

Stellar Reaches

A Fair Use Fanzine for Traveller



A Samardan Press Publication

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For more information on BITS, check out their website at <http://www.bits.org.uk/>

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Letter From The Editor

Greetings, Fellow Sophonts:

This issue has four rather starkly different articles.

First, Hegemony, Duchy, Republic: Part V wraps up a series of articles providing a historical perspective on the Empty Quarter, starting from near the end of the Vargr Pillaging and stretching over 2700 years to the current year of 993 Imperial. Here, we will be focusing on Alpha Quadrant, which includes the four subsectors discussed earlier in **Stellar Reaches** #4. Ruled by the dual-species Ikonaz (The Vargr and Vilani of Ikon), it has gone through quite a long series of formal interstellar governments: the current Rukadukaz Republic, among the most long-lasting governments, is in its fifth decade of existence. But despite the fragility of the Vargr-dominated governments, the devastation of the Julian War, and hostility towards the nearby Hegemony of Lorean, the cultural region of the Ikonaz Sphere remains the most cosmopolitan, wealthy, and successful region of the Empty Quarter. The even farther future will be the focus of further articles, which are planned to continue after a hiatus.

Afterwards is an adventure, Conscript Reporting. Two massive scouts are discovered fighting by the PCs, who themselves are members of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service. What's going on? What should they do? Not a lot of shooting is involved in this adventure, but quite a bit of roleplaying is necessary, including interrogations, negotiations, investigations, repelling psionic assaults, and crucial decisions that can shape the destiny of the Imperium herself. Exploration-oriented Referees can find two detailed motherships, with attendant sub-craft, to be plugged into his own adventure. Naval- or Invasion-oriented groups can repurpose the ships into a light military force with just a few tweaks, or just use the vessels as is.

Biography: Selected Ship Masters of the Empty Quarter III continues with the series of Travellers, notable and minor, within the Imperial Empty Quarter. The personalities have built-in hooks for campaign use: many of them are strongly tied to the setting of the Six Subsectors, including folk heroes, traitors, old spacedogs, and arrogant outsiders. But in this letter, I want to draw your attention to the starships. Ignoring stock starships, they include a luxury liner, a heavily modified Free Trader, an interstellar ferry/settler combo, a large merchant transport, and yet another version of the hospital ships so beloved by Charity LIC. There is also a large selection of robots, quoted from the old Digest Group publication 101 Robots.

Finally, there is a large selection of interesting YouTube videos I uncovered, mainly for the visuals, but sometimes for the concepts. They are summed up in YouTube for the Imaginative Referee: perhaps they will be useful to you.

Ω

A Lose Your Own Adventure book, for relics of the pre-Internet era:

<http://site.despair.com/blog/2010/10/05/introducing-lose-your-own-adventure%E2%84%A2-who-killed-jfk/#respond>

Understanding Power and Influence Players: a glimpse in just what a modern-day 'low-level Noble' can do:

<http://www.economicpolicyjournal.com/2011/02/understanding-power-and-influence.html>

No matter how socialist your society is, the elite 20% of the powerful 20% still call the shots, just with different lies. To observe why the elites always stand above the law – in ancient times, now, or 3000 years in the future - consider "Why Isn't Wall Street in Jail?" <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/why-isnt-wall-street-in-jail-20110216>

Reading ahead,

Alvin W. Plummer

Editor, **Stellar Reaches** fanzine

BITS Task System

From pg. 8, BITS Writers' Guidelines June 1999. Copyright ©1999, BITS. All Rights Reserved.

T20 Open Game Content from the article "Extending the Task Resolution System to T20" Copyright 2003, Jason Kemp.

MegaTraveller (MT), Traveller: The New Era (TNE) and Marc Miller's Traveller (T4) all use a graduated system of task difficulty ratings – Average, Difficult, Formidable, etc. 'Classic' Traveller (CT) and GURPS Traveller (GT) use modifiers to the task rolls instead. Traveller T20 (T20) uses difficulty classes (DCs) to define target numbers for skill checks. The BITS Task System provides a simplified common ground for all these rule sets, using difficulty ratings with corresponding task modifiers for CT and GT and DCs for T20 as shown in Table 1. The means by which spectacular (GT: critical) success or failure are achieved are defined by the rule set used. Similarly, the GM should apply the rules for special tasks – opposed, co-operative, hasty, cautious, etc. – according to the rule set used. As always, these are only guidelines – the GM may alter any task roll as appropriate to enhance the game.

TABLE 1: TASK DIFFICULTIES

BITS Task Difficulty	T4 Difficulty	T4.1 Difficulty	GT Target Modifier	TNE Difficulty	MT Difficulty	CT Target Modifier	T20 DC
Easy	Easy (Auto)	Easy (1D)	+6	Easy	Simple	-4	10
Average	Average (2D)	Average (2D)	+3	Average	Routine	-2	15
Difficult	Difficult (2.5D)	Difficult (2.5D)	0	Difficult	Difficult	0	20
Formidable	Formidable (3D)	Formidable (3D)	-3	Formidable	Difficult	+2	25
Staggering	Impossible (4D)	Staggering (4D)	-6	Impossible	Formidable	+4	30
Impossible	(5D)	Hopeless (5D)	-9	Impossible	Impossible	+6	35
Hopeless	(6D)	Impossible (6D)	-12	Impossible	Impossible	+8	40

Ex. Maria Charles is forging a complex document, which the GM rules is a Staggering task. Maria has Forgery-4 (GT: Forgery-16, T20: Forgery +18) and the relevant attribute (MT, T4) is INT 10 (TNE: INT 9, T20: 15).

CT: Task success is normally $2D + Skill \geq 8$. Maria requires $2D + Forgery \geq 12$ ($8 + 4$ for Staggering difficulty). Alternatively, the GM may prefer to apply the target modifier as a negative modifier on the dice roll, i.e. $2D + 4 - 4 \geq 8$.

MT: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to MT's Formidable (15+), thus the task is $2D + Skill + (Stat / 5) \geq 15$. For Maria this is: $2D + 4 + 2 \geq 15$.

TNE: Staggering difficulty is equivalent to TNE's Impossible, thus the task is $d20 \leq (Skill + Stat) \times \frac{1}{4}$. For Maria this is $d20 \leq 3$, i.e. $(9 + 4) / 4$ rounded down.

T4: Maria requires $4D \leq INT + Forgery$. (Note that T4's Staggering rating of 3.5D is ignored.)

GT: Maria requires $3D \leq Forgery + Target Modifier$, i.e. $3D \leq 16 - 6$.

T20: Maria requires $d20 + 18 \geq 30$. (Note that the INT modifier is already factored into the skill check.)

Task definitions should always be used sparingly – the GM should be able to define the difficulty and required skills and equipment for most tasks using common sense. Where strange skills or equipment are needed, these can usually be listed, without requiring a full task definition. Where a full task definition is required, use the following format (you don't need to use the bold or italics formatting; plain text is fine):

To find a boar:

Difficult Recon (GT: Tracking), or

Difficult Hunting (T20: P/Hunting), or

Formidable Survival

+1 Difficulty if riding at full gallop.

+1 Difficulty if lost.

-1 Difficulty if moving slowly.

Spectacular Success: They have surprised a boar and have one round to act before it reacts.

Success: They have found boar tracks and can begin following them.

Failure: No tracks found.

Spectacular Failure: They have become lost.

+1 Difficulty indicates a harder task (e.g. an Average task becomes Difficult) whereas -1 Difficulty is an easier task (e.g. Difficult would become Average).

NOTE: This system has been extensively play-tested but suggestions for refinements are always welcome.

Hegemony, Republic, Duchy: Part V

By Alvin W. Plummer



On the lonely world of Gueddzouukh, 993 Imperial.

The graphic is titled "Instant Mojo"©pushinfaders.

See his gallery at http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=423843

Alpha Quadrant: The Ikonaz Sphere Summary

The Alpha Quadrant of the Empty Quarter is dominated by the Rukadukaz Republic. Of the 83 systems within the region, 60 are members of the Republic: another 19 are independent systems, and four more are client states of the Third Imperium. Tsahrroek Subsector is completely dominated by the Republic, and only one system in Kakhasaek Subsector remains outside Republican borders.

In 993, the Republican borders closely follow the boundaries of the Ikonaz Sphere, a dual-species cultural domain populated largely by the Ikonaz Vargr – a.k.a. Ovaghoun originating from the powerful system of Ikon

– and the Ikonaz Vilani, the pre-Pillage inhabitants of Ikon. The Imperial Clients are early Imperial colonies dating from before the Julian War: as part of the peace agreement, they were downgraded to human-dominated client states. Over the following 800+ years of peace between these two powers, very few systems have chosen complete independence, but only Outpost has shifted her allegiance from the distant, human-dominated Imperium to the nearby, wealthy, Ikonaz-dominated Republic. The others remain sheltered under the umbrella of the Imperial Tokitre Flotilla, based at the large Imperial Naval base over Tokitre.

Imperials who can make the adjustment to a wealthy, Vargr-led, Vilani-organized interstellar society will find

Alpha Quadrant far more similar to the 'baseline Imperial campaign' than the rest of the Empty Quarter. While the planetary societies are a good deal more unstable than the equivalent Imperial worlds, they are definitely more stable than the rest of the Vargr Extent. Human or Vargr, Republican societies more-or-less adhere to Vilani norms, which makes the entire region feel very familiar to Imperials. There is a distinct lack of the intermural hostilities that mar the Six Subsectors, or the horrific slaughters of Beta Quadrant. The Vilani and Vargr hashed out their relationship over a thousand years ago, the thumbnail summary being "the Ikonaz Vilani get the money and cultural dominance, and the Ikonaz Vargr get the guns, the political power, and the fame." Piracy is a highly regulated affair, and xenophobia is rare (excluding Ikonaz hostility to non-Ovaghoun Vargr). The strong Star Legion presence helps to keep the region almost as civilized as the Imperial Core.

The Ikonaz Sphere has seen a vast number of interstellar governments come and go: the region is more unstable than many pure Vargr polities, such as the vast Empire of Varroerth (founded 26 Imperial according to human research, at the start of interstellar Vargr society – around -3810, when jump drive was discovered by the Vargr, according to Varroerth historians.) The Rukadukaz Republic, now 53 years old, has already outlasted 85% of the previous governments of the Ikonaz Sphere (average lifespan: 16.6 years.) Members of the government point to its 'species-blind' legal system as the source of stability. Increased Vilani representation in the interstellar government is also mentioned, as is the possibility of local unity against the Hegemony of Lorean, which the locals distrust deeply. Another possible reason is that Ikon is *not* the capital: thus, the system (and its money) acts as a hard limit to the Republic's power, crippling its leadership's ability to ignore and isolate itself from the population, and thus grow ripe for overthrow. "Lower the stakes, limit the infighting." as the Vargr would say.

Ikonaz Vilani wealth has been the powerhouse of Ikon's technological elevation. While Ikon retained TL 11 throughout the Long Night, and slowly gained TL 12 during the first Imperial century, it was mainly Ikonaz Vilani corporations (and reverse engineering skill) that pushed further progress. The Julian War era's TL 12 rose to TL 13 by c. 300, TL 14 at c. 550, and to an unsustainable TL 15 in the late 600 before slipping back to TL 14 in the early 700s. Even today, research labs on Ikon remain among the most advanced anywhere in the Julian Protectorate.

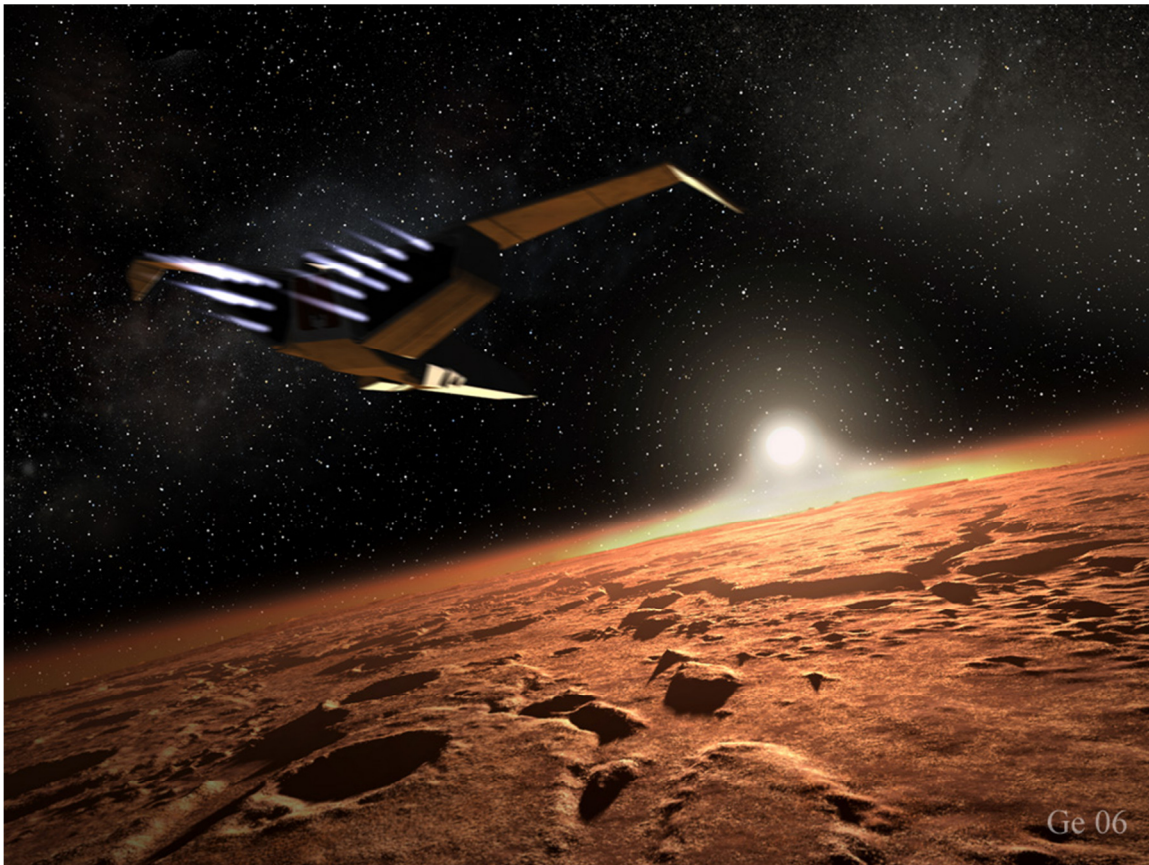
The region is somewhat below-average in wealth-per-world, with an average TL of 8 instead of 12. However, the actual living standard of the subsector is around TL 12 to 13 for the majority of worlds, due to the powerful influence of Ikon. Ikon's C-class starport points is specialized for shipping out large quantities of high-tech goods, but the last of the shipyards were transferred to Guezdhe (Kakhasaek/Empty Quarter 0511) a long time ago, in one of several attempts to redirect Irlitok settlement outside of Ikon system.

The Vargr Pillaging

The Rukadukaz Republic is the 162nd Vargr interstellar successor state to the fabled Loi Kungkeiso-leoeksknusin, the first 'proto-Ovaghoun' government in the region. As part of the tail end of the great Vargr Pillaging (of c. A.D. 2100 to 2800/-2400 to -1700 Imperial), the packs of the Loi Kungkeiso-leoeksknusin seized Ikon only on A.D. 2809 (-1711 Imperial), late in the Long Night. Unlike earlier Vargr conquerors, these Vargr were here to stay, to the shock and horror of the human habitants. The huge war-band formed and dispersed at need, but disintegrated for good in A.D. 3077 (-1443 Imperial), shortly after the last major human uprising was crushed. As their claws sunk into the world, the Vargr grew to appreciate the benefits of Vilani culture, and began to look at life in an increasingly unVargr way.

Populating the Stars

Unlike most Vargr worlds, the Vilani element on Ikon created a clear (if convoluted) bureaucratic paper trail that careful historians can use to trace the development of local history. The Vargr with good relations with their Vilani slaves and servants grew to appreciate Vilani organizational and planning skills, and steadily outcompeted Vargr who refused to adapt the more useful aspects of the Vilani worldview. As the proto-Ovaghoun Vargr shifted their thoughtlife into the classical Ovaghoun Vargr cultural forms, they also simultaneously increased their domination of local space from about A.D. 3320 (-1200 Imperial) onwards, with the reconstruction of an old orbital shipyard, supplemented by stolen material and technology ("So what else is new?") Initial interstellar policy consisted of variations of 'Smash and Grab', 'Loot, then burn', and 'Hunting season,' but grew more sophisticated over time under Vilani advisors. (Referee: See Franz Oppenheimer's *The Six Stages of the Creation of the State* - <http://mises.org/daily/4759> - for inspiration.)



A scout ship built along classical Ikonaz lines explores the Angour system. 970 Imperial
 The graphic is titled "Fly-by" © Christopher Gerber. See his gallery at
http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=2086427

It was during this time that the planetary settlement pattern decisively shifted from terrestrial to aquatic. The Ikonaz Vargr, unlike the human residents, knew that quite a large percentage of the mineral, rare earths, and isotopes revealed by ancient Event – a substantial, fractional-c impact on the world of Ikon – was in very great demand across the Vargr Extents: but to get at these fractures, the human slaves would have to be relocated underwater and put to work. By A.D. 3250 (c. -1250 Imperial), 95% of humaniti was working under the sea: this had the benefit of letting the land return to wilderness, something of great value to the aristocratic hunts the Ovaghoun Vargr prefer.

As they fell increasingly under the sway of their Vilani advisors and servants, the Vargr of Ikon shifted their attitude to humans from 'disposable labour' (around A.D. 2800/-1700 Imperial) to 'useful slaves' c. A.D. 3000 (-1500 Imperial), eventually working up to 'useful servants and pets' around A.D. 3200 (-1300 Imperial). Unlike the Suedzuk, Ovaghoun dietary restrictions ensured that they never ate humans, although they did hunt them for sport before A.D. 3000. The later assimilation of semi-sacred Vilani food preparation

techniques and teachings – modified for carnivores – further increased their understanding of human flesh as profoundly Unclean and Defiling. And naturally so: on Ancient Vland, human flesh was the safest meat around, biochemically speaking. Powerful ceremonial taboos were necessary to not only to guarantee safe food preparation in general, but to also guarantee that the Ancient Vilani didn't destroy themselves via cannibalism.

The Vargr chieftains flex their muscles and bare their teeth, while their oh-so-humble manservants watch you with cool, sensible, utilitarian, pragmatic eyes.

Vilani eyes are far more dangerous than Vargr claws, I always say.

The famed Vargr Scout-Diplomat-Pirate-Scoundrel Gatokha
 Observing the relationship between
 Ikonaz Vilani and Ikonaz Vargr
 Ikon system, A.D. 3772
 (-748 Imperial)

From c. A.D. 3500 to 4200 (-1000 to -300 Imperial), the increasingly wealthy Vargr established more and more undersea colonies for the general human work force, while establishing interplanetary & interstellar colonies for themselves and their picked Vilani servants. The leading Vargr packs – who owned most of the land area of Ikon – insisted on keeping it free of habitation. The still-sparse biosphere of Ikon continued to be built up in both mass and complexity: the Vargr and their human underlings worked surprisingly well in this endeavour, and the Ikonian biosphere of 993 Imperial is of such high quality and complexity that it's difficult to distinguish it from that made from the hands of God Himself. The 'wild and uncultivated' lands are carefully managed, not for food production, but with an eye to the many Vargr hunting rituals Ovaghoun culture prescribes for a truly cultured Vargr life.

Over time, colonial activity was increasingly shifted from Ikon to the nearby systems. These later projects were carefully planned out by their Vilani servants. Most colonial expeditions and population transfers involved a mix of about 70% Vargr/30% Vilani settlers. With strong financial and material support for fledging colonies – a rarity in Vargr history – Ikonaz space grew and prospered, 'resettling' old worlds and founding new ones in Meshan, Mendan, Lishun, and Antares sectors. The success of these colonies led to even more colonial ventures, founded both by Ikon and by other Ikonaz worlds. By A.D. 4200 (-300 Imperial), the region of Ovaghoun colonization – the original 'Ikonaz Sphere' – had grown into The Windhorn, Vland, and Amdukan sectors. These colonists soon intermixed with other local Vilani human and Vilani-influenced Vargr cultures, while rejecting, shunning, and eventually killing other Vargr who wouldn't respect the Ovaghoun way: "If the Vargr don't follow Tradition, then they are a threat to Tradition – and shall be dealt with Traditionally."

In the meantime, the Vilani servants on Ovaghoun-dominated worlds grew increasingly attached to 'their' Vargr, 'the traditional masters'. They even modified their collective name to reflect their proper place by the Ovaghoun's side, the 'Ikonaz Vilani'. Concurrent to this shift in allegiance was an increasing hatred of other, untraditional Vargr leaders – especially the Blood Vargr. In other worlds, this pattern of thought eventually dissipated, but on the 'homeworld' of Ikon Vilani hatred of uncivilized Vargr from other realms continued to deepen, eventually influencing their Ovaghoun Vargr masters as well. Starting at about A.D. 3900 (-600 Imperial), this led to a policy of ethnic cleansing within the Ikonaz Sphere. The Big Stick used to enforce this was an ever-changing mix of armed groups, originally only Ovaghoun, but eventually

including Vilani in inferior ship positions (generally engineering, medicine, navigation, ship systems and maintenance, and never the glory positions of pilots, gunners, or boarding parties.) Vilani traffic analysis and pattern recognition gave the Ovaghoun a consistent edge against their opponents, and their organizational skills and innate desire for discipline and order gave the Ovaghoun a distinct advantage over their enemies: clichéd as it is, the phrase "warriors vs. soldiers" conveys the idea well.

By around A.D. 4300 (-200 Imperial), despite the steady rise and fall of Vargr interstellar governments, there was a definite region of space, about 20 parsecs in length and width, which was populated by Ovaghoun Vargr, Ikonaz Vilani, a handful of Mixed Vilani families... and nothing else. Numerous Ovaghoun pirates, raiders, and warships, no longer finding anyone left to kill at home, wandered widely across the Extents, Antares, and the coreward Empty Quarter. With the mix of Vilani organization, consensus-based decision making, and proficiency with Vargr innovation, stalking instincts and innate teamwork while on the hunt, Ikonaz hunting packs was a strong factor in maintaining the Vargr niche as the Terror of the Spaceways.

Even though the Vargr were nonhuman, the few victims who survived capture by these wolf packs advised other victims to beg before the Ikonaz Vargr leaders, who might occasionally show mercy just for a change in pace or to wow the audience. Not so the Ikonaz Vilani, who were consistent in their preference for killing all victims regardless of species, being careful to efficiently recycle limbs, organs, and miscellaneous organic material for maximum profit.

Outsiders

When the first outside human traders – the Menderes Corporation in A.D. 4325 (-195 Imperial), and Antares-based speculators in A.D. 4333 (-187 Imperial) – started showing up within the Ikonaz Sphere, the Vargr governors (and their Vilani advisers) were utterly unconcerned. Even as humanity began to make their mark again in Imperial Space, the Ikonaz Sphere turned inward, focusing on internal development. The only ones who were interested in increased human trade & (re)colonization were the corsairs, who simply *loved* the idea of increasing their hunting range. From c. A.D. 4200 (-300 Imperial), long-range colonization was slowly brought to a close, even as pirating groups entered a boom phase. Instead, the Vargr leadership encouraged nearby colonies within the Ikonaz Sphere – worlds which could directly benefit Ikon's economy, and naturally follow her lead in all things. As they

wrapped up the destruction of nearby non-Ovaghoun Vargr societies, new Ikonaz settlements were kept in

subjection to the government of Ikon, to insure that they remained tied to the Ikonaz culture.



Ikonaz scouts explore Raklug system, -657 Imperial.

This graphic is titled Red Dog IV © Paul Gibson See his gallery at www.gibsoncreation.com and http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1997005

Ikonaz interest in the outside universe was not stirred when the first Sylean Federation traders arrived at Ikon, in A.D. 4277 (-243 Imperial). In contrast, the Sylean government was extremely interested in Ikon, the centre of pirate activity for a good 30 parsecs about her... Even a century later, the Ovaghoun Vargr leaders of Ikonaz society still felt that they had the best little empire going for parsecs – indeed, they did not know of ANY interstellar government stronger and wealthier than their own. Only when the Vilani worlds of Vland began to roll back the Ovaghoun expansion did the Ikonaz realize that the era of unchallenged Vargr dominance was coming to a close, and Vargr governments will soon have powerful and enduring human nations as their new neighbours.

Thorns in the Side

From about A.D. 4370 (-150 Imperial), the limits to the continued growth of the Ikonaz Sphere made themselves felt. A carefully co-ordinated series of Vilani offences destroyed numerous Ovaghoun settlements in Vland sector. This meticulously planned out conflict stretched out for forty years, playing into the hands of the shorter supply lines of the Vland government. By -130, the Ovaghoun hold on the Vland subsectors A, B,

C, and D was broken beyond repair, with the ruination, subjection or sterilization of many promising settlements.

The Ikonaz Vilani servants often fought and died with their Vargr masters. Relatively few switched sides before Vargr authority authorized surrender. Captured Ikonaz women and children who threw themselves at the mercy of the Vilani of Vland after the death of their menfolk were generally permitted to live so long as they completely abandoned the few distinctive (i.e.: innovative, non-mainstream Vilani) elements of their culture and completely conformed to the true Vilani standard of culture, as determined on Vland. On occasion, the Vilanized nature of the Ovaghoun spared them from extermination, but as a group they served only as one of the lower Vargr castes, below their old Ikonaz servants but above other, less Vilanized nonhumans. Inevitably, the numerous Vilani colonists from Vland took the better positions in society for themselves.

Other Ovaghoun colonies in the Vland and The Windhorn sectors faced another threat, from the Logaksu Vargr culture centred on Lair, the Vargr

homeworld. Sometimes, the Ovaghoun were able to hold the system, but more often they were forced to cede part of their sparsely-populated world to Logaksu interests. Moreover, the cultural dynamic of the Ovaghoun was somewhat disrupted: the Logaksu did not follow the proper traditions – and were therefore not truly sentient beings – but, as the original Vargr from the first Vargr world, they had better connections with the Revered Ancestors than the history-conscious Ovaghoun had. The series of Logaksu-Ovaghoun wars (from about A.D. 4410 to 4450/-110 to -70 Imperial) were as hard-fought on the propaganda & cultural level as they were on the ground and in space.

In the end, their result was inconclusive on the battlefield, but a clear victory for the Logaksu culturally and charismatically. This was formalized in the Mmoannikh Accords, drafted by the more powerful Logaksu packs and the local Ovaghoun and their Vilani allies. Signed on Lair (on -55 Imperial) the Logaksu and Ovaghoun cultures was officially declared ‘separate but equal’ ways of life, and the Logaksu Vargr were now formally considered to be full sophonts for the purposes of Ovaghoun law. Most satisfying to the Logaksu, the Mmoannikh Accords declared the Logaksu to be ‘as much the rightful descendants of the Revered Ancestors’ as the Ovaghoun themselves.

The Mmoannikh Accords were rejected by the central Ikonaz government on Ikon herself. This rejection directly led to the shattering of the unity of the Ovaghoun race and their interstellar government on A.D. 4467 (-53 Imperial). A new government was functioning by A.D. 4470 (-50 Imperial), but by that time it was impossible to recover the lost Ikonaz territories in The Windhorn and Lishun sectors.

The final marker in the Ikonaz shift from offensive to defensive operations focused on the Outpost and Tokitre systems. Unlike Ikon herself, these worlds had large Solomani-dominant populations, and they fought a long and bitter series of insurgency campaigns against both the hated Vargr and the despised Vilani quislings. None were successful, although some rebellions were ended only by orbital bombardment. Finally, in -36, the Ovaghoun Vargr decided to abandon these bleeding ulcers – after first killing every city on these two worlds with a population of over 500,000, as the Ikonaz Vilani advised.

This is one of those cases in which the imagination is baffled by the facts.

Adam Smith, -2798 to -2731 Imperial

The Solomani residents considered the nuclear bombardments and gassing a small price to pay for freedom from their intensely hated overlords. By A.D. 4510 (-10 Imperial), no Vargr or human with a trace of Vilani blood still drew breath on these worlds. By 50 Imperial, Outpost’s and Tokitre’s industrial infrastructure had been rebuilt, capable of constructing naval bases over both worlds. And by 100 – when the Imperium started to send diplomatic feelers to these systems – their population had completely rebounded, and all physical trace of the bombardment was erased.

The Price of Failure

I wasted time, and now doth time waste me.
William Shakespeare, c. -2957 to -2905

The Ikonaz, having dedicated so much of their economy to producing (or stealing) war material needed to protect their far-flung possessions, had fallen behind in the tech and development race with the other interstellar competitors. This truth was brought to public knowledge by the controversial Kr’rig A’ounorg Report of A.D. 4477 (-43 Imperial). Foreign corporations – the Menderes Corporation, Four-star Lines and Voyageur (both from the powerful neighbour of Antares), the Zhunastu Corporation, the Vilani Bureaux – have surpassed the obsolescent and undercapitalized Ovaghoun corporations. Only with immense effort was the technological level of Ikon raised to TL 11, around the dawn of the Third Imperium.

Regardless of their tardy rise in technology, the corporate power of the Syleans (now the Third Imperium), the Asimikigir (who dominated the Menderes Corporation) and the Antareans were rapidly unravelling the Ovaghoun economy. Imperial Vilani promises of a restored tradition and a place for their long-lost Vilani brothers in the gentle, sheltering arms of the Imperium contended with Menderes hints of wealth untold to both Ovaghoun Vargr & Vilani.

With the rise of the Antares Pacification Campaign, Ikonaz culture was placed under unprecedented stress. A few wealthy sophonts sold their financial holdings, and with the handful of ships they were able to obtain, fled into Imperial Antares and Lishun (if Vilani) or into Vargr-held Meshan and Mendan sectors (if Vargr). More common was sudden mass panics, ‘Ikonaz style’ – sudden public swings against ‘Imperial contamination’, accusations against the Vilani for being secretly undermining Ovaghoun Vargr rule, paranoid purges of anything ‘innovative’, and a ferocious insistence on

comprehensive conformity. These sweeping manias served only to exhaust and dishearten Ikonaz patriots, as they tried to focus on the Imperial threat and ignore the insistent distractions of a society under stress.

For a time, the Imperium successfully drove a wedge between the wavering Ikonaz Vilani and intensely anti-Imperial Vargr, as both desperately fought off ever-increasing Imperial attacks both obvious and hidden. As the Ikonaz pushed against the Imperium, they were driven into the waiting arms of the Menderes Corporation, which was happy to support their struggle against the Imperium... for a price.

What finally tipped the balance was the massive influx of refugees from regions recently conquered by the Imperium, especially those from Antares herself. The Antares Vilani exiles wept for their wealth and lost lands, seized by Imperial Solomani nobility, while the Vargr exiles spoke of ethnic cleansings and exterminations of astonishing brutality. This convinced influential Ikonaz Vilani that the Solomani-dominated Imperium was 'an imitation Imperium', no different from the Solomani-dominated Ramshackle Empire.

When preparing to attack the Persian Empire, Croesus asked the Pythia, the Oracle at Delphi, to give a prophecy on the matter. The Pythia answered, "If you cross the river, you will destroy a great empire."

Unfortunately, Croesus failed to ask *which* empire would be destroyed...

Dr. Chow Ying-kay,
Household Imperial Academic,
while educating Princess
(later, Empress) Margaret,
838 Imperial

As Ikonaz opinion hardened against the Imperium, Ikonaz pirates and irregular forces began to intensify operations against Imperial interests from the early 90s onwards, operating from the rimward regions of the Ikonaz Sphere. The Third Imperium insisted on violating Ikonaz space to attack these corsairs and guerrilla outfits, due to the self-proclaimed right of 'hot pursuit'. In 114, the Loyalty Force of the then-current Ikonaz government, the Steel Bond of Ethou, destroyed an Imperial anti-pirate force operating in Kikarmur system (Antares 2413). The Archduke of Antares promptly declared war against the Steel Bond. While the struggle lasted three years, the technological and numerical superiority of the Imperial Navy meant that the contest was never in doubt.

The final peace settlement, in 117, seeded to the Third Imperium all the Ikonaz systems within Lishun and Antares sectors. The multitude of worlds lost worlds included the still-untaken Vargr fortress world of Oghoutsekae (Antares 2316), the valuable trade nexus of O'ksorddzaash (Antares 2209, later renamed Areshu) and the mysterious world of Sabmiqys (Antares 2117: earlier known by the Vilani name of Gashukubi ("Instant Death")). A few Ikonaz systems with primarily human populations, Leiwnei (Antares 2708) and Riimedireku (Antares 2709), were categorized as 'Non-Aligned', but most were absorbed into the Third Imperium, with the former Ovaghoun ruling race killed off, exiled, and/or quite vigorously subjected and stripped of all wealth and property by local human authorities.

Over 70% of the Vargr inhabitants were expelled from their homes, eventually arriving on Ikon homeless and destitute. This rises to 90%, if you leave out the major outlier of Oghoutsekae. Oghoutsekae herself was Red Zoned and heavily interdicted by the Imperium until the rise of Archduke Soegz, centuries later. During the time of the Ban, the tech level of the world, starved of trade, went into a steady decline from TL 10 during the Pacification Campaigns to TL 6 at the time of the Imperial Civil War.

The price to be paid for defeat was not limited to territory lost to the Third Imperium. Earlier, an attempt was made by the leaders of the two closely-aligned systems of Tokitre and Outpost to create an interstellar state in the 20s, but pirate-diplomats from Ikon made clear that any such decision would be treated as an act of war by the Ikonaz, regardless of what government happened to be in power. However, the Imperium, learning of these important systems and their boundless hatred for the Ikonaz, sent out diplomatic feelers to these governments in the 80s, during the Antares Pacification Campaign. Now, with the defeat of the Steel Bond, the Imperium was able to force the Bond to recognise Outpost, Tokitre, and several nearby worlds as members of the Imperium, creating a permanent Imperial naval presence on the trailing flank of the Ikonaz, as well as their rimward regions.

There have often been civil wars and internal conflicts between the various factions of the Vargr rulers, but such affairs were transient affairs, typically lasting mere weeks. Moreover, they tend to be limited conflicts, involving assassinations, large-scale duels, and custom-governed fights involving strictly soldier-to-soldier violence. The abject failure of the Steel Bond to stand up to the Imperium, coupled with the ugly stipulations of the peace treaty, led to the only really destructive

civil war in Ikonaz history. Generally referred to as just 'the Civil War', this chaotic and feral conflict lasted only two years, but resulted in the a population decline of 18% across the Ikonaz Sphere (5% on Ikon herself) and the sharp if temporary dip of Ikon's economy/ technology matrix, from TL 11 to TL 10. A massive loss of territory was also endured, as all Ovaghoun systems in Meshan sector and half the Ovaghoun systems in Mendan sector broke the rule of the Fatherworld over their now-independent systems.

These tell-tale signs of a dictatorship all reinforce Mises's observation: the regime can only last if it maintains the illusion that it is beneficial to the masses. Mere physical strength is not sufficient, because it is ultimately ideas that determine which way the soldiers and police point their guns.

Robert P. Murphy,
"Ideals Can Overthrow Regimes",
<http://mises.org/daily/5105/Ideas-Can-Overthrow-Regimes> ,
-2409 Imperial



The Tall Towers of Kuell. Originally built in 106, destroyed by Imperial assault in 183, and rebuilt in 440 Imperial

The graphic is titled "Xhan Organis" © Philippe Bullo.

See his work at <http://www.darthmagus.com/science-fiction/album/slides/Xhan%20Organis.html>

The end of the conflict finally arrived in 119, when the Uekfavgrovbr' Syndarchy – which had finally crushed all opposition from Ikon/Empty Quarter to Imikari/ Meshan – made a deal with the other major Ovaghoun factions, redefining the Ikonaz Sphere to include only the territory the Syndarchy currently controlled. This implicitly freed the Ovaghoun outside of these borders from Ikonaz authority.

In an attempt to marshal the resources necessary to resist the Imperium, the Syndarchy increased both the law level and the taxation rate over their territory, forcing the major corporations, independent bureaux, and ruling families to pay heavy taxes for decades. The

'temporary' levies were initially used to strengthen the military and house the Vargr refugees from the Lost Worlds, but the taxes remained in place after the emergency faded away. They were only somewhat lowered as the influence of the Menderes Corporation increased after the Julian War. The abolishment of these taxes and the lowering of the overall law levels occurred only occurred during the 580s, as part of the then-new 'Great Economy, Free Society' policies.

As part of their emergency measures, the Syndarchy seized the few remaining Ikonaz Vilani slaves, transferred ownership to the State, and cyborged them with expensive equipment. These high-tech slaves were

used for various specialized duties, mainly in covert paramilitary operations and espionage/anti-espionage work. In various forms, this distinctively Ikonaz caste of human (and occasionally Irilitok Vargr) techno-slaves – called the Falsemen in Anglic – existed until the abolition of Ikonaz slavery after the Imperial Civil War.

The Julian War

Prelude

Between the end of the Antares Pacification Campaign in 120 and the start of the Julian War in 175, Menderes agents laboured unceasingly to consolidate anti-Imperial opinion while discrediting pro-Imperial views. Heavy government spending, coupled with low interest loans from Menderes Financial and a committed populace, created an amazing and effective defensive network around the world of Ikon. This laser-based network – called the Wall of Light by Imperials – was fully operational by 169, but it was built at the cost of squeezing the defence budgets of every other system within Ikonaz space, as well as undercutting economic growth on Ikon herself. As they grew more anti-Imperial, there became more ready to prepare for war – something that the Menderes Corporation stood ready to assist with, complete with discounts and easy credit terms for bulk weapons orders.

Imperial diplomats were sent to the meet with the major parties across Mendan, Meshan and Amdukan Sectors – including the Oatheingthue Starnet, the 106th interstellar Ikonaz government in the Ikonaz Sphere. While the very best negotiators were sent to speak with the Menderes family, other ‘top-draw’ diplomats were sent to negotiate with the Ikonaz: it was felt that the strong Vilani culture there would create an affinity with the Imperium, making negotiations easier and more likely to succeed in their goal: the peaceful absorption of the entire region into the Third Imperium.

Touch me, and lose your hand.

Peacemaker Second Class Gvothohfotze
to Imperial High Ambassador
Baron St. Claire, as he offered
to shake her paw.
247-168 Imperial

Among the Ikonaz, the diplomats were received exactly as protocol dictates, and nothing more. Whenever possible, the Imperial diplomats – all ranking Nobles – were given the cold shoulder, and frozen out of all social functions and events. They were not *quite* treated as Persona non Grata, but it was an amazingly good imitation thereof.

The Crystaliron Fist

As the reader can guess, the Starnet told the diplomats ‘no’. They keep on saying ‘no’ in a variety of ways, until the diplomats finally left nine years later. The Ikonaz government patted themselves on the back, for their strength in resisting all Imperial demands – and kept on doing so until, a few months later, the Imperial Navy began invasion operations against the Starnet.

The darkness of the Long Night endures until ALL Imperial worlds, without exception, are under the banner of the Imperial Starburst.

Sector Duke Wolfram Krisiun, 146-175

You want your worlds back? Come and get them.

‘Killer eye’ Malt’qingliiz,
Made-Vargr of the Oath Llughimmusekh,
c. 175 Imperial

Naturally, the Ikonaz government promptly disintegrated: few Ikonaz bothered to notice, as they were busy dealing with the actual work of destroying the Imperial invaders.

(After the conflict, Ikonaz historians were highly amused to discover that the Imperials thought that they had defeated the Ikonaz merely because the government collapsed. Jokes stemming from this misinterpretation of Vargr psychology are still making the rounds, 800 years later.)

Even though the Oatheingthue Starnet had disintegrated and no formal government replaced it until after the war, the leaders of Ikonaz society stood solidly with the Protectorate, ‘just with less paperwork.’ Instead of expendable government officials signing a piece of paper, the local Vargr and Vilani clan leaders – a far more august group – signified their acceptance of the Julian Concord with paw- and finger-prints dipped in their own blood.

The Imperial Navy slowly rolled up the various Ikonaz minor worlds of Oulduktak/Antares subsector before getting down to the job at hand, which meant cracking Ikon. The First Battle of Ikon (277-176 to 284-176) was a truly epic affair, with a focus on ship-to-ship engagements, ugly boarding actions, and the surprise showing of ‘instant space mines’. The Second Battle (310-178 to 347-178) ranged over most of the Inner System. The Third Battle (359-180) consisted of a single day of savagery over the skies of Ikon. While the Imperial Navy finally destroyed the Wall of Light in this engagement, they were unable to overcome the heavy aerospace forces committed to stand in the gap. The

final attempt to press the Imperial advantage, referred to as 'the Death Dive' in the history books, is still studied by students of military history centuries later. Despite the major Imperial commitment of resources, all three battles were won by the Ikonaz.

Of course the Imperium did not restrict operations to the Ikonaz Sphere: at most, 20% of available Imperial resources were directed here. In contrast, 50% of the in-theatre Imperial resources were thrown against the Asimikigir Confederation, the leading polity of the Protectorate. Even so, the ability of Ikon to Hold the Line prevented the Imperium from flanking the defenders of the Protectorate, turning a planned five-year Pacification Campaign into a sixteen-year slugfest.

As the war lengthened, the Imperium expected that their stronger industrial capacity would eventually wear down the Protectorate. Instead, Imperial forces at 'the tip of the spear' were worn down by round-the-clock raiding and 'hit'n'fade' operations, while other Vargr did what they do best: devour Imperial shipping, now expanded to include the naval logistics chain. Only the stoutly defended Imperial bases at Outpost and

Tokitre (and the unstinting support of their populations) prevented an early collapse of the Imperial logistics chain in the Ikonaz theatre. Even so, the Imperial was never able to bring their full force of their economy to bear against the Protectorate, due to the 'vanishing transports' problem.

Stand and Deliver!

Chief of Ships Vgreink to his forces

Fourth Battle of Ikon, 25-183

One more push against Ikon was made. Late in 182, Imperial forces flooded the Ikonaz Sphere (to draw out the Ikonaz military from the Ikon system). As soon as a majority could confirm engagements with Ikonaz warships, the Imperials quickly condensed into a single fleet, and jumped into Ikon in 25-183. Unfortunately for the Imperials, Chief of Ships Vgreink of the Ikonaz was able to out-guess the Imperial stratagem, and was ready and waiting when the Imperial Navy arrived at his doorstep. The daring operation came to an abrupt and brutal end.



Star Legion reinforcements arrive at Ikon during the Julian War, c. 180 Imperial.

The graphic is titled "Moving the Fleet" © Richard Jefferies. See his work at http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1923310

A Victor Emerges

After the surge of Imperial might gradually ebbed out, the Protectorate wasted no time in bringing the war to the enemy. In a daring offensive strike, Confederation and Ikonaz forces – now unified into the Star Legion - slipped into Imperial Space via a void crossing in The

Empty Quarter, striking the poorly protected Antares Cluster without warning in 185 Imperial. A few lighting strikes later, and the Protectorate was rampaging across Imperial Space, smashing the Depots in Antares and Ley sectors and rapidly shutting down the

interstellar economy across the Coreward-Trailing Imperium.

Emperor Martin was forced to withdraw part of his in-theatre forces to deal with the problems closer to home. The remainder of his forces in Mendan and Amdukan Sectors were driven from the field by a resurgent Star Legion. Major Imperial offences come to an end at this point – except for a last surprise raid on Ikon on the last day of the year 189. The task force, actually an Imperial cruiser squadron from Tokitre, left the well-protected homeworld alone, sterilizing other, lightly defended moons and worlds instead.

A portion of deployed Ikonaz forces were recalled to defend the home system, and a second, smaller group was sent to deal with the Tokitre’s Imperial naval base – a task force that never returned. The vast majority of the Ikonaz military spend the remaining three years in ‘happy hunting ground’ mode, hauling away fat prize ships, laden with booty, back home to Ikon. When the war ended in 191, roughly 40% of Ikonaz forces never actually got around to standing down, morphing into pure pirate fleets and acting as a bushel of thorns in the side of the Imperium over the next two decades.

Prices to be Paid

Back home, every Ikonaz world outside of Ikon herself was damaged in some way or another: many were out-and-out sterilized, while others were merely ‘severely or badly damaged’. Despite this, the powerhouse of a homeworld herself was unharmed, allowing reconstruction to begin immediately. While most of the war damage was cleaned up by the 400s, resettlement was a very slow affair: for a century, few sophonts cared to leave the protection of Ikon.

I prefer wars that pay for themselves.
Ksoellagz,
Master of the Kfovdzaankeghoekuzk Hunters,
53-190 Imperial

The pirate booty – mainly low-volume, high-value goods, stolen databases and knowledgeable slaves (human and otherwise) – helped not only to fund reconstruction, but to give the Ikonaz a major boost to their technological standing: ‘the gift that keeps on giving’ to the current day. Freed since the mid-700s, many returned to Imperial Space in the famous fleets of troop transports, but about 10,000 freed slaves choose to remain on the only home they had ever known.

The descendants of these slaves, numbering two million as of 990, tend to be tied to the knowledge and scientific research professions, and given job security and benefits in lieu of a high salary and increased authority over others. Still, their freedom is real: they can actually quit, and a minority has successfully made the transition to other fields, even into such upper-class activities as piracy and the blood-sports favoured by the Ovaghoun. The “Impservers” are largely Imperial humaniti, with a variety of nonhuman communities as well, most notably Bwaps and even a few Imperial Vargr who refused to abandon the Sunburst or their human friends, despite every inducement.

When the Imperium began the war, the enemy was a disorganized group of divided petty polities: when the war ended, the Imperium faced a powerful interstellar state, the Julian Protectorate; a large percentage of her fleets was so much floating scrap; and even after the ‘official’ withdrawal of the Star Legion, many of their associated Vilani & Vargr privateers were making themselves at home in Imperial Space, to plague the Imperium for the rest of her existence. Finally, her systems on the wrong side of the Lesser Rift were downgraded from Imperial to Imperial Client systems as part of the peace agreement between the Imperium and the Protectorate.

In 195, the Ikonaz – led by the Ovaghoun elite, as usual – finally took the time to create a new interstellar government: the Thali A’okfonkun. Amidst promises of “One Thousand Years of Predicable Leadership”, life returned to normal.

Re-Populating the Stars, and the Backlash

Two major events – one a one-off, the others a gradual shift – shaped the development of the Ikonaz Sphere between 200 and 700 Imperial.

The first was chaotic migration flows that resulted from the devastation, cratering, and sterilization of many Ikonaz systems. The Ikonaz leadership forced population transfers from 226 to 240 to repopulate the shattered worlds under their rule. This launched a major ship construction boom, which indirectly built up the trading capacity of Ikonaz traders. Originally, the poorer Ovaghoun Vargr inhabitants of Ikon were dumped on the recently depopulated worlds of Sudvoukh, Khebha, Tsahrroek, Gvurrdakh, and Sutedvok, as well as on the decimated (but still inhabited) worlds of Byegh Aengz, Gueddzoukh, Kaekhaenae, and Byeggra.

The more things change, the more they are the same.
Alphonse Karr, -2673 Imperial

The increasing amount of political instability this stroked on Ikon destroyed many governments, forcing their successors to abandon the use of Ovaghoun Vargr as settlers. Instead, from the 240s onward, the more pliable Irlitok Vargr from Amdukan sector was persuaded to settle the smashed worlds, under the political authority of the earlier Ovaghoun Vargr communities. Ever since the 240, a steady flow of Irlitok migrants – sometimes strong, sometimes just a trickle - has entered into the Ikonaz Sphere.

The second event was spark that led to a revolution across Ikonaz space. The spark: a series of planet-wide strikes and low-level riots across the world of Tsahrroek. The Ovaghoun rioters successfully overthrew interstellar authority over their world in 331, and proclaimed the birth of the Interstellar Brinkoegzi Hierarchy. As news of this spread across the Ikonaz Sphere, the old interstellar government, the Three-Halves Bodyguard, fell apart due to internal bickering and dissension: its successor, the United Parliaments of Ikon, organized both her navy and private corsair forces to crush the fledgling government at Tsahrroek. Early in 332, the Hierarchical forces were destroyed in battle, and the single major city on Tsahrroek, Mnosa'oudz, was destroyed via a single five-megaton warhead.

Instead of a return to peace and quiet, instability increased across the Ikonaz Sphere. The colonized worlds became ungovernable, and the majority of the poorer residents of Ikon – both Vargr and Vilani – grew hostile to the United Parliaments. From 335 to 352, the United Parliaments gradually grew more oppressive, but the now-interstellar insurgency was careful to never provide the United Navy with a clearly nukable target. Instead, their forces intermingled with the enemy, tightly restricting the possibility of Parliament to attack, crippling their offensive capability, but never delivering the killing blow. The insurgency – soon fracturing into multiple insurgencies – provided isolated Parliament forces with life support to insure 'death in battle', but would reject any surrender.

A sudden charisma-offensive among insurgency-sympathetic officers of the Parliamentary Navy led to a brief series of coups and counter-coups in 349, with the final result being a fragmented anti-Parliament front of corsairs, privateers, individual warships, and small squadrons of ex-Navy units. A string of sporadic anti-Parliament military actions struck across remaining Parliament territory. The most important result was the

neutralization of space-capable forces available to the United Parliament. As soon as it was realized that the United Parliament no longer had a navy, the various insurgent group demanded the immediate surrender of all of the surrounded ground forces. Most surrendered without a struggle, and were quickly let go after being disarmed and disbanded. Those who chose to stand were attacked until they surrendered or died in place.

By 351, only Ikon herself was still held by the United Parliaments. The various insurgents were unwilling to nuke the world – despite the Parliamentary destruction of Mnosa'oudz on Tsahrroek – so they choose to isolate it instead and support local anti-Parliamental forces. Most of the cities were undersea, and could not be bombed conventionally, but local anti-Parliamental forces could and did take control of the various life-support equipment. The transport and electronic networks connecting the undersea cities were, destroyed, compromised, or completely taken over by various anti-Parliamental groups. Finally, around mid-352, the remaining United Parliamentary leadership broke up into factions. While there was no surrender, there was no longer any force or leader of the United Parliament, which dissolved into nothingness.

After the Second Interstellar Brinkoegzi Hierarchy was formed, its first act was to imprison the former leadership, their supporters, and their families: eventually, over a million sophonts, the majority Vilani, were exiled to Tsahrroek. Large amounts of Vilani wealth was seized and redistributed to assorted insurgency factions and their supporters. Finally, the entire subsector, then named Ikon, was rechristened Tsahrroek subsector, after the martyred world. Additional actions met serious internal opposition, and led to the collapse of the Hierarchy.

It's strange that men should take up crime when there are so many legal ways to be dishonest.
Anonymous, from *Sunshine* magazine,
c. -2500 Imperial

For 57 years, there was anarchy, with various competing interests, planetary governments, corporate syndicates, and ideological organizations competing for the favour of the Navy and the corsairs. The next widespread, more-or-less stable government, the Lucky Paws Generosity Commission, ignored government policy almost completely, focusing instead on tax collection and organizing gambling and vice rings. Once again, the Vilani grew to become the financiers, backers, and corporate elites behind the scenes – but this time, there was little opposition. As a side-effect of

the return of prosperity, the ever-expanding needs of reinvigorated industrial concerns led to the pervasive tainting of the atmosphere by 400 Imperial.

The End of the Anarchical Age

The resurrection of a fairly stable interstellar government was rooted in a major Protectorate security breach. The Protectorate has been successful in deterring Imperial encroachment across the Lesser Rift - excepting the Imperial First Survey of the region, during the early 400s. Despite the threat of armed force (and the occasional demonstration of such force), the IISS was generally able to evade Protectorate restrictions with a vast array of tactics. The only debatably successful resistance against the IISS was organized by the Lucky Paws Pirate Fleets. At the time the corsairs were merely a 'mutual non-aggression pact' of 23 pirate ships, but their successful strikes against IISS operations in the chaotic Ikonaz Sphere led to increased wealth and respect for the Lucky Paws.

Hyman Roth always makes money for his partners. One by one, our old friends are gone. Death, natural or not, prison, deported. Hyman Roth is the only one left, because he always made money for his partners.

Godfather II
-2546 Imperial

The Lucky Paws Pirate Fleets were – at the time – the only major Vargr band to use Vilani aides for financial management of their wealth, which developed into a huge advantage for the Lucky Paws over her competitors. As these irregularly gained profits grew and grew, the leading pirate, First ShipHunter Vgrofhiighollouksesh Ar, parlayed this wealth to political influence. His relentless targeting of IISS personnel and ships led to an ever-increasing surge in his charisma, and a network of friends who helped him dodge Imperial assassination teams and covert hunter-killer anti-pirate squadrons. His incredible charisma – boosted by a string of ever-greater coups against the IISS and even the Imperial Navy – was multiplied by his money and legendary intelligence to become the indisputable leader of the Ikonaz Sphere. His formal creation of the Lucky Paws Generosity Commission – the first stable Ikonaz interstellar state in decades – was largely a formality.

As the corsairs settled into power, they grew more and more of the trappings of a formal government. The Lucky Paws Generosity Commission collapsed soon after the death of Vgrofhiighollouksesh Ar himself in 442, but the pattern of corsair rule – spiced up with

Naval juntas, Corporate syndicates and massive Personality cults – continued until the early 700s.

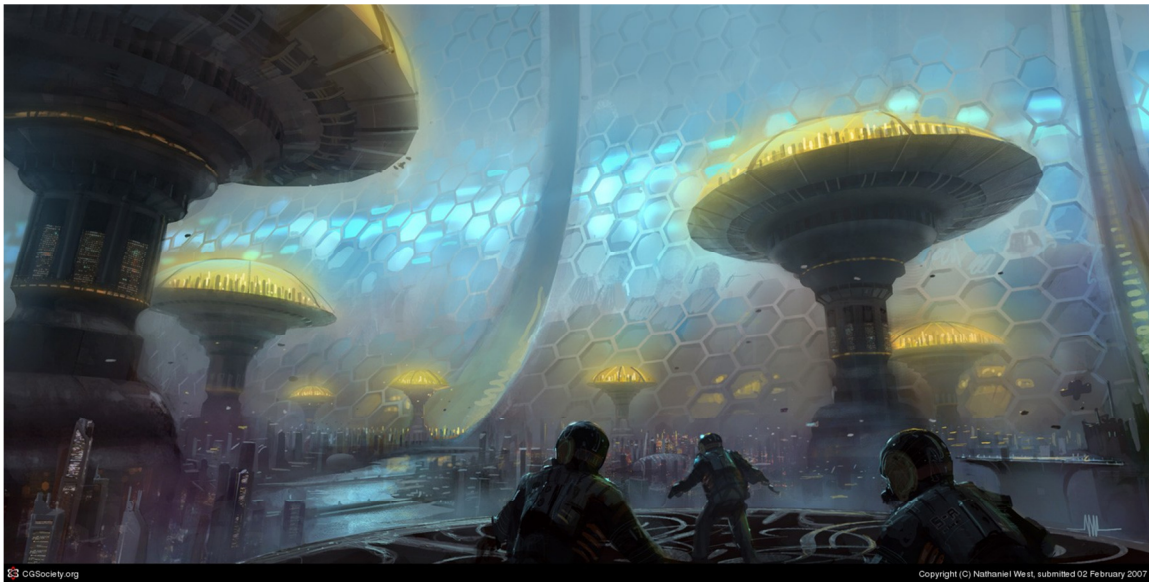
Admiral Burton! So glad to *finally* make your acquaintance!

The Most Generous Vgrofhiighollouksesh Ar,
First ShipHunter, Defender of Ikon,
and The Best Friend of All the Ikonaz,
meets his old foe,
Sector Admiral Baron Edward Burton,
Imperial Navy (ret.)
for the first time on Ikon, 421 Imperial

The Three-Crown Monarchy – the Ikonaz interstellar government at the time – avoided intervening directly during the Imperial Civil War. But, they refused to restrain local corsairs from taking ever-bigger bites out of the Imperial hide. During the height of Ikonaz pirate activity, in the 615 – 625 period, Ikon grew fat on the trade of stolen goods and lives. Huge pirate packs, combinations of Vilani organization and Vargr violence, descended on the relatively unprotected Imperial worlds and shipping. Large fleets laden with plunder and slaves docked at her ports, and Ikonaz auctioneers prospered as they sold the cargo to the highest bidder.

The Imperial Civil War was good to the Ikonaz pirate fleets in other, more lasting ways. At the end of the war, there was a major restructuring on Ovaghoun pirating philosophy, completing the shift from just killing and taking to levying unofficial 'taxes' and 'transit fees' on the unfortunate merchants they capture. This kinder, gentler approach to piracy isn't good for building Charisma: but it did maximise revenue over time, bringing smiles to the Ikonaz Vilani. In time, the additional money allowed the purchase of better starships, guns, and other goodies, amply rewarding the delayed gratification of the Ovaghoun Vargr for his patience. The transition, begun by at least 250 Imperial, had finally gelled, solidifying into the standard Ovaghoun tradition.

Ksovg Kogkaenii, King-Emperor of All the Ikonaz, was smart enough to force his more aggressive kin to draw back their claws as a new, assertive leader of the Imperium, Regent Arbellatra, began restoring Imperial authority and unity. After she became Empress, she directed her new Vargr Archduke, Soegz of Antares, to work hard to better relations between the Imperium and the Protectorate. His efforts – and the continuation of his work by his heirs – made the Alkhalikoi policy of 'Peaceful Borders' a reality between the two old foes.



Vgriimnikr'ru, the premiere city of Ikon, 993 Imperial

The graphic is titled "Alexandria--The Second Chamber" and was created by Nathaniel West. See his work at <http://features.cgsociety.org/challenge/eon/entry.php?challenger=12065> and <http://nathanielwest.net/>

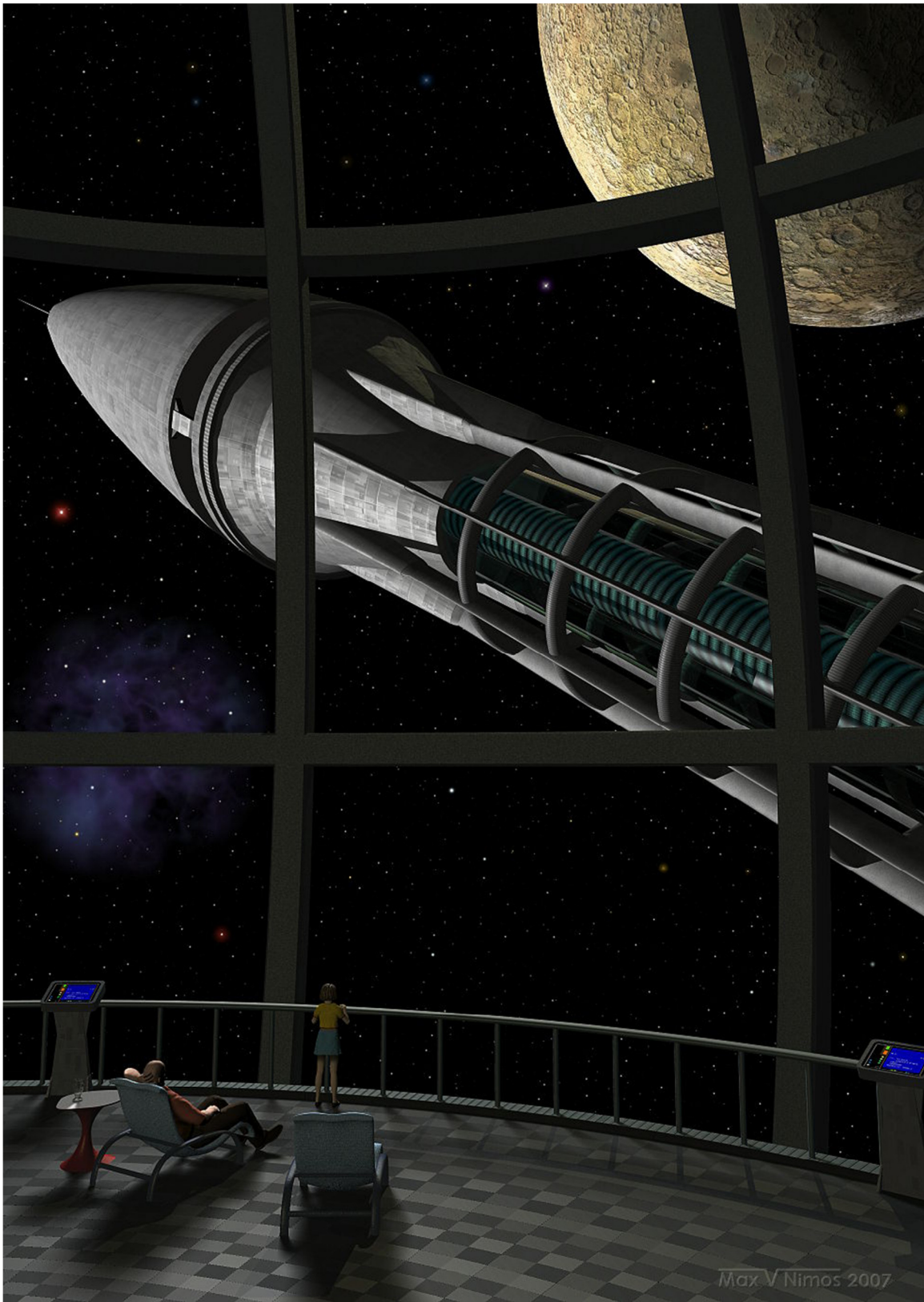
One of his major accomplishments was in using a series of carrots and sticks (well, 'steaks and teeth' in the various Vargr tongues) to insure that massed pirate fleets remain on their side of the Imperial border. The first major result from better Protectorate-Imperial relations was a decline of pirate attacks, and an equivalent rise in legitimate trade between Ikon and Antares. Another major landmark was the Imperial-encouraged evacuation & emancipation of the Impservers of Ikon. While limited manumission occurred at the initiative of a Vargr master (if the slave was privately owned) or a diplomatic gesture (if the Impservant was owned by a government or crypto-government agency), comprehensive emancipation only occurred during the mid-730s, during a unusually turbulent era in Ikon's history

Rebuilding, Immigration, and the Great Migrations

The corrupt nature of corsair rule inevitably led a chronic underfunding of public works, as funds were siphoned from uninteresting maintenance tasks to high-charisma activities like building up the pirate fleets and making ostentatious displays of wealth. There were several patchwork and band-aid solutions used to delay the 'crisis of the commons', fix things on the cheap, and keeps Ikon's economy going forward – if on an ever

more unstable footing. The quick-fix methods finally led disaster in 594, when the undersea megalopolis of Thertziraakh suffered a catastrophic, cascading failure in life support and structural integrity. In less than two hours, 19.9 billion sophonts died.

Following this unprecedented failure, the name of Gvakkfa'ozkzaanghamme Omaloekha'ous, a highly charismatic Vargr with a well-earned reputation for unflinching integrity and courage, bubbled to the surface, and the population turned to him to redeem Ikon's honour to protect her citizens. Omaloekha'ous rode the demands of the crowd and the fears of the elite with great skill. On 599, he persuaded the major political factions of Ikon's ever-turbulent political scene to rebuild all of the major megalopoli according to the A'grangrigk Plan. Such a project would take decades at least, so he made certain to gain the backing of the Vilani leadership as well: no massive long-term project could hope to be completed without total and unreserved Vilani support. While work started in 606, the full rebuild wasn't completed until 744. When the huge construction project was finally done, Ikon had underwater cities that surpassed any other in all of Charted Space in beauty, functionality, multiple redundancy and fail-safes.



At 895 Imperial, two Ikonaz Vilani watch as a massive colony ship exits Ikon's highport.

The graphic "Observation Lounge" © Max V. Nimos. See his work at
http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1367014

In support of the massive Ikonaz construction projects of the 7th Imperial century, enormous numbers of Irilitok workers were brought in from Amdukan sector: after all, ruling sophonts grant charisma, ruling robots grants nothing... except a few snickers. As the end of construction neared these workers, most of whom had no skills outside of undersea construction, began to be laid off.

Even before the last superdense plate was grown into place, by 720 there was a major depression, coinciding with a population peak of 300 billion sophonts. Of course, a 'depression' at Tech level 15 was the height of prosperity everywhere else in the Vargr Extents: at this time, Ikon was the single wealthiest & most heavily populated world in the Vargr Extents. But this truth brought cold comfort to the labourers: politically radicalized and furious, they had regular clashes with local law enforcers. Exacerbating the situation was the refusal of the 'guest workers' to return home, and the increasing fear of the Ikonaz Vargr of being displaced on their own homeworld. As the depression wore on, the amazing tech level could no longer be sustained, putting into effect nasty political feedback loops that further destabilised a precariously balanced situation. The strong surge in Irilitok emigration grew to a flood as it became obvious that the depression has brought down Ikon to TL 14, with no firm bottom in sight.

This economic failure was blamed on the ruling corsair/corporate interstellar government at the time, and a new government, led by famous (read: high-charisma) media personalities, was founded in 723. The Association of Good Wolves decided to promote the emigration of the working classes – especially the Irilitok – going so far as to subsidise 70% of the cost of leaving the world and settling down elsewhere. Various associations were willing to subsidise emigration even further, or provide a loan for the interested emigrant, to be paid for by indentured service.

The stars cry out for us!
The Extents demand the civilization,
the wealth, the wisdom only we can provide!
It isn't only our destiny to spread our people
across space – it is our *duty*!
The Ancestors Demand It!
Proconsul Feisdzesur of Ikon,
145-762 Imperial

Even the massive orbital shipyards, a major source of Irilitok employment, were repositioned to Guezdhe system. Repeated Vilani proposals to expand the settlements onto Ikon's own largely uninhabited surface – as opposed to undersea habitations – were

strongly resisted by the Ikonaz Ovaghoun elite: they, like most of the local Vargr, saw the surface of Ikon as a sacred wilderness and hunting ground. Certain terrorist incidents turned public opinion decisively against the 'Home Settler Movement', turning the eyes of the settlers to the stars.

The peace and the numerous worlds now safe for settlement acted as the pull; the push wasn't only from pro-colonization government policy, but also from the irreversible rise of the Irilitok to population parity with the Ovaghoun. The Ovaghoun view this lesser breed with an even greater distaste than they saw most other Vargr: as a race of conquerors, they instinctively view the Irilitok as a race of slaves. Subconsciously, both the Ovaghoun and the Irilitok are strongly shaped by human culture: the Ovaghoun conquerors as imitators of the culturally superior Vilani underlings, and the Irilitok as Vargr bred to serve their human betters. The similarities naturally lead to intense loathing of the Irilitok on the part of the Ovaghoun, and a free-spirited, soft-edged mockery of the oh-so-masterful Ovaghoun on the part of the Irilitok. The Ovaghoun are better organized than the Irilitok, and clearly superior in the area of violence on an individual and collective level – the humans took care to 'breed out' as much of the hunting instinct as possible from the Irilitok, while reinforcing the innate need for social rewards and approval. The Irilitok rarely challenge Ovaghoun rule directly, but the cold hostility and loathing of the Ovaghoun continues to be matched by the ridicule and passive-aggressive pseudo-submission of the Irilitok.

Despite strong emigration, the Irilitok continued to grow as a percentage of the local population. Attempts to enforce a restrictive birth-control policy on the Irilitok failed due to the expense of enforcing it against creative and unceasing Irilitok resistance: the habitual collapse of planetary (and occasionally interstellar) governments also made enforcement ineffective. The more fearful (or, perhaps, merely more prudent) Ovaghoun clans, packs, and nations began to leave Ikon. The first Great Migration was from 725 to the 770s, as vast numbers of Ovaghoun residents left Ikon. Initially, the settlers preferred worlds near Ikon, but as the Irilitok began to settle there as well, the Ovaghoun moved on, to the exclusively Ovaghoun worlds in Mendan and Antares sectors. Often, the more successful colonies would restrict further Ovaghoun immigration, while failing colonies would be abandoned – with the world again recolonized in a few years or decades by other Ovaghoun fleeing Ikon.

Besides the traditionally Ovaghoun regions of Mendan and Meshan sectors, large Ovaghoun settlement flows

reached into the old Ovaghoun settlements in The Windhorn as well. A respectable number of Vargr packs, betting on better Vargr-human relations with the improved Imperial-Protectorate relationship, came to rest in Imperial space. Most 'Imperial Vargr' chose to join the large Vargr presence in Lishun sector, but some set down roots in Antares sector instead. Some surprisingly broad-minded traditionalists Ovaghoun saw the 'original Vargr', the Logaksu, as worthy partners, and were willing to settle closer to the old homeworld of Lair. However, large-scale settlement here was barred until the expatriates convinced their home government, the New Association of Good Wolves, to finally sign the Mmoannikh Accords, in 733.

A second, smaller Great Migration emerged from Ikon from 820 to 860. The majority of Ovaghoun Vargr migrants chose between the long-settled worlds of Byegh Aengz and Kakhasaek, while the Ikonaz Vilani preferred to relocate Daalii and Kadrius/0538 in Amdukan sector. In all four systems, social and economic divisions between the old residents and the newcomers have a powerful impact on local society and politics. These migrations also tended to strengthen anti-Irilitok attitudes on these systems.

The severe social shifts that the immigrants created were nowhere worse than on the highly-regarded and vibrant world of Daalii. Local Vargr superpowers eventually decided the issue via war, which – despite Protectorate and Ikonaz conferences and diplomatic initiatives – escalated into three separate nuclear exchanges, devastating the world in 859. The political backlash not only destroyed the Mnoushfar Wisdom Council – the Ikonaz government of the day – but also deflated the optimistic spirit that drove the second Great Migration. As the promoters of the Migration suffered a charismatic collapse, volunteers and monies dried up. Entire fleets of massive transports were sold off at ruinous prices, and worlds across the nearby Extents saw their futures evaporate.

Even as the huge surge of emigration reduced Ikon's population, the flight of wealth, expertise and trained labour permanently crippled any economic recovery. The relentless aging of her population locked her down at TL 14, even as the planetary population halved every 50 years. The rejection of terrestrial settlement 'to protect the purity of the land' began to be contested on the grounds that airborne pollution had already damaged the land and local lifeforms far more than habitation could ever due. To undercut the argument, huge sums of money were spent on cleansing the entire planetary atmosphere over a period of 80 years, as well as recreating and reshaping the biosphere. The

world's atmosphere was finally declared taint-free in 807 by the Protectorate Office of Science, and the biosphere was given a 'very strong' rating by the same Committee in 914. This also had the unpredictable effect of encouraging a redefinition of 'hunting', to include "spirit hunting" – using nature as a catalyst in meditation, merging the supplicant's spirit with that of the Revered Ancestors, Timelessness, or the Ghost of the Ancients, depending on the precise religion.

Political Carnivores

The Long Watch, the Sharp Claws Motto of 'The First Fleet' the oldest existing Ikonaz Vargr-Vilani Home Guard/Customs/Privateer naval group, founded 177 Imperial

Unlike the rest of The Empty Quarter, the essential stability and lack of tribal strife within Ikonaz society (whatever the government of the day happened to be – or if it even existed at any given point in time) has led to a strong foundation of unity and internal peace in the centuries since the Anarchical Age. This combination of surface chaos and deep predictability tends to confound Imperials – Imperial Vilani find Ikonaz culture "hard to like, but easy to understand". Naturally, the superior wealth, technological accomplishments, cultural refinement and antiquity of Ikonaz culture lead many Republicans to look down their noses & snouts at Gushgusi Imperials, and usually receive a punch in said nasal appendage as a reply.

The major external concern of the Ikonaz elites involves the Hegemony of Lorean. Coming out of nowhere, this expansionistic state took control of The Empty Quarter's Beta Quadrant in a mere 20 years, utterly dominating the region since the 800s. The shock of such a sudden change galvanized Vilani opinion against the Hegemony: their unyielding hostility to the Hegemony influenced Vargr opinion as well, shaping it into an anti-Hegemony form.

Throughout the 800s, there was a major military build-up as war between the Hegemony and the Protectorate grew likely. The unexpected defection of the Damlaer Union to the hegemony led to the Lorean Strikes (933-936), which the Fellowship of Nobles – the government of Ikonaz Sphere at the time – were pleased to spearhead. While their naval forces performed well, the war rested on a ground campaign that turned to an unmitigated disaster, similar in spirit to the nightmare of Napoleon's invasion of Russia, so many thousands of years ago.



Ikonaz military transports, ferrying war material to the Oanglika'Il, a large Ikonaz Vargr/Vilani mercenary army with a close relationship to the Republican government. Kaekhaena, 989 Imperial.

The graphic above is titled, "Resource Moon 147" © Christopher Gerber.

See his work at http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1418511

After the dissolution of the Fellowship in early 937, the Vilani and the minor Ikonaz worlds lobbied hard for a new government that would avoid 'foreign distractions', increase Vilani political clout, and transfer the political capital off the gracefully declining, politically hidebound world of Ikon to another system. These efforts shaped the new 'species-blind' Rukadukaz Republic, proclaimed by a group of naval captains and business interests in 940 Imperial. Even as the Republic avoided direct confrontation with the Hegemony, the Rukadur leadership has used their political clout and the superior Protectorate status of the Republic - as 'A Full and Founding Member of the Protectorate' - to hinder the 'Associate Member-State' of the Hegemony of Lorean, whenever possible.

The Ikonaz Vilani have benefited even more than the minor worlds in the new political order. The 162nd interstellar Ikonaz government has strongly encouraged Vilani participation, to the point of requiring minimum quotas for Vilani electors,

hereditary rulers, military commanders, and judicial experts. Even Rukadur referendums can't pass without a minimum percentage of Vilani support. For the first time, the Ikonaz Vilani are treated by an Ikonaz interstellar government not as slaves, pets, a protected underclass, useful servants, or patronized cubs, but as worthy allies. This is still not equality - and, in the Alpha Quarter, only on Aeghzivik (discussed later) are the Irilitok truly regarded as equals - but it is a major concession, giving the Vilani the right to protect their interests *as Vilani*, and not in the name of a Vargr overlord.

There are other reasons why Irilitok/Ovaghoun hostility has declined. For one, the Vilani are often chosen as Emissaries (a Vargr career) to act as go-betweens between the two population blocks. Partly, because the aging Ovaghoun are more interested in stability than in victory, and are unwilling to pick a fight with the Irilitok so long as the social niceties are maintained. Increased self-segregation reduced the amount of contact

between the two groups, and thus the possibility of conflict. Finally, in addition to a trend for more Irilitok individual (NOT collective) liberty, the Ovaghoun are increasingly softening their stance self-governance, informally letting local Irilitok populations rule themselves so long as they don't challenge the general principle of Ovaghoun primacy. The Ikonaz Vilani, for their part, are happy for the greater economic freedom (and thus, economic wealth) they are enjoying. They continue to press for greater independence of action, while careful to acknowledge the Ovaghoun as the natural leaders in matters of politics and war.

While domestic society is slowly breaking free of old hatreds, the possibility of a serious loss of charisma continually haunts the Rukadur leadership, who fear the fate of their predecessors. Many still view the Hegemony of Loreans as a threat to the security of the Republic, but they don't have the authority to push Protectorate public opinion against the Hegemony – yet. However, the major anti-Hegemony umbrella organization, Usivravgrashdi, has gained a major political coup in persuading the Outpost system – an exclusively pure Solomani Imperial Client State since before the Julian War – to join the Republic in 979. This feat has brought them a serious surge of charismatic authority, but they have refused to spend their political capital on moving directly against the Hegemony. Instead, Usivravgrashdi continues to enhance their position as unyielding yet broadminded Rukadur patriots, while undermining the Hegemony image and position within the Protectorate.

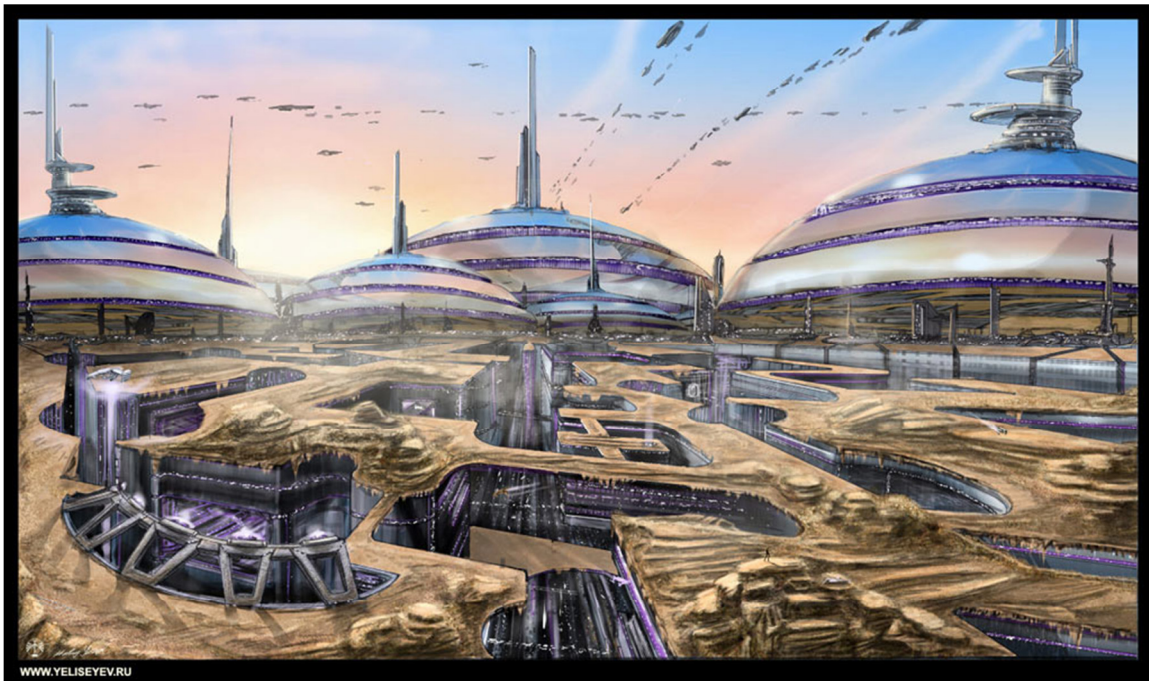
Recently, they have shifted their focus on using their influence to grasp 'the impossible dream' – bringing Tokitre into the Republic. Tokitre is a key system in the coreward Empty Quarter: extremely pro-Imperial, rabidly anti-Vargr, and armed to the teeth. The Imperial Client State is the 'Last Homely Home' for innumerable Imperial businesses, major corporations, and non-governmental organizations operating in the Julian Protectorate and the Vargr Extents, especially those who want a more discreet relationship than is possible from Imperial Antares. Moreover, due to treaty stipulations ending the Julian War centuries ago, an over-strength Imperial flotilla is rotated in and out of Tokitre on a routine basis: powerful orbital defence platforms (and numerous smaller firebases) also orbit Tokitre.

If the aristocracies that rule Tokitre could somehow be wooed into the Republic, it would smash the Imperial

position in the coreward Quarter beyond repair, and quickly lead to all the remaining Imperial Client States joining the Republic in short order. Moreover, it would allow the Rukadur to deploy her forces in an aggressive posture vis-à-vis the Loreans, 'just in case'. Winning such a coup would make the anti-Hegemony factions a shoe-in for various elections, appointments, and media contests. After gaining a sufficient amount of political power, they intend to 'push back' the Hegemony – out of the Quarter, and out of the Protectorate. The leaders of the anti-Hegemony parties plan to politically manoeuvre the Menderes family to support their cause, and thus gain the support of the Star Legion: but, if that fails, Ikon's naval assets are numerous, and they have a powerful set of high-tech fangs and claws, growing rusty from lack of use....

Naturally, it is forbidden for Protectorate member states to wage interstellar war on co-members. As the Ikonaz are long-standing members of the Protectorate – compared to the Johnny-come-lately Loreans – the Usivravgrashdi are certain that they have the political clout to drive the Loreans out of the Protectorate before tearing them to pieces. However, if it is absolutely necessary, the Usivravgrashdi are prepared lead the Rukadur Republic out of the Protectorate – not permanently, just long enough to handle an urgent matter for a few years.

A separate issue stems from the failure of the Protectorate forces to hinder the Imperial First Survey. This failure - as well as centuries of peace between the Protectorate and the Imperium - has led to a more conciliatory attitude regarding the Second Survey, commissioned by Emperor Gavin in 990. Negotiations have reached a 'mutual survey' agreement: expected to be signed at Capital in 1000, both powers will be permitted to survey the other's worlds within for a span of two decades, and to review each other's data and survey techniques. (The Imperials survey Mendan, Amdukan, Arzul (K'kree: Ingukrax), the coreward Empty Quarter, and coreward Star's End: the Protectorate surveys Lishun, Antares, the Imperial Empty Quarter, and Ley Sector.) The Rukadur is disappointed with the 'soft-headed Asimikigir diplomats', but are prepared to abide by the decision, more or less. The assassination of the visiting Domain of Antares Archduke Gvueneghz in Odzsouu system (49-979 Imperial) sharply increased the possibility of war, but quick action by the Star Legion and the heartfelt apologies of the Regent of the Protectorate – offered in person on Antares – allowed relations to normalize quickly.



The Imperial Client world of Tokitre: the Imperium's toehold on the far side of the Lesser Rift.

The graphic is titled "Colony" © Nikolay Yeliseyev.

See his work at <http://nikyeliseyev.blogspot.com/> and <http://nikolay.cgsociety.org/gallery/>

An important internal issue revolves around the world of Tsahrroek. By law, the capital of the Republic shifts between the Eight Notable Worlds - the Constitution of the Republic explicitly forbids Ikon from ever being the capital. From 980 Imperial, the world of Tsahrroek has served as the capital of the Rukadukaz Republic. Tsahrroek has proven to be so suitable that the world was selected for the position for three consecutive five-year terms. But now, various planetary governments are chomping at the bit to get their chance to shine, while established interstellar interests want to amend the Constitution, to make Tsahrroek the permanent capital. A serious political clash seems unavoidable.

The Republic and Other Ovaghoun Polities within the Protectorate

The Ukhanzi Coordinate, a 20-system Ovaghoun-majority interstellar polity in Meshan sector, is a member state within the Julian Protectorate, and a fairly reliable ally of the far more populous, powerful and respected Rukadukaz Republic. The relationship between the Ovaghoun and Irilitok are noticeably warmer there, with the Irilitok considered full citizens. Relations with humans – especially Imperials – are very formal, and very cold. While actually older than the Rukadukaz Republic, the Coordinate Ovaghoun are often treated like 'youngsters who lack sufficient filial piety.' As they also follow many Vilani norms, the Coordinate Ovaghoun respond by stressing the

elegance and purity of their ancestral ceremonies, compared to the 'expensive, over-tched and frivolous' ceremonies the Ikonaz Vargr prefer. Economically, the Ukhanzi Coordinate is very dependent on the goodwill of the Ikonaz government of the day – the Menderes Corporation has no objection to their existence, but are unwilling to invest much funds into this impoverished (if oh so earnestly traditional) region of space. Politically, they are merely a buffer state between the Ikonaz and Lasla. Lasla (Lasla/Mendan 1634) is a high-pop, high-tech, Ovaghoun-dominated system that could easily build her own pocket empire if so inclined, easily devouring the Ukhanzi Coordinate if the Star Legion and the Rukadur would kindly step aside for just a moment...

Imperialism *is* fun, but *such* a drain on the treasury – with so little return!

And all that bloodshed – it's so uncivilized, so chaotic, such a tragic waste! So unlike the productive world of business...

It's just another boy's game, in the end.

Brurrasgurelli,
Senior Political Engineer of Lasla
In a speech before
the True Elders of the Coordinate
117-990 Imperial

A game perhaps, but one played with real weapons, shedding real blood. Our esteemed neighbours to rimward are past masters at the great game. We don't need to follow in their bloody footsteps, but don't kid yourselves. Lock two men – sophonts, if you insist – in a room, one with a million [Julian] Stars, and the other with a loaded pistol. You know and I know who will soon have both the Stars and the pistol.

Star Legion Admiral Abdul Kalam
In a speech before
the True Elders of the Coordinate
117-990 Imperial

...but so far, her government has shown no interest in depriving the Ikonaz of their small friend: after all, it could upset the 'sufficiently profitable' financial and banking arrangements currently in place with Menderes Corporation. The Laslaz, (Laslai, if Vilani) are equally uninterested in anything more than a cordial relationship with the Coordinate. They only mildly resent the diversion of the Protectorate funds they pay to support the development of the Ukhanzi Coordinate: while annoying, it is only a small matter compared with the numbers they usually deal with...

On the other hand, the Laslaz/Laslai strongly resent Protectorate attempts to lure their world into either creating their own multisystem empire (and more nations further elevate the importance of the Regent) or lead a friendly takeover of the Coordinate (and, therefore, gain the obligation to fund the development of a bunch of impoverished off-world peasants.)

Religious Currents

Rukadur citizens are fairly happy with the current government, for different reasons. The Ovaghoun are satisfied that their superior social status vis-à-vis Ikonaz Vilani remains intact, regardless of the official legalities. "A single ancient tradition is worth a library of newly-minted laws." (For non-Ikonaz Vargr, replace 'a single ancient tradition' with 'an ounce of charisma'). The Irlitok, while naturally friendly and easy-going, are not as pleased with their second-class state: but they don't let distant politicians interfere with their pleasures in life. The world where the Irlitok are most respected is Aeghzivik: here, the humans are clearly second-class citizens, holding fewer rights than on most Ovaghoun worlds – but the Irlitok, being Vargr, are treated as actual equals, despite their history as bred slaves.

This shift on Aeghzivik is due to the influence of the Church of the Chosen Ones: the newly dominant religion of the Vargr inhabitants of this system (See **Stellar Reaches #4**, page 8), it insists on the complete

supremacy of the Vargr over all other sophonts. This is in contrast to the long-dominant Ovaghoun religio-ideologies of the region – the Unity of Ikon Orders, the Ceremonialist Cult, and its offshoot the Hidden Knowledge Cult. The Ikon Orders, hewing close to the ineffable glory of Pure Charisma, groups their Order Leaders according to the four traditional archetypes of Vargr literature and thought: the Taker, the Empire Builder, the Prince, and the Paranoid. The Unionists see the humans as pure Empire Builders – a natural viewpoint, with the massive, mysterious, human-dominated Third Imperium as a neighbour. Only the Ovaghoun Vargr are seen as maintaining the sacred balance between the Four Essences. (See the Classic Traveller Alien Module **Vargr**, page 45, for more information on the Vargr Archetypes.)

The Ceremonialist and Hidden Knowledge Cults are both descendants of an old schism of the ancient Starlight faith. The Ceremonialists are strongly influenced by Vilani ritualism and ancestor worship beliefs: several observers argue that it should be considered part of the Vilani religious tradition, transplanted into the minds of another species. The Knowledge-seekers are more closely related to a mixture of Imperial Gnosticism and the amazing mental construct known as Imperial Astrology, mixed liberally with outright hero-worship and the pursuit of the Sacred Quest. During the late 700s Imperial, several notable Imperial Astrologers and Star-worshipping Diviners held conferences on Ikon, exerting a powerful influence on the Knowledge-seekers.

Also of importance is the widespread notion that the Ancients are Vargr gods of long ago, ancestors and creators of the Vargr race, The Church of the Chosen Ones feels that this is heresy: but their words are of no avail. Dramatic stories of gigantic, super-charismatic Vargr shaping the Universe with their bare hands are currently all the rage, especially in the movies and computer games. Over a million Vargr in the region now claim to have been contacted by the True Vargr Gods, luminescent with bright silver, golden, or blood-red hues.

Julian and Republican authorities view the entire cultural eruption as a huge fad. As it is as typically disorganized as most Vargr enthusiasms, they believe that it will fade and dissipate in a decade or two, to be replaced by some new obsession. Secularist Imperial xenologists, dreading powerful irrational religious currents they don't understand, nervously await the Vargr prophet that will take hold of this powerful surge in belief, and shape it to his own ends...

Conscript Reporting

By Alvin Plummer

An Outside Context Problem is the sort of thing most civilizations encounter just once, and which they tend to encounter rather in the same way a sentence encounters a full stop. The usual example given to illustrate an Outside Context Problem was imagining you were a tribe on a largish, fertile island; you'd tamed the land, invented the wheel or writing or whatever, the neighbours were cooperative or enslaved but at any rate peaceful and you were busy raising temples to yourself with all the excess productive capacity you had, you were in a position of near-absolute power and control which your hallowed ancestors could hardly have dreamed of and the whole situation was just running along nicely like a canoe on wet grass... when suddenly this bristling lump of iron appears sailless and trailing steam in the bay and these guys carrying long funny-looking sticks come ashore and announce you've just been discovered, you're all subjects of the Emperor now, he's keen on presents called tax and these bright-eyed holy men would like a word with your priests.

— Iain M Banks, *Excession*

Introduction

This adventure is essentially a character study of a form of True Alien/Ultimate Man within the context of the Traveller universe. The PCs – who must all be scouts – get to have a glimpse of something from Outside, and have the option of coming along for the ride. In order to understand the mental framework of what used to be Mission Commander Ekaterina Akhremenko, the Referee is instructed to read the novelette “Understand” by Ted Chiang. It is available online here: <http://www.infinityplus.co.uk/stories/under.htm>. As usual, Classic Traveller rules using the BITS system apply, with the notable exception of the Mission Commander.

The Boring Preamble

The PCs were detached scouts, recalled to the colours to provide more eyes and ears to keep track of shipping movements, especially the movements of certain vessels the Imperium suspects to be part-time or professional pirates. They are provided with a standard TL 11 Suleiman Scout/Courier, with a triple-missile turret. Current orders are to:

- 1) Make a jump1 entry, arriving at a given mainworld at the 200-diameter mark (instead of the usual 100-diameter point). The jump1 entry is to provide enough fuel for the jump2 craft to immediately bug out, if the scout runs into trouble it can't handle (which, frankly, is most forms of trouble – even tangling with a 200-displacement Beowulf can be touch-and-go for the scout/courier). Arriving at the 200-diameter point instead of the usual 100-diameter point gives the scout breathing room and a good vantage point 'above' the mainworld's traffic.

- 2) Fire three sets of probes (designed to fit the standard triple-turret). These probes will take up equidistant points around the mainworld, passively recording local space activity. If queried with the proper protocols, it will use a laser datalink to download current recordings: uploads are also possible, to patch software and provide new ships profiles the probe should keep a special focus on.
- 3) Download data and retrieve the probes, as necessary. These probes are designed to download their data once every 28 days, and are given enough storage to preserve one set of old data: thus, 52 days of data may be stored before old data is overwritten. The probes contain enough power to run for one year before retrieval and refurbishing is necessary. Therefore, after deploying the probes, the PCs are expected to revisit the mainworld once every 28 days. If the probes are destroyed in the meantime, the PCs are to determine the cause if they can, and deploy new probes to take their place.

In early 993 Imperial, the PCs are conducting a surveillance cycle for four worlds in Lentuli & Gimushi subsectors, described in **Stellar Reaches #1**. The cycle is as follows: Shuura (scout base, home port) -> Aardimash-> Dorado-> Jaleel-> Shuura. Very little ever happens in this tiny corner of space. However, Shuura is only two parsecs coreward of the important world of Shamokin (Nightmare/Ley 1002 A54599D-E). Once a month, an Imperial courier from Shamokin's naval base visits Shuura for an update on surveillance data. The visitors tend to treat the Scouts as an advance watch for their naval base – which it is, speaking strategically.



The Scout base on Shuura, with her unusual quadruple landing pads and central habitat.

Sir Ismael Slamanya Imperial Scout Base has obviously seen better days.

Still, she's built tough enough to see her second century of service to the Imperium.

The graphic above is titled "In Talquanm" © Glenn. Visit his gallery at

http://www.renderosity.com/mod/gallery/index.php?image_id=1755375

Things Get Interesting

On 43-993, the PCs starship enters at the 200-diameter limit over Jaleel. As they exit jumpspace, they are expecting nothing but the same old, dirty-yellow dry-as-dust world. But what lies before them are two large starships fighting it out: with one 30,000-ton ship simply pouring out streams of missiles. The other, a 50,000-tonner, is the biggest ship the PCs have seen in ages: accompanied by two medium-sized escorts, it is issuing forth particle accelerator fire, streaking like blue lightning at its targets.

The PCs have an immediate decision to make: jump out immediately and relay this information directly to the Base Administrator at Shuura? Warn the Imperial Naval Base at Shamokin in neighbouring Ley Sector? Or stick around, make contact with the warships, and figure out who is doing what to whom – and why? The kind of firepower on display on both sides can easily pulverize

the PCs' starship, if the combatants decide to keep the Imperium in the dark. So far, both ships are ignoring the lightly inhabited & undefended world nearby – but there is no guarantee that this will continue. The PCs are acutely aware that, if they don't escape with their information, nobody at all outside the system will know the threat even exists – until, perhaps, the winner of this fight decides to make his existence known, at a time and place of his own choosing...

And if the PCs decide to leave, there's a good chance that the probes deployed earlier will have captured invaluable information. Should they stick around long enough to pick up the probes, or just hope that they will be intact when they return – hopefully, with some heavily armed escorts? Or just download everything now, counting the seconds before the downloads are complete while desperately hoping that the big boys continue to ignore them...

The Referee must demand answers from the PCs before continuing the adventure.

why so few live to see the end of their first four-year term of service.

Forks in the Road....

- Responsible Scouts would immediately jump out of the system, as soon as they comprehend just what is happening before their eyes. High Command simply MUST know that major interstellar combat has broken out within the Imperial Empty Quarter. Every day they don't know this elementary fact is another day that puts every high-population system in the Six Subsectors in danger. "Extra information can wait: get the basics before the nearest Imperial Duke, *now*."

The above follows the standard chain of command, which is sector-based. But, on a strategic level, it can be argued that it's more important to warn the Imperial Naval Base Shamokin/Ley Sector first. This breaks the chain of command, but it's the smart thing to do from the strategic level – and protecting that base is the reason why the Scouts were surveying these systems in the first place! Of course, their bureaucratic & Noble superiors may make certain that no good deed goes unpunished...

- Risk-takers will download the data from the previously deployed probes. Risk-takers who routinely gamble with their lives will go ahead and pick up the probes for every scrap of information they may have, aware that Instant Death can be hurdling towards them at the speed of light. It takes 10 + (2D6) minutes to download the information. It takes 90 + (1D6 x 10) minutes to locate and take on all the probes, before jumping out. "When facing a new threat, every scrap of additional information is absolutely indispensable. Risking a dinky scout *now* is better than risking a two-front war *later*."
- Imperial Scouts who openly laugh in the face of death will open all channels, *insisting* that the starships cease fire in the name of the Emperor's Peace. Some will offer their services as negotiators; some will draw closer to the firefight, to get better pictures of the starships involved, get some decent design specs, and make a rough guess of the technology levels involved. A frighteningly high percentage of Field Scouts fall under this category, which is

Fork One: Aftermath

The scouts who didn't contact the combatants, but jumped out instead, don't return with a massive Imperial fleet: those kinds of naval assets are simply not available in the Six Subsectors. However, a military alert is raised across the Six Subsectors while most jump-capable Colonial Navy ships in Nulinad and Gimushi subsectors conduct sweeps of the local systems, with every ship captain hoping that they don't discover anything. The Sector Duke issues an urgent request for a Battle Squadron and three Cruiser Squadrons to track down the interloper, but privately believes that he's be lucky to get half a Cruiser Squadron, 'beefed up' with extra destroyers and escorts.

[Referee: the naval commanders at Shamokin/Ley Sector would just love to send their own assets to look around, but there's a maze of bureaucratic and jurisdictional issues to navigate first. Ley Sector is under a different military and Noble hierarchy, and it will take weeks at least to get all the forms filled out. Until then, the Scouts call the shots.]

The Base Commander on Shuura eventually grants permission for four IISS Scout/Couriers to re-enter Jaleel, with a chartered Far Trader serving as a Scout command ship. They are not to jump immediately over the mainworld, but instead arrive over the world in the nearest orbit to Jaleel, refuel their jump tanks, and then spend a few days crossing interstellar space to Jaleel. "If there's any trouble, just jump out. We'll Red Zone it, and let the regular Navy handle it later – if they ever bother to show up."

As they draw near to Jaleel, they spot a large vessel in orbit of the world. If the scouts try to raise them on line-of-sight communication (laser or maser/microwave) no response is received. Contacting them by broadcast media (radio) also has no response from the ship – but does raise a response from the Baron that rules the system. It is quickly learned that Solomani servicemen have been marooned on Jaleel, they have already surrender to the Imperium, and request transport off this dry and barren rock.

As the scouts approach the world, it becomes obvious that the silent ship is a damaged 50,000-ton Solomani starship, charred everywhere on its surface. Boarding the vessel shows that the damage is worse on the surface than internally: part of the jump drive has been

removed, but otherwise the ship is definitely repairable. Once the reactor has been refuelled, life support and power comes back online. The computers have been wiped sparkling clean, but new programs can be installed without any issues. There are internal bays for four large starships and a ship's boat: two of large bays are still occupied with 1000-ton fuellers, two are empty, and the ship's boat is gone. Apparently, the ship was abandoned 'in good order', and not in a frantic haste.

Four scout ships and a Far Trader cannot transport hundreds of men off of Jaleel. The PCs can argue with the Scout team leader and the other captains on what to do. Here, I assume that they decide to split the party: two scout ships will return to the subsector capital of Lazisar by different routes to request some transports, while the PCs, another IISS scout, and the IISS command ship remains over Nazirah to keep a lid on the situation.

The prisoners are isolated in a habitat dome commandeered from the general population. Over 80% of the prisoners are elderly men, over the age of 60: the rest are men between 20 and 60. Although the prisoners all claim affiliation with the illegal Solomani Confederation (with whom the Imperium is currently engaged in a massive war) their uniforms are not Confederation, instead resembling Catholic religious habits: they claim to be members of a scientifically-minded order, the Ordo Basilianus Saint Jannymi (a.k.a. "The Jannites"), a branch of the world-dominating Trita Brotherhood. Some claim to be clergy of that faith, and the rest are said to be lay brothers. All claim to be citizens of the distant Solomani world of Trita/Canopus, also in rebellion against Imperial authority.

The civilians that have had their homes taken from them for the sake of the prisoners are not happy at all. The Baron notifies the PC Scouts that he has enough resources and political pull to keep the prisoners for another month, but after that, they need to be off the world. Otherwise, the TL 10 life support will start buckling under the strain of the burden, and the people who were kicked out of their homes will start running out of patience. The Baron is willing to kill the prisoners *in extremis*, if that's what it takes to protect the life support systems on this almost airless world. Finally, as the ruler of the planet, he will lay claim to the bodies, and use them as biomass for the closed-cycle hydroponic and aeroponic farms.

To evacuate the stranded Solomani naval prisoners: assume that it will take 4+2D6 weeks for an Amethystium-class liner, two Far Traders bearing extra

supplies and Colonial Navy (i.e. Lazisar Directorate Navy) personnel, and a Helper I Hospital Ship from Charity to arrive. The liner has enough staterooms and low berths to evacuate all the Solomani prisoners (and Colonial guards) to one of the internment camps, to sit out the rest of the war. Note that it takes *at least* six weeks for the liner to arrive, while problems in life support will start getting serious in four weeks.

Depending on the interests of the PCs, the scouts can interrogate the Solomani, investigate the orbiting hulk, or try and figure out where the missing combatants: either the large 30,000-tonner or the two ~1,000-ton starships.

Fork One: Interrogation

Interrogating the prisoners can reveal additional information.

The Scout PCs do not have permission to torture the prisoners. Fortunately, use of the Interrogation skill is not dependent on torture. Experience has shown that good treatment, friendship (real or faked), simple or sophisticated deceptions, intelligent questioning, bribes, etc. are sufficient to get 80%-100% of the information needed in most cases. (The same dynamic is in play in the secret services as well: 80% – 90% of really useful, actionable information is available from public sources.) If higher authority decides that harsher interrogation methods are necessary, trained professionals will be sent to do the job. The PCs are expected to use psychological interrogation methods: torture will be punished by their superiors. Claims of "The Safety of the Imperium was at stake!" or "A billion lives depend on this information!" will be dismissed out of hand – even if true. See **Appendix: The Imperium, The IISS, and Torture** for an extended discussion on the subject.

Interrogating the prisoners can give quite a lot of history about their 30,000-ton antagonist. An Average Interrogation task reveals that the two smaller starships were part of the Solomani force (logical analysis of the Solomani hulk can give this info as well: remember the two large internal bays?) Only a few officers know the final orders given to those ships: a Difficult Interrogation task to uncover that those vessels were ordered to relay information gathered to the nearest Solomani embassy.

Lower the difficulty by one if:

- The interrogators take the time to befriend the subject.

- If the interrogator has Intelligence 10+ (This takes into account the ability to draw inferences and make educated guesses with fragmented information.)
- If the subject has intelligence 5- (This models a failure to control his tongue, vulnerability to trickery, poor lying, weakness to emotional manipulation, etc.)

Successful Results from an Easy Interrogation:

The *Heavenly Wanderer*, the Solomani's Nomadic-class Scout tender, and the *Dwennon*, an Imperialis Eie-class Scout Mothership, was part of a series of attempts to decrease the hostility between the Imperium and her Solomani systems. *Heavenly Wanderer* started out from Terra/Solomani Rim at 114-949 Imperial, meeting up with the *Dwennon* at Capital at 223-951. Together, they set out to explore the Vargr Extents: initially entering Mendan sector, crossing spinward over 150 parsecs to Gvurrdon, then coreward to Khoellighz, going 150 parsecs trailing to Gzaefueg (neighbouring the Second Empire of Gashikan), then quickly crossing Meshan rimward into Imperial-held Lishun Sector. The initial plan was to spend two years in each of the ten sectors covered in this journey, with a planned return into Imperial space at around 970.

While the *Dwennon* is an Imperial Interstellar Scout Service ship, the *Heavenly Wanderer* is owned by a pro-Solomani scientific religious order. Solomani Confederation scouting duties are handled by the Confederation Navy, and as the Imperium would not recognize the existence of such a navy, it proved politically impossible to organize a joint expedition directly between the two interstellar governments.

[Referee: Note that the information of the above two paragraphs can be verified with the minor-league ten terabyte database onboard the PC's scout starship – no larger than the typical civilian handcomp at TL 12.¹

Scout ship databases have an additional datum, not available to the Solomani: 'The Dwennon expedition: A joint Imperial-Solomani Sphere expedition, sent into the Vargr Extents in 951: it was expected back in 970: it was declared overdue in 972, and lost in 980.' For how this database is partitioned, see **Appendix: Databases** for my pick-a-number assumptions.]

Due to the turbulent nature of Vargr interstellar politics, laws, flash wars, and governments, it took a good deal longer to conduct their investigations than planned. One of the unplanned diversions required Mission Commander Ekaterina Akhremenko to submit

to an untested (on humans – on Vargr, it always proved fatal) psionic procedure 'to prove her courage' and thus, her right to enter into the Oruvaekhs Linkage, a 16-system Vargr state that in 980 existed in Khoellighz Sector, subsector-M (Next to the Zhodani Consulate). The results radically altered the Mission Commander's psychology, physiology, and psionic abilities, much to the regret to the researchers and their drastically-shortened lifespans.

After teleporting herself 120,000 km to her starship on her first attempt, what used to be the Mission Commander swiftly dominated the minds of all the sophonts on both the *Heavenly Wanderer* and the *Dwennon*. It took about two days for her to ease up enough to permit the crews to eat & sleep, and another week before they regained their individuality and autonomy (while feeling a certain presence in their minds that was always watching them, and restrict their ability to think in certain ways.) They finally jumped out of the system, and began to make their way home.

[The Referee is invited to create as many tales as he desires in the 13 years between 980 and 993]

By the time the expedition approached the Imperial Border in Antares, the crew of the *Heavenly Wanderer* hasn't felt the force of the Mission Commander's mind in over five years. They knew that they were being made dependent on the power of the *Dwennon* to protect them, but planned to make a break for it as soon as they entered Imperial Space. However, even after entering Antares in secret, there always seemed to be some reason or another to delay their escape for 'just one more jump'. Finally, when they arrived over Jaleel, they made the decisive break from the power of the Mission Commander. They failed to defeat the *Dwennon*, but they did force her to fight physically, and not with her mental powers. Moreover, two of their starships managed to get away. The *Dewnnon*, satisfied with simply crippling the ship, left the system. The survivors abandoned ship, and surrendered to the Imperial authorities of Jaleel.

Successful Results from an Average Interrogation:

By using various religious mental disciplines, the Brotherhood was able to weaken and hide their thoughts from the Mission Commander.

Some of the members of the Mission are not originally from Trita, but are replacements for casualties, taken from the few True Humans (read: pure Solomani) to be found within the Vargr Extents. They were initially accepted as children, being slaves bought by the Order

from their Vargr owners; marooned Imperials whose parents, desperate for any way back home, persuaded the Order to accept them; or children whose human parents, caught in the crossfire of a local Vargr war, tried to save at least part of their family from destruction. All have spent at least 10 years on the Heavenly Wanderer, and are now no younger than 20 years of age. (Note that most of the crewmen are between 40 and 60 years of age, with a significant minority going up to 80 years).

Successful results from a Difficult Interrogation:

After their defeat in battle, the aged Abbot of the Solomani mission was able to make a deal with the Mission Commander: the lives of his crew in return for the destruction of all the computer data on the Mission Commander and their encounters from the ship's databases. (Note that this turned the entire 42-year adventure into a waste of time, excluding what the Imperial Scouts can glean from the memories of the survivors. Unless, perhaps, the *Dwennon* can somehow be captured intact...) Note that the Abbot has not an ounce of regret over the decision: in Catholic (and indeed, Christian) doctrine, one human life is of greater worth than an invaluable and irreplaceable database.

The Jannites don't accept new members older than six, and some of the mental foundations needed to complete the more complex anti-psion techniques are impossible to teach to students above the age of ten.

The Mission Commander has been steadily weakening in psionic strength: from near-godly levels of power in 980, it has fallen to merely awesome levels by 993. However, what she has lost in raw power has been compensated by... something else. Call it 'insight', 'foresight', or 'experience', but the Mission Commander behaves as if she knows what is going to happen before it happens.

Successful results from a Formidable Interrogation:

Solomani Security – a.k.a. Solsec – has a few members planted within the Order: while this fact is known and accepted by the patriotic Abbot, the actual identity of these men is unknown to him.

Successful results from a Staggering Interrogation:

The Solsec moles left the *Heavenly Wanderer* with the two escaped starships. They bear a highly compressed datacrystal with a summary of the highlights of the expedition, and certain crucial information on the Mission Commander. It is impossible to break the encryption of their other datapacks: a pity, as it would provide an interesting peek into Solomani activities within the Vargr Extents.

Successful results from an Impossible Interrogation:

One Solsec mole stayed behind. It is not possible for the PC scouts who uncover this fact (that there's a Solsec agent on the loose) to pin down his identity before he flips his face and disappears without a trace: perhaps into the local population, perhaps into the crew of a visiting merchantman. The mere fact that they discovered his existence at all leads to an Imperial security agent asking them to switch teams: the kind of raw untrained talent that can successfully pull off an impossible interrogation task has better things to do than boot around in a Detached Scout Ship.

Fork One: Survival

After the interrogation, the key issue is insuring the prisoners live long enough to be transported off the world. Remember that the prisoners have only four weeks before they use up their allotted life support, while it will take 4+2D6 weeks before a liner can arrive to pick them up. It is possible to do some wheeling & dealing with off-world traders to keep the prisoners in oxygen, electricity, food, and water. How hard the PCs will have to hustle is up to the Referee. Note that pirates usually don't bother this system, but if there's an unusual amount of shipping activity, some hungry raider is bound to show up.

Fork One: Endpoint

If the prisoners die, the PCs get a black mark on their record. They can continue on their careers, but they are considered 'below-average' scouts, and are given missions to match. They will have to find some way to live it down, or redeem their reputation. Fellow Scouts will start to keep their distance: in the extremely high-risk world of scouting, a 'below-average' Scout is another way of joining the walking dead, and nobody wants to be around for the collateral damage, or to have the 'bad luck' rub off on them.

Assuming that the prisoners survive to get off world, the PCs get a mildly positive report. More importantly, they gain in stature and reputation among their peers, and are tagged as 'good Solomani hands'. Their future missions will begin to have a Solomani slant to them: continued success will make them among the 'go-to' experts in handling the Solomani within the Six Subsectors. An entirely new level of adventure opens up if they become the number-one field expert in all things Solomani within the sector – something that is within their grasp.

Fork Two: And Now, Something Completely Different

The scouts who do contact the combatants are initially ignored by the combatants. By the end of the combat turn, it is an Average Naval Tactics task to realise that the 50,000-ton ship has been put out of commission by the 30,000-ton ship.

The pause between the end of the battle and the moment the victor turns her attentions to the tiny nuisance demanding that they ‘Stop in the Name of the Emperor’ is the last chance the PCs have to get out of Dodge. The Referee should stress this fact to the Players.

So, they insist on behaving like the deeply insane, borderline suicidal Scouts that they are? Fair enough.

The 30,000-ton ship broadcasts a reply: “This is the Imperial Scout Ship *Dwennon*. We recognize the authority of the Emperor Styryx and his lawful successors. Please transmit identification verifying your identity.”

Now, the PCs might comment that Emperor Styryx was deposed in a coup in 989, four years ago. The important thing here is that the current Emperor, Gavin, was lawfully proclaimed Emperor by the Imperial Moot. (The fact that he is also the first-born son of Styryx also helps.) There are several far-flung Imperial scouts, missions, and outposts who still aren’t aware of the change at the top. There is a strong Imperial consensus that the coup was necessary, and no serious challenge to the Moot ruling, so the PCs are well within their rights to claim Emperor Gavin as the lawful successor.

Or, the PCs may decide to avoid mentioning the political change for now, and just transmit the codes.

In a little while, the *Dwennon* transmits a message: “We attacked and successfully defeated an enemy Solomani ship: thus, we did not violate the Emperor’s Peace. We have been outside of Imperial Space for many years, and intend to return to Capital to present our data to the Emperor. We invite your captain and the crewmembers he chooses to dine with us, to celebrate our return to the Imperial stars.”

If the PCs made a fuss about Emperor Gavin, the *Dwennon* adds: “We have no reason to challenge your claim that Gavin is the lawful successor to Styryx, and hereby swear fealty to him. Long live Emperor Gavin!”

Fork Two: Onboard the Dwennon

The PCs are invited to dock their ship within the *Dwennon*, within one of the internal docking bays. Looking around, they find it a good fit for their Suleiman starship. As soon as they exit their docked ship, a dozen sophonts in the Imperial Scout uniforms of four decades ago greet them warmly, and invite them to join for a meal with the Mission Commander in five hours. Most of the party are Vargr or humans, of a mix of sexes and ages – but most of whom are over 60 years of age.² They are more than willing to speak about their four decades of adventures within the Vargr Extents: they have so much to tell, that only a very observant conversationalist can sense something odd is going on.

Armed PCs will be invited to leave their weapons on their ship. Those who refuse to must remain in their scout ship. There is a slim chance that a fast-talking minor Noble (or a commoner PC pretending to be a minor Noble) can convince the crew of the *Dwennon* to make an exception: this discussion must be roleplayed out.

A host of interesting tasks can be attempted here, determined by the Referee or the Players, as the Referee decides:

To sense that there are gaps in what they are talking about is a Formidable Liaison task.

If the previous task is done successfully, using Liaison to determine that ‘the Mission Commander’ is very dangerous, quite powerful, and not exactly human is only an Average Liaison task.

(This would represent intuiting what is not being said, and/or the kind of lies being used. At no time will the *Dwennon* crew voluntarily offer this information. Challenging them will only result in denials and blatant lies that the PCs won’t be able to disprove until it’s way too late.)

To sense that there is a powerful Psionic presence onboard is a Difficult Psionic task (if using Clairvoyance, Teleportation, or Special), an Average Psionic task (if using Telekinesis or Awareness), or an Easy Psionic task (if using Telepathy).

[Referee: there had better be an impressive reason why the PCs who have this skill managed to avoid their scheduled lobotomy. At this point in Imperial history, all sophonts in Imperial service are screened for Psionic potential: all who are detected with such potential

have it surgically removed.³ However, those who manage to hide their potential are never screened again – unless the rumour mill gets going...]

If the PCs ask about this, the crew of the *Dwennon* will quickly change the subject, focusing on the illegal psionic powers the PCs may have. A trip to the brig is very likely...

[Referee: yes, the crew – and the Entity that leads them – is being as hypocritical as possible.]

To intuit that there is a hive-mind link among the crew of the *Dewnnon* is a Staggering Intelligence test, or a Formidable test of Parapsychology, Sophontology, or Psychology. (Scouts are more likely to have these skills than other Imperial sophonts.)

There are no obvious ‘tells’ like crewmen completing each other sentences, or everyone eating and drinking in synchronicity. They are on their best behaviour before the PCs, and the Entity that rules them has ‘loosened the reins’ so to speak. However, they have behavioural and verbal ticks that only make sense if their minds were networked at one time.

If questioned about this, the *Dwennon* leaders will joke about sampling drugs used by the Vargr, and the bizarre foods and drinks they ingested for many, many years. If permitted, a lot of fascinating tales will be spun, none of which answers the PCs questions.

Fork Two: Serious Trouble

While the PCs are nearing the end of their meal with the leaders of the *Dwennon*, they will briefly feel an extremely familiar sensation: they have entered jump space.

Let’s say this again: the PCs and their ship are onboard the *Dwennon*, and the *Dwennon* has just entered jump, without sounding any alarms or red alerts, destination unknown, with most of the senior crew of the ship dining with the PCs in a ship meeting room.

The PCs can freak out now.

If the PCs decide to get tactical:

The *Dwennon* crew within the room outnumber the PCs, but over half of the dozen or so sophonts are over the age of 60 – read ‘weak and slow’. Of the remaining six crewmen, half are actually Vargr, so the PCs need to be alert for claws and bites. Six verses four-to-six PCs are bad odds, especially after a crewman – old or young – raises the alert. (This is done by speaking a code-

phase to the computer: how quickly the crew of the *Dwennon* remember the phase is up to the Referee.)

Weapons can change the odds: none of the *Dwennon* crewmen are armed. Moreover, they will fight to capture and subdue the PCs, not kill them. Their morale in hand-to-hand combat is only Trained. (If this was a naval fight or a survey mission, it would be much higher.)

The PCs automatically get the benefit of surprise: the crew of the *Dwennon* are used to Vargr guests making trouble. For the last few decades, ‘human’ equalled ‘one of us’, so they are slow to react to the PCs use of force.

If the alert is sounded, in 1D6 rounds (assuming a round is six seconds), 1D6+2 Veteran armed guards will arrive to take the PCs prisoners. They will be bearing batons, tasers, and pistols, as well as the equivalent of jack armour.

If no alert is sounded, the PCs have 1D6 x 10 minutes to get ready for an Armed Response Team. The Entity in command of the *Dwennon* is busy with other things, and it will take time before it notices that something’s wrong.

When the Response Team arrives, it will include the guards described above, backed up with 2D6 +2 Veteran armoured security men with sealed Combat Armour, gauss rifles, fragmentary grenades, and shotguns – all at TL D. (Another 3D6 +10 armoured security troops are held in reserve). As they are very experienced, having repelled several Vargr boarding attempts, the PCs would be smart to surrender as quickly as they can.

If the PCs are even *smarter*, they will be long gone by the time the Response Team arrives. Hiding in the ship is not too hard, if the PCs can patch into the computer network and hack past the 40-year-old security protocols. Search parties will be sent after them, but if they stay stealthy, the PCs will have a few days before the *Dwennon* crew starts closing in, restricting their movements.

They will soon learn that they must run as soon as they are seen by anyone: the psionic network linking the minds of the crew is reactivated. While not as strong as it once was, it is strong enough for the Entity in charge of the ship to see through the entire crew at once, reacting immediately if any single sophont spots the PCs.

There will be eight Security men in the *Dwennon's* dock at any one time, and three of them will guard the PCs ship, specifically. Attempting to exit the *Dwennon* with their starship while the *Dwennon* is still in jump ruptures the jump bubble, destroying the PCs ship and the *Dwennon*. Attempting to fuel up and jump their own ship, while the *Dwennon* is still within jump space, is a 'divide by zero' error: the Referee is encouraged to push his imagination to the limit while describing to the players *exactly* what happens when they do so. For best effect, the Referee should be comfortable with theoretical physics, to get the arcane terminology, convoluted math, and bizarre seven-dimensional graphs just right.

The best bet for the PCs is to wait for the *Dwennon* to exit J-space and enter N-space. (That's Traveller terminology for 'jumpspace' and 'normal space'.) Then, get the dock doors open, get into their pre-fuelled spaceship (or vice-versa), get some distance between them and the *Dwennon* to cut down the damage & likelihood of a misjump, and then jump as soon as they can, before the extensive weapons array of the *Dwennon* turns them into a cloud of superdense metal shards.

The Referee is strongly encouraged to dramatize this sequence of events. I recommend a bug-out limit of ten minutes: this will allow enough distance to make a successful jump possible, while cutting it close enough for the PCs to actually see the stream of 6G missiles racing to their position with the naked eye. If the Referee wants to make it easy on the PCs, use the *Dwennon's* laser batteries instead: if harder, use the particle accelerators.

If the PCs decide to play it cool:

Instead of reaching for their pistols or a thick, heavy object, the PCs demand answers from their hosts.

(While not as exciting as a brawl, it is more realistic. Most Scouts know that large scoutships have armoured muscle running around somewhere, and scouts who naturally think with their fists have a difficult time surviving long enough to finish their first term.)

The crew of the *Dwennon* try to placate the PCs, and tell them that the Mission Commander will tell them everything they need to know. And yes, they'd be happy to bring the PCs to her – immediately.

Fork Two: Secrets

The PCs wind their way through the ship corridors. As they make their journey, they notice 1D6+2 armed

guards with 'batons, tasers, and pistols, as well as the equivalent of jack armour' joining their group: they seem friendly, but keep their distance, with their eyes on the PCs at all times.

At the Mission Commander's cabin – not far from the bridge of the starship – they see 2D6+4 Security men, as described earlier. Two are at the entrance to the bridge, and another two guard the Commander's cabin. They are formal, and observant, but apparently neutral (rather than openly hostile or friendly) to the PCs.

As the PCs enter the cabin, they see four Security men waiting for them, weapons at ease. The room is noticeably hot: the PCs begin to sweat profusely. Despite the uncomfortable temperature, the room is otherwise large and well-appointed, with a few small tables and chairs. No computers, holographic projectors, or other electronic interface can be seen.

Like most Captain's cabins (and adjoining bridges), this one is set deep within the ship, but one wall is covered with a viewscreen displaying the featureless grey of jumpspace. The opposite wall is covered with a slowly swirling pattern of pebbles and metal beads: the visual effect is pleasing to the colour-blind Vargr, but gives headaches to the humans who watch it.

The outer door shuts, the inner door opens, and the PCs behold the Entity, a.k.a. what used to be Mission Commander Ekaterina Akhremenko.

It stands before the PCs in the filthy rags of a disintegrating Scout uniform. Its' skin is a waxy, greasy grey surface, and its feminine face is set in a hard frowning mask. The Entity's eyes glow with a bright yellow hue, without pupils. A cloud of dim, fading 'soft sparks' drift from its eyes, and surround its head for a few moments before fading away.

All the PCs immediately feel a suffocating presence within their minds, making it difficult to think or react clearly. Despite the climbing temperature within the cabin, the presence in their heads feels cold, cruel, contemptuous, and profoundly hostile.

To think clearly for one six-second round required one round of effort. To succeed in this effort is a Staggering task. A combined Strength, Endurance, and Intelligence score of 20-29 or greater reduces difficulty by one level, and a combined score of 30 or greater reduces difficulty by two levels.

Spectacular Success: the PCs mind is cleared for three rounds.

Spectacular Failure: the PC passed out.

To attack the Entity: Many PCs take pride in the fact that they can kill anything with stats.

Note the lack of stats provided for the Entity in this adventure.

There are additional difficulties. It knows what the PC is trying to do before the PC can act. It is more than powerful enough to shred the PC's mind. However, is more likely to direct the Security guards to restrain or kill the PC instead, depending on the threat level.

To leave the cabin: this is very difficult. The PC has to get past the guards to do this. The Security men are wearing psi helmets, permitting them to think clearly. They are also wearing combat armour and bear submachine guns, batons, and tasers, while the PCs have nothing.

The best bet is to ask the Entity for permission to leave. This leads to a new set of tasks...

To talk to the Entity: this is doable for PCs, after successfully clearing the mind for a moment. This need not be verbal: the Entity will hear mental thoughts directed at it, and will reply psionically, within the PC's head.

"What do you want?" I WANT TO SPEAK TO THE EMPEROR.

"Why?" I HAVE A REPORT TO GIVE HIM.

Asking for more information about the report leads to silence.

"What is your name?" THE COMMANDER.

"What do you want from us?" OBEDIENCE.

After the PCs have heard the responses of these four questions, the Entity is satisfied for the day. The door will open, and the PCs will be permitted to leave (or dragged out, if unconscious.)

If all the PCs fall unconscious, they will be brought out of the cabin and woken up. If they did not ask and hear the response to the four questions, they will be returned to the cabin once a day, for as many days as necessary, until they ask the question. The language they use, or if they ask the questions verbally or mentally, is immaterial: the Entity (unlike normal psions) understands all questions and all thoughts, regardless of the internal language used or the level of intelligence of the thinker.

(It can't read high-level machine thought or the thoughts of non-physical beings, more due to the lack of practice than anything else. However, it CAN read low-level, non-sentient electronic/machine thought.)

Fork Two: Mind Wars

The PCs are physically exhausted after the encounter with the Entity, and are in no position to resist the Security men or the guards as plastic restraints are tied around their wrists. Unconscious PCs are woken up, and also similarly restrained. They are then guided to their cabins – one cabin for every two PCs.

After 2D6 +6 rounds in their cabins, the PCs will be able to regain their bearings. They are not permitted to leave their cabins, but they are placed next to each other: a creative PC can figure out a way to tap messages next door fairly easily. The walls separating the cabins from the hallway are strong bulkheads, but the walls separating the cabins from each other are thin and light: a PC with a strength of 10+ has a good chance of smashing a hole through the wall, with the help of a stout metal chair. But if he makes his move too early, he'll just be separated from his peers and placed in a reinforced brig for his troubles.

The real problems occur when the PCs sleep. The words the Entity said are memetic ideograms, planted directly into the PC's head. They are designed to rebuild certain aspects of the PC's mind, to integrate these thoughts as their own. Once finished, these memes will convince the PCs that they need to OBEY THE COMMANDER, in her desire to SPEAK TO THE EMPEROR, and finally give him the long-delayed report on the Vargr Extents.

(That's 'her', not 'it' – the Entity is using the Mother archetype for itself, to complement the Father archetype of the Emperor, and stress the need for their unity.)

To resist, the PCs must pass an Average test of Intelligence each night. Each time they fail, one of the four ideograms is locked into their mind, in this order:

- "We should help her speak to the Emperor. In person."
- "She has an important report that must be delivered to him. In person."
- "She is the Mission Commander, and we should listen to her. She wants the best for everyone in the ship. We must help her speak to the Emperor."
- "We must obey her. It is natural that we obey her. It is right that we obey her. It is patriotic to obey her. It is rational to obey her. The

Gods wants us to obey her. It is traditional to obey her. It is our destiny to obey her. We must obey her. We must obey her, now and forever!”

Over time, all the PCs will eventually have all four ideograms locked into their minds, and all will be its slaves. However, so long as they still have their minds, they can resist it, and they can protect their Emperor – and Charted Space – from whatever antihuman delusion it wants to propagate.

How they kill the Entity is up to the PCs. It is unlikely that the PCs will survive its destruction, but every member of the Imperial forces understands that there are some things more important than personal survival.

If they do survive the destruction of the Entity, they will reach legendary status among their peers. If they manage to communicate to the Imperium the nature of the memetic ideograms within their heads, the Imperium can begin research to destroy these memes. Even after the PCs succumb, there is hope that the damage can be reversed. It will probably require a quiet deal made between the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate, for the journey of the PCs to the Spinward Marches for treatment by Zhodani Psionic Surgeons in a classified location.

Footnotes

¹ Yes, I am using 1970s retro-technology assumptions: back in the real world, this should be available in 2020 or so, with good TL 12 AI robots, capable of replicating the human brain, at about 2050. Sadly, there is still no antigrav on the horizon, and forget about the moonbase.

² While the Jannites who manned the *Heavenly Wanderer* were all male Solomani – and generally elderly men, as well – the Scouts of the *Dwennon* were mixed-race, mixed-sex humans, Vargr, and Bwap. The Vargr age more quickly than humans do, so there are fewer older ones around: and there are no young Bwap, as there are no female Bwap onboard. (And if there were, the proper formalities could not be done, making reproduction impossible for the Bwap.) On the other hand, over 50% of the crew is younger than 60, due to on-ship romances and occasional recruitment (and high-end slave purchases) within the Vargr Extents. Naturally, the section heads – there are no ‘officers’ in the Field Scouts – are generally older than the rest of the crew.

³ There is one exception: Droyne within Imperial Service are permitted to remain psionic. In a very tense, high-stakes meeting with Emperor Gavin early in his reign, a group of four Sector Scouts managed to convince the Emperor that his duty to all loyal sophonts include the psionic Droyne⁴, who as a race been generally quiet, trouble-free Imperial citizens. The Emperor Gavin would have preferred to restrict all Droyne to their own worlds, but the Imperial resources needed to enforce such an edit were already committed to the Solomani Rim War – and the Droyne nobles guaranteed their loyalty and support to the Iridium Throne as a race.

So far, they have been as good as their word: no Imperial Droyne, anywhere, has been known to act in support of the Solomani during the ongoing war. In contrast, many Droyne *dreskay* (extended families) produce hand-crafted, high-tech equipment for use by Imperial Special Forces: from jump drives of exceptional quality to the very best rifles and ammunition possible without nanotechnology. (Quite a number of Droyne families and business are profiting mightily from the current war.)

As of 993 Imperial, the Droyne are permitted to live unmolested on their own worlds and territories. The few Droyne in Imperial service are currently tied directly to a Droyne noble or a Ducal House. Droyne nobility are permitted to keep their Imperial powers and rank, and Droyne traders are allowed to go about their business, but both groups are carefully watched by the Ministry of Justice.

(The MoJ is trying to change this, as the Droyne are a law-abiding race. Resources used watching the Droyne obey the laws should be redeployed to punish real troublemakers like the Vargr or Solomani.)

As per the famous Psionic Suppression Orders, the Droyne are not permitted to teach humans psionic techniques: for cultural and psychological reasons, this would be difficult for them to do in any case.

⁴ Like most Imperials, Gavin was unaware of the psionic powers of the reclusive Droyne. The vast majority of Imperials are unaware that the Droyne are a widespread major race: due to their small numbers, isolated locations, and weak political power, they tend to be referred to by local names, and thought to be locally native lifeforms. Even senior Imperial scientists didn’t considered them to be a major race – that is, a species that independently discovered FTL jump drives – until researchers in the distant sector of the Spinward Marches began to prove that various isolated ‘small, winged, caste-based sophonts’ were 1) actually of the

same species 2) had independently discovered jump drive in the distant past.

This research, started in the 700s Imperial, is still ongoing: as of 993, about 25% of Imperial xenobiologists still consider the 'Droyne' race as fictional, a collective name for what are really separate species of winged hive-race beings. While most of their arguments have been disproven, there are still important points that need to be refuted before the argument can be considered to be decisively settled. After the Solomani Rim War is concluded, the Imperial Scouts plan to conduct an exhaustive genetic & cultural survey of known Droyne and Chirper (uncasted Droyne) populations to clarify these points.

Appendix: Databases

Note that 10 TB is about the size of the Library of Congress in the early 2000's. See http://searchstorage.techtarget.com/sDefinition/0,,sid5_gci944596,00.html for more size comparisons of bytes.

For our purposes, let's visualize one meter of shelved books as 100 MB. To extend the comparison, let's also call 10 shelves (1 GB) a bookcase of information.

So, the PCs starship has the equivalent of a library of 10,000 bookcases (or 10 TB, or 10,000 GB) of information. What would this library consist of? Just for a shot-in-the-dark, let's make the following assumptions:

- 1,000 bookcases (1 TB) for general IISS-specific information, from history to exploration philosophy to ship design recommendations to biographies to in-house controversies: "Are we a science organization? A spy agency? The tip of the Navy spear? A data distribution network?"
- 2,000 bookcases (2 TB) for the detailed data that an Imperial Scout must have, according to his local superiors. Actual communication protocols, detailed procedures, exhaustively detailed equipment and starship specifications, classified IFF and Mayday codes for an impressive set of circumstances (misjumped a century into the future? Here's the ID-IFF-Mayday code for that...) the nuts and bolts that a Scout lives on is here.
- 1,500 bookcases (1.5 TB) of information specific to the Imperial Empty Quarter: each of the 134 systems has about ten to thirty

bookcases dedicated to it, depending on its importance. Additional bookcases discuss interstellar connections among the systems, including history, dynasties, corporations, languages, religions, races, species, etc.

- 500 bookcases (0.5 TB) of information tied to the rest of the Empty Quarter. This information is sketchier than the Imperial information. Half of this information is tied to the major high-population systems. Ikon, Zuethun, Ssilnthi, and Tokitre has thirty bookcases each, the other high-pop systems have about ten bookcases each. The other 165 non-Imperial systems have about one to two bookcases (1-2 GB) of information each.
- 1,000 bookcases (1 TB) of information on the territories of the Third Imperium. This includes about 11,000 starsystems (the ~9,000 starsystems actually under Imperial administration and the additional ~2,000 systems claimed by the Imperium, but actually ruled by the Solomani Confederation.) As this is roughly 24 full sectors, that gives about forty bookcases (40 GB) for each Imperial sector. As each sector contains roughly 400 systems, that gives roughly one shelf of information for each Imperial system (100 MB).

[An exercise for the reader: summarize all the important information of Terra System (today's Sol System) into 100 MB. Note that the complete works of Shakespeare weighs in at 5 MB, while a 'high-resolution' photograph is about 2 MB, and one minute of high-fidelity sound is 10 MB. The Encyclopaedia Britannia is about 1 GB, while a good academic research library is about 2 TB.]

- 300 bookcases (3 TB) of information dedicated to general science, from biology to astrophysics to jumpspace physics. Some of this information specifically addresses Six Subsector conditions. About 70% of this information revolves around the physical sciences, especially astronomy, astrography, physics, geology, environmental physics, stellar evolution, etc. The remaining 30% focuses on the living sciences of biology, medicine, ecology, etc.
- 100 bookcases (1 TB) of information are tied to 'miscellaneous and uncategorized data'.

Odd-ball religious prophecies, Scout-accessible information on local psionic activity, spaceman rumours, impossible jumpspace encounters, bizarre coincidences across lightyears, clusters of vanished starships... it all gets dumped here. Detached Scouts are often requested to chase down these X-files, to get to the verifiable fact of the matter. Unfortunately, those Scouts who actually return alive usually ends up with, say, four clear answers that lead directly to forty more questions....

Appendix: The Imperium, the IISS, and Torture

It's time for a long-winded discussion of the IISS, intelligence, and the place of torture in my take of a morally Grey Imperium. Your mileage is sure to vary: hopefully, I will at least address the right issues, even if I have the wrong answers.

The IISS, Intelligence, and Morality: The IISS is the premiere Imperial intelligence agency: however, because it is a public organization that spends most of its efforts either within the Imperium or in neutral space, Capital sees it as counterproductive to grant it permission to torture sophonts. Such a permit would go quite far in setting up an adversarial, fear-based dynamic between the Imperium and the citizens. In its near-millennium years of experience, the Imperium's 'institutional memory' has found fear-based rule to be expensive, and tends to erode legitimacy over time, no matter how secret or hidden. Instead, the IISS is kept on a tight leash when it comes to hurting people or destroying property.

Yes, this may mean that Scouts die like flies – as per Classic Traveller rules – but that can be just as easily attributed to a distinct lack of weaponry, a lack of up-to-date (or *any*) background information, or the consequences of a training regime focused on science rather than armed force in a hazardous universe.

(Average Imperial lifespans of the far future are shorter than ours of the 21st century: going by Classic rules, Imperial humaniti live only to their 60s & 70s. Advanced medical technology is insufficient to compensate for a materially more dangerous society. And by 'more dangerous', endemic low-level violence is only part of the picture. Hostile atmospheres, greater radiation exposure, and a higher tolerance for risk-taking also factor into the decreased lifespan.)

In any case, Imperial Scouts are designed to be a cheap, disposable force, a sacrificial lamb to feed information

to the Armed services and the Nobility. (And when they don't return from a mission, that in itself is useful information.)

When yet another Scout fails to return from investigating a particularly interesting anomaly or way-off-the-mainstream culture, the Imperium need not treat it as a clear challenge to its authority. Scouts carry less Imperial prestige on their shoulders, so their lives are of lesser value in Imperial eyes than the life of a Marine or a Starman. As their deaths do not put Imperial rule on the line, it give the Imperium greater room for a flexible response. Moreover, the vulnerability of a Scout means that there's at least one Arm of the Emperor that is approachable by the ordinary Imperial citizen. ("Ever tried talking to a Battle Dress Marine, or those fast-moving dots in the sky, or some high-and-mighty Noble? Thought so.")

Better for the disgruntled to kill a few Scouts (and so giving them an ego boost while giving the Imperium a heads-up that trouble is brewing) than have their hatred forcefully repressed, and allowed to fester to something more potent – nurturing networking among unhappy populations, corporations, nobles and worlds, for example.

What "wins" at the tactical and physical levels may lose at the operational, strategic, mental and moral levels, where 4GW is decided. Martin van Creveld argues that one reason the British have not lost in Northern Ireland is that the British Army has taken more casualties than it has inflicted. This is something the Second Generation American military has great trouble grasping, because it defines success in terms of comparative attrition rates.

William Lind, "Understanding Fourth Generation Warfare"

For classical bash-down-the-door situations, the Imperium has the Navy and the Marines. But these tools of State are expensive, and blood calls for blood in most Imperial cultures. The Imperium understands that, as the dominant power, it is vulnerable to being isolated from the population and the local elites: isolation leads to blindness, and blindness leads to death.

To avoid this, the Imperium follows a large range of strategies, and is adapt at co-opting enemies. It's difficult to lead a revolution against a power that makes few laws to revolt against, and is quite good at buying off the revolution's leadership.

The fact that the Imperium was the largest, the strongest, the single most dominant force in interstellar politics for more than a thousand years misled even its most vocal detractors. Critics talked about change rather than revolution. Dissidents talked about escape rather than change.

Norris Aella Aledon,
The Last Days of the Imperium, 1144
Referee's Manual, MegaTraveller

A common practice is to give vocal dissidents noble rank and to co-opt them into working within the system. The Imperium opens its arms and its upper ranks to include a broad spectrum of philosophies and ideologies within its borders. As a result, every noble has one clear choice when he or she is called upon to choose, and that choice is the status quo.

Rebellion Sourcebook, MegaTraveller

Imperial torture: Current Imperial policy is to have trained intelligence professionals in a properly equipped facility handle torture – physical & psychological. Imperial Scouts are not trained interrogators, and are forbidden from using torture, be it physical, environmental (i.e. denying the subject sleep) truth serums, lie detector tests, subject-conscious personality rebuilds and the like. (In 993, it is dangerous for Imperial secret services to even *ask* to use psionic interrogation methods.) Selected individuals of the Imperial Navy & Marines are authorized to use torture on behalf of Imperial interests: use of such methods on Imperial citizens are subject to Noble judicial review.

Planetary governments are sovereign states, and are permitted to establish their own laws and practices regarding torture as they see fit. The Referee may rule that Noble houses and the more powerful corporations may also torture on their own behalf, but they are held to a higher standard, and are more vulnerable to sophisticated interstellar public opinion, than some law level K hellhole. As a rule of thumb, they permit torture only when household or corporate lives are in *immediate* danger. Abusing the privilege invites retaliation: Nobility, especially those involved in the

armed forces, are strong supporters of the unofficial 'Imperial Doctrine of Vengeance', a.k.a. *lex talionis*.

Domestically, Emperor Gavin understands the long-term wisdom of avoiding torture – respecting your citizens increases the respect due to your government, and decreases both the number and the venom of enemies of the Imperium. The goal of the Imperium is to gain and keep 'just enough power': not too little (a weak and insipid Imperium benefits nobody) and not too much (a tyrannical and abusive Imperium is hated by all).

If this means that sometimes, the Imperium loses a fight, the assassin gets away, or the hidden nuclear device explodes, so be it. A one-time hit is to be preferred to an endless corrosion of Imperial legitimacy, respect, and honour in the eyes of the citizens.

Note that things are different in the Solomani war zone. When at war, the Imperium upholds the ancient Roman convention *Inter arma enim silent leges* – the laws are silent in times of war. The Imperium has no legitimacy to lose among enemy civilians, and three years into a desperate conflict "where everything that could go wrong, did", deployed forces are perfectly willing to torture & kill as many sophonts as required, innocent or not, in order to win. "We'll let some Solomani Noble make their heartfelt, teary-eyed promises of 'never again' just as they please – *AFTER* we have won." The Solomani are in a better strategic position: as they are confident of victory (in the current year, 993 Imperial), they can afford to use a gentler hand on the Solomani populations of captured worlds. Things can and do get uglier for non-Solomani and nonhuman populations, especially when local insurgencies are involved.

Appendix: Media

Musical Inspiration:

Higurashi no Naku Koro ni

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DogLOzOFXjg>

Visual Inspiration:

"Gaze" by Michael Backerman

<http://mbakerman.cgsociety.org/gallery/934252/>

Appendix: Starships and Spacecraft involved in the firefight over Jaleel, 43-993 Imperial

Ship: Heavenly Wanderer Class: Nomadic
Type: Scout Tender Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13

USP

ST-P3414G3-670000-80400-0 MCr 35,953.576 50 Ktons
Bat Bear 2 2 3 Crew: 344 Agility: 1
Bat 3 3 4 TL: 13

Cargo: 139 tons Fuel: 26,100 EP: 2,000
Shipboard Security Detail: 50
Craft: 1 x 30T Ship's Boat, 2 x 1200T Flyerman II Scout,
2 x 1000T Padre Fuel Skimmer
Fuel Treatment: On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/7fib Computers 1 x Bridge

Architects Fee: MCr 359.536 Cost in Quantity: MCr 28,762.861

Two Ships: Starhawk, Nightflyer Class: Flyerman II
Type: Scout Ship Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13

USP

S-A623322-200000-40002-0 MCr 606.438 1.2 Ktons
Bat Bear 1 1 Crew: 23 Agility: 2
Bat 1 1 TL: 13

Cargo: 319 tons Low: 6 Emergency Low: 4 Fuel: 468 EP: 36
Shipboard Security Detail: 1
Craft: 1 x 20T Ship's Boat
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/2 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 5.860 Cost in Quantity: MCr 489.234

Ship: Dwennon Class: Imperialis Eie
Type: Survey Mothership Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13

USP

S-M6333G3-370300-50404-0 MCr 16,110.993 30 Ktons
Bat Bear 9 9 2 9 Crew: 744 Agility: 2
Bat A A 2 A TL: 13

Cargo: 442.7 tons Emergency Low: 180 Fuel: 11,100 EP: 900
Shipboard Security Detail: 30
Craft: 3 x 500T Orbital Station (Devon), 20 x 100T Scout (Filament),
4 x 400T Scout Tender (Daralis), 5 x 200T Survey (Northman),
4 x 50T Module Cutters w/Module, 7 x 33T Survey (Ofercyme),
8 x 30T Cutter Module, 18 x 5T Field Base
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/4fib Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 161.110 Cost in Quantity: MCr 12,888.794



ROUND ONE

Battle Formation step:

A: Dwennon - battle line 1
B: Heavenly Wanderer - battle line 1
Starhawk, Nightflyer - battle line 2

Location:

Dwennon - 10,10
Heavenly Wanderer - 3,3
Starhawk - 3,4
Nightflyer - 0,0

Initiative roll

A: 1+1 (agility), 4+1, 5+1 -- attacker
B: 1+1 (more ships), 4+1, 4+1 -- defender

Range: initial range is always long

No breaking off, no emergency agility

Attacker puts forward his largest ship

Defender fires all his weapons at the Dwennon. Only weapons that can fire is that onboard the Heavenly Wanderer

Combat A:

Batteries that fire:
Two laser batteries, factor 8
Three particle accelerators, factor 4

Combat B:

Modifying to-hit:
Ship size: +1
Relative computer size: +0
Laser fire: -1 at long range
Particle: +0 at long range
Total modifiers:
Laser: +0
Particle: +1
All roles are modified, then noted.

Laser battery 1: roll=8. Hit
Laser battery 2: roll=7. Hit
Particle battery 1: roll=12. Hit
Particle battery 2: roll=9. Hit
Particle battery 3: roll=9. Hit

Combat C:

Laser battery 1 vs. Defensive battery fire (sand) 1,2,3,4, factor 7
Laser 1 factor 8 vs Sand 1 factor 7: roll=5. Pass through
Laser 1 factor 8 vs Sand 2 factor 7: roll=11. Pass through
Laser 1 factor 8 vs Sand 3 factor 7: roll=5. Pass through
Laser 1 factor 8 vs Sand 4 factor 7: roll=6. Pass through

Laser battery 2 vs. Defensive battery fire (sand) 5,6,7,8,9, factor 7
Laser 2 factor 8 vs Sand 5 factor 7: roll=9. Pass through
Laser 2 factor 8 vs Sand 6 factor 7: roll=10. Pass through
Laser 2 factor 8 vs Sand 7 factor 7: roll=4. Stopped

Combat D:

Passive defense: none.

Combat E:

Laser battery 1 damage roll = 6 +6 (factor 9 and less) +3 (armour)=15. Fuel -1%
Particle battery 1 damage roll, surface = 6+6+3=15. One battery lost (particle)
Particle battery 1 damage roll, radiation = 8+6+3=17. One battery lost (missile)
Particle battery 2 damage roll, surface = 10+6+3=19. Fuel -1%
Particle battery 2 damage roll, radiation = 5+6+3=14. Two batteries lost (laser)
Particle battery 3 damage roll, surface = 9+6+3=18. One battery lost (sand)
Particle battery 3 damage roll, radiation = 10+6+3=19. One battery lost (particle)

***Attacker, Dwennon, fires all his weapons against the defender, Heavenly Wanderer

Combat A:

Batteries that fire:

Nine laser batteries, factor 5
Two particle batteries, factor 4
Nine missile batteries, factor 4
All missiles are nuclear

Combat B:

Modifying to-hit:

Ship size: +1
Relative computer size: +0
Laser fire: -1 at long range
Particle: +0 at long range
Missiles: +0 at long range

Total modifiers:

Laser: +0
Particle: +1
Missiles: +1

All roles are modified, then noted.

Laser Battery 1: roll=3. Miss
Laser Battery 2: roll=6. Hit
Laser Battery 3: roll=2. Miss
Laser Battery 4: roll=5. Miss
Laser Battery 5: roll=6. Hit
Laser Battery 6: roll=12. Hit
Laser Battery 7: roll=10. Hit
Laser Battery 8: roll=6. Hit
Laser Battery 9: roll=6. Hit

Particle Battery 1: roll=4. Miss
Particle Battery 2: roll=7. Hit

Missile Battery 1: roll=13. Hit
Missile Battery 2: roll=12. Hit
Missile Battery 3: roll=9. Hit
Missile Battery 4: roll=7. Hit
Missile Battery 5: roll=9. Hit
Missile Battery 6: roll=10. Hit
Missile Battery 7: roll=6. Hit
Missile Battery 8: roll=12. Hit
Missile Battery 9: roll=9. Hit

Combat C:

Missile battery 1 vs. Defensive battery fire (sand) 1, factor 7
Missile 1 factor 4 vs Sand 1 factor 7: roll=8. Stopped.
Missile battery 2 vs. Defensive battery fire (sand) 2, factor 7
Missile 2 factor 4 vs Sand 1 factor 7: roll=7. Stopped.

Combat D:

Passive Defense: None

Combat E:

Laser battery 2 damage roll = 10 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=22. No effect.
Laser battery 5 damage roll = 7 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=19. Fuel -1%
Laser battery 6 damage roll = 4 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=16. Fuel -1%
Laser battery 7 damage roll = 9 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=21. One battery lost (part.)
Laser battery 8 damage roll = 6 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=18. One battery lost (laser)
Laser battery 9 damage roll = 7 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=19. Fuel -1%

Missile battery 3 damage roll (surface, nuclear) = 8 +6 (fac 9 and less) +6 (armour) -6 (Nuc)=14.
One battery lost (particle)
Missile battery 4 damage roll (surface, nuclear) = 4 +6 (fac 9 and less) +6 (armour) -6 (Nuc)=10.
Fuel -2%
Missile battery 5 damage roll (surface, nuclear) = 8 +6 (fac 9 and less) +6 (armour) -6 (Nuc)=14.
One battery lost (laser)
Missile battery 6 damage roll (surface, nuclear) = 6 +6 (fac 9 and less) +6 (armour) -6 (Nuc)=12.
Maneuver-1 lost
Missile battery 7 damage roll (surface, nuclear) = 8 +6 (fac 9 and less) +6 (armour) -6 (Nuc)=14.
One battery lost (sand)

Missile battery 8 damage roll (surface, nuclear) = 7 +6 (fac 9 and less) +6 (armour) -6 (Nuc)=13.
Fuel -1%
Missile battery 9 damage roll (surface, nuclear) = 3 +6 (fac 9 and less) +6 (armour) -6 (Nuc)=9.
Maneuver-1 lost

Missile battery 3 damage role (radiation) = 4 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=16.
One battery lost (sand), One battery lost (particle)
Missile battery 4 damage role (radiation) = 12 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=24.
No effect.
Missile battery 5 damage role (radiation) = 9 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=21.
One battery lost (laser).
Missile battery 6 damage role (radiation) = 4 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=16.
One battery lost (sand), One battery lost (particle).
Missile battery 7 damage role (radiation) = 5 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=17.
No battery left to destroy.
Missile battery 8 damage role (radiation) = 11 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=23.
No effect.
Missile battery 9 damage role (radiation) = 8 +6 (factor 9 and less) +6 (armour)=20.
No battery left to destroy.

Breakthrough:

All line of battle ships for side B neutralized
No remaining batteries left on side A remain to be fired.

Pursuit:

Starhawk & Nightflyer retreat together at Agility 4
Dwennon elects not to pursue.
Starhawk & Nightflyer successfully escape.

Boarding:

Dwennon elects not to board the crippled Heavenly Wanderer.

END OF ROUND ONE.

Heavenly Wanderer negotiates a surrender to Dwennon on good terms.
The entire crew of the Heavenly Wanderer abandons ship, using carried craft.
Dwennon boards the Heavenly Wanderer and destroys her jump drive
(her manoeuvre drive was already destroyed in the battle.)
Dwennon ignores the survivors of the Heavenly Wanderer, and exits the system.

Appendix: Starships
Imperial: Imperialis Eie Scout Force

Ship: Dwennon	Class: Imperialis Eie
Type: Survey Carrier	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13	

USP

S-M6333G3-370300-50404-0	MCr 16,110.993	30	KTons
Bat Bear	9	9 2 9	Crew: 744 Agility: 2
Bat	A	A 2 A	TL: 13

Cargo: 442.7 tons Emergency Low: 180 Fuel: 11,100 EP: 900
 Shipboard Security Detail: 30
 Craft: 3 x 500T Orbital Station (Devon), 20 x 100T Scout (Filament),
 4 x 400T Scout Tender (Daralis), 5 x 200T Survey (Northman),
 4 x 50T Module Cutters w/Module, 7 x 33T Survey (Ofercyme),
 8 x 30T Cutter Module, 18 x 5T Field Base
 Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
 Backups: 2 x Model/4fib Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 161.110 Cost in Quantity: MCr 12,888.794

HULL: 30,000 tons standard, 420,000 cubic meters,
 Flattened Sphere Configuration
CREW: 24 Officers, 720 Ratings
ENGINEERING: Jump-3, 3G Manoeuvre, Power plant-3, 900 EP, Agility 2
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/7fib Computer; 2 Model/4fib Backup Computers
HARDPOINTS: 2x 50-ton bays, 80 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT: 2x 50-ton Particle Accelerator Bays (Factor-4),
 20 Triple Missile Turrets organised into 10 Batteries (Factor-4),
 20 Triple Beam Laser Turrets organised into 10 Batteries (Factor-5)
DEFENCES:
 40 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organised into 10 Batteries (Factor-7),
 Nuclear Damper (Factor-3), Armoured Hull (Factor-3)
CRAFT:
 3x 500-ton Orbital Station (Devon) (Crew of 40),
 20x 100-ton Scout (Filament) (Crew of 1),
 4x 400-ton Scout Tender (Daralis) (Crew of 10),
 5x 200-ton Survey (Northman) (Crew of 4),
 4x 50-ton Module Cutters w/Modules (Crew of 2),
 7x 33-ton Survey (Ofercyme) (Crew of 1),
 8x 30-ton Cutter Modules (Crew of 0),
 18x 5-ton Field Bases (Crew of 3)
FUEL:
 11,100 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 56 days endurance,
 plus 300 tons of additional fuel)
 On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 380 Staterooms, 40 Low Berths,
 180 Emergency Low Berths, 442.7 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:
 20x Lab (Superior) (4 tons, Crew 1, Cost MCr 1.000),
 3x Physics Labs (4 tons, Crew 1, 0.010 Energy Point, Cost MCr 1.000),
 1x Isolation Lab (20 tons, Crew 1, Cost MCr 10.000),
 2x Simulation Labs (5 tons, Crew 2, 0.001 Energy Point, Cost MCr 1.530),
 1x Computer Bank (1 ton, Crew 2, 0.003 Energy Point, Cost MCr 30),
 2x Holographic Tanks (5 tons, Crew 0, 0.100 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.500),
 1x Botanical Garden (20 tons, Crew 2, 0.010 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100)

COST:

MCr 16,272.103 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 161.110),
MCr 12,888.794 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME:

179 Weeks Singly, 143 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Imperialis Eie-class survey carrier is an old design, first drawn up by the IISS in the 550s Imperial. Serviceable, stable, and reliable, it served well as a deep space exploration platform for over 200 years. Even after it was replaced as a front-line unit in the late 700s, it has remained in production on second-line Imperial worlds (high-pop, but tech level one step below the current Imperial maximum of 14).

With the large number of small Filament scouts (Similar to the Suleiman scout, but with far more powerful computers), an Imperialis Eie-based expedition can survey an entire subsector in less than a year. Four tenders are provided, to help extend the range and service life of the Filaments in the field. The five Northman-class survey ships permit a detailed study of a single world, with an onboard lab, enough space to transport eight ground explorers in comfort, and enough life support to stay over a full month onsite. For additional, long-term observation, the Imperialis Eie-class vessel can place one to three orbital platforms over any given world, and simply pick it up at a later time. Finally, the small but fast Ofercyme-class spaceships allows up-close-and-personal visits to all the worlds and moons in many solar systems.

The vast number of field bases and modules based on an Imperialis Eie-class carrier allow a vast amount of research and investigation of the most interesting worlds to be conducted - simultaneously. The large number of labs onboard the vessels permit quick classification and analysis of samples, something desperately needed when investigating an entire planet.

Note: 307 tons of fuel is needed to run the ship for 28 days.

Modular Cutter comment: There are three modules available for each cutter, for a total of twelve modules.

- * Four fuel modules
 - * Two passenger modules
 - * Two cargo modules
 - * Two robot support modules
- (Similar to the air/raft, but with space to support 2-4 robot ops men.)
- * Two ATV modules

187 extra men = exploration scouts.

Usually,

- 40 are deployed with the Northman surveyors, 8 per ship.
- 14 are deployed with the Ofercyme surveyors, 2 per ship.
- 30 are deployed with the Devon stations, 10 per ship.
- 28 are extra, for casualty replacement or special projects

Total # of Field Bases = 36

(18 on the Imperialis Eie, 18 on the three Devons)

Total # of Field Base crewmen = 36*3 = 108

Total # of Ofercyme crewmen = 10

(7 on the Ofercyme, 3 on the three Devons)

Total # of Lab Techs = 62

(32 on the Imperialis Eie, 30 on the three Devons)

HULL: 500 tons standard, 7,000 cubic meters,
 Dispersed Structure Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Navigator, Engineer, Medic, 5 Gunners, 21 Flight Crew,
 10 Additional Crew (Lab techs)
ENGINEERING: No Jump, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-2, 10 EP, Agility 0
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4fib Computer; 1 Model/4fib Backup Computer
HARDPOINTS: 5 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT:
 1 Triple Missile Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3),
 2 Triple Beam Laser Turrets organised into 2 Batteries (Factor-4)
DEFENCES: 2 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organised into 2 Batteries (Factor-4)
CRAFT:
 1x 50-ton Fuel Cutter (Crew of 2),
 1x 33-ton Survey (Ofercyme) (Crew of 1),
 2x 30-ton Cutter Modules (Crew of 0),
 5x ½-ton Air/Rafts (Crew of 0),
 6x 5-ton Field Bases (Crew of 3)
FUEL:
 40 Tons Fuel (112 days endurance)
 No Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 33 Staterooms, 2 Low Berths, 15 Emergency Low Berths,
 10 Middle Passengers, 25.5 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 10 Labs (4-tons, Crew 1, Cost MCr 0.200)
COST: MCr 223.549 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 2.213),
 MCr 177.069 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 91 Weeks Singly, 73 Weeks in Quantity
COMMENTS:

The Devon-class Orbital Platform is designed to support the investigation of a world, with space for six 5-ton Field bases. It also has support for an Ofercyme-class system surveyor, to visit nearby moons and planets.

The ten additional men are scouts:

- * two man the Ofercyme-class spaceship.
- * eight man the specialized modules, or work as a landing party

Usually, one module is for fuel (unmanned), one is a garage (robot air/raft), and one is a scout survey base.

Ship: Ferront	Class: Filament
Type: Scout	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13	

USP	
S-11224D1-200000-00000-0	MCr 190.630 100 Tons
Bat Bear	Crew: 1
Bat	TL: 13

Cargo: 0.5 Tons Fuel: 24 EP: 4 Agility: 2
 Craft: 1 x ¼ T Air/Raft, 5 x 0.05T Robot Probes
 Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
 Backups: 2 x Model/4fib Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 1.906 Cost in Quantity: MCr 152.504

HULL: 100 tons standard, 1,400 cubic meters,
 Needle/Wedge Configuration
CREW: Pilot

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 2G Manoeuvre, Power plant-4, 4 EP, Agility 2
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4fib Computer; 2 Model/4fib Backup Computers
HARDPOINTS: None
ARMAMENT: None
DEFENCES: Armoured Hull (Factor-2)
CRAFT: 1x ¼-ton Air/Raft; 5x 0.05 ton Robot Probes
FUEL: 24 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
 On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 1 Stateroom, 0.5 Ton Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None
COST: MCr 192.536 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 1.906),
 MCr 152.504 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 38 Weeks Singly, 30 Weeks in Quantity
COMMENTS:

This one-man, unarmed vessel is designed strictly to look, take pictures, scan for transmissions, and exit. When feeling particularly daring, the robot probes may be used to supplement the starships sensor suite. Use of the air/raft is generally reserved for extreme situations: the lone pilot should never have to leave his vessel while on a mission.

Ship: Afton	Class: Northman
Type: Survey	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13	

USP

S-23223D1-200000-00003-0	MCr 237.980	200 Tons
Bat Bear	1	Crew: 4
Bat	1	TL: 13

Cargo: 4 Tons Passengers: 8 Fuel: 52 EP: 6 Agility: 2
 Craft: 2 x 0.5T Air/Raft
 Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
 Backups: 2 x Model/4fib Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 2.380 Cost in Quantity: MCr 190.384

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Medic, Gunner
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 2G Manoeuvre, Power plant-3, 6 EP, Agility 2
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4fib Computer; 2 Model/4fib Backup Computers
HARDPOINTS: 1 Hardpoint
ARMAMENT: 1 Triple Missile Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)
DEFENCES: Armoured Hull (Factor-2)
CRAFT: 2x ½-ton Air/Rafts
FUEL: 52 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 56 days endurance)
 On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 12 Staterooms, 2 Low Berths, 8 Middle Passengers, 4 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 1 Lab (4 tons, Crew 0, Cost MCr 0.200)
COST: MCr 240.360 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 2.380),
 MCr 190.384 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity
COMMENTS:

The Northman-class Surveyor is tasked with actual dirtside investigations. Normally, the eight ground surveyors are broken up into two groups, each with its own air/raft. With extensive life support, it can remain on-station for almost two months before requiring a liquid hydrogen refill, or heading back into the black. Like the Filament-class scout, it is armoured to deal with

Solomani: Heavenly Wanderer Reconnaissance Mission

Ship: Heavenly Wanderer Class: Nomadic
Type: Scout Carrier Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 13

USP

	ST-P3414G3-670000-80400-0	MCr 35,953.576	50 Ktons
Bat Bear	2 2 3	Crew: 344	
Bat	3 3 4	TL: 13	

Cargo: 139 Tons Fuel: 26,100 EP: 2,000 Agility: 1
Shipboard Security Detail: 50
Craft: 1 x 30T Ship's Boat, 2 x 1200T Flyerman II Scout,
2 x 1000T Padre Fuel Skimmer
Fuel Treatment: On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/7fib Computers 1 x Bridge

Architects Fee: MCr 359.536 Cost in Quantity: MCr 28,762.861

HULL: 50,000 tons standard, 700,000 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration

CREW: 28 Officers, 316 Ratings

ENGINEERING: Jump-4, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-4, 2,000 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/7fib Computer; 1 Backup Bridge, 2 Model/7fib Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: 4 50-ton bays, 35 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 4 50-ton Particle Accelerator Bays (Factor-4),

25 Triple Beam Laser Turrets organised into 3 Batteries (Factor-8)

DEFENCES: 10 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organised into 3 Batteries (Factor-7), Armoured Hull (Factor-6)

CRAFT:

1x 30-ton Ship's Boat (Crew of 1),

2x 1,200-ton Flyerman II Scouts (Crew of 23),

2x 1,000-ton Padre Fuel Skimmers (Crew of 11)

FUEL:

26,100 Tons Fuel (4 parsecs jump and 84 days endurance, plus 100 tons of additional fuel)

No Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 350 Staterooms, 139 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:

4 Labs (10 tons, Crew 1, 0.100 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100, requires 1 Hardpoint)

COST: MCr 36,313.112 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 359.536),

MCr 28,762.861 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 188 Weeks Singly, 150 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Nomadic-class Scout Carrier is a long-distance mothership, designed to support far-flung Solomani expeditions to distant stars, far from the Confederations' border to rimward. It is outfitted with two Flyerman II, large jump-capable scouts for local scouting (usually in-system, but sometimes neighbouring systems as well). Two large Padre fuellers and a ship's boat rounds out the docked vessels.

It takes 32 trips for one Padre to completely refuel a Nomadic-class starship: eight trips per parsec's worth of jumpfuel.

An extra 100 tons of fuel is kept on-board, as an emergency reserve to fuel the smaller ships. SOP is for on-board starships to fuel themselves.

Ship: Starhawk
Type: Scout Ship
Tech Level: 13

Class: Flyerman II
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

S-A6233C2-240000-20002-0 MCr 627.850 1.2 Ktons
Bat Bear 1 1 1 Crew: 33 Agility 2
Bat 1 1 1 TL: 13 Pulse Lasers

Cargo: 159 tons Low: 30 Emergency Low: 4 Fuel: 468 EP: 36
Shipboard Security Detail: 1
Craft: 1 x 30T Ship's Boat, 4 x 2T Air/Raft, 4 x 10T Grav Base
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/3 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 6.279 Cost in Quantity: MCr 502.280

HULL: 1,200-ton standard, 16,800 cubic meters,
Flattened Sphere Configuration

CREW: 11 Officers, 22 Ratings

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 3G Manuever, Power plant-3, 36 EP, Agility 2

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/3fib Computer, 2 Model/3 Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: 3 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 1 Single Missile Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-2),

1 Dual Pulse Laser Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-2)

DEFENCES: 1 Triple Sandcaster Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-4),

Armoured Hull (Factor-2)

CRAFT:

1x 30-ton Ship's Boat (Crew of 1),

4x 2-ton Air/Rafts,

4x 10-ton Grav Bases

FUEL:

468 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 84 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 20 Staterooms, 30 Low Berths, 4 Emergency Low Berths,

30 Low Passengers, 159 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:

4 Labs (10-tons, Crew 1, 0.100 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100,
requires 1 Hardpoint),

2 Workshops (10-tons, Crew 1, 0.100 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.050)

COST: MCr 634.129 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 6.279),

MCr 502.280 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 123 Weeks Singly, 99 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Flyerman II is a scout/science vessel, derived from the Flyerman pocket carrier. The 50-ton missile bay, as well as the fighters, has been removed. Additional fuel for another jump has been added, as well as more powerplant fuel - enough for twelve weeks - and four general labs. The expensive computers have been emasculated: this ship is NOT meant to fight as a way of life, despite being built on the frame of a small warship.

Note that the 30 men of the exploration team are kept in low berth, until called for. Starship life support is NOT sufficient to maintain them for over a day or so.

Ship: Namarie
Type: Pocket Carrier
Tech Level: 13

Class: Flyerman
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

C-A6234G2-400200-30008-1	Mcr 928.868	1.2 Ktons
Bat Bear	2 1	Crew: 47
Bat	2 1	TL: 13
		Agility: 1
		Pulse Lasers

Cargo: 1 ton Emergency Low: 14 Fuel: 318 EP: 48
Shipboard Security Detail: 1
Craft: 10 x 20T Peersonet Fighters, 2 x 2T Air/Raft
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/4fib Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 9.289 Cost in Quantity: MCr 743.094

HULL: 1,200-tons standard, 16,800 cubic meters,
Flattened Sphere Configuration
CREW: 11 Officers, 26 Ratings, 10 Pilots
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 3G Manoeuvre, Power plant-4, 48 EP, Agility 1
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/7fib Computer, 2 Model/4fib Backup Computers
HARDPOINTS: 1 50-ton bay, 2 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT:
1 50-ton Missile Bay (Factor-8),
2 Triple Pulse Laser Turrets organised into 2 Batteries (Factor-3)
DEFENCES:
Nuclear Damper (Factor-2), Armoured Hull (Factor-4)
CRAFT:
10x 20-ton Peersonet Fighters (Crew of 1),
2x 2-ton Air/Rafts
FUEL: 318 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance,
plus 30 tons of additional fuel)
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 30 Staterooms, 4 Low Berths,
14 Emergency Low Berths, 1 Ton Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None
COST:
Mcr 938.157 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 9.289),
Mcr 743.094 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 123 Weeks Singly, 99 Weeks in Quantity
COMMENTS:
Original specs are for a 1000-ton ship with fighter craft,
priced under 1 BCr.

The Flyerman carrier is a small fighter carrier, build 'on the cheap'. This is especially noticeable with the cut-rate backup computers. Earlier versions had a larger fighter bay, but the current production model replaced much of that space with a 50-ton missile bay. This gave the Flyerman a useful level of bite in mid-scale naval clashes, while putting the fear of the Race into Aslan raiders, the traditional enemy of the Confederation Navy - back to when it was part of the Imperial Navy.

NOTE: This vessel is not part of the Reconnaissance Mission. It is presented for the Referee to see the ancestor of the Flyerman II, and to be used in various alternate missions and scenarios as the Referee dictates.

Ship: Nath-2
Type: Fighter
Tech Level: 13

Class: Peersonet
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

F-0101J41-000000-03000-0 MCr 57.125 20 Tons
Bat Bear 1 1 Crew: 1 Agility: 1
Bat 1 1 TL: 13

Cargo: 0.050 Fuel: 1 EP: 3.600
Craft: 5 x 0.05T Robot Probes
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops

Architects Fee: MCr 0.571 Cost in Quantity: MCr 45.700

HULL: 20 tons standard, 280 cubic meters,
Needle/Wedge Configuration

CREW: Pilot

ENGINEERING: No Jump, 1G manoeuvre, Power plant-18, 3.6 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4 Computer

HARDPOINTS: 1 Hardpoint

ARMAMENT: 1 Single Plasma Gun Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)

DEFENCES: None

CRAFT: 5x 0.050 ton Robot Probes

FUEL: 0.129 Tons Fuel (0 parsecs jump and 1 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 3 Acceleration Couches, 0.050 Ton Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST: MCr 57.696 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.571),
MCr 45.700 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 11 Weeks Singly, 9 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS: This is a very short-duration fighter, meant to get out, fight or
deploy the probes, and get back to the carrier before life support runs out.

The robot probes are meant to work as a sensor grid. Deployed in useful
numbers before an engagement, these probes will relay more detailed
information to the command ship, permitting better fire solutions in battle.

Unfortunately, the acceleration couches are an integral part of the Traveller
design flow. The Referee is free to rule that the additional couches are
actually extra living space, life support, spacesuit storage, etc.

Ship: Father Brown
Type: Fuel Skimmer
Tech Level: 13

Class: Padre
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

F-A3012B2-140000-30000-0 MCr 308.520 1 Ktons
Bat Bear 2 2 Crew: 11
Bat 2 2 TL: 13

Cargo: none Fuel: 834 EP: 20 Agility: 1 Marines: 2
Craft: 1 x 10T Lifeboat
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops
Backups: 1 x Model/2fib Computer

Architects Fee: MCr 3.085 Cost in Quantity: MCr 246.816

HULL: 1,000 tons standard, 14,000 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Navigator, 2 Engineers, Medic, 4 Gunners, 2 Marines
ENGINEERING: No Jump, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-2, 20 EP, Agility 1
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/2fib Computer; 1 Model/2fib Backup Computer
HARDPOINTS: 4 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT: 2 Dual Beam Laser Turrets organised into 2 Batteries (Factor-3)
DEFENCES: 2 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organised into 2 Batteries (Factor-4),
Armoured Hull (Factor-1)
CRAFT: 1x 10-ton Lifeboat
FUEL: 834 Tons Fuel (28 days endurance, plus 814 tons of additional fuel)
On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 6 Staterooms, 0 Ton Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None
COST: MCr 311.605 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 3.085),
MCr 246.816 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 120 Weeks Singly, 96 Weeks in Quantity
COMMENTS:
The Padre is a dedicated fuel skimmer, capable of transporting 814 dtons of fuel. She has no purification plants.

Other vessels

Ship: Edmund Stone Class: Helper I
Type: Hospital Ship Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 9

USP

H-2611112-040000-00000-0	MCr 71.668	200 Tons
Bat Bear	1	Crew: 16
Bat	1	TL: 9

Cargo: 7 tons Passengers: 6 Low: 20 Fuel: 42 EP: 2 Agility: 0
Craft: 1 x 2T Air/Raft, 1 x 1T Ground Buggy, 1 x 4T Ambulance G-Carrier
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Architects Fee: MCr 0.717 Cost in Quantity: MCr 57.334

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Steward, Medic, Gunner, 11 Additional Medical Crew
ENGINEERING: Jump-1, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-1, 2 EP, Agility 0
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/1 Computer
HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT: None
DEFENCES: 2 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organised into 1 Battery (Factor-4)
CRAFT: 1x 2-ton Air/Raft, 1x 1-ton Ground Buggy, 1x 4-ton Ambulance G-Carrier
FUEL: 42 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 15 Staterooms, 20 Low Berths, 2 High Passengers, 4 Middle Passengers, 20 Low Passengers, 7 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:
1x Hospital Ward (15-tons, Crew 6, 0.050 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100),
1x Medical Lab (5-tons, Crew 2, 0.030 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100),
1x Pharmacy (3-tons, Crew 1, 0.010 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.030),
1x Analysis (5-tons, Crew 2, 0.025 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.200)
COST:
MCr 72.385 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.717),

MCr 57.334 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Helper I is a TL 9 Free Trader (Type A), with the cargo area refitted as a medical centre. It is a small but highly capable medical centre, for use by the Iper'mar in the Imperial Empty Quarter.

The Hospital Ward holds a surgery theatre, a trauma centre, an intensive care unit, and a ward of five beds.

Unlike her more civilized and high-tech cousin, the Helper III class, the Helper I has fuel purification equipment installed. She is a jump1 vessel, but carries two parsecs worth of fuel.

Biography: Selected Ship Masters and Vessels of the Empty Quarter III

by Alvin Plummer

Introduction

Biography is a series of biographies of various personalities within the Empty Quarter. For Referees, this is a selection of useful NPCs and starships. Starships are designed with the Classic Traveller format, using the *High Guard Shipyard v1.13* program written by Andrew Moffatt-Vallance.

Quite a lengthy list of characters is being provided. In order, we have:

- A well-seasoned liner captain;
- A scientist who specializes in creating new art... er, lifeforms;
- A small band of thugs, readying themselves to stand up against the Shadow Cartel;
- A grand old man of a free trader;
- A shell-shocked travelling encyclopaedia salesman;
- A mysterious caravansary chief, deep into heavy-duty treason;
- A friendly high-tech technician, from an unusual culture;
- A captain who's unwittingly got himself involved in scavenging, colonization, and planetary invasions;
- A rather exotic pirate, former folk hero, and aspiring insurgency leader;
- A very aristocratic, wealthy, snobbish, and determined missionary; and
- A soft-hearted Chief Physician of a charitable medical ship, whose in way over his head.

Pick the one (or, hopefully the handful) that interests you. Or choose the one that can cause the most trouble for your PCs. Or pick one to model your PC on, if that's how you play.

Most characters have a Classic Traveller starship assigned: many of these vessels are unique, and may inspire something similar in your campaign.

Captain Sayeed bin Gidarug

Captain Sayeed is an old pro of the interstellar lanes, having risen through the ranks of Traumeer Cargo & People LIC – routinely shortened to Traumeer C&P - before becoming skipper of the *Trite and Twee*, a 500-ton Solace-class liner. A highly gregarious and glad-handling character, the Respected Sayeed is a politically-connected social storehouse of information, with a 'Who's Who' of the subsector in his memory and perfect recall of names, faces, and a few factoids for the thousands of passengers who have crossed his path. While eager to curry the favour of clients and easygoing with social equals, the Respected Sayeed is hard on his crew, quick to curse at high volume, and occasionally descending to petty cruelty. Wooden sticks have been issued to his crew bosses to beat clumsy deck hands and stupid stewards.

Born on Hebrin, Sayeed was a bright student who was also quite the bully in his school. He won a scholarship to a local merchantman college, and graduated with honours. He learned to control his fiery temper on his first cruise as a purser on the 200-ton liner (and ex-Free Trader) *Gracernote*. The master of the ship, Kat Pimentel, was a tough taskmaster with a cutting tongue and an eagle eye for any error. Captain Pimentel drove his crew hard – but those who adapted to his style of command grew very proficient in their position, very quickly. Sayeed thrived in this environment, becoming highly experienced at handling passengers, slicing thru red tape and easing the concerns of starport authorities.

His impressive performance ratings let him to a double-promotion and a transfer to the *Raz-ma-tazz*, an old and slow 1500-ton Solace-class liner. Sayeed made a point of providing 'above and beyond the call' service for the fast-rising 'junior executives', fading celebrities, minor Imperial bureaucrats, and 'second-cousin Nobility' who made the most use of the *Raz-ma-tazz*; a policy that would later pay big dividends for both Traumeer C&P (in repeat

business and word-of-mouth) and Sayeed's career. It was during this time that he married both daughters of one of the big shareholders of Traumee C&P, marking him as one of the company's insiders.

After years of long nights working the spreadsheets, back-slapping executives, soothing irate passengers, and screaming at the new hires, Sayeed finally got his own ship, the *Trite and Twee*, in 988. Sayeed swiftly rose to a leadership position among the local liner captains, using the good relationships he has built with his more notable passengers to build a second career as a petitioner/lobbyist in several subsector courts (in addition to his duties on his ship). Sayeed's reputation as an influential fixer and a political go-to man has made him the prime candidate for the CEO position for Traumee C&P after the founder retires.

As Captain Sayeed grows more comfortable walking in the august halls of power, he's starting to get the 'glory light' in his eyes: that tell-tale sign that pops up when men start imagining themselves with an Imperial Title before their name. 'Sir Sayeed' is starting to sound like sweet music in his ears, and he knows that if he can just latch on to the right issue, and speak to the right Noble, it can be his. Perhaps a few Travellers he's acquainted with can help him grab that shiny brass ring...

Attire: Captain Sayeed is typically seen in 'ship undress' (work overalls, bearing the colours and insignia of Traumee C&P) outside of passenger country. In passenger country and for public consumption, he wears a formal Captain uniform, which closely resembles the naval dress uniform of the early Third Imperium (but not *quite* so flashy.) When off-duty – a rare event – he wears East Indian-style robes in the Arab colours of black, red and white. He is routinely unarmed, but carries a hip flask in a tasteful leather pouch, for use after dealing with especially trying passengers.

Sayed bin Gidarug, Captain of the Trite and Twee. 785B79, 42 years, Steward-4, Liaison-3, Administration-1, Legal-1, Vacc Suit-1, Bribery-1, Caousing-1, Leadership-1, Pistol-0, Computer-0, Broker-0, Ground Vehicle-0. Usually unarmed. Always unarmed. Speaks Imperial Anglic (Transform dialect, as spoken in Antares and the Imperial Empty Quarter.)

Ship: Trite and Twee
Type: Liner
Tech Level: 13

Class: Solace
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

	L-5331332-150000-20003-0	MCr 327.520	500 Tons
Bat Bear	1 1 1	Crew: 25	Pulse Lasers
Bat	1 1 1	TL: 13	Agility: 1

Cargo: None Passengers: 20 Fuel: 165 tons EP: 15
Craft: 1 x 20T Ship's Gig, 2 x 2T Ground Car
Backups: 2 x Model/3 Computers
Architects Fee: MCr 3.275 Cost in Quantity: MCr 262.016

HULL: 500 tons standard, 7,000 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration

CREW: 11 Officers, 14 Ratings.

ENGINEERING: Jump-3, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-3, 15.000 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/3 Computer, 2x Model/3 Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: 5 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 1 Triple Missile Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3),

2 Single Laser Turrets organised into 1 Battery (Factor-2)

DEFENCES: 2 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organised into 1 Battery (Factor-5),

Armoured Hull (Factor-1)

CRAFT: 1x 20 ton Ship's Gig (Crew of 1), 2x 2 ton Ground Cars

FUEL: 165 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

No Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 45 Staterooms, 4 Low Berths, 4 High Passengers, 16 Middle Passengers

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 1 of each of the following (no dedicated crew)

Game Room/VR Room/Spa

(3 tons, 0.010 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.010),

Lounge/Dining Hall/Conference room

(5 tons, 0.010 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.020),

Observatory

(5 tons, 0.020 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.030),

Chart Room (TL 14)

(2 tons, 0.030 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.070)

COST: MCr 330.795 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 3.275), MCr 262.016 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 91 Weeks Singly, 73 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Solace-class liner was built as a high-end subsector liner, with extra-long legs (jump 3) and quality materials and technology (TL 13). It is fairly common in Ley sector, but rare in the Empty Quarter, as the TL D materials needed to maintain the ship are more expensive (in time and money) to obtain. Visually, the ship is quite beautiful and well-portioned. The colour palette - white or light beige, with gold highlights - is repeated throughout the ship.

(Other members of the Traumeer C&P line use different highlights depending on their purpose: gold highlights for VIP passenger transport, silver for ordinary liners, blue for standard cargo, red for priority cargo (using jump4 ships), and black for armed security/anti-pirate escorts. As of 993, there are two VIP transports, six liners, 25 standard cargo freighters, three priority cargo transports, and three starmerc ships operating with Traumeer C&P. Traumeer operates in [Referee's choice] subsectors)

This specific starship is heavily geared to the high-end passenger with cash to burn. Officially, only carry-on cargo is permitted, as space usage is geared to the entertainment. However, certain passengers have been known to pay for an extra cabin as a storage space for their belongings. Internally, professional internal decorators have created a look that simply oozes luxury and good taste. More impressively to professional starfarers, a large chunk of her internal space is dedicated to the entertainment and pleasure of her passengers: this includes a dedicated Game Room (re-configurable to a spa), an ample Dining Hall (re-configurable to a range of purposes), and a chart room (Referee: treat as a variant of the Enterprise's 'Stellar Cartography' room in *Star Trek: Generations*.) While the very high-tech Chart Room was supposed to be the centrepiece of the ship, the Observatory - a bubble below the nose of the *Trite and Twee* - has proven to be the most popular location on the ship, especially during landing procedures.

In addition to the usual crew compliment, the *Trite and Twee* has a dedicated personal attendant for every high passenger. Also, a professional entertainer - usually a faded pop star, a semi-retired radio/television/tri-V host, or a professional comedian - provides live entertainment. For a premium price, a genuine pop star or celebrity can be made available.

The cost for all this attention is steep. For Middle Passengers, prices are about 1.5 times that of the usual ticket price: for High Passengers, prices are between five and ten times the standard High ticket price (more for special requirements, like high humidity for Bwaps or small hunting game for the Blood Vargr to chase down and tear apart.) Even so, the ship's reputation for sterling service, attention to detail and strong connections

with the Traveller's Aid Society, notable hotels and local high-end greeting houses means that there is always a waiting list.

The usual air/rafts have been replaced by comfortable antique ground cars, as part of the *Trite and Twee* brand identity. Defensive armament is deliberately emphasised: the ship is expected to flee, not fight pirates. Starmercs are expected to be used in dangerous locations and times, when Imperial protection is lacking – like in the 993 Empty Quarter.

The Respected Dr. Divya Chowdhury

There are two things starfarers most hunger for in the depths of space. First, they long to see the stars outside. Second, they want to see life – something green, something alive. Without one of these things, crewmen tend to get a little stir-crazy. Without either of them, the minds of men slowly start to warp and twist...

The Respected Dr. Divya Chowdhury is a well-known bio-sculptor, the most famous within the Six Subsectors of the Imperial Empty Quarter. She helps to soothe the minds of men – not just by the fact that she's easy on the eyes despite her age, but more importantly by providing the mini-gardens, ship vines, handi-sized pets, and assorted critters that keeps most sophonts connected with reality, even when trapped in tiny tin cans, floating in an ocean of nothingness.

As usual for scientists of her calibre, she was educated outside of the Six Subsectors, in Antares Sector. Graduating fourth in her class, she soon put her skills to work for the small Empty Quarter branch of SuSAG, LIC, an Imperial megacorporation. While disliked in most regions of the Imperium (due to its' chemical and biowar operations), SuSAG is fairly well respected in the Empty Quarter, thanks to its work in terraforming worlds and providing hardy, useful livestock for both food and work, able to handle the dry environments common in the region.

While most of the new lifeforms are modified versions of naturally-occurring species, the Respected Divya specializes in creating brand-new species at a reasonable price. Her creations are not meant to be eaten (although they are harmless and fairly nutritious, if things get desperate.) Instead, they are generally meant to keep spacers company and act to calm sophonts working in the isolated and hostile environment of outer space. Of course, some of her creations can do a good deal more...

In most of Imperial Space, such lifeforms have a strong cuteness/cuddly factor, and tend to slightly resemble human infants, along the 'Big Eyes, Small Mouth' styling common in spaceflight-era Japan. (Think 'chibi'.) However appealing this is to human and Vargr females (but NOT Aslan, Droyne, or Hiver!), spacefarers within the Empty Quarter are overwhelmingly masculine, so a different approach is needed. After a lot of false starts, Dr. Chodhury hit upon the 'strong/dangerous little buddy' archetype. Her creations all have some kind of hidden danger or unexpected benefit – nothing serious or truly life-threatening, but something that will catch the unwary off-guard. For example, the seeds of the Vemvine will cause vomiting if eaten raw, or the ever-hungry, finger-sized Okro ship lizard acts as great anti-static agents as well as luring & eating any insect pest in Gimushi Subsector – the more, the better. (Yes, the common Terran cockroach has finally met his match.) Her best creations combine both danger and usefulness, becoming quite popular among spacers as they cross the heavens.

Her work has re-invigorated the Antares terraforming community, pushing it away from creating perfectly safe (and perfectly boring) biospheres and back into something more balanced and more stable in the long run. Naturally, her fame in the Antarean scientific community cuts no ice back in the Empty Quarter, although the new Bwap Sector Duke was recently shamed into giving her the title of Respected. (Most Solomani Dukes would have nominated her for a knighthood by now.)

As of 993, the Respected Divya has earned the right to command a SuSAG laboratory ship. It is manned by 39 unique, near-sophont lifeforms of her own creation – all of which are sterile, and which have been designed to fail the standard tests of sentience, while still retaining the mechanical and intellectual ability to run a starship and its' labs.

(A brief break for the "I knew a trained monkey could do this job!" jibes to run their course...)

To be fair, some of the lifeforms have brain-jacks, and are trained to plug themselves into the ship's mainframe to handle certain difficult computations and decision trees. Moreover, there are four general-purpose robots onboard, which are used instead of artificial lifeforms in hazardous environments (like space), and in non-routine or dangerous lab work.

The lifeforms are based on a variety of animals, all of which are known for their cleverness, sociability and their ability to grip and manipulate fine objects. (Referee: as an analogy, think of monkeys, dogs with hands, land octopi, etc.) Getting them all to work together was quite a challenge, but the goal was met. There are no plans to expand what is essentially a pilot project to any kind of regular production.

A younger clone of herself, named Divya Beta, is her only intelligent company while onboard the lab ship. Divya Beta is currently taking correspondence university courses, and is being closely trained to follow in her mother's footsteps. She has been raised in some odd circumstances, isolated from most sophonts, and is quite distrustful of strangers.

In 993, their unarmed lab ship, the *Close Analysis*, remained untouched by pirates. SuSAG has an extensive paramilitary force, but they are designed for terrestrial encounters, and are not meant for naval operations. Why the *Close Analysis* has been ignored by pirate bands is the subject of some speculation. Some believe that the onboard labs are being used for illegal activities, and the results given to the pirates in return for 'protection'. Others think that SuSAG directly pays protection money to a numbered account in the Rukadukaz Republic. Still other theorists suspect that SuSAG has promised gruesome biochemical reprisals for any act against their personnel or property. Only senior SuSAG management knows for sure.

Attire: The Respected Divya usually is found working in dirty coveralls outside of the labs, and in sterile scrubs in the labs. When she wants to, she can dress in an attractive and elegant manner. Her daughter wears the baggy pants, single-hue t-shirt, and East Indian sari typical of young Indian women.

The Respected Dr. Divya Chowdhury. Senior Researcher & Developer, SuSAG LIC. 564BF9, 50 years, Bioengineering-6, Biology-4, Physics-3, Research-3, Animal Handling-2, Liaison-1, Admin-1, Vacc Suit-1, Instruction-1, Go (Chinese Game)-1, Computer-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0, Chess-0, Writing-0. Always unarmed. Speaks Imperial Anglic (Transform dialect)

Miss Divya Beta Chowdhury 774BA9, 18 years. Animal Handling-2, Bioengineering-2, Biology-1, Vacc Suit-1, Go (Chinese Game)-2, Computer-1, Research-1, Physics-0, Chess-0, Pop culture (East Indian, Empty Quarter)-0. Always unarmed. Speaks Imperial Anglic (Transform dialect)

Ship: Close Analysis
Type: Lab Ship
Tech Level: 12

Class: Fresnel Effect
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

LL-4421222-000000-00000-0 MCr 192.932 400 Tons

Bat Bear

Crew: 13

Bat

TL: 12

Cargo: 4 tons Passengers: 2 Fuel: 88 EP: 8 Agility: 1

Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Backups: 2 x Model/2 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 1.929 Cost in Quantity: MCr 154.346

HULL: 400 tons standard, 5,600 cubic meters, Close Structure Configuration

CREW: 2 scientists, 39 semi-sentient lifeforms

(Standard: 9 Officers, 4 Ratings)

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-2, 8 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/2 Computer, 2 Model/2 Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: Two Empty Turrets. Used for storage.

DEFENCES: None

CRAFT: None

FUEL: 88 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 15 Staterooms, 2 Middle Passengers, 4 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: 2 Laboratories (85 tons)

COST: MCr 194.861 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 1.929),
MCr 154.346 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 82 Weeks Singly, 65 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS: The Fresnel Effect class of lab ships are closely based off of the standard TL 11 Lab Ship, with some differences. First, the TL has been raised to TL 12. Secondly, the small craft has been removed, and replaced with a second lab. Thirdly, a fuel purification plant has been added, and two backup computers have been provided. Finally, the number of crew has been increased, and the nature of the crew has been drastically changed.

Of the four passengers, one is the Respected Chowdhury, one is her daughter, and the other two are doctoral students who double as animal wranglers.

Crewboss Waddah bin 'Ubaidah al'Beja

Waddah is a large, heavy-set Arab-Vilani man who is extremely skilled in keeping starship engines running like clockwork. Unfortunately, his great skill set is matched with a strong disposition for violence and rage. He has been shuttled from starship to starship, taken on by starships that desperately needed a qualified engineer at any price – to realise later that ‘any price’ is just too high a price for Waddah’s services, however good they may be. As his reputation spread, he eventually found himself running with the only crowd that could stomach his anger: smugglers, pirates, and corsairs. The match worked, as neither the criminals nor Waddah could afford to be choosy.

Waddah rarely got involved in boarding ships, as he was too important to be allowed to risk himself before enemy fire. This, as well as his wild wilfulness in the maintenance of his engines and powerplant, allowed himself and his ship, the *Horrid End*, to evade Imperial dragnets that caught other pirate crews with slacker maintenance habits – and thus, a tendency to suffer some critical failure at an inopportune time.

Nowadays, with the far weaker Imperial presence, most pirates are having a field day – when they aren’t killing each other for a bigger share of the spoils. The *Horrid End* is no exception: the money flows in and out like water, but the ship has gone through three bosses in six months, with their violent ends directly tied to the problem of dividing the stolen booty. The last ship-wide shootout left not only the former crewboss dead, but his would-be successor crippled by a shot to the spine. The surviving crew chose Waddah as the new boss of the crew, as he was the most experienced and feared of the survivors.

The first thing Waddah did was suffocate the paralysed successor with a pillow. Immediately afterwards, the new Crewboss declared that all booty would be equally divided by the crew, with his share used to fund the maintenance and refits of his ship. This was an acceptable bargain to his fellow criminals. Finally and secretly, Waddah had the controls of the ship tied to his biometric information and life signs: if he died or didn’t touch a control with a certain period of time, the ship would overload and fuse the fusion power-plant and the starship manoeuvre engines. Starship powerplants are specifically design to prevent a Big Boom: but even so, the *Horrid End* would be dead in space: without heat, the crew would quickly die as well.

For a year, things went fairly smoothly, with only a single mutiny that was put down with a hail of bullets (and one grenade.) However, the Space Sat Killers, a pirate band who recently became affiliated with the Shadow Cartel, decided that they wanted to horn into the *Horrid End*’s territory. Surprisingly, the *Horrid End* not only survived an

attack by two Space Sat pirate ships, they even managed to blow one apart with a lucky missile shot. They still had to beat the odds to escape with their skins intact.

From that time to today, the *Horrid End* has been on the run. The old-school 'lone wolf' corsairs are being killed off one by one everywhere the subsector: it's rumoured that the Cartel even has an unspoken agreement with the weak Imperial Admiralty regarding the disposal of the unorganized pirates. Because of the brutal history of Crewboss Waddah, no Imperial Amnesty has been extended to his crew in return for a surrender: there is only a warrant for his capture, dead or alive, and similar arrest warrants for his crew.

Recently, Waddah has managed to hook up with two other pirate ships, the *Serial Peacemaker* and the *Room Temperature*, at an off-the-charts deep space refuelling point – one of the few such watering holes still undiscovered by the Shadow Cartel. The pirates deeply distrust each other, but know that there has to be some kind of organized resistance to the Cartel, or they might as well open up the air locks now and die with some dignity. But with both the Cartel and the Admiralty against them, the only possible place for support is from a planetary government (ha!) or from legit traders – many of whom still remember what these pirates did in their heyday, and would be overjoyed to see them dance at the end of a rope, be it Naval or Cartel.

Attire: Crewboss Waddah wears the dirty t-shirt, baggy shorts, and heavy magnetic boots common among crewmen on low-tech starships. A tool-belt with numerous pockets and dangling tools marks his 'space monkey' status as a shipboard engineer. A snub pistol jammed into his belt completes his daily work uniform, such as it is.

Waddah bin 'Ubaidah al'Beja, Crewboss of the Horrid End. 7797B3, 38 years, Engineering-4, Electronics-2, Mechanical-2, Computer-1, Vacc Suit-1, Ship Tactics-1, Zero-G-1, Jack-o-Trades-1, Wheeled Vehicle-0, Rifle-0. Always carries a snub pistol (untrained user). Speaks Imperial Anglic (Transform dialect)

The *Horrid End* is an unmodified Far Trader, formerly named the *LightDancer* before the former crew and passengers were mercilessly killed off. The ship is armed as the Referee desires. No info is provided, as Far Trader stats are detailed in every edition of Traveller ever made.

ShipMaster Ilish Mesdaguudugmish

Ilish Mesdaguudugmish was born in 854 Imperial to a formerly noble Vilani family on Urak/Zarushagar (in 993: B6889CF-B), not too far from the notable Imperial Core worlds of Kaggushus and Reference. As the President of the Nulinad Spacefarers' Board – a loose union of independent traders, minor shipping lines and important Travellers – he has managed to build up a small political power base in the Sector Court. He is also the majority owner and manager of BrightEye Logistics, a small interface line of two free traders and two far traders.

Mesdaguudugmish was raised on his family's crumbling estate on Urak. Most of his family were of the 'proud but impoverished' type, living off of the faded glory of their names and the charity of more successful Vilani families. Most of his elders and kinsmen never reconciled themselves to the rise of the Solomani three thousand years ago: many held the children of mixed Solomani-Vilani unions with greater contempt than pure Solomani, calling them lishaashli ("walking corpses", a reference to their shortened lifespans), or magiirkagir (loose translation: "filthy disease-carrying housefly", a comment of the many Terran diseases that struck the Vilani during the Interstellar Wars and into the first century of the Rule of Man.) The Mesdaguudugmish clan always stood ready to support Vilani cultural and revivalist movements: indeed, their indirect financing of a blotched anti-Solomani rebellion – in an age where Solomani nobles dominated the Imperium – is what led to their disenfranchisement in 521 Imperial.

After graduating from a Vilani academy in 877, Mesdaguudugmish became a security officer for Makhidkarun, the Vilani megacorporation traditionally associated with the Vilani Karunii (aristocratic) caste. He has an arranged marriage with another pure Vilani, Ligale, which was comfortable and safe (if not very loving.) After his first wife died after a fight with cancer in 901, Mesdaguudugmish turned over his four children to his kin back on Urak, as he couldn't raise them properly, being a Traveller.

It was during a stint supporting corporate interests in the Empty Quarter that he met Shadiyah, an 'Imperial race' woman on Hebrin. An enchanting woman, she encouraged his romantic interests, and eventually agreed to marry in him in 907, on the condition that he convert to Sunni Islam. His marriage to Shadiyah and his abandonment of Vilani ancestor veneration led to his disownment by his family, and he was forbidden from seeing the children of his earlier marriage. The Makhidkarun megacorp disapproved of the union, but Ilish was punished only with mild and temporary sanctions.

His marriage was a long and happy union, with five children before Shadiyah died of old age in 963. During this time, Mesdaguudugmish continued to rise in seniority, eventually becoming the number ten man in the Makhidkarun security department in the sector (after over 60 years of service in the Empty Quarter, and an additional three decades in the Imperial Core.) Shadiyah's death, although long expected, shook Mesdaguudugmish to the core. He abruptly left Makhidkarun, and turned his hand to running a Free Trader. Over the next three decades, Mesdaguudugmish was able to build his business from a single mortgaged Free Trader to four ships – two of them owned outright – which together make up the BrightEye Logistics, an interface line in Nulinad subsector.

With his natural skill in negotiation, Mesdaguudugmish has been elected President of the Nulinad Spacefarer's Board, a local lobby group for independent traders and small interface lines. He has only been mildly successful in promoting his member's interests, as the major sector wide lines have deeper pockets than he has. However, upon occasion the sector lines have found it politically expedient to ally with the Spacefarers' Board against megacorporate interests: usually, Mesdaguudugmish has been able to wring out some useful concessions in return for his support. As of 993, this very old man splits his time between attending the Sector Court on Nulinad as President of the Nulinad Spacefarers' Board; pushing paper, attending meetings, and greeting investors as a CEO and Director of BrightEye Logistics; and two-to-four month jaunts as ShipMaster of the *Star of Shadiyah*, a 200-ton Far Trader.

As Mesdaguudugmish feels his mortality drawing closer, he has a desire to reconnect with his Vilani heritage and the old family rituals of his youth. He has made public his interest in Kikhushegi – a mix of Islam doctrine and Vilani ritualism – as well as purely orthodox forms of Vilani ancestor worship and ritualism. His family – some of whom remember his wedding to his first wife 'as if it was yesterday', over 110 years ago – have made it known that they are willing to accept him back, if he returns to his original religion and disowns the children of his second marriage. His Sunni Muslim grandchildren & great-grandchildren of his second marriage have made it clear that they will kill him if he abandons Islam. (Mesdaguudugmish's five children by Shadiyah are long dead, as of 993 Imperial: none were murdered.)

Attire: Like all pure/nearly pure Vilani, Ilish Mesdaguudugmish looks younger than he is: in this case, that means that he looks like a worn but happy 70-year old man. In recent years, he has chosen to dress in the strict Vilani style, as suits his caste and station in life. Rumour has it that he may finally be granted the title 'The Respected' from the Sector Duke: an Imperial Empty Quarter title, it carries no legal weight, but does signify respect from his peers and favourable regard from the Nobility.

*Ilish Mesdaguudugmish, ShipMaster of the **Star of Shadiyah**.* 124C89, 139 years, Admin-2, Liaison-2, Gambling-2, Liaison-2, Legal-2, Trader-2, Screens (Sandcasters)-2, Grav Vehicle-2, Ship's Boat-1, Prop Aircraft-1, Steward-1, Vacc Suit-1, Pilot-1, Laser Weapons-1, Computer-0, SubMachinegun-0, Long Blade (Vilani sword)-0, Medical-0, Grav Belt-0, Brawling-0, Handgun-0, Carousing-0, Turrent weapons-0, Gravitics-0, Eletronics-0, Engineering-0, Old High Vilani-0. Always carries a ten-shot laser pistol: has a concealed carry permit on many worlds (unnecessary on low-law Nulinad, his adopted homeworld). Speaks Imperial Anglic (Core dialect) as his native tongue.

The *Star of Shadiyah* is a stock 200-ton, Beowulf-class TL 9 Free Trader. One turret holds a sandcaster, the other a laser. No special modifications have been made, but the ship is kept in tip-top shape, and a fuel bladder is carefully maintained: it is deployed when two parsecs must be crossed. (Note that the extra 20-tons needed as fuel volume comes at the cost of cargo space.) Her crew is a mix of pure Vilani and Vilani-culture men of Solomani or Mixed Vilani origin. Most of these men have been serving under Mesdaguudugmish for over 20 years.

This particular crew has a very good reputation in the local Traveller community. The referee should not treat them as Legendary (a.k.a. Jim Kirk's *Star Trek*™ crew), but more like Highly Regarded (the top 4%, or 'among the best'.) They should be considered Experienced in firefights and small unit operations, Veteran for ship-to-ship combat operations, and Elite for civilian ship operations (navigation, maintenance, etc.) and business dealings.

Most of the crew are men of some means, being shareholders of the *Star of Shadiyah*, and often notable stockholders of BrightEye Logistics as well. The senior members of the crew could name their price elsewhere and/or retire immediately if they chose, but remain under Mesdaguudugmish's command out of personal loyalty & trust. Moreover, they see the *Star of Shadiyah* as home, and their crewmates as family. When Mesdaguudugmish retires for good, they are likely to go their separate ways. Should the ShipMaster be killed, they will be sure to avenge him before separating.

Captain Peter Molossus

Most information in high-tech societies are kept in the local Internet/Datasphere/Commgrid/etc, and typically downloaded to PCs or hand-held devices. (Brain interfaces are seen as perverse in the Imperial Empty Quarter, and are practically unknown outside of specialized Imperial Military squads and certain Noble servants.)

Unfortunately, most worlds within the Six Subsectors are below TL 8, so information devices are unobtainable except for a small elite with access to a sufficient amount of Imperial currency. Even more crucially, these devices require power and maintenance that is often unavailable locally. These factors point to the use of books, memory (as a trained skill), and inscribed tablets (where paper and skins analogues are unavailable for book-making).

Enter Peter Molossus. Of American Indian/East Indian ancestry, Molossus spent his first career as a highly trained IISS Scout providing technical support in the field. While training other Scouts on Pugaash, a nasty incident with suspicious local authorities left him eyeless. The Scout Service paid for cybernetic replacements; nevertheless Molossus decided to retire from the service, and remained traumatized for quite a while.

After working a stint as a starmerc – a regrettable experience for everyone involved – he decided to look for a position that would put his old Scout skills to work in a more peaceful manner, allowing him to travel while spreading knowledge and learning across the Six Subsectors. Thanks to the Scout grapevine and some sympathetic Noble Household servants, Molossus managed to hook up with Factor Donni Chicha. A former agent for R Publishing – currently in merger talks with the Delgado family (see 'Seasons Change', **Stellar Reaches** #5) – Factor Chicha negotiated a deal with the R Publishing, making Molossus a Minor Publisher of the company, and placing him in charge of the *Sun Credo*, a modified Scout vessel owned by R Publishing.

As Master of the *Sun Credo*, Peter Molossus uses the portable presses of his starship to provide books and reading material for a large and varied clientele within the Imperial Empty Quarter. He specialises as a world-to-world encyclopaedia salesman, publishing and selling the Antarean version of the Imperial Encyclopaedia to low-tech schools, libraries, research institutions, clans, and wealthy individuals 'right from the starport'. The standard sets are the 40-volume Student Edition (with four-colour illustrations) and the 200-volume Scholar Edition (with colour plates). Certain special editions, including the Holopaper and Pocket-sized versions, are also available with three-to-six months' notice. The famed Noble editions, being actual works of art, cannot be printed on the *Sun Credo*, but a single volume is kept as a sample for curious local potentates to examine.

[Referee: the Imperial Encyclopaedia, while respected as a general resource, is not nearly as prestigious as Vland's AAB. Simply known as 'the Encyclopaedia', this enormous compilation is stored on a set of 40 TL 14 holocrystals, as of the late 900s Imperial, costing 50,000 Cr for a complete set. A new, 10-crystal version using cutting-edge TL 15 technology is currently before various AAB committees.]

Molossus has not earned the right to be a true Independent Agent. His itinerary, finances, and business policies are handled by local R Publishing personnel, Central Office on Akiar (in the SkyOrb Imperial Starport: see footnote 10 of the **Stellar Reaches** #5 'Seasons Change' adventure), or the robots and expert systems on board the *Sun Credo*.

However, he has done well as the ship's master, and is improving in his abilities as a (junior) businessman and trader.

Molossus is reasonably happy in his current position. He is likely to be promoted to Independent Agent status in a few years, but more due increasing competence in his position and needed skill-sets, rather than the result of ambition or corporate climbing. He would like to visit the famous Scriptorium Chalán, in Antares Sector, but this is more of a fond wish than a true goal. Molossus is not a man of strong feelings, except in regard to Pugaash: he refuses to step foot on that world, and he will not speak to any native of that world. Molossus is a quietly loyal Imperial, a more-or-less orthodox Christian, and a member in good standing of the Amerindian Tarcat Tribe, but avoids political, religious, and tribal controversies whenever possible.

He is a strong technologist and a hard worker, and he personally maintains the many robots and machines on the ship: the single Cargo Handler Master Robot, the two Slave robots, four Assembler robots (which both run and maintain the four on-ship Autofacs), two Boxer Robots for boarders and hostiles, and the Robotastar Second-hand to actually pilot the vessel – as well as maintain the ship himself.

Certain Iper'mar friends – see the **Stellar Reach #5** article, "Minor Races of Charted Space: The Iper'Mar" for more information – greatly impressed by his technical abilities and work ethic, had offered to adopt him into their clan, but he has respectfully declined: "thanks for the offer, but I like my God, and I can't change my tribe." This hasn't stopped small knots of young Iper'mar groupies from chasing him down in the larger starports. (This is especially true on Yogesh, the regional centre of robot manufacturing that Molossus tried to visit at least once every two years. He can also be found at the head office of R Publishing, on Aikar/Gimushi, perhaps once a year.) In contrast, the women of his own tribe find him way too nerdy for their tastes...

Attire: Molossus dresses in 'business casual', with a sports jacket, a sporty soft cap, a turtleneck sweater, plaid slacks, and good sound spacer boots, styled to fit in civilian environments. He is never without a large briefcase, with a few samples of his wares.

Peter Molossus, Master of the Sun Credo. 8DB8C6, 38 years. Robot Ops-3, Computer-2, Persuasion-2, Jack-o-Trades-1, Engineering-1, Mechanical-1, Astronomy-1, Geology-1, Medical-1, Sensor Ops-1, Handgun-1, Legal-1, Trader-1, Vacc Suit-0, Swim-0, Streetwise-0. Like most Emptyheads, his native tongue is Imperial Anglic (Transform dialect.)

Ship: Sun Credo	Class: Suleiman (modified)
Type: Scout/Factory Ship	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 11	

USP

SS-11222R1-000000-10000-0	MCr 51.984	100 Tons
Bat Bear	1	Crew: 2
Bat	1	TL: 11

Cargo: 4 tons Fuel: 32 EP: 2 Agility: 0
Craft: 1 x 3T Air/Raft
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification

Architects Fee: MCr 0.520 Cost in Quantity: MCr 41.587

HULL: 100-ton standard, 1,400 cubic meters,
Needle/Wedge Configuration
CREW: Pilot

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 2G Manoeuvre, Power plant-2, 2 EP, Agility 0

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/lbis Computer

HARDPOINTS: 1 Hardpoint

ARMAMENT: 1 Single Beam Laser Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-1)

DEFENCES: None

CRAFT: 1x 3-ton Air/Raft

FUEL: 32 Tons Fuel (3 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 4 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:

2x Small Autofacs (TL D, 2-ton, 0.005 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100),

2x Large Autofacs (TL D, 4-ton, 0.050 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.200),

1 Robot Bay (4-ton, 0.020 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.050),

1 Autodoc (2-ton, Crew 0, 0.010 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.200)

COST: MCr 52.504 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.520),

MCr 41.587 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 38 Weeks Singly, 30 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Sun Credo is a heavily modified Suleiman-class scout/courier, with a strong technology boost from the stock TL 13 type, armed with a laser turret. Most notably is that many ship functions are automated, either with the four TL D autofacs (one for paper, one for ink, one for binding glue, and one that puts them all together), or the range of onboard robots that assist with book production and running the ship.

Of the four rooms, #1 contains the ink & glue autofacs, #2 produces paper, #3 binds the books together, and #4 is a robot maintenance bay. The four displacement tons of cargo hold difficult-to-get parts and supplies for the autofacs and the robots. Molossus himself lives on the bridge: his captain's chair is unique, and can recline into a bed or fold into an additional worktable for robot maintenance. There are numerous space-saving devices on the one-man bridge, and quite a bit of involved programming in the ship maintenance systems if you know where to look.

Referee: The autofacs are not nanotech: they are something like the Espresso Book Machine, illustrated here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q946sfGLxm4>

There are a variety of robots in use on the Sun Credo. [Note: These robots are from Digest Groups 101 Robots publication, quoted verbatim below.] Among them are:

CARGO HANDLER MASTER ROBOT

URP: 646xB-M4-LM221-V543 Cr187,000 540 kg

Fuel=7.4 Duration=18.5 hours TL=12

41/1-1 (mesh)

Four Heavy arms

Head (35%)

Two eyes, Two ears, voder

Two spotlights (visual spectrum)

Master unit

Radio (distant range)

Cargo Handling-4

One of the earliest robot designs still in general use in the Imperum today is the ZV-3663 Biraakid cargo multibot. This robot was also one of the first to successfully use the multibot concept of a master robot, supervising and assisting several slave robots. Originally designed and manufactured by the now defunct Sharad Kiir Robots Company, when the company closed down this design was taken over by Naasirka along with several others.

Although this model is considered to be thoroughly obsolete, Naasirka still manufactures and distributes it on more primitive worlds.¹ However, on most worlds with modern robots this model has been superseded by newer cargo handlers.

CARGO HANDLER SLAVE ROBOT
646xB-M4-BB000-V301 Cr12,000 530kg
Fuel=30.5 Duration=3.2 TL=12
41/101 (mesh)
Four Heavy arms
Two eyes, two ears, voder
Two Spotlights
Slave unit
Radio (distant range)

The ZV-362 cargo slavebot contains an excellent sensory package, but it merely passes the information along to the master robot of the team for processing. The usual number of these slaves handled by the master robot is two.

ASSEMBLER ROBOT
30xx0-04-LB000-MF11 Cr47,700 155kg
Fuel=(external power) Duration=(unlimited) TL=12
10/25 (no armor)
Four Medium tentacles
Two eyes, touch sensors
Power interface, brain interface
Four Light laser welders (in tentacles)
Mechanical tool package

The Naasirka SS1 assembler robot has no power plant, no locomotion, and a very limited brain, yet it is one of the most common robots used within the Imperium. For less than Cr50,000, a factory owner can install an SS1 and replace one or two human workers. Reconfiguring an entire assembly line can be expensive in the initial cash outlay, but over the years the accrued savings can be considerable.

Robots have other advantages over human workers in assembly tasks: robots are willing to work 24 hours a day, perform repetitious tasks without becoming bored or sloppy, and never strike or take sick leave as long as they are well maintained. One added expense for the industrialist is the hiring of robotics engineers, who must instruct these robots and keep them in good condition.

SS1 robots are typically fixed in their locations, with dedicated power lines and brain interface cables. From a central location, the engineers can reprogram a whole factory at once.

BOXER ROBOT
556x2-L2-ML201-LA32 Cr292,300 670kg
Fuel=2.9 Duration=7.2 hours TL=12
36/99 (combat armor)
Two Heavy tentacles
Head (20%)
Three eyes, electronic circuit protection
Close Combat-4

Robot boxing is just one of many growing spectator sports involving robots., The Orycole Model 169 described here is an excellent example of an entrant in the 700 kg weight class. More complex robots could be built for this class, but it must be remembered that most robots on the losing side are destroyed, so cost is an important factor in the design.

The Model 169 has two special-purpose heavy tentacles. One of these tentacles ends in nothing more than a heavy bulb, hardened so as to do the most damage when striking an opponent. The other tentacle ends in a heavy-duty gripping appendage, designed to hold on to an opponent; the powerful contraction of this "hand" can crush metal if given the chance.

Three recessed eyes are provided, since an eye can be rendered useless with a single well placed blow, and a blind robot is an easily defeated robot.

On worlds where gambling is legal, huge sums of money are won or lost from betting on robot duels lasting only seconds. This robot does not carry much fuel, both for safety's sake and because long-term operation is unnecessary.

The robot below is based on DGP's "RASHUSH ORIGINAL ROBOT". The numbers are the same, but the programs used and the fluff text are different--

ROBOTASTAR SECOND-HAND ASSISTANT ROBOT
653x2-A2-NP226-N856(A) Cr297,400 210kg
Fuel=79.3 Duration=13.2 TL=12
33/83 (mesh)
Two Medium arms
Head (10%)
Basic sensor package, voder

****Original programs****

Steward-3, Valet-3, Medical-1, FireFighting/Rescue-1, Instruction-1,
Emotional Simulation

****Currently installed****

Gunnery-4, Medical-2, Pilot-1, Navigator-1

This is a copy of the "Rashush Original Robot", produced by Naashirka in - 2008 (During the Rule of Man.) The Robotastar Company, based on Gingesh, is a start-up of a group of East Indians ex-Naashirka megacorp programmers. Here, 'second-hand' is meant to refer to an additional hand, not a used product: some aspects of local Indian English are 'lost in translation' to standard Anglic speakers.

In any case, Molossus swopped out the original programming, and wrote his own for the robot. It is actually the robot that flies the ship, not Molossus. Note that the Imperium insists that all interstellar flights be crewed by living beings - and robots don't count as 'living beings'. Molossus' sponsor, R Publishing, has managed to get a partial waver on this requirement from the Ducal Courts of Yogesh and Gimushi, with Molossus himself being deemed the crew of the ship. As a practical matter, Molossus is restricted to travelling within these two subsectors.

Molossus doesn't talk about his robot pilot unless absolutely necessary, and doesn't permit it to leave the ship. "No need to risk a worldwide riot from the technophobes - you remember the last time some idiot spacer drew the wrong kind of cartoon here, right?"

Station Chief Stubby bin Harold al Hebrin

Chief Harold is the rarely-seen station chief of the *Hale'n'Hearty* caravansary, located at hex 1927 of Hebrin subsector (see **Stellar Reaches #6's** "Empty Quarter Echo", by Jeff M. Hopper, for more about caravansaries.) Known as a shy recluse with a preternatural business sense, this thin and pale man is known to be rather wealthy for an independent caravansary, unconnected with the Iper'mar tech tyrants, the Arabic interstellar trading clans, the Bwap crèches, or the web of Indian merchant dynasties. (See **Stellar Reaches #5** for more information about the Iper'mar). Again unusual for a caravansary boss, he doesn't tolerate the fencing of stolen goods on his station, choosing to run a rather clean fuelling stop. (The overworked men of the Colonial subsector fleet – labouring to stamp out a host of pirate flare-ups every single month – appreciate this fact.) The *Hale'n'Hearty* is known to have a largely Solomani clientele: other races and species are tolerated and may trade and refuel in peace, but folks wondering why there are no Vargr workhands, Vilani technicians or Bwap moneylenders kept on station are encouraged to keep their mouth shut, or they are going to fall down a few flights of stairs in the near future.

Chief Harold is not what he seems. He is a persona: a natural man, whose genetics, history, memories, and electronic trail are routinely tapped by an anima. The persona is genetically related to the anima, often a 'pseudo-clone' or even a true clone, with heavy cosmetic surgery. The anima is usually a high-tech agent of a powerful interest who can afford the technological sophistication of both creating such a mask and hiding its' existence from various interested parties

In general, an anima maintains a series of three to seven persona, each in a critical position – but usually not on the same world, and certainly not in the same social circles. (The physical, mental, and psychological resemblances between the personas might draw the wrong kind of attention). The anima circulates between the persona, borrowing their identity to execute certain missions, generally highly sophisticated intelligence gathering.

[Referee: Information technology professionals can use the client-server computing model as a pretty good analogy for the anima/persona relationship.

Note that the major intelligence services consider using such an expensive resource as an AP team for near-trivial jobs like assassinations or entrapment – something that can be handled by cut-outs, or even a specialized mercenary – to be a true waste. However, there are certain valuable assets, such as high-placed moles and sleeper agents, whose protection or destruction could be worth the loss of an AP team.]

The most feared AP teams work for the Zhodani Consulate: the discovery of their existence within the Domain of Deneb during the late 9th Imperial century was one of several predecessor issues that solidified elite Imperial Noble opinion against the continued tolerance of Psionic organizations and individuals within the Imperium.² In Zhodani AP teams, the agent does not only use the identities of the personas, but also uses various Psionic and technological techniques to re-calibrate memories, electronic traces, genetic alterations, and shift thru new information.

This particular team is tied to the Solomani Party, an illegal association within the Third Imperium, and a major player behind the currently raging Rim War. The AP team is rather different than most: there are several agents, tied to a single persona. They come and go from the station in various guises, posing as clone-brothers of Chief Harold (a genetic test would confirm this – or not, depending on the needs of the agent and how much forewarning they have regarding a genetic test.) As they are not true psions, they use TL E-F brain-tapping equipment to directly exchange information and impressions, using Chief Harold's organic/cybernetic brain as a server.

The central goal of Chief Harold is to find a catalyst that will spark a war between the Third Imperium and the Julian Protectorate. He is aware of various incidents that could have led to war, but were defused by both sides. Having spent several years studying the Empty Quarter, directly absorbing the findings of his highly skilled agents, the Chief has found some pressure points that are quite promising. Success in sparking a war here, regardless of the eventual winner, will turn the likely victory of the Solomani in the Rim into a certainty. Played right, it could

even lead to the collapse of the Third Imperium, should Emperor Gavin insist on focusing on the Solomani while ignoring the collapse of his trailing-coreward frontiers.

The Chief is working with the Shadow Cartel (who stands to gain immense wealth in any such war, regardless of the eventual winner) and certain pro-Vargr groups within the Rukadukaz Republic, which control the key world of Ikon, (The Shadow Cartel is described in the adventure 'Into the Lesser Rift', by Jason "Flynn" Kemp, in **Stellar Reaches #2**; Ikon is described in the article 'Ikonic Voyage' in **Stellar Reaches #9**.) Financially and materially, he is backed by assorted pro-Solomani interests in the Imperial Core, with certain specialized assets provided by the central Solomani government on Terra.³

Attire: the Chief is rarely seen. When he does go on a walkabout, he is fully-suited up in a vacc suit with a tinted visor. (Astute observers can tell that he knows the basics of operating a vacc suit, but is not a true space dog. They can also guess he's more of a '99-pound weakling' than a muscular soldier type.)

Within his Apartment of Solitude, he wears one of his chosen sets of worn work overalls – built for utility and resistance to wear & tear, not style. He prefers to wear magnetic boots, just in case the gravity cuts out. Once every three months he wears a heavy metallic 'crown' for several hours: it contains various TL E-F devices, programs, interfaces, and microbots that keeps his cybernetic brain in tune and in compliance with his wetware brain. Spares are kept in various secure locations. Should his dual-brain organ go two months without a tune-up, organic deterioration begins, with insanity and death inevitable after an additional month without maintenance.

*Stubby bin Harold al Hebrin, Station Chief of the **Hale'n'Hearty** caravansary 545DE8, 38 years, Sophontology-3, Trader-3, Perform-3, Recruiting-2, Persuasion-2, Instruction-2, Language (Modern Vilani)-1, Imperial Anglic (Transform dialect)-1, Arabic (Hebrin dialect)-0, Admin-0, Streetwise-0, Vacc Suit-0. Handgun-0. Native tongue: Rim Anglic (never spoken)*

Ship: Yutaka (currently)
Type: Free Trader
Tech Level: 15

Class: Beowulf (supposedly)
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

	AA-2644751-040000-30000-0	MCr 249.980	200 Tons
Bat Bear	1 1	Crew: 6	Pulse Lasers
Bat	1 1	TL: 15	Agility: 4

Cargo: 0 tons Passengers: 1 Fuel: 94 EP: 14
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/5 Computers
Architects Fee: MCr 2.500 Cost in Quantity: MCr 199.984

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration

CREW: Pilot, 2 Engineers, Medic, 2 Gunners

ENGINEERING: Jump-4, 4G Manoeuvre, Power plant-7, 14 EP, Agility 4

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/5 Computer, 2 Model/5 Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 1 Triple Pulse Laser Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)

DEFENCES: 1 Triple Sandcaster Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-4)

CRAFT: None

FUEL:

94 Tons Fuel (4 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 5 Staterooms, 1 Middle Passenger, 0 Ton Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST: MCr 252.480 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 2.500),
MCr 199.984 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

This is the standard free trader, in all its' TL 9 glory. Fits well with the Empty Quarter, don't you think?

Well, in this case, the above sentence is just a pose, not the truth. This particular vessel – one of the vanishingly few TL 15 Imperial starships in the Six Subsectors – is an asset of certain pro-Solomani Party elements within the Imperial intelligence services. Their Party handler is currently Chief Harold.

The captain and crew are highly experienced Imperial Naval Intelligence assets, who have quietly decided to break their oaths to their God(s) and their Emperor in the name of the Race. In general, they engage in INI projects in a support and communication capacity, a job for which they have earned a string of commendations. Perhaps once or twice a year, they do something a little different.

The ship maintains an entire portfolio of alternate identities, as does the crew: these are official covers, and are used with the cognizance of certain individuals within the Admiralty and the Intelligence community.

Note that this is a TL 15 starship, and is therefore an experimental prototype in 993 Imperial. Various bugs and system conflicts are still being worked out on the fly, and repairs must be handled at a certain obscure spaceport in the outer reaches of Nulinad system, a fair distance from the mainworld and sector capital.

[PC Bait: The Referee can prick the curiosity of the crew by getting them to ask two questions of this supposedly TL 9, Jump1 vessel:

- 1) How in Charted Space did that jump1 ship get over here *so fast*?
- 2) This is a free trader, right? Lots of cargo space, yes? Well... why have I never ever ever seen those cargo doors open, or seen anything more than a few unmarked boxes loaded onboard in the dead of night?

Whether these questions lead the PCs on to glory (and perhaps ennoblement), a quick death in a back Startown alley, or something completely different is up to them.]

Staff Sergeant Chibuzo Ush Murnas

Sergeant Murnas – nobody except Accounting and the Base Commander uses the 'Staff' – is the senior electrician for the Com-tom Base, located on the moon of Lidack Aitch, orbiting Lidack, one of the less-visited gas giants of Nulinad system. (Official UWP: F200367-9) The base is officially a refined-fuel port, serving starships using the gas giant as a fuelling stop, but unable to refine the liquid hydrogen. As a sideline, Com-tom Base also resells mildly out-of-date (and difficult-to-locate) business information from across the Imperium, being a subscriber to several third- and fourth-tier business information networks. An additional earner is a small hotel, the Blue Eye Hotel: while it's true that the spectacular views are little different from similar tourist sites across Charted Space, the low prices of the hotel, reasonable quality, and the lack of a serious pirate threat – this *IS* the sector capital, after all! – brings a steady flow of minor-league tourists, business visitors, and the occasional bush league convention to the establishment.

Most of the time, Sergeant Murnas cheerfully works on Com-tom cutters, boats, fuellers, and gigs. Some of the visiting starships are INI assets, and require specialized care and treatment. The INI robots and cybernetic equipment are generally handled by the specialized INI technicians, but sometimes his ship-focused team can lend a hand.

However, upon occasion a certain Beowulf Free Trader shows up. This ship is the primary reason why Sergeant Murnas is here, 40 parsecs from his homeworld of Laudum. (As of 993: Laudum/Kaskii/Core B3528A8-E). The Sergeant is part of the first wave of Imperial Naval Intelligence technicians trained to work on bleeding-edge, TL F electronics and equipment. Like all other starships, the Yutaka (or whatever she is calling herself this time) needs a thorough overhaul once a year, and the Sergeant and his team are the only ones who can provide it in the Empty Quarter.⁴ Upon occasion, it becomes necessary for the team to go to the ship instead: this has only happened once in the five years the Sergeant has been based here, and was quite an interesting experience.

In general, the Sergeant is a patient and good-natured leader: his position of authority has forced him to grow out of his shell, and his skills in handling both the men and the equipment have made him rather popular on the base. He has married Nashu Kdgergadm, one of the cooks of the hotel, and plans to return to Laudum with her and their three children (one, a two-month embryo, kept in suspended animation in a TL 12 portable artificial womb) in two years.

(Explaining why he 'went Vilani' will be difficult before his family patriarchs: despite their Vilani family name, they are largely Solomani genetically and extremely Solomani culturally. They don't have the (legal) authority to kill him, but may strip him of his family & religious authority, or even completely disinherit him.)

In addition to his work duties, the Sergeant acts as the local deacon of the Imperial Light, an important Laudum religion dedicated to the veneration and worship of the Emperor and his family. Polytheistic cultures that define godliness in terms of power see no reason why a very powerful man can't be treated as a minor god, especially when that man can command the creation of sophont races and living worlds, while killing hundreds of billions with a word. Imperial Light theology is quite sophisticated, as you'd expect from a populous and technologically advanced world, but the Sergeant was chosen as a local priest mainly due to family tradition and his place as first-born son, not his religious knowledge. (His current work in the Imperial Services is a plus, but there are numerous family members who can make the same claim.)

On Com-tom base, perhaps 500 of the base's 7000 members follow the Imperial Light, evenly split between Solomani, Vilani, and Mixed Vilani races. (Non-humans balk at worshipping a human being.) The growth of the Imperial Light on Com-tom – recently spreading to a few of the visiting starships – is more due to the missionary work of certain energetic laymen, rather than the more laid-back piety of the Sergeant himself. Even so, he still welcomes new converts, and remembers to bow and pray before a sanctified Imagio of the Emperor at the appropriate times.

[Referee: the rank of 'Staff Sergeant' is an employee rank: Lisdid Associates, LIC, the INI front corporation that runs Com-tom Base, is run along pseudo-military lines. It's been so long since anyone has addressed the Sergeant by his actual Imperial Navy rank of Petty Officer that he probably won't react to it at first. Then, standard protocol for a security breach comes in force...]

Attire: Like all Lisdid Associates, the Sergeant wears a skin-tight black & red bodysuit under work overalls while on the job. Off-duty wear is usually some combination of a light t-shirt under a sweater, and a *santaov* (a short skirt-over-long slacks setup: yes, this is menswear back on Laudum) with regular runners for footwear.

Staff Sergeant Chibuzo Ush Murnas A32B77, 34 years, Electronics-2, Mechanical-2, Robotics-1, Computer Programming-1, Vacc Suit-1, Admin-0, Streetwise-0, Rifle-0. Native tongue: Core Anglic.

[Referee: unlike most everyone in Chartered Space in 993, this man suffers no skill penalty in handling TL 15 equipment.]

The starship Yutaka was described earlier, in the 'Station Chief Stubby' section.

Captain Naresh Goyal

Goyal started out in the planetary navy of his native Irash, serving on the TL A cruiser *Chapal*. After serving for eight years, he served as an officer of a Tukera Lines freighter for another three years before being let go in 981, eight years before the start of the Solomani Rim War. Goyal struggled to make ends meet for himself and his family for three years until a fellow spaceman's tip led him to the Mussoorie Association. This colonial venture, based on Irash, has great need of his naval skills: after verifying for themselves his skills and service record, they hired him as the captain of the *Hillman*, an aging 2000-ton Othefe-class starship ferry.

Their plan was to kick start the colonization of Guudagi by selecting a fertile yet largely uninhabited region of that world, and then occupy it with interested settlers from nearby Irash. The settlers will reside on their colony craft initially, but will soon expand into a town when they determine conditions are right. In the meantime, Goyal will help fund the venture by using his starship to retrieve abandoned vessels, and return them to Irash for either refurbishing and reselling, or refitting for additional landing craft/colonial bases.

For two years, 980 to 982, his work was reasonably satisfying. Legal troubles arose, as the various nations of Guudagi, eventually discovering the colonization via their AD 1920s-1940s-style observatories and telescopes, claimed that their world was being invaded by the Kingdom of Irash. The Count of Irash pointed out that planetary defense is a concern of the world's government: the Imperium only controlled the space between the stars. The various governments were directed to various starmerc organizations, but they found their asking prices far too high. Instead, the various native nations organized a TL 6 naval invasion [Referee: think 'Operation Shingle', NOT the Normandy landings!] with a marine landing on the landmass colonized by the TL A Irashi on 191-982 Imperial.

The 2,000-man invasion was foiled by the ability of the ~500 colonists to crowd into their hollowed-out landers – generally repurposed Free Traders – and antigrav their way into the air, out of the reach of the TL 6 marine force. When the *Hillman* arrived, her laser batteries made short work of the armour and vehicles of the invasion force. Without a logistics train, the invasion disintegrated: further attempts by the local navies to retrieve their force were foiled by small off-world mercenary units hired by the Mussoorie Association. Three years later, the 92 survivors finally arrived at the nearest native settlement, after a walk of over 2,000 km.

In 985, the same year the survivors re-joined their civilization, the *Hillman* spearheaded an invasion of Guudagi. Captain Goyal initially transported some SDBs into the system, and later acted as an assault carrier, with her laser batteries supporting deployed vehicles and troopers in their conquest of the planet.

By 990, the planet was quiet enough for the *Hillman* to return to more peaceful duties, even as much of the Imperium was girded for war against the Solomani Confederation. While she still occasionally drops off colonial landers, the *Hillman* is more commonly employed in making money, finding abandoned starships, and transporting them to Irash for resale, return to their owners for a bounty, or for stripping them for spare parts.

In 993, while preparing for another salvage run, he was approached by an attractive young woman who offered to charter the starship and crew for a speculative venture. After he made clear that he didn't own the ship, he saw nothing more of her: but he was soon put to work retrieving abandoned vessels from across the Irash cluster. The locations given were a lot more precise than before, and the lifeless vessels were always at the location given. Usually, they were dead scouts and far traders, but upon occasion shuttles, cutters, and ship's boats were found.

Initially, Goyal was quite pleased with this work: the money coming in allowed him to conduct needed repairs, gave the Mussoorie Association a solid stream of income (needed to offset the costs of the colony and pay off the loans needed to fund the invasion), and even allowed small bonuses for himself and his crew. However, it is becoming more apparent that, at least occasionally, the salvaged and abandoned vessels are *very* recent kills.

Some of his fellow captains have begun to keep their distance from him, while others insinuate that he has joined the Shadow Cartel. He certainly has not, but the suspicion that something is wrong is gnawing at the back of his mind. He avoids thinking about it too much: even if there was some funny business going on, he has no desire to challenge those very tough customers. And anyways, it isn't really his place to talk back to his owners – and he does have a family to feed...

Eventually, Captain Goyal will have to make a choice. His decision will determine how far he falls, how hard his future will be, and how much of a future he has. Until then, life continues to look up: the Mussoorie Association is increasing the size of his bonus; the dockhands always give him first-rate treatment; the Imperial inspectors barely glance at his salvage before waving him through; well-dressed, powerfully-built men greet him by name; and attractive women seem to always gather around him whenever he enters Startown. Yes, life is good... for now.

PCs: The PCs may choose to assist Captain Goyal in escaping the clutches of the Shadow Cartel. Perhaps he alone is to escape, or his family, or even his crew and the ship (which does not belong to him) as well. The greater the number to escape, the greater the difficulty will be. The PCs have a window of opportunity before the Cartel notices their interference with business, and targets them as well.

Attire: Captain Goyal is of medium build, with a middle-aged paunch. While the ratings may dress as they like – so far as it doesn't interfere with ship operations – the Captain and the rest of the bridge crew wears black uniform jackets, white collared shirts, and a black-red-black-gold-black-striped tie, signifying their membership in the Mussoorie Association. Black slacks, spacer's boots, and a datapad complete the uniform. The Captain is normally unarmed in the course of his duties. When trouble comes knocking on his ship, he carries an Accelerator Rifle: this counts as a Zero-G weapon. On a dangerous world, he bears an assault rifle and light cloth armour.

Captain Naresh Goyal 3AAA78, 38 years, Admin/Legal-2, Zero-G (Movement)-2, Pilot-1, Instruction-1, Sensors-1, Gun Combat-1, Vacc Suit-1, Zero-G Combat-1, Zero-G Weapon-1, Ortilery (Laser)-1, Transform Anglic-1, Guudagi Hindi-0. Native tongue: Irash Hindi

Ship: Hillman
Type: Ferry
Tech Level: 12

Class: Othefe
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

	FE-B321342-030000-10000-0	MCr 1,164.587	2 Ktons
Bat Bear	5 5	Crew: 46	Pulse Lasers
Bat	5 5	TL: 12	Agility: 1

Cargo: 167 tons Passengers: 3 Fuel: 460 EP: 60
Shipboard Security Detail: 2
Craft: 3 x 200T Colony Transports, 1 x 30T Ship's Boat,
1 x 50T Modular Cutter, 3 x 30T Additional Modules
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/4 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 11.646 Cost in Quantity: MCr 931.669

HULL: 2,000 tons standard, 28,000 cubic meters, Cylinder Configuration

CREW: 12 Officers, 34 Ratings

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-3, 60 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/4 Computer, Model/4 Backup Computers

HARDPOINTS: 10 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 5 Single Pulse Laser Turrets organised into 5 Batteries (Factor-1)

DEFENCES: 5 Single Sandcaster Turrets organised into 5 Batteries (Factor-3)

CRAFT:

3x 200-ton vessels,
1x 30-ton Ship's Boat (Crew of 3),
1x 50-ton Modular Cutter (Crew of 3),
3x 30-ton Additional Modules

FUEL:

460 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS:

34 Staterooms, 1 High Passenger, 2 Middle Passengers, 167 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST: MCr 1,176.233 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 11.646),
MCr 931.669 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 132 Weeks Singly, 106 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

A starship ferry is a vessel that transports ships across distances that the vessel is unable to cross an empty parsec herself. When there isn't sufficient trade to support a caravansary - see **Stellar Reaches** #6, "Empty Quarter Echo" by Jeff M Hopper for more information - a starship ferry provides this transportation service for jump1 starships, usually Free Traders. The Othefe-class ferries provide this service for the Six Subsectors.

These ferries are useful not only for transporting short-legged starships, but spaceships as well, which by definition have no FTL drive. The Othefe-class can transport Free Traders and Battle-class SDB, as well as Far Traders (which usually don't need the service, unless the jumpdrive is dead or crippled.)

In addition to a ferry service, these vessels make good colonization ships, depositing modular cutters with an array of specialized modules to where they can be most effective. On colony duty, the Hillman carries three 200-ton Litdian Colonist Landers, described below, to deposit on the colony world. The Colonial Navy uses a few of these vessels to circulate Colonial Battle-class System Defense Boats to where they are most needed.

These vessels also make good salvage boats, capable of transporting one or two small starships to another system for salvage, re-sale, or reclamation by their owner. They are also sought-after by pirates: why just steal the cargo or a Ship's Boat, when you can steal the whole starship?

Ship: Onna	Class: Litdian
Type: Settler	Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 9	

USP

ST-2601111-000000-00000-0	MCr 54.850	200 Tons
Bat Bear	Crew: 3	
Bat	TL: 9	Agility: 1

Cargo: 62 tons Passengers: 20 Fuel: 2 EP: 2
Craft: 2 x 3T Air/Raft

Architects Fee: MCr 0.549 Cost in Quantity: MCr 43.880

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration

CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Medic

ENGINEERING: Jump-0, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-1, 2 EP, Agility 1

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/1 Computer

HARDPOINTS: None

ARMAMENT: None

DEFENCES: None

CRAFT: 2x 3-ton Air/Rafts

FUEL:

2 Tons Fuel (28 days endurance)

No Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS:

23 Staterooms, 20 Middle Passengers, 62 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:

1 Cargo Modification (7 tons, Crew 0, Cost MCr 0.350)

COST: MCr 55.399 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.549),

MCr 43.880 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Litdian class - essentially gutted and refitted Beowulf Free Traders, repurposed as a colonial lander & settlement base - provides a means to transport settlers, tools, robots, and materials needed at a settlement site. Also, it provides a long-term base of operations to a settlement project, which can be used as an emergency transport and/or shelter when necessary.

Modifications to the cargo bay allow the vessel's space to provide hydroponic food production and air recycling. After landing on a given world and emptying the cargo bay, many settlers put the space to work in other ways, from robot repair bays to rabbit farms to quick'n'dirty lab space. With the right equipment, the cargo bay can even be used as an indoor mini-factory!

To reduce the burden on the life support of the mother ship, usually an Othefe-class ferry, the crew and passengers are usually sealed within the vehicle during transport.

Captain Sadhana Kenchamma

Captain Kenchamma (no nicknames allowed!) is something of a rarity: a woman, born in 946 as Ekaja Contractor on a low-tech world, who rose to be a pirate/smuggler within the Empty Quarter. Her childhood on Guudagi within the now-dead Fourth Tumkūr Republic was a happy childhood. An only child, her mother dying during childbirth, her father treated her as the son he never had, encouraging her to study mathematics and astronomy, as well as local Hindu precepts and Imperial Astrology. After learning all she could on her TL 6 world, she convinced her father at the age of 16 to let her seek her fortune among the stars. She took working passage whenever she could, learning to master higher technologies as she grew to become a well-rounded ship's hand and a proficient navigator. (She also grew quite experienced in fending off unwanted advances as well.)

At the age of 28, Ekaja Contractor found herself inadvertently working on the pirate ship *Kfiktimi*, in Lentuli subsector. She has heard of the horror tales of pirate treatment of women, but fortunately for her, this was an Ikonaz pirate ship affiliated with the Saerrog Pack, which prided themselves on professionalism and their moral superiority to the Blood Vargr and local Imperial thugges.⁵ This attitude not only allows greater discipline among the crew: it also tends to lower their profile in the eyes of the Imperial Navy. Which corsair will be the first to be targeted and hunted down, a pirate who simply takes the air/rafts and a few cargo pallets and makes a quick exit, or a pirate that makes a bloody mess of the crew and passengers? Of course, by the time the Navy has cornered and killed the more dangerous corsair, the more cautious and cunning pirate would have made his getaway to a less supervised part of space....

By the age of 32, she has successfully defended her claim to be the sole lover of the ship's captain, Lakshan Saxena. She then encouraged him to turn away from ordinary pirating. Instead, with her guidance, he became a 'repentant pirate' and became a poster-boy for the Imperial government, gaining a mild level of fame by giving testimonies against the pirate life. He also 'made an honest woman' of Ekaja, marrying her at the age of 34 in 980.

Ekaja played the demur wife, staying in Hindu purdah and out of the media limelight. From here, she kept the communication lines with the Saerrog Pack open: criminals in the sector tend to be more open to ambitious and enterprising women than ordinary society, and few men, even in law enforcement, want to get involved in the shameful things that are 'women's matters'.

Following his lover's advice, Lakshan build up a heroic reputation among the merchants, uncovering the 'bad eggs' among them – hated for being too prosperous, for cheating their fellow merchantmen, for being a tattle-tale to the Imperial government, or for being too 'alien': i.e. being a successful outsider (HE'S RIPPING OFF OUR PEOPLE!); using too many nonhumans (TRAITOR OF ALL HUMANITI!), using cyborgs or robots on their ship (THE ROBOTS AND HALF-HUMANS ARE INFILTRATING OUR SPACE – AND STEALING OUR JOBS!); or for being 'too lucky' (FILTHY PSION!). After 'unveiling' the bad egg, Lakshan would lead vigilante groups against the target on the ground or in space, and after the kill, get the lion's share of the rewards. Of course, the friends made in battle will get their cut too, and integrated into their personal power nexus, unofficially called 'Lakshan's Men'.

[Referee: you may begin the adventure here if you choose, setting up your merchant or mercenary PCs to take down, build up, or take over this network. There is no direct relationship with Lakshan's Men and the Saerrog Pack, but if the Men need something unusual done or a very special tool, it's the Pack they will turn to first...]

Ekaja and Lakshan had a good run together, until 990, when someone (The PCs, or someone the PCs know) put an end to their racket, killing Lakshan and forcing Ekaja to flee the subsector. If it was the PCs who did the deed, you can be sure that Ekaja will carve out her vengeance, given the right opportunity.

In the meantime, she was eventually forced to hide her ship, now camouflaged in a crater of a nameless moon. Laying low, a few old friends helped her steal a Far Trader, the *Odyssey*, from an Imperial starport while the *Odyssey* crew was conducting some serious R&R in Startown. Docked in a 'black caravansary', she was refaced (i.e. given a new look, engine & power-plant signatures, etc.) and renamed the *Sṭāra Nartakī* (Hindi: "Star Dancer"), with a reasonable set of paperwork and data-trails, expensively forged. Getting a new cover identity for herself and her old crew was considerably cheaper. Now known as 'Sadhana Kenchamma', Ekaja did a variety of profitable, fairly legit jobs as a starmerc, hostage negotiation, an anti-pirate assault/rescue force, and smuggling (usually sneaking alcohol and pork to desperate customers on Islamic worlds).

Even as she paid off the last underworld debts she owed, word seeped to her regarding the troubles of her homeworld, Guudagi. Even though her aged father wasn't harmed, the patriotic Ekaja would love to find a way to hit back, but was trapped in paying off her debts first. By 991, they were finally off the books, but even after visiting her homeworld under cover, she couldn't figure out a way to hit back outside of small-time arms smuggling to local 'freedom fighters', rapidly devolving to mere organized crime syndicates with a wafer-thin political cover...

...until someone whispered the name "Captain Goyal" in her ear. Tapping into yet another network of friends and allies she naturally weaves around herself, she learned that he has a very useful ship in his hand, that he was a major part of the hated Mussoorie Association's cash flow, and that he was with the Shadow Cartel, a 'business competitor' of hers.

'Sadhana' pondered these facts, setting her natural cunning to gnaw at the problem slowly and carefully. Speaking in various guarded 'hypothetical situations', this 'honest adventuress' gathered the perspectives of career agents and mercenaries on the best way to approach the problem. But it was during her daily devotions to Durga that everything clicked in her mind, like a divine revelation...

Referee: There are several ways that you can introduce 'Captain Kenchamma' to your PCs.

- As noted earlier, you can actually run the adventure earlier in her career, either alone or as a prelude to the big show later. They will know her real identity and perhaps the real nature of the *Sṭāra Nartakī*.
- The PCs may also be fellow Guudagi. In this case, they are definitely East Indian/Vilani, probably Hindus, and likely to be roped into her scheme to free their world from the clutches of the Mussoorie Association. (What happens to the colonists afterward is an interesting question. Note that 'Captain Kenchamma' is a businesswoman who prefers to avoid violence – she has killed less than twenty people in the 19 years since she first became a pirate. While her patriotism is world- and religion-grounded, she respects the Imperial Laws of War, and values a clean reputation – and not only for PR purposes, either.)
- She may be a patron of the PCs, with their own starship. As such, they will never be fully trusted by 'Kenchamma', and never be allowed to go past her cover identity. However, they can expect to get involved in some skulduggery, smuggling, and covert ops.

- If they don't have their own ship, they will probably crew the *Sṭāra Nartakī* and work with 'Captain Kenchammana' on a daily basis. The PCs will be tested for loyalty: even if they fail her, they will just be given their walking papers (in a civilized port if it just doesn't work out, or on a barbarian world if they are *really* annoying) unless they (try to) betray her to the Mussoorie Association, get past her cover identity, or uncover the real history of the *Sṭāra Nartakī*. If they do... well, she will have to arrange something regrettable, but necessary. Whenever possible, she will try to make it seem a genuine accident, a chance incident that nobody could have predicted, or the inevitable result of too much risk-taking or bad living. "Everybody gets boarded by pirates sometime, and I think we got off very lucky. Pretty odd, though: they completely ignored the cargo and the passengers! All they did is force their way onboard, shot one crewman twice in the head, and then leave. Weirdest thing I ever saw – and I've been around the subsector a few times..."
 - Eventually, if the PC crew earns the trust of 'Captain Kenchammana', they will be able to run the ship themselves: she will transfer to the *Kfiktimi* with the bulk of her old crew (who retain their own cover identities.) The official line is that the old crew found the abandoned ship, successfully claimed it for themselves before an Imperial Court (after paying the necessary fees to the Imperium), and invited her to be their Captain. In reality, this armed and high-tech vessel will be used to spearhead military raids against the colonial government of Guudagi, and act as a licensed privateer against shipping to that world, on behalf of the ousted native governments. The *Sṭāra Nartakī* will retain her civilian cover, smuggling useful items and supporting covert operations against said government.

Religion: Choosing a cover name after the Hindu goddess Durga, wife of Shiva, 'Captain Kenchammana' has grown increasingly religious as she gets older, adoring her namesake and encouraging others to do so too, especially if they are Hindus. The ten-armed Durga is a Hindu embodiment of self-sufficient femininity and fierce compassion. Even as a fierce demon-fighter, Durga "never loses her sense of humour, even during spiritual battles of epic proportion." (Wikipedia, 'Durga', March 2, 2011) Whenever possible, 'Kenchammana' emulates her goddess.

Attire: 'Captain Kenchammana' dresses in the Irashi style, with a mix of Vilani asymmetrical and Hindi styles. She dresses in a high-caste fashion, showing little flesh. She prefers solid colours with golden and silver highlights: outer clothing often bears Hindu patterns that show her piety and devotion to Durga. She always wears the equivalent of TL 14 cloth armour, an automatic pistol in a holster, and a hidden body pistol.

Inlaid in each of her gloves is an electroshock contact weapon that will stun an opponent, should she touch them in hand-to-hand combat. (It is usually inactive: making a fist or flattening her palm for a slap is necessary to activate them.) These are covert weapons: the gloves physically need to be taken apart and inspected with TL E+ technology to reveal their hidden functionality.

'*Captain Sadhana Kenchammana*', aka *Ekaja Saxena*. 564DDA, 47 years, Streetwise-4, Bribery-3, Admin/Legal-2, Transform Anglic-2, Automatic Pistol-1, Body Pistol-1, Jack-of-all-Trades-1, Steward-1, Vacc Suit-1, Dagger-1, Zero-G Movement-0. Native Tongue: Guudagi Hindi.

Ship: *Sṭāra Nartakī*
 Type: Far Trader
 Tech Level: 11

Class: Empress Marava
 Architect: Standard

USP

A2-22212R1-040000-30000-0	MCr 102.550	200 Tons
Bat Bear 1 1	Crew: 6	
Bat 1 1	TL: 11	Agility: 0

Cargo: 66 tons Passengers: 6 Low: 4 Fuel: 44 EP: 4
 Craft: 1 x 3T Air/Raft
 Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops

Architects Fee: MCr 1.026 Cost in Quantity: MCr 82.040

HULL: 200-tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Cone Configuration

CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Steward, Medic, 2 Gunners

ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 1G Manoeuvre, Power plant-2, 4 EP, Agility 0

AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/1bis Computer

HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints

ARMAMENT: 1 Triple Beam Laser Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)

DEFENCES: 1 Triple Sandcaster Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-4)

CRAFT: 1x 3-ton Air/Raft

FUEL: 44 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS: 10 Staterooms, 4 Low Berths, 6 High Passengers,

4 Low Passengers, 66 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None

COST: MCr 103.576 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 1.026),

MCr 82.040 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The *Ṣṭāra Nartakī* is a standard Far Trader, with a few modifications. Extensive work has been done, visible and otherwise, to obscure her old identity as the *Odyssey*. Overlaid on that is additional interior decoration, to emphasise the Hindu-Vilani nature of the Irash cultural zone. Finally, six tons of space has been taken from the cargo area, and turned into a shrine of Durga. This is a mark of a true devotee, as this act costs a trader real money.

The inlaid gold and silverwork alone is worth 50,000 Cr, but the large, 3,000-year-old, ten-armed silver and bronze statue of Durga has a value in the low seven figures. However, the most valuable object in the room is an ornate sealed container, set before the idol, containing four litres of water from the river Ganges. After being verified as the genuine article, its value is at least twenty million credits: a bidding war can send this price to the stratosphere...

'Captain Kenchamma' has hired a Vilani Brahman priest solely to tend to the idol and insure that the proper ceremonies are conducted. Three human shrine guards - one on duty per 8-hour shift - and six armed robots also protect the shrine. (Three robots may be detached to protect the ship in general, but the other three are programmed to stay to protect the shrine, no matter what.) Otherwise, the Captain alone is permitted to enter the shrine: PC crews are simply told to stay out, or else.

The four Shrine personnel have their rooms assigned from the high passengers' quarters - and the priest gets a double room. Only three rooms can be hired out to high passengers. A particularly devout high passenger may be permitted to enter and worship at the shrine, but only after payment of a large sum to the priest, and another smaller sum to the Captain.

The knowledge that the *Ṣṭāra Nartakī* carries a very valuable shrine is common enough among the old-time traders of Udusis subsector. Despite this, the vessel has never been attacked by pirates. PC crews should be encouraged to speculate why this is so.

Ship: Kfiktimi
Type: Corsair
Tech Level: 14

Class: T'Quorg
Architect: Alvin Plummer

USP

P-4224782-030000-53000-0 MCr 630.150 400 Tons
Bat Bear 1 11 Crew: 24
Bat 1 11 TL: 14 Agility: 3

Cargo: 58 tons Fuel: 108 EP: 28 Marines: 6
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops
Backups: 2 x Model/8 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 6.302 Cost in Quantity: MCr 504.120

HULL: 400-tons standard, 5,600 cubic meters, Cone Configuration
CREW: 10 Officers, 8 Ratings, 6 Marines
ENGINEERING: Jump-2, 4G manoeuvre, Power plant-7, 28 EP, Agility 3
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/8 Computer, 2 Model/8 Backup Computers
HARDPOINTS: 4 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT:
2 Triple Beam Laser Turrets organised into 1 Battery (Factor-5),
1 Single Plasma Gun Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)
DEFENCES:
1 Single Sandcaster Turret organised into 1 Battery (Factor-3)
CRAFT: None
FUEL: 108 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)
On Board Fuel Scoops, No Fuel Purification Plant
MISCELLANEOUS: 16 Staterooms, 58 Tons Cargo
USER DEFINED COMPONENTS: None
COST:
MCr 636.452 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 6.302),
MCr 504.120 in Quantity
CONSTRUCTION TIME: 82 Weeks Singly, 65 Weeks in Quantity
COMMENTS:
The T'Quorg class is built to steal valuable cargo from heavily armed Vargr merchants. In comparison, attacking human ships is no different than taking candy from a baby...

...however, this particular starship has seen better days. As of 993, the Kfiktimi is hidden in a moon crater, and she badly needs her yearly overhaul. It's unlikely that the PCs will have access to her before her crew boards her, and brings her over to a friendly (read: pirate-friendly) port to give her the tender-loving care she needs. If they do, though, the Referee should cripple the vessel in a variety of ways, from poor manoeuvre-drive performance to weak weapons.

Captain Caleb Washington

Caleb Washington was born into wealth, a member of an Imperial-race (the pompous way to say 'Mixed Vilani') cadet branch of the Washington dynasty that has been part of the aristocratic scene of Gushiirdiimi (Truax/Gushemege 2036) since -600 Imperial. On a world where mathematical aesthetics dominate religiosity and cultic activity, his own line's adherence to Geilg Christianity (a descendant of 28th century African Christianity, far more Dionysian in spirit than Apollonian) was far more a statement of the antiquity of his House than a living faith. Still, he was the black sheep of the family that took the religion seriously, causing a certain level of embarrassment to his Archon and family elders. In the end, they managed to soothe the family waters by subtly encouraging him to use his own funds to spread the Gospel in a distant corner of the Imperium.... like, for example, the Empty Quarter, over 100 parsecs from the family firms.

After arriving in the Quarter in 987 Imperial, Washington carefully considered how to spend his inheritance. Over 50% was used in the down payment of a 65-year-old Stellar Bounty-class merchant, the *Smorgasbord*, from Tukera Lines, and another 20% in bringing her back to good working order. (The rest was invested in Nulinad real estate.) Over the next two years, he built a small network of sales agents on the Class-A ports on the notable Bwap worlds of Wesaswek/Lentuli, Marhaban/Lentuli, Tapewa/Gimushi, and Ka-aswa/Yogesh. Using his agents – generally Bwap, but occasionally Vilani – Caleb secured the freight contracts he needed, bringing goods from these worlds to the Bwap population of Hebrin.

Between 987 and 990, it was rough going, forcing Washington to sell a 30% stake of his ship to a Bwap venture capitalist group. Despite this, he bet the farm on a 50 million credit refit of the *Smorgasbord*. He skated the edge of bankruptcy for a full year until war was declared between the Imperium and the breakaway Confederation. Many cautious Bwap shippers refused to make the 17-parsec journey to Hebrin, and many of the larger & better freighters were chartered by the Imperium for her war effort. The disappearance of much of the competition made life much easier for Washington. When the Empty Quarter Sector Fleet was dispatched to help shore up the front, Washington's gamble in refitting his ship finally paid off in attracting more business, even as shipping fees soared.

Now, with the money side of his life secure, Captain Washington can turn to his calling, distributing Bibles to the Solomani who desire them.⁶ (Tradition-minded Vilani are uninterested in some other culture's religion: and anyways, "Only True Humans should worship the True God!") He arranges them to be printed in Bwap space on high-contrast plastic-paper (so they can be read in a variety of lighting and humidity conditions), and distributed them on Hebrin, paying their shipping fees out of his own pocket. He also occasionally hires freelancers to further their distribution to other nearby star systems. Various members of the local Islamic Ummah have taken a vocal dislike to him, and Washington has grown more careful in distributing his Bibles. He is also increasingly less likely to leave the Imperial starport while in Hebrin subsector, preferring to turn to third parties – like the PCs – to handle interactions with the locals.

Roleplaying Washington:

- Being a strict Geilgist believer, Washington assumed that non-human sophonts have no relationship with God, nor do they require any. "When they die, they die – and that's a lot better than most humans will get!" He works with the Bwaps regularly, and loves to haggle with them over some obscure regulation or other. In his off-time, he has been teaching his Bwap crew how to *really* dance and play lively African music with elegant Vilani musical instruments, leading to interesting outcomes. The Bwap are comfortable living with a charismatic, Spirit-filled man – bureaucratic Bwaps prefer to have charismatic leadership on their worlds.
- He is confident that some Muslim will kill him eventually – but it won't happen without a fight. And the longer he can delay the inevitable, the better it is for his work and the greater his reward in Heaven. For a 'dead man walking', Washington is a remarkably cheerful fellow. "I am utterly immortal – until the day God Himself decides to kill me. And who am I to say that He shouldn't do so?"
- As Washington was born a member of a Solomani-culture, Imperial-race ruling aristocracy that has dominated the local Vilani of Gushiirdiimi/Gushemege since the rise of the Second Imperium, he naturally sees the Vilani as unthinking, industrious corporate drones, ever-reliant on their expert machines to make any decisions according to tried-and-true rules (see **Vilani & Vargr**, page 33). His disdain of the 'drone-humans' is palpable. Arguments defending the worth of their culture fall on deaf ears: 'some human cultures (individuals, religions, languages...) are simply better than others.'⁷
 - Note that most of the Gushiirdiimi aristocracy are descendants of black colonists (Americans & Africans). FYI, Vilani skin tones are usually light brown, sometimes deepening to dark brown and black. Hair varies from dark brown to black: eyes, from grey to gold. (**Vilani & Vargr**, page 2) White and yellow skin tones are tied to Solomani genetics, as is blond, red, and light brown hair.
- Like most Imperials, Washington has no interest in egalitarianism or democracy. The local Abadani (East Indian communist-socialist) claims of equality bring only gales of laughter: "So the evil Ruling Nobility is replaced by the righteous Ruling Party. Spare me." Enforcing class, sexual, racial equality demands a huge expenditure of money and controls and busybody commissars, an ever-escalating war against reality which invariably collapses into dust when the public is finally tapped out. Democracy is seen as a battle of

gives the captain the ability to handle multiple hostiles, while giving a stronger kick in the teeth of the leader of the pack.

The 'special sauce' is the upgraded computer. More hits on the enemy leads directly to less time under enemy fire, and less hits on your own ship. Of course, buying a new computer for an old ship was the biggest gamble Captain Washington made, but it has paid off handsomely.

As there is a stronger demand for cargo ships that actually arrive, the ship can be realigned to jump2 operations - generally more profitable than jump3 - turning the additional volume to money-making freight & cargo space.

The Smorgasbord is crewed primarily by Hindus, with strong Bwap, Vilani, and American Indian components. No Muslims are permitted to board, regardless of age, gender, or uniform: the terror risk is simply too big to ignore. Most Vargr are barred as well, as "they are probably scouting the ship for their pirate masters" but the Captain has given certain long-established, highly-respected Vargr brokers and merchants special permission to board. "You gotta weigh the money and the risk... and, sometimes, the money wins."

Chief Physican Farid bin Anas Sharif, M.D.

Over the millennia, the Muslim Brotherhood has morphed into many different variations and flavours across Solomani-inhabited space. The Brotherhood universally promotes the Islamic religion and Sharia law, with a strong focus on strengthening the Ummah (Islamic society). Within the Imperial Empty Quarter, over 80% of donations to the Brotherhood go to charitable institutions, primarily hospitals and medical clinics: several schools, religious & technical institutions, and crop & terraforming initiatives are also under the aegis of the Brotherhood. The remaining 20% goes to administrative overhead, of course.

Farid, born on the prosperous world of Lukaau, had a rather happy childhood. His father, a gunner on the Vilani merchantman *Mudladnashera*, was often away for months at a time, but always brought a ton of gifts and stories when he returned to his family. Anas' TL 14 salary went quite far on the TL 9 world of Lukaau, and when his son Farid dreams of crossing the sea of stars as well, his father made certain that he got into the best university in the system. Farid made the mildly clever decision to focus on xeno-medical care, able to treat members of the Vargr and Bwap species, as well as Vilani and Solomani humaniti. Unfortunately, there were no berths available to him after he graduated, so Doctor Farid worked in the Imperial Starport medical clinic for the first few years of his career.⁸

It was while he was working at the starport that he heard of his father's leukemia, the Spacer Killer. His father refused the medicinal, chemotherapy and radiation regimes that would have merely delayed his death, at great expense to his family. Instead, he made his son promise to care for the millions of Muslims in the Six Subsectors that rarely had access to any decent care at all.

After his father's death, Farid remained in the starport clinic for another year, but his concern for his patients managed to catch the eye of a travelling Charity LIC executive (See **Stellar Reaches** #5, "Sand Castles", for more information on Charity.) After quickly accepting an offer to join the corporation, he transferred to the world. The years he spent there were the most professionally rewarding of his life, working with outstanding equipment and amazingly competent (if very demanding) professionals. And it was not only professionally rewarding: he met his Ilham there as well, eventually marrying her in 980 Imperial.

After ten years there, he had almost completely forgotten the promise he made to his father until news of his mother's death reached him in 988. After grieving, he reconsidered his life, and convinced his wife to leave Charity with him. Taking their three children with them, the family had no problem finding work with Charity on their resume, but they kept an eye open for a way to help the poorer Muslims in the sector. Finally, a friend of a friend

hooked them up with the Muslim Brotherhood: amazed to make such a catch, they made him head of one of their few medical ships and put him to work immediately.

Now, Dr. Fahid has a multi-million credit ship as his responsibility. Keeping ship and crew safe in an unarmed but valuable vessel in pirate-infested space would be a heavy burden on a man half his age. But he can't retreat now: his people call to him, and he must answer their need. But his wife no longer supports his dream, finding it too risky and dangerous: "Why can't we work on a safe world, like Charity? At least until the Imperial Navy returns. Then, when the pirates are gone, we can follow your dreams of helping the Ummah! If we die out here, how will that please Allah?" At least his children have left the ship and are attending college back home on Lukaa, inshallah!

Unfortunately, the Brotherhood can't help him with security besides a few low-level guards: it has its hands full organizing a jihad against the pirates. What the good doctor needs is an edge, an experienced friend in tough times. Perhaps there is a Traveller who is willing to lend a hand, someone who also cares about the weak Muslims of the sector. If a free trader or even a scout could lend a hand until the Navy returns, it would take a load off of his mind! The Doctor can't pay in money, but Allah sees all.

Attire: Dr. Fahid wears standard scrubs when on duty. Off duty, a light beige dishdashah (dress for Arab men) is usually worn, with Shumagg and Ogal (a.k.a. the red & white headcloth, and the circlet that holds it in place.) Light shoesocks are usually worn as well, sometimes exchanged for slippers for variety. Dr Fahid hates vacc suits, a quirk that may kill him one day. He bears no weapon, and usually doesn't use a datapad, preferring to use the computer net at his desk or the medical complex instead. He prefers to use a plain copy of the Koran for devotions and study: his one extravagance is a very ornate and expensive prayer rug.

Chief Physican Farid bin Anas Sharif, M.D. 5859C7, 40 years, Medic-3, Surgeon-1, Anglic (Transform)-1, Modern Vilani-0, Vargr (Vuakedh, an Irilitok tongue common in Antares and the Empty Quarter)-1, Bwap-0, Wheeled Vehicle-0, Desert survival-0. Native Tongue: Lukaa Arabic.

Ship: Mutadaffaq Class: Helper II
Type: Hospital Ship Architect: Alvin Plummer
Tech Level: 12

USP
 H-2611122-050000-00000-0 MCr 83.212 200 Tons
Bat Bear 1 Crew: 13
Bat 1 TL: 12 Agility: 0

Cargo: 8 tons Passengers: 6 Low: 20 Fuel: 42 EP: 2
Craft: 1 x 2T Air/Raft, 1 x 1T Ground Buggy, 1 x 4T Ambulance G-Carrier
Fuel Treatment: Fuel Scoops and On Board Fuel Purification
Backups: 2 x Model/1 Computers

Architects Fee: MCr 0.832 Cost in Quantity: MCr 66.570

HULL: 200 tons standard, 2,800 cubic meters, Flattened Sphere Configuration
CREW: Pilot, Engineer, Steward, Medic, Gunner, 8 Medical Crew
ENGINEERING: Jump-1, 1G Manuever, Power plant-1, 2.000 EP, Agility 0
AVIONICS: Bridge, Model/2 Computer, 2 Model/1 Backup Computers
HARDPOINTS: 2 Hardpoints
ARMAMENT: None
DEFENCES: 2 Triple Sandcaster Turrets organised into 1 Battery (Factor-5)
CRAFT:
1x 2-ton Air/Raft, 1x 1-ton Ground Buggy, 1x 4-ton Ambulance G-Carrier
FUEL:
42 Tons Fuel (2 parsecs jump and 28 days endurance)

On Board Fuel Scoops, On Board Fuel Purification Plant

MISCELLANEOUS:

15 Staterooms, 20 Low Berths, 2 High Passengers, 4 Middle Passengers,
20 Low Passengers, 8 Tons Cargo

USER DEFINED COMPONENTS:

1 Hospital Ward (15 tons, Crew 6, 0.050 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.100),
1 Medical Lab (4 tons, Crew 1, 0.030 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.080),
2 Autodocs (2 tons, Crew 0, 0.030 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.300),
1 Analysis (4 tons, Crew 1, 0.025 Energy Point, Cost MCr 0.200)

COST:

MCr 84.044 Singly (incl. Architects fees of MCr 0.832),
MCr 66.570 in Quantity

CONSTRUCTION TIME: 57 Weeks Singly, 46 Weeks in Quantity

COMMENTS:

The Helper II-class hospital ship is a TL C Beowulf, with the cargo area refitted as a medical centre. It is a small but highly capable medical centre, for use by the Iper'mar in the Imperial Empty Quarter.

The Hospital Ward holds a surgery theatre, a trauma centre, an intensive care unit, and a ward of five beds.

Note that the medical equipment is at TL D, but the ship is at TL C.

The Fairyland was an old & worn Free Trader even before her refit by Charity LIC in 970. Renamed Nightingale, she was worked hard until the maintenance problems were seriously eating into profits. She was due to be stripped and sold for scrap before the Muslim Brotherhood put in a bid for her. Now renamed the Mutadaffaq (Arabic: "Running Water") with a completely new jumpgrid & jump engine, and a partially rebuilt power plant, manoeuvre drive, and life support system, she will be seeing her 150th year in space this year.

It would be nice if the Mutadaffaq would just stop complaining about it, though. Even dead in space, her metal skeleton groans, and the racket when she enters and leaves a gravity well has got to be heard to be believed. (The ship engineer was something of a doubter, but the Mutadaffaq has made him a devout Muslim believer, praying like he never prayed before...) The artificial gravity noticeably wavers in strength depending on where you stand. Then there's the ships' computer, which the Captain swears has gone rampant: "After 150 years of pushing digits, you know it has developed a mind of its own. All it's waiting for is the right time to strike. I know it! Inshallah, our deaths will be swift and merciful..."

Footnotes

¹This robot may be obsolete in civilized space, but in the Imperial Empty Quarter, the Biraakid multibots are definitely cutting-edge. Of the 127 Imperial systems of the Empty Quarter, 12 systems are at or above TL 12, the technological level where true robots can be manufactured. And only four of these worlds are above TL 12, thus putting the Biraakid multirobot into obsolescence (but not technically obsolete, as it is still useful.)

In most of the Imperium, Naasirka dominates the production of these robots, but in the Six Subsectors Naasirka has only a small share of the market

(measured by territory or units-per-world), dominated by five hungry competitors, all based on Yogesh, the centre of robot production in the region. The local firms can generally adjust to market conditions faster than the Vilani megacorporation can, and frankly, Naasirka simply isn't willing to put in the blood, sweat, and tears needed to dominate the competition in a very marginal, low-profit market.

Note that Naasirka DOES call the shots on wealthy Ushmigad, and has a heavy presence on the well-off Bwap worlds. If you measure market share by revenue and profits, Naasirka retains her dominant position,

thanks to her presence on the more civilized and technologically advanced worlds.

²The official Traveller history of the Psionic Suppressions (800 to 826) traces the origin of these orders to “a series of financial, ethical, and moral scandals within the Psionic Institutes” Moreover, numerous Institutes were proven to be linked to the Zhodani Consulate, thus provoking the Imperium to move against the Institutes, and eventually against psions in general.

The ‘Referee’s history’ notes that the Office of the Emperor and the Intelligence Agency “became convinced that... approximately 60 percent of the Psionics Institutes within the region spinward of the Corridor sector were being financed, at least in part, by Zhodani money.... The Zhodani were believed by many at that time to be laying the groundwork for a ‘fifth column’ to operate in Imperial space during a war planned to break out between 810 and 820. The Imperium moved to combat this.” This was executed by Empress Paula II issuing the Suppression Orders (SO 1 to 131).

Some of these suppression orders have been secretly revoked by 1105. This permitted the re-establishment of two Institutes operating under Imperial auspices (one on Imperial-occupied Terra, one in the Spinward Marches world of Wypoc). “Both Imperial chartered Psionics Institutes are under military control, and are engaged in psionics research. Their existence is of the utmost secrecy.”

(All quotes above are taken from the MegaTraveller Imperial Encyclopaedia, pages 35 and 50.)

Recent work regarding Imperial culture understands that the Vilani have always loathed psions and their reality-warping (and deeply untraditional) powers – see the sidebar Psionics, in the GURPS supplement Interstellar Wars, page 135, for more information on traditional Vilani/First Imperium/Ziru Sirka views on psionics.

³Pro-Solomani sentiment within the six Subsectors is appreciated; but the locals are generally too poor, low-tech, and parochial to be of major assistance. Still, even the Chief will admit that some of the locals have talent...

⁴This isn’t actually true: the wealthy pirate world of Saerrog (Kakhasaek/Empty Quarter 0312) has a UWP of B110300-F in 993, and can handle an overhaul of the

Yutaka. How the INI ship got there will be an interesting story...

⁵See **Stellar Reaches** #9, “Ikonic Voyage”, for more information on Oekhikr’rugosankis and the Saerrog Pack.

⁶This character is a partial memorial to Scott & Jean Adam, wealthy Americans who went on a world-wide tour to give away Bibles. Along with Phyllis Mackay and Robert A. Riggle, they were captured by Somali pirates, and killed during a U.S. Navy rescue attempt. To appreciate the difficulty of successfully pulling off such a rescue attempt, have the PCs roleplay Imperial Marines, attempting to rescue the rather unlikely⁹ Captain Washington after the *Smorgasbord* has been boarded by Muslim Pirates of the Far Future.

You will find that Technology Levels are far less important than Morality Levels.

Captain Ahblocoenazin, Imperial Navy.
While contrasting the Barbary Pirates of the Early American era, the Somali Pirates of the Late American era, and the various Arab Raiders of the Imperial Era.
990 Imperial

Travellers should themselves, as the first and best line of defense: doable in the Imperial universe, but many governments in the real world have made it illegal for civilian sailors to arm themselves for self-defence.

Evil morons.

But no matter: as the power of the nation-state continues to slowly disintegrate, the right to self-defence will be increasingly demanded, and then simply taken by both sailors and citizens, regardless of the braying of the authorities and their collapsing power-structure.

The blog of the deceased Travellers are here:

<http://www.svquest.com/> Some nice ideas can be mined by peaceful, Christ-minded Traveller groups.

Those Travellers who are interested in continuing the mission may visit

<https://secure.oneplace.com/opendoorsgivebible/default.aspx> to make a donation.

As I do believe in the resurrection, I hope to go Travelling with the Adams someday, not on the New Earth – no seas – but in the New Heavens.

Christus Victor!

⁷This is modeled after the invaders from Iran – the original ‘Aryans’ – who set themselves as the ruling castes: “the priests (Brahman), aristocracy (Kshatria) and the businessmen (Vaisia) of the society.” - <http://adaniel.tripod.com/aryans.htm> Whether the Aryan invasion ever happened is in dispute.

⁸PCs and Referees interested in the Starport Medic career may be interested in the “Starport Medic” Prestige Class, written by Christian "Chaos" Schwietzke in **Stellar Reaches #4**.

⁹What can I say? Plaster saints bore me to tears, even more than politically correct drivel. And that’s saying something!

Appendix: The Invasion of Guudagi

In the year 985, the *Hillman* was put to work as part of an Emptyhead-style invasion fleet. It consisted of:

- The *Hillman* herself as the command ship, bearing two Battle-class SDBs (See the Appendix of the article “Zukhisa” in **Stellar Reaches #11** for details);
- *Arcane Voices*, an Amethystium-class liner (See “Biography: Selected Ship Masters and Vessels of the Empty Quarter” in **Stellar Reaches #7**) bearing 1000 TL A troops and equipment;
- Twelve Beowulf-class Free Traders, each bearing 4x four-dton TL A armoured vehicles and their crews;
- Two Broadsword-class mercenary ships. While their firepower was welcome, of greater importance were the two modular cutters they each bore. Specialized modules were used to provide infrastructure for the invasion force, and the construction of a small space station to support the Battle-class SDBs. (See **GURPS Traveller: Modular Cutter** for the vast variety of modules available.)

[Referee: Of even greater importance than the ships themselves, was the fact that they could and did return to Irash to pick up additional men and material, while the natives could not resupply.]

On 104-985, the strike force arrived in orbit over Guudagi, with landings following soon after. The weaker nations, on the edge of native-inhabited territory, were conquered first. While the invaders were equipped to TL 9-A specs, they were not as experienced or as well-trained as the TL 5-6 native soldiers. It took the invaders three to six months to become proficient in battle: by that time, quite a bit of equipment was lost to the native forces, some of which was put to work against the invaders themselves.

Despite the courage and adaptability of the local forces, the last major city was conquered by the Mussoorie Association in 101-986. The local colonists from Irash now ran the world: fearful of insurrection, the new Mussorie Lands planetary government established harsh laws over the native inhabitants. Most of the expensive off-world military forces were withdrawn during 987, replaced by soldier-colonists from Irash. While the general tech level of the colonial soldiers remained at TL A, the level of equipment fell, from grav armoured troop carriers, plasma rifles, and combat environment suits to air/rafts, laser rifles, and flak vests.

Between 986 and 990, the size of the colony increased two-hundred-fold, from 500 to 20,000, composing largely of young male Irashi, hired as soldier-colonists. As part of their pay, they have been given women purchased or stolen from the native population as wives, as well as a grub stake and the basic tools needed to raise a crop, and a shipping container or two for housing. Those families that are pure Irashi are already establishing themselves as a ruling caste: the children of the mixed-race marriages will most likely develop into an intermediate caste between the rulers and the lower native classes.

As of 993, the world quietly lies under the yoke of the colonists. Order is maintained in the native cities mainly by locally-hired men, often as not soldiers and policemen of the vanished native nations. The rumours of ‘a secret native army with stolen high-tech equipment, deep in the uncharted lands’ are rapidly turning into fanciful legends and vague myths told to entertain children. There are still minor acts of resistance, but they continue to dwindle in number and scale over time. The colonists no longer have to massacre neighbourhoods and villages to compel obedience, and the locals are now quick to turn over any insurgent they find. The colonists have also chosen not to

interfere with local efforts to rebuild and repair their partially-destroyed cities. Even after defeat, life goes on: and the natives still clearly outnumber the colonists. Perhaps one day, they will regain their liberty.

Referee: The main criteria between 1) assimilation and synthesis of a new nation and 2) either the invading settlers or the natives expelling or exterminating the other seems to be race & religion. Consider the old Celts of England, who were invaded and conquered by the Romans, then the Germanic tribes, then by the Franks. None of the invaders were kicked out by a national revolt: all became part of a new version of 'England'.

In contrast, the Afrikaners of South Africa never merged into a new nation with the native Bantus and Zulus: their young families abandoned the nation from the end of apartheid onwards, merging with and vanishing into the old White Commonwealth. A similar yet different development existed in southern Sudan, with the Arab Muslims, long accustomed to treating the black southern Christians and Animists as slaves, eventually lost control of the region despite centuries of domination. Even the invisible lines of religion can annul the power of the conqueror: see Ireland in the early 20th century, or the exit of Belarus and Ukraine from the Soviet Union.

Now, bringing all this to the point at hand:

Both the Irashi and the Guudagi (demonym of Guudagi) are Indian-Vilani, and are closely related in culture and religion as well as race. The 985 invasion marks the 18th time Irash has invaded Guudagi since the foundation of the Third Imperium almost a millennia ago. As a comparison, for the last 985 years, England has been invaded once (1066, Normans) and Ireland has been invaded twice (1169, Normans; 1541-1607, Tutor England).

So, the invaders and the conquered are similar enough to cause me to doubt that the Guudagi will ever regain their freedom in the lifetimes of anyone living. Freedom will come, but it will come to a fundamentally changed world. The world that was is lost for good. Unless...

Outside of the major cities and roads, the power of the colonists is far weaker. Many towns have never seen an off-worlder: the more isolated villages are actually unaware of the conquest of their world. Many of these desperately poor, largely illiterate villages have no radio, books, or newspapers, and have never been farther than 20 km from their village. (Note that most of the planetary population lives in this TL 2-3 level technology level: TL3 is the official TL of the planet, as of 993 Imperial.) Much of the world remains uninhabited: but the Mussorie Lands government is conducting air/raft and orbital surveys of the entire world. After the Rim War is over, they plan to petition the Duke to send Imperial Scouts to assist in local surveys.

In the meantime, the colonial settlement has continued to grow. Now named Vijayī (Hindi: "Victorious"), the stellar-tech shanty-town now has a slap-dash Class E starport to match. The current Governor, elected by the colonist, is petitioning the local Ducal family to send a scion to rule the world – and so tap into the wealth and power of that family to build up the colonial position. Otherwise, the Rim War has sucked away available wealth and interstellar trade, so – outside of vigorous population growth – development has slowed substantially.

Youtubes for the Imaginative Referee

Because everyone's imagination can use a prod

Many Traveller Referees have their own favourite pools for inspiration, ranging from ancient history to the latest movies. I tend to draw upon Google News as my favourite pool, but here, I will do a rather random dump of links and a few free-form thoughts. Film clips dominate, but there are a few songs and – believe it or not – a classic, Web 1.0 static text page!

Three Excellent programmers -

<http://reprog.wordpress.com/2010/03/21/the-hacker-the-architect-and-the-superhero-three-completely-different-ways-to-be-an-excellent-programmer/>

Here, we have three different ways to approach and solve a problem: “The hacker, the architect and the superhero.” Intense Referees can use this as a model to figure out just how that NPC insane genius thinks, and reward players that can follow – and then outguess – what the mad scientist is up to.

A shuttle launch, seen from an airplane -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GE_USPTmYXM

Most starships of the Traveller universe do not leave an exhaust trail, but this video suggests what a pilot might see as he approaches/exists the starport.

All I Ever Wanted -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVmtG9_55F0

A classic emo song for a torn Imperial Noble. Monumental architecture depends on the Referee's flavour of the Third Imperium, naturally.

The Quiet Earth – Saturn Rising -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2hnfTqKOO>

Ever wanted to really fix a certain PC's wagon? Set up some irresistible schmuck bait, preferably in such a way that the PC *knows* that he shouldn't try this, but he just *can't* resist it. (Try to avoid giving facial clues - maniacal laughter is right out.) Then have him *personally* teleported to the other side of the galaxy... it's a lot more fun than “meteor falls, everybody dies!”

Cordyceps Infection

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RuopJYLbVrI>

The Traveller Universe has a host of strange ecosystems and more fun fungal infections than you can shake a stick at. (An entire planet of fungi has been detailed in a Challenger article – you can buy them at

www.rpgnow.com – but the name of the article escapes me.) So, all you need is to create a cordyceps infection for humaniti, and you're all set!

A Tiny Apartment Turns into 24 Rooms -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lg9qnWg9kak>

This kind of interior design can be quite common on long-duration starships, cramped spaceports, and asteroids where space is at a premium.

The Incredibles – Buddy Spiked -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G9CZjr7rf6ET>

This is just for the adrenaline rush.

The Dominoes Fall -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxQX9fyf2aI>

Not every government falls the same way. But, there are similarities. There's always some incident – a man burns himself to death in Tunisia, a hungry young woman beats a drum in Paris, or there are no bananas for sale in East Germany....

V for Vendetta: Last Fight Scene -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLqEWD01VQk>

A Noble and his householders are killed by an insurgent. Just so you know, Imperial Marines are trained in sabres. They also know that continuous cover/suppression fire is a *good* thing.

A Proper Noble Funeral -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GuILHU_uueo

I always thought that a good High Vilani Noble funeral would look something like this. Incidentally, the anime Seirei no Moribito (Guardian of the Spirit) is worth a look, if you prefer swordplay to guns.

The Swim Back -

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYZ_77qxRr0

How does a man beat a genetically enhanced superman? *This* is how. If a Traveller Referee can teach his players – not the player characters, the actual people before him – this lesson, he has done very well, indeed.

The Far Future -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WppJEf3ZtFU>

Traveller is set in the far future: and when I say ‘far’, I mean about 3000 years in the future. Of course, the “TL 15” technology shown is more likely to appear in 100 years, not 3000, but try to keep the proper perspective anyways. About the only thing that will really take millennia to achieve is FTL travel: and this is impossible, if only because of the time travel paradoxes involved.

Sense of Wonder -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN8xvX7ZHnc>

Yes, this is a romantic ballad, but nevermind: I love the sci-fi eye candy. It’s hard to do good scenery description on the fly in a verbal role-playing game, but practice makes perfect.

OK, the actual anime behind the shots deserve a brief mention. The anime 5 centimeters per second is focused on the importance of “time, space, people, and love.” I suspect that it would be difficult to Travellers to maintain relationships with dirtsideers when the individuals in question are apart for weeks at a time (at best: months at a time is more likely) and there is a distinct possibility of the Traveller in question will never return, and the dirtsideer will never even know why...

In The Year 2525 Music Video -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5tLTb4P1HD8>

Just a set of fun images. Pick one, and build a story or a scenario behind it. Throw in the PCs, and see how they handle it. Rinse, and repeat.

Toy Story 3 – Incinerator Scene -

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kivfPjkUzp0>

Death is inevitable: how you die is where things get interesting. This is especially applicable to Travellers, and part of the job description for Imperial Scouts. Also, note that salvation can come in the oddest forms, sometimes involving little green men and mechanical claws.

GardenPool.org –

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMkmgolAj6o>

Back to dreary old realism for the last link. On the poorer worlds – certainly including the Imperial Empty Quarter – you’re going to work with a less-than-optimal equipment set to keep yourself and your people alive. This video is a good way to model just how these impoverish worlds pull off this feat. Despite the sneering nickname given to them, the Emptyheads are not stupid: stupid people simply don’t last long in a pitiless and uncompromising environment.

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