destiny to go forth to those worlds... really a symbol of the whole of creation... bring order and civilisation, and the benefits of our peace. And why not? We have proven our ability... and our right... to survive, proven it again and again in the righteous and noble slaughter of countless g'naak species, and in the uplift of countless more. All K'kree maintain this as part of their cosmic-view, that they are destined by nature to rule, destined even to usher in a new age in planetary biology. Nothing can stop this; it is quite inevitable, basic to the entire foundation of bioevolution!

You disagree? Oh, but you do... you cannot lie to us, so why deny it?

We scent your stink of anger and fear and revulsion. It matters not to us. Perhaps you're unaware that once we were Ghir'ghik'keer!k of a world within our sphere, a world inhabited by Humans. Omnivorous Humans! We took part in their rrab!ak, their... taming... we supervised the eradication of the diehards among them, and we governed the survivors for seven years after that. We watched the colony transformed from savagery to civilization and happiness. We know the benefits of the K'kree way! Well... very well, if you feel that way. The opinion of a Human can hardly matter to us. Our bodyguards will show you out... but long will be the time before we grant another interview to a Human!

It will take days to rid the compound of the last traces of your stench...

*K'agzi X'ten kri' kri!k K't' Hk'tree'trilix't'rr !kru Kraxenga
Noble Diplomat of the 25th Degree, of the family K't'xra, who attends
the Nobler Ambassador Kraxenga, of the herd X'ten*

Editor's Note: The Noble K'agzi is part of the diplomatic staff at Capital. After a distinguished military career, he was adopted into the family of the renowned Kraxenga himself. His mastery of diplomacy, tact, and interspecies understanding has led to new inroads in human-K'kree friendship and cooperation.



ENCOUNTERS

SIMONE GARIBALDI

Simone Garibaldi is a young but well-known academic who has become the subject of some controversy in recent months. She holds a doctorate in linguistic archaeology from a highly respected university and achieved prominence after translating the works of the ancient Vilani poet Gaakuuru. Gaakuuru's work was assumed to be lost, with all known examples being quotations or extracts found in the writings of later figures. However, Garibaldi somehow managed to collect enough of his work to fill three translated volumes.

Garibaldi resigned from her university post three years ago, and has been out of contact until very recently. Upon resurfacing, she announced that she had been seeking source material, then working on translations for the past three years. She has declined to explain how she came by the lost works of Gaakuuru, and will not release the original manuscripts for analysis. Garibaldi says this is due to their age and delicate condition, which is plausible. However, there are those who have their doubts about her story.

Garibaldi's translations were in general well received. The quality of the translated manuscripts is excellent; they hold the same power and style of the fragmentary Gaakuuru pieces that have survived. A number of experts initially pronounced Garibaldi's find authentic, and the translated works enjoyed wide circulation. Recent controversy has actually increased sales but Garibaldi's professional reputation has been tarnished by claims her works may be forgeries.

There is some evidence to back up these allegations. Inconsistencies of style crop up here and there, and there are five separate instances where the manuscripts seem to refer to events that occurred or people who became prominent after Gaakuuru's death. Garibaldi's refusal to produce the originals from which she made her translations has not helped her case; she is currently discredited in academic circles and the subject of divided popular opinion.

The referee should be the final judge as to whether or not Dr. Garibaldi is, indeed, telling the truth. If the material is a hoax, Simone has turned her talents in Vilani literary history to the production of these forged manuscripts. If, on the other hand, the referee decides Simone is genuine, she may enlist the Travellers to help her find more obscure manuscripts or prove the works are not forgeries.

Either way, Garibaldi's story is that she came by the originals more or less by accident. She paid a visit to an old Vilani colony world that had fallen into barbarism, out of general interest rather than following a lead.

Simone Garibaldi

Profession Scientist/Rogue

Age 30

Terms 3

Money Cr100 000

Skills

Admin 0, Art (write) 1, Diplomat 1, Electronics 0, Persuade 2, Science (archaeology) 1, Science (history) 1, Science (Linguistics) 3, Streetwise 1

STR: 7

INT: 10

DEX: 9

EDU: 10

END: 6

SOC: 7



The writings were contained in an ancient colonial library which has now become the seat of a powerful local religion. Garibaldi is a little vague about whether or not she had permission to visit, but hints that there were other literary treasures there as well. Garibaldi says she has a photographic memory (and can demonstrate this to be true), which enabled her to reconstruct the texts and translate them without removing documents from the library. She does not want to reveal the location of the works for a variety of reasons, but with her reputation in tatters she may have to obtain proof that her work is genuine.

There are many ways Dr. Garibaldi might cross the paths of a band of Travellers. She may hire them to transport her to another star system or guard a case which she says contains the precious originals. If she is a forger, this may be a complex plan to have the manuscripts 'destroyed' in an attempt to steal them. A third party (a rival scientist, her publisher, or someone encountered along the way) may hire the Travellers to gain solid evidence that the manuscripts are or are not forgeries. The Travellers may be caught in the middle when someone else attempts to obtain proof of forgery through kidnapping, and thus forced to decide whether or not to intervene on one side or the other.

Simone Garibaldi is attractive, extremely intelligent, and practical. She is not above using people to get what she wants. In all of her dealings, she insists that the Gaakuuru manuscripts are genuine, though as a rule she says little or nothing about how she came by them except to people she trusts – or wants to appear to trust. The Travellers may never encounter her directly but still be affected by events surrounding her work, perhaps being engaged to obtain the original documents (or prove they do not exist) after someone forces Garibaldi to reveal their location.



CENTRAL SUPPLY

>> WEAPONS SECTION <<

Assault Rocket Launcher

The Assault Rocket Launcher, or ARL, is a variant on the concept of a chemical-propellant slugthrower. Introduced at TL10, the ARL is favoured by some armed forces as an alternative to standard firearms, especially by those who operate in a low-gravity environment. Recoil is much lower than a standard weapon since the projectile accelerates under its own power and continues to do so after leaving the barrel. This comes at the price of reduced accuracy and lower effectiveness at very short ranges, but for most users these disadvantages are offset by the weapon's versatility.

The assault rocket launcher fires 10mm solid-fuel rocket slugs, each with four pinhole-sized nozzles angled to induce spin, stabilising the projectile in flight. By the time the projectile has travelled five metres its propellant will have burned out and maximum velocity will have been reached. This is less than that of a standard bullet, but many ARL projectiles rely on payload delivery rather than sheer kinetic energy for effect. Most ammunition reaches a final velocity of around 800m/s, with gas rounds achieving only 300 m/s.

Ammunition is held in detachable magazines inserted into the underside of the weapon behind the pistol grip. Standard magazines hold 20 rounds, with larger 40-round versions available for the squad-support role. These make the weapon rather clumsy and are not favoured by personnel who may have to move quickly. There is no ejection mechanism as the whole round is fired, and the barrel is vented to allow exhaust gases to escape. This has the secondary effect of reducing the noise made by an ARL compared to a standard firearm.

The standard ARL is not capable of automatic fire. A more expensive support version is, but is otherwise quite similar, and magazines are interchangeable between the two. A personal defence weapon (PDW) variant also exists, which has an extremely short barrel and no stock. Although the final velocity of projectiles from this weapon is roughly the same as that of other versions, accuracy is even worse and generally considered a failed experiment. However, some users like having a wildly inaccurate but powerful weapon, citing the deterrent value of fully-automatic mayhem.

Standard ammunition is a squash-head round designed to deliver maximum impact to the target without over-penetration. Sometimes referred to as dum-dum rounds, squash-head ammunition is favoured for shipboard operations against lightly armoured opponents. For harder

targets, kinetic-energy armour-piercing (KEAP) and high-explosive armour-piercing (HEAP) rounds are available.

All ARL weapons suffer DM-1 to attack rolls. The PDW variant instead suffers DM-2 to hit all attack rolls made against targets beyond 10m.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Traits
Standard ARL	10	80	-	3	Cr800	Zero-G
Support ARL	10	80	-	4	Cr1300	Zero-G, Auto 4
PDW ARL	10	50	-	2	Cr600	Zero-G, Auto 4
Squash Head Rounds	10	-	4D	-	-	
KEAP Rounds	10	-	3D	-	-	AP 5
HEAP Rounds	10	-	5D	-	-	AP 2

Weapon	Magazine	Magazine Cost
Standard ARL	20	Cr100
Support ARL	40	Cr200
PDW ARL	20	Cr100
Squash Head Rounds	-	x1
KEAP Rounds	-	X1.5
HEAP Rounds	-	x2.5



TRAVELLING

PIRACY ON THE SPINWARD MAIN

The practice of piracy involves more than a crippling shot, a boarding party, and a swift escape into the blackness of space. Even pirates must obey certain laws: the laws of economics, ecology, and political reality. Piracy has flourished in particular places, and follows a progression from simple outlawry to organised business (sometimes to the formalised status of privateer). Mutineers, hijackers, and other 'wildcatting' pirates appear dashing, but successful long-term piracy requires intelligent, planned adaptation to conditions, like any other enterprise. In the words of the overused phrase, 'there are old pirates and bold pirates, but there are few old, bold pirates.'

The major feature distinguishing the business of piracy from the merchant's trade is its systematic acceptance of illegal violence to enhance the normal effort to buy low and sell high. Under certain conditions, the pirate entrepreneur may slip freely back into the merchant role. Like the merchant, the pirate requires a ship, crew, source of goods, and a market in which to sell them. He faces the same risks of accident, malfunction, and remoteness from aid in a crisis. His routine varies only as dictated by his status as an outlaw.



Poverty, mutiny, other crimes, or temperament can force experienced spacers into piracy as a livelihood. The illegal acquisition of a starship will be a relatively easy task for experienced spacers (albeit rather dangerous). Obvious approaches include hijacking, mutiny, and 'skipping'; a successful pirate might someday boast funds enough for an outright purchase of a ship! An exchange of ships may sometimes be useful, when the crew's current vessel is damaged, 'hot', or inadequately equipped.

What sort of ship suits the pirate's needs? The requirements of illicit space travel come into play here. Streamlining is essential for frontier refuelling without recourse to port authorities. The jump drive should be sufficient for rapid travel, but not so large as to require excessive crew. Piracy itself dictates hardpoints and turrets, plus space for cargo and captives (perhaps in low berths). Superior sensors will detect nearby ships and altered transponders will lull suspicions of both victims and police. Forged documentation is, of course, a necessity if the ship is to survive long in patrolled space.

Realistically, very few pirate vessels will have all (or even a majority) of these facets. Scout/couriers and far traders will be most common in the 'trade', with their integral hardpoints, streamlining, and jump-2 capability obvious assets. Without mortgage repayments, the costs of operating a starship are low: fuel can be skimmed from gas giants or remote oceans, and even a minor success will generate the few tens of thousands of Credits needed for salaries, life-support, and maintenance.

Prizes can be stripped of costly equipment or sold intact to illegal buyers. Kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and the fencing of valuable cargo can offer other sources of cash. There are major problems, however. Access to facilities, not their expense, is the key to on-going piracy. Basic ships stores can be extorted from casual traffic, purchased under a 'cover' identity, or delivered through a second ship (willingly or under duress). Annual maintenance and repairs of battle damage will require lengthy stops in a Class A or B starport. Battle damage can be difficult to explain to port authorities (bear in mind that not everyone can be bribed, and not all those who can will stay bought). Secure maintenance can be a difficult and expensive proposition, and such bases will delimit the natural 'ranges' of successful pirates. Without secure bases of operation, pirates will lead a hand-to mouth existence, extorting or conning their way through groundside repairs, always one jump

ahead of the fleet, having to abandon vessels with great frequency, or operating unreliable ships increasingly prone to dangerous malfunctions. Pirates with such handicaps will be no match for the local authorities, armed merchantmen, or jealous rivals.

Personnel must be taken into consideration as well. Few ship's crew will care to spend their entire lives onboard ship, slowly accumulating money. Ship's crew must be given rest and recreation in port at frequent intervals, or they will soon desert or mutiny. In addition, pirate crews are not renowned for their high moral fibre or extreme loyalty; many a second-in-command has 'promoted' himself with murder. Many crewmembers will get revenge for a slight (real or imagined) by betraying their ship and turning state's evidence. A captain who took command by mutiny could very well have set the precedent for his own downfall.

Pirates must seek out Class A or B starports beyond the borders of major states, and controlled by authorities too weak or too immoral to bar suspected criminals from their facilities. They must also remember the cardinal rule: Don't get greedy. If you become enough of a threat to business, either the business will go away, or somebody (not necessarily the law) will remove you as a threat. No matter how big you are, there is always somebody bigger, and it is usually a good idea not to attract their attention. In seeking prey, cost efficiency directs pirate attention to ports of Class C or better, with their higher volume of traffic. Such ports provide immediate targets for piracy, but also present the danger of a rapid response from the authorities. A laden merchant is most securely looted at a distance from its last known location: Intimidated, hijacked or lasered into compliance, a ship can be boarded and re-programmed for jump to a nearby empty system, with time in jumpspace for a leisurely inventory of the take. The main problem with piracy is that a given region can only support so many 'predators'. If trade is disrupted too much, merchants will avoid the area, and the pirates will 'starve.'

The analogy to nature can be carried further: Shepherds expect a few losses from their flocks as part of the cost of doing business. If wolves begin killing too many sheep, however, the shepherds will find it worth their while to organise a large-scale hunt to wipe the wolves out or drive them away.

SPINWARD SPECIFICS

Only five worlds in the Spinward Marches combine the technical and political requirements of a pirate haven with a convenient proximity to underpoliced stretches of space:

Thanber (Querion 0717)

Class B starport, Government 5, Law Level 3. Thanber lies at the edge of a region of a dozen worlds between Zhodani space and the Darrian Confederation. The Zhodani are not a market for stolen goods, but some business can be done with the Darrians.

Tremous Dex (Vilis 1311)

Class B starport, Government 1, Law Level 1. Tremous Dex has access to nearly twenty systems outside the Imperial borders in the Jewell and Vills subsectors.

Debarre (Darrian 0830)

Class B starport, Government 2, Law Level 3. Debarre adjoins a range of some twelve worlds between the Darrian and Sword Worlds subsectors and connects to the next range.

Asteltine (District 268 0931)

Class B starport, Government 0, Law Level 2. From here there are connections with twenty systems along the fringes of the Sword Worlds and across District 268.

Trexalon (District 268 1339)

Class B starport, Government 5, Law Level 1. From Trexalon, another twenty worlds extend from the limits of the Asteltine range rimward through District 268 and into the Outrim Void.

Referees should bear in mind that the populations and governments of these worlds will not openly condone piracy, and will aid in its extermination if it begins to cut too much into the circulation of trade in the region. Remember, a small, discretely run operation will be the most successful in the long run. Inspiration can be drawn from the way pirates in the 'real world' operated. Research the Caribbean pirates and privateers of the late 1600's to early 1700's AD. Note in particular the career of Henry Morgan, a pirate/privateer for the first part of his career, then a privateer for the British in his later life.

ALIEN



GIRUG'KAGH

The Girug'kagh are a subject race of the K'kree, dwelling within the Two Thousand Worlds. Such races are collectively known as kr'rrir, which translates literally as 'subjects'. All have been forced to adapt their cultures to conform to standards imposed by their K'kree overlords.

The name Girug'kagh was bestowed by the K'kree upon the people of a world named Savitztah, who originally called themselves the Savezitaioh. They are roughly humanoid-upright bipeds, homeothermic, standing 1.5 metres tall and generally hairless, with faint scaling always visible. Scales are dyed in various colours to indicate rank and status through patterns of different sorts, a point of great pride to the Savezitaioh people and one of their few links with the past.

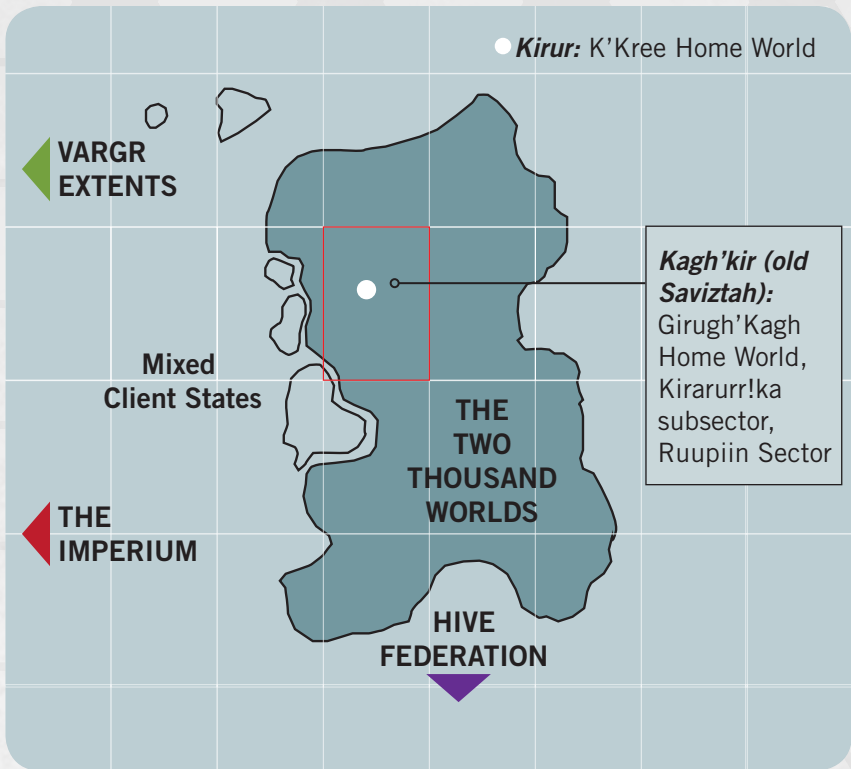
Girug'kagh hands have long, delicate fingers with seven digits. There are three grasping fingers mutually opposable to all the other digits, and four shorter, stubbier, thumb-like members. Physically, the race is undistinguished; mentally they seem subservient, easily cowed, and almost totally without spirit. Some have gone so far as to describe them as a slave race.

HISTORY

The Girug'kagh are descended from omnivore/gatherer stock which lived in the coastal plains of their homeworld. They developed intelligence in the face of changing climate and increased competition for food collected from shoreline tidal pools and nests of burrowing animals which dwelt along the coastal cliffs. Cooperation proved essential in the face of threats from several species of amphibian and shore dwelling carnivores.

The combination of intelligence and group cooperation led eventually to the rise of civilisation, but the Girug'kagh had only attained TL2 when the K'kree first came across them. This was the third non-K'kree race to be contacted, and opinions were mixed on how to deal with them. The K'kree interdicted Savitztah for quite some time and came close to implementing a policy of genocide. However, it was eventually decided that there was some hope for the Girug'kagh, who foraged for such food as they could find and had already developed a flourishing agricultural base.

After deciding that the people of Savitztah might not need to be exterminated as meat-eating vermin, the K'kree offered them the option of adopting new ways or facing certain destruction at the hand of their technological superiors.



To the primitive Girug'kagh of that time, the K'kree were little short of gods. It is doubtful that they understood what was being asked of them, but K'kree dictates on diet, conduct and other modifications in culture were accepted as teachings from heaven, and widely embraced. Those who failed to adapt to the new ways were hunted down and slain by bands of vegetarian zealots which were usually – but not always – composed of young K'kree warriors intent on making a name for themselves.

The Girug'kagh were eventually deemed ready to enter the mainstream of society in the Two Thousand Worlds, and granted full subject status nearly four thousand years ago. Subject status conferred a limited autonomy of self-rule and the right to travel to other worlds. The interdiction of Saviztah was ended, allowing the Girug'kagh to be visited by K'kree ships and those of other subject races.

By this time, the Girug'kagh had evolved a culture which was highly artificial, forced upon it from above rather than developed naturally from within. The cultural shock had left the Girug'kagh unable to realise their original potential as a civilised people.

SOCIETY

Few vestiges now remain of the pre-K'kree ways of the Girug'kagh. Their language is all but dead, though in the last century or so there has been an effort to revive the old tongue and keep it from passing away forever. Ancient literature has been preserved as far as possible, but the majority of pre-contact cultural materials were destroyed long ago.

Most social customs have arisen out of the K'kree dominance with the result that vegetarianism – and hatred of meat-eaters – is deeply rooted at the core of Girug'kagh culture.

The Girug'kagh have been instilled with an absolute conviction that they are second-class citizens, utterly inferior in all things to their K'kree overlords. Visitors from human states have attempted to persuade the Girug'kagh to throw off their chains and realise that they were as good as anyone else. These efforts were not merely unsuccessful; they were actively resisted and opposed by the Girug'kagh. The luckiest of these well-meaning emissaries were deported for their efforts.

The Girug'kagh simply cannot accept the idea that they were not naturally intended as servants to the K'kree. Though they no longer regard their masters as gods, there is still an intense feeling of awe and reverence characterising their attitudes towards the K'kree.

Equally, the Girug'kagh feel a superiority over other non-K'kree races. They were the first race to attain full subject status, and consider themselves to be a sort of next step down in an inter-racial caste structure. The K'kree nobles, merchants, and servants come first, then the Girug'kagh, and then the rest of the universe. Many of the race's institutions are coloured by this opinion, and the most honourable career for a Girug'kagh is that of underservant to a K'kree family group.

The Girug'kagh are often found as translators and intermediaries among the K'kree, particularly those K'kree who have dealings outside the Two Thousand Worlds. Less easily offended by the smell of meat-eating outsiders, and more capable of racial tolerance and enclosed spaces than their masters, Girug'kagh are very useful in conducting negotiations and other functions requiring close contact between K'kree and outsiders.

GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

The Girug'kagh government is a curious amalgamation of pre-contact structure and K'kree-imposed concepts. It follows a loose caste system, with a hereditary nobility occupying the highest echelons. This nobility was originally a sort of priesthood selected to deal with the K'kree, earning this honour mainly by being the first to embrace vegetarianism and capitulate entirely to the K'kree in all things. The fact that entry to the ruling class of the Girug'kagh was based on utter subservience to the K'kree had major implications for the development of society thereafter.

Other functions and services are dominated by a guild structure which, though not completely dependent upon birth, tends to limit social mobility. The only exception to the generally stagnant guild structure is the potential for anyone to volunteer for training to serve the K'kree as translators and servants.

The Proctor's Guild acts as a police force, but the Girug'kagh have no military as such. Subject status to the K'kree does have one major benefit – a threat to a subject race is a threat to the Two Thousand Worlds and would be dealt with by the forces of the overlords.

GIRUG'KAGH TRAVELLERS

Girug'kagh are unlikely to be encountered outside the Two Thousand Worlds or away from their K'kree overlords. Small groups are sometimes placed as trade or diplomatic emissaries and allowed to conduct the business of the Two Thousand Worlds with virtually no supervision – the K'kree are quite confident of the loyalty of their subjects.



Girug'kagh display a peculiar mixture of subservience and arrogance; subservience to their overlords and a haughty disdain for those below their station – which is more or less everyone who is not a K'kree. Their behaviour has been compared to that of an English butler, managing to convey an air of contempt while behaving with complete propriety.

Careers

Most careers are available to Girug'kagh on their homeworld, other than military and spacefaring services. However, the only Girug'kagh likely to be encountered by outsiders are translators working for the K'Kree. Girug'kagh translators have no rank structure recognisable by humans and do not receive mustering out benefits. They are part of a K'kree's entourage for life.

Translators receive one skill level in both Steward and Diplomat when they begin their career. One additional skill is earned from the following tables during each term of service.

1D	Personal Development	Service Skills	Education
1	STR +1	Mechanic	Admin
2	DEX +1	Steward	Electronics
3	DEX +1	Flyer (grav)	Language
4	END +1	Language	Diplomat
5	INT +1	Profession (any)	Persuade
5	EDU +1	Streetwise	Broker

Characteristics

Girug'kagh roll for STR and END on 1D+2. DEX is rolled for on 1D+7. Other characteristics are generated normally, though SOC indicates the level of K'kree society the Girug'kagh serves more than anything else.

Traits

All Girug'kagh have the following traits:

Kr'rrir: Any Traveller with this trait is recognised by a K'kree as being a 'good subject'. They smell right and display the correct level of abject servitude, enabling K'kree to feel comfortable around them. Someone with the Kr'rrir trait suffers DM -6 on any checks that go against their loyalty to the K'kree, even if they want to disobey or harm them. A Traveller with the Kr'rrir trait would be bypassed by rampaging K'kree warriors or even protected by them – whether protection was needed or not.

LIGHT PATROL VEHICLE

Light Patrol Vehicles, or LPVs, are used by many security services and mercenary units. They have some applications in counter-insurgency work but are primarily encountered patrolling the boundaries and approaches to installations such as starports. Although more glamorous high-tech vehicles are available to those with funds, an unsophisticated wheeled vehicle capable of resisting small arms fire and mounting a decent support weapon is more than enough for most security applications.

The standard LPV is a four-wheeled design capable of crossing rough terrain but possessing a limited radius of operation. The crew of three consists of a driver, gunner and commander. The latter two are seated in the turret, which normally mounts a projectile weapon such as a light autocannon.

Autocannons are by far the most common weapons, but machineguns and other high-rate-of-fire weapons are also common. LPVs may also carry grenade launchers or less-lethal weaponry such as tear gas jets or water cannons.

Like many military and paramilitary vehicles, the LPV is better protected in the frontal arc. The glacis and turret front are capable of withstanding heavy machinegun fire, whilst the rest of the vehicle is armoured against small arms fire.

The large turret is quite roomy when a standard weapon such as an autocannon is fitted. Normally this weapon is accompanied by a coaxial machinegun which shares its rather basic fire control system. Two spaces of weapons can be fitted if the autocannon and machinegun are removed. A second machinegun is mounted on the turret top for use by the commander, providing all-round infantry defence.

LIGHT PATROL VEHICLE

Armour

Front 20

Sides 12

Rear 12

Traits

Off-Roader

TL 9

Skill Drive (wheeled)

Agility -2

Speed (cruise) High (Medium)

Range (cruise) 300 (450)

Crew 3

Passengers 0

Cargo 0.5 tons

Hull 45

Shipping 7.5 tons

Cost Cr132 000

Equipment

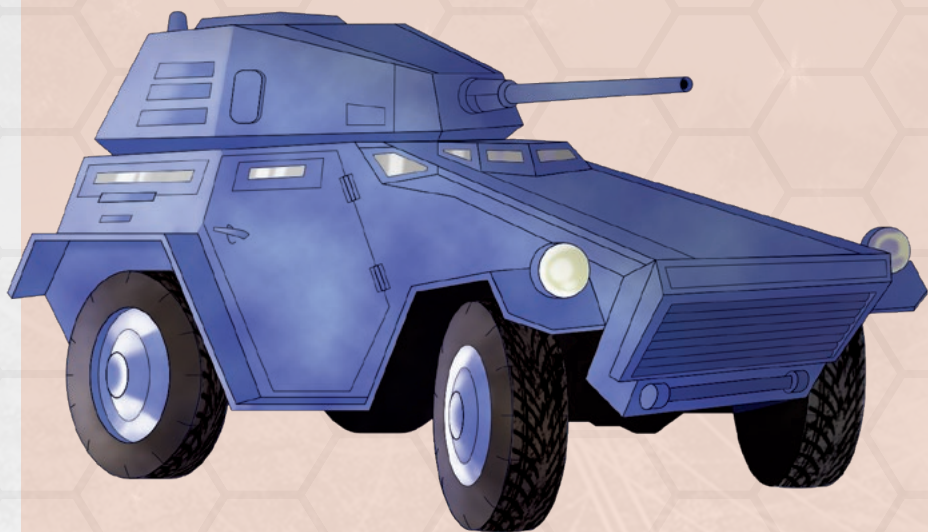
- Communications System (improved)
- Control Systems (basic)
- Fire Extinguishers
- Sensors (basic)

Weapons

- Large Turret (light autocannon, machinegun, basic fire control)
- Pintle Mount (machinegun)

Equipment

Autopilot (skill level)	-
Communications (range)	500 km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	-
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-



Weapon	Range	Damage	Traits	Fire Control
Light Autocannon	1000	6D	Auto 3	+1
Machinegun	500	3D	Auto 4	+1/0

Weapon	Magazine	Magazine Cost
Light Autocannon	500	Cr1000
Machinegun	500	Cr500



LIGHT APC

Armour

Front 20

Sides 12

Rear 12

Traits

Off-Roader

TL 9

Skill Drive (wheeled)

Agility -2

Speed (cruise) High (Medium)

Range (cruise) 300 (450)

Crew 2

Passengers 6

Cargo -

Hull 45

Shipping 7.5 tons

Cost Cr73 600

Equipment

- Communications System (improved)
- Control Systems (basic)
- Fire Extinguishers
- Gun Ports x 6, Sensors (basic)

Weapons

- Pintle Mount (machinegun)

Equipment

Autopilot (skill level)	-
Communications (range)	500 km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	-
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-

Weapon	Range	Damage	Traits	Fire Control
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Machinegun	500	3D	Auto 4	+0
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LIGHT APC

The light APC is built on the same chassis as the Light Patrol Vehicle and has many components in common. Some users combine both designs to create a mobile infantry force with organic fire support elements, though often the APC is used for all roles. The large turret of the LPV is replaced by a large internal compartment with a high ceiling, making the APC suitable for command vehicle, armoured ambulance, and weapons carrier roles, as well as personnel transport.

Normally the vehicle is armed only with a pintle-mounted machinegun and even this may be omitted on some security vehicles. APCs of this sort are sometimes used by civilian 'armoured truck' companies transporting valuables and police departments, neither of whom normally mount military weapons on their vehicles. The vehicle does have six firing ports to allow personnel to use their weapons from behind armour.

The crew of two (driver and commander) are seated at the front of the vehicle, separated from the troop compartment by an internal partition. Troop capacity is nominally six personnel. Up to twice as many can be jammed in but this makes dismounting or even conducting an equipment check very difficult.



Weapon	Magazine	Magazine Cost
Machinegun	500	Cr500

CHARTED SPACE

GAZULIN STARPORT

Gazulin (AA86887-B) is the capital of the Gazulin subsector in the Trojan Reach. It is a vital link between the Imperial worlds around Tobia and Trin's Veil – and therefore the rest of the Imperium. With only two worlds within reach of a jump-1 capable starship there is little local trade, but Gazulin plays host to jump-2 ships making the Trin-Tobia transit and serves as a staging point for vessels crossing into Pax Rulin.

The majority of traffic using the port docks at the extensive orbital component, with passengers taking a shuttle planetside if they wish.

Gazulin Gazulin subsector



Many ships just refuel, conduct business and move on, but those that do decide to visit Gazulin Downport find it has extensive facilities.

GAZULIN HIGHPORT

The orbital component is known as Gazulin Highport. It maintains a geosynchronous orbit above the downport, which is located on the world's equator. The present installation is not the first highport Gazulin has possessed. It was built around 50 years ago to replace the previous installation, and gradually expanded ever since. Seen from a distance, the port takes the form of a thick disc with a huge bulge on one face and several smaller ones on the other.

The central disc contains the main living and working areas of the port. There are private shuttle bays and a few protrusions around the periphery of the disc which is arranged in a concentric fashion. The outer edges are largely reserved for defence and security installations, with a 'security zone' running right around the periphery. Military and visiting naval personnel are quartered in this zone, which has restricted access.

Most of the central disc is taken up with residential areas. It is subdivided by airtight bulkheads and pierced by transit corridors allowing cargo to be moved into the central areas or through from one face of the station to the other. Much of the station has been filled with what amounts to a small city, but some compartments stand almost empty. These are routinely searched for contraband and criminals using them as a hiding place, and in some cases are kept in a vacuum state to preserve their unused facilities and discourage misuse.

At the core of the disc is the main power generation and life support machinery complex. This is behind armoured bulkheads and, like the outer ring, is subject to restricted access. Subsidiary plants are located at strategic points around the highport, but under normal conditions the main load is carried by the primary machinery with secondary power plants running at low level, ready to meet heavy local demands.

The 'front' of the disc has a huge, slightly uneven bulge which contains the main docks and business district. Most visitors never leave this bulge; the disc is where people who inhabit the station permanently live and has the character of a small city rather than starport. This is in contrast to the frontal bulge, which is dominated by the main and subsidiary docking areas, a warehouse complex, and an industrial district. There are also expensive living quarters around the outer edges of the bulge and an administrative centre which runs the port but not the station as a whole.

At the rear of the disc are several smaller bulges. One contains the main control complex for the highport as a whole, including traffic control facilities. There is also a docking area for military ships and a berthing/launch complex for defensive craft. The largest of the rear bulges is wholly occupied by a small shipyard run by Ling-Standard Products.



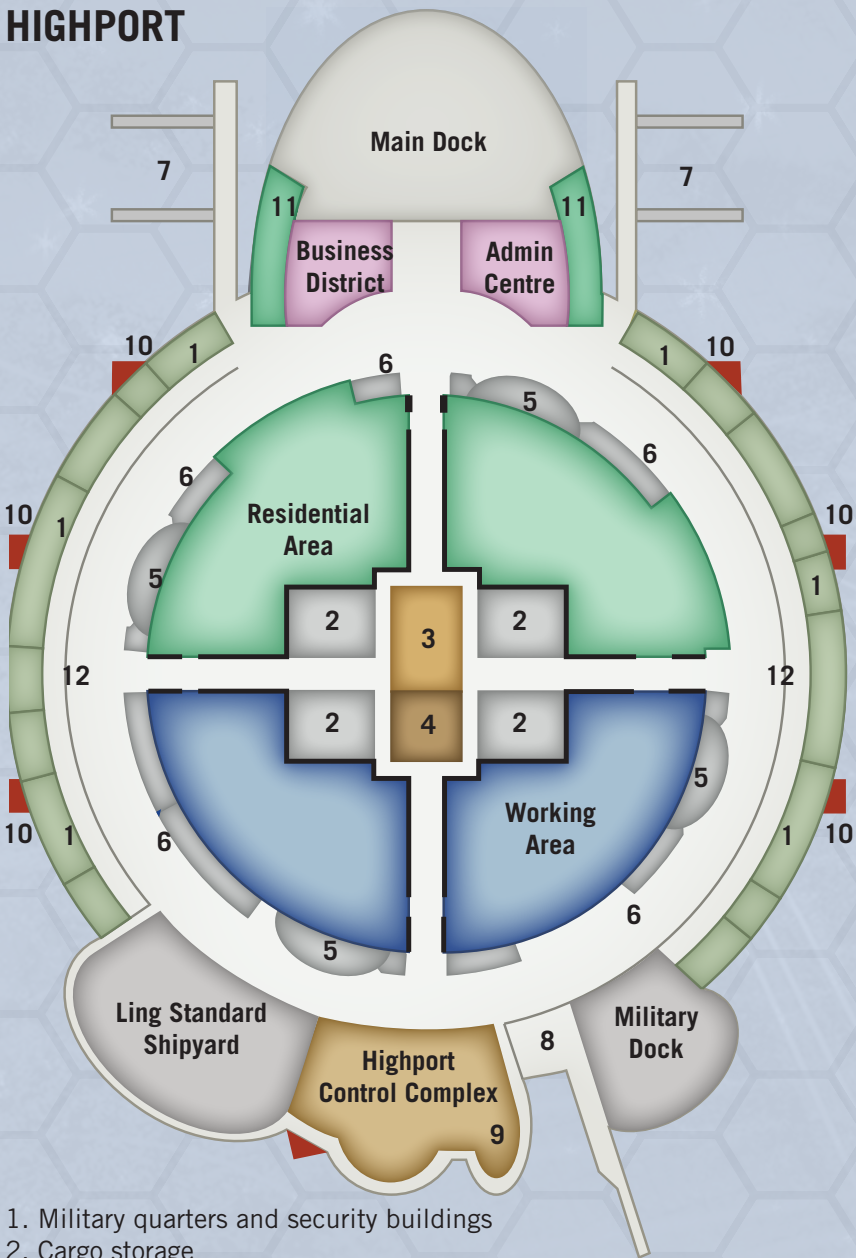
Gazulin Starport Authority operates a flotilla of 10-ton light fighters and 20-ton launches to conduct customs inspections and provide an official presence as ships approach. It is not uncommon for a vessel to be escorted by a fighter even if it is not boarded; this is essentially a flag-showing exercise to remind port users they are being watched and kept safe... or that others are being kept safe from them. Ships that display suspicious or wayward behaviour or ignore traffic regulations typically acquire a shadow in the form of one or more fighters, and may have to explain their actions under the guns of the station.

The orbital port itself is protected by batteries of laser turrets, with several large missile bays able to concentrate fire on any serious attacker. These are located on the outer surfaces of the central disc, with beam turrets dispersed all over its surface.

Naval and diplomatic vessels using the station are directed to an official dock, whilst all other traffic either berths within the main docking areas or moors at one of the external stations extending from the frontal bulge. These are reserved for very large ships and equipped for bulk cargo transfers or movements of significant numbers of passengers.

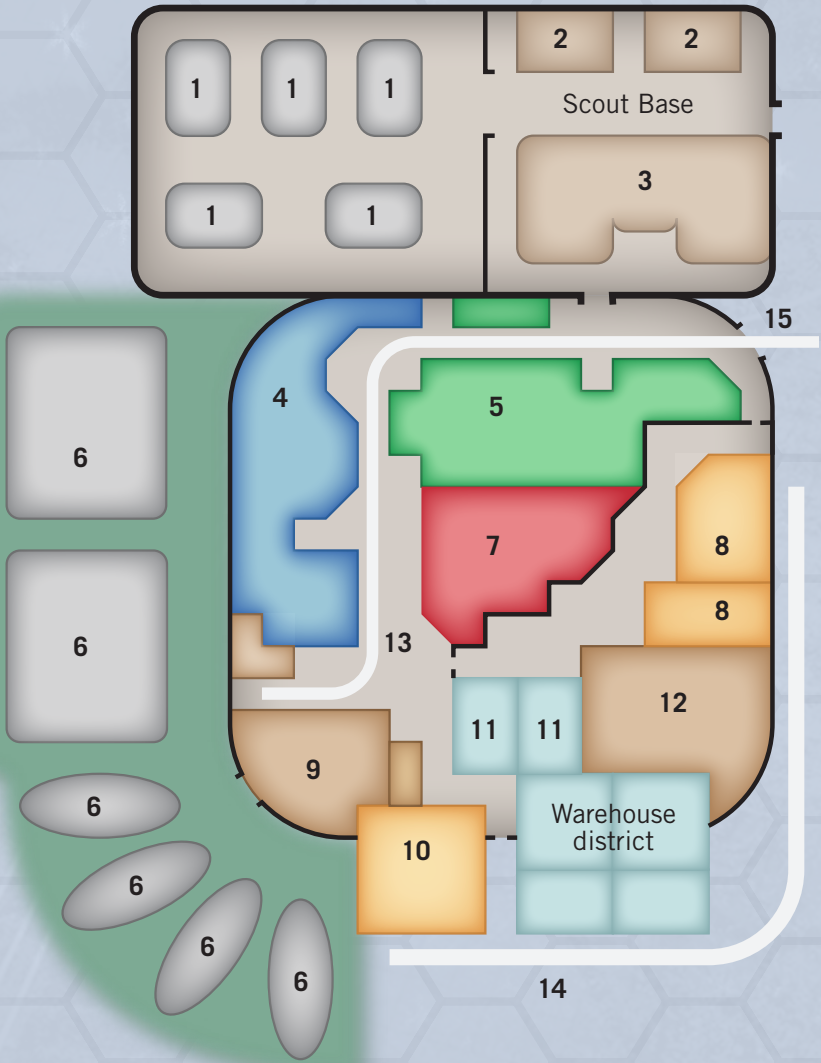
The facilities of the main business area are typical of a Class A starport – efficient and courteously run, if rather bland. Gazulin Highport has little character to make it memorable, though this can be said about many similar ports. A lot of Travellers think this is a good thing – a port visit is usually memorable because something went wrong or took far too long. The main business district can be entered from any of the docking

HIGHPORT



- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. Military quarters and security buildings | 8. Military berth |
| 2. Cargo storage | 9. Traffic control |
| 3. Main power generator | 10. Laser turret battery |
| 4. Life support machinery complex | 11. Visitors living areas |
| 5. Shuttle bay | 12. Security zone |
| 6. Stores and general purpose lockers | |
| 7. Berthing bays | |

DOWNPORT



- 1. Scout ship landing pad
- 2. Ammenities
- 3. Administrative complex
- 4. Business district
- 5. Accomodation complex
- 6. Landing pads
- 7. Entertainment district

- 8. Freight dock
- 9. Terminal
- 10. Unloading docks
- 11. Warehouses
- 12. Industrial facilities
- 13. Public transportation
- 14. Heavy cargo monorail
- 15. Way to Harussein city

areas, and like most ports it has a large main concourse filled with shops, restaurants, hotels, and entertainment facilities. A premium spot on the concourse is very expensive, so many smaller businesses are located a little back from the main thoroughfare.

The port maintains a no-weapons policy, though it is possible to obtain permits to bring weaponry through customs and store it until departure. Law enforcement is by means of a private security force operated by the port authority – the same force that mans the missile bays and conducts customs boardings. Its personnel are renowned for their courtesy and professionalism, and the port has a very low crime rate.

The focus of the highport for independent starship operators is the commercial centre, where cargoes are traded and brokers have their offices. This is a busy area at any time of day, but rather reserved and stuffy compared to the auction-houses of some smaller ports. Most business is conducted in a genteel manner, often electronically, with huge sums of money changing hands in a most unexciting manner.

Those who want a bit of excitement are directed planetside. A dedicated shuttle dock runs a quick and efficient service to the downport. Unlimited use of the shuttles is included in highport – but not downport – docking fees. Those who do have to pay find the service inexpensive and easy to use.

GAZULIN DOWNPORT

Gazulin is a large world with a dense atmosphere, resulting in windy conditions. Highport shuttles are aerodynamic and easily able to deal with gusty conditions, but ordinary starships using the downport tend to get blown around a little on approach. This is not especially dangerous, but does result in the occasional clumsy landing. Few ships over 400 tons displacement use the downport's pads, though sometimes a larger vessel braves the crosswinds.

The downport is co-located with the city of Harussein, which boasts a seaport and healthy industrial sector. The port and its 'startown' are separate from the city, though it is relatively easy to pass from one to another. Locals often visit the startown for entertainment, whereas starfarers are unlikely to find much of interest in Harussein itself.

Like the highport, the downport is divided into sectors. The Gazulin Scout Base is actually a leased segment of the downport segregated by a large fence. Smaller scout vessels come and go on a frequent basis; larger ones are berthed at the rear of the highport. The majority of the downport is taken up with an accommodation complex for the workforce, with a large business and entertainment district immediately beside the landing area.

The landing area as a whole, and each individual pad, is surrounded by a berm to mitigate the events of a crash. Wheeled ground vehicles transport

personnel and cargo between ships and the terminal, using secured access points that allow the security force to scan for illegal weapons and other contraband. Ships intending to remain at the port for more than a few hours are moved to a dispersal area once cargo and passengers are offloaded. Maintenance facilities are provided at these areas, though they are not as extensive as those at the orbital port.

Transportation within the downport is by means of electric buses for short trips or a monorail system for quick movement across the city. The passenger system is separate from the heavier cargo transport line, which connects the unloading docks with the warehouse district and the city's industrial facilities. Local transport hubs with monorail and grav-flyer links to other cities are located at the periphery of the port, well away from the starship landing area.

It is clear to anyone using the port that it has been expanded several times during its history. The original terminal is now an office complex, and the freight docks are used as additional warehousing when the new, larger, facility overflows. The worker's accommodation areas are of little interest to Travellers, and tend to be quiet compared to the entertainment area and associated startown. The latter started out as the original accommodation area and gradually morphed into a vibrant and occasionally rather rowdy adjunct to the entertainment district. There is a clear demarcation line between the port and the startown, beyond which conditions change rapidly in the space of a couple of blocks.

The port's entertainment and business district is strictly run and kept highly presentable by the port authority, whereas the startown is officially the responsibility of the Harussein City Administration. Its nebulous status as sort-of part of the port and slight separation from the city itself means that the startown is not well regulated. The entertainment found there is of a more rough-and-ready nature, and criminality is higher. So long as problems stay within the startown, the authorities are not unduly concerned.

Gazulin downport startown is the destination of choice for many visiting small-ship crews. It is a place to blow off steam and have a good time in a reasonably safe environment with just a hint of danger and illegality. Those wishing to venture there are given a warning for form's sake that the startown may not be safe for offworlders, but the reality is that it is not very much wilder than the rest of the port. All the same, it is rumoured that disreputable deals are made in the bars of the startown and illicit goods can be bought for a large wad of cash. Whether this is true or intended to draw in excitement-seekers in order to make money off them is a matter for conjecture.

