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MASTERS AND MINIONS™

The StarCorps Dossiers

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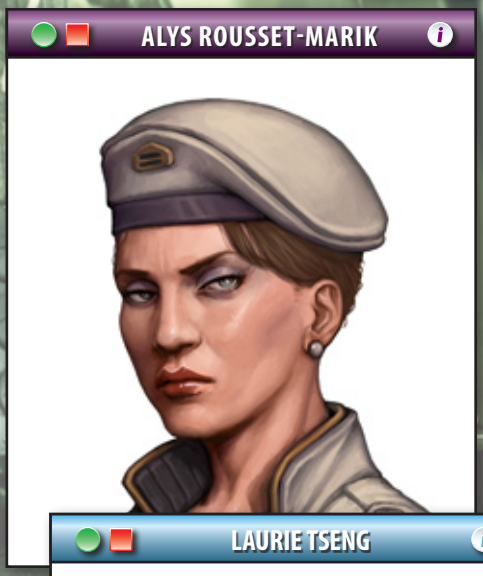
A TIME OF WAR COMPANION

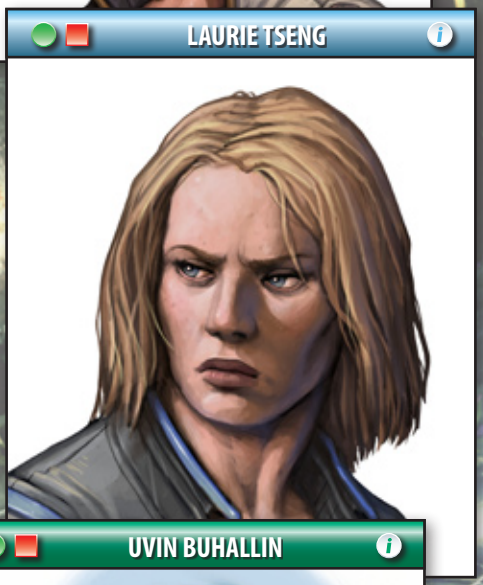
RULERS OF THE UNIVERSE

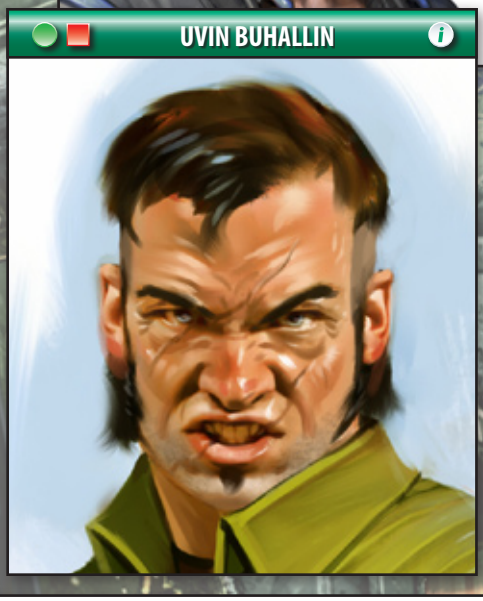
Who is the Director of the Internal Security Force? Planetary ruler of Regulus? Current Marshal of the Armies? Merchant Factor of Clan Diamond Shark?

As one of the most powerful interstellar corporations in the Inner Sphere—with satellite plants in every House—such questions are imperative for StarCorps Industries. In the tumultuous time of the Jihad, as power brokers fall and new personalities rise to prominence, the answers to such questions can mean the difference between a fat in-the-black account and operations in the red. And no corporation, much less one as powerful and far reaching as StarCorps Industries, treats failure well.

Masters and Minions: The StarCorps Dossiers is a sourcebook from the perspective of StarCorps Industries, compiled from dozens of sources by an army of administrators, all with an eye towards furthering StarCorps markets and interest. Masters and Minions is a complete who's-who of the *BattleTech* universe, with well over a hundred personalities detailed. Short overviews of all the major and most minor factions of the Inner Sphere are also included, briefly covering such details as their most notable factories, planets and military forces.







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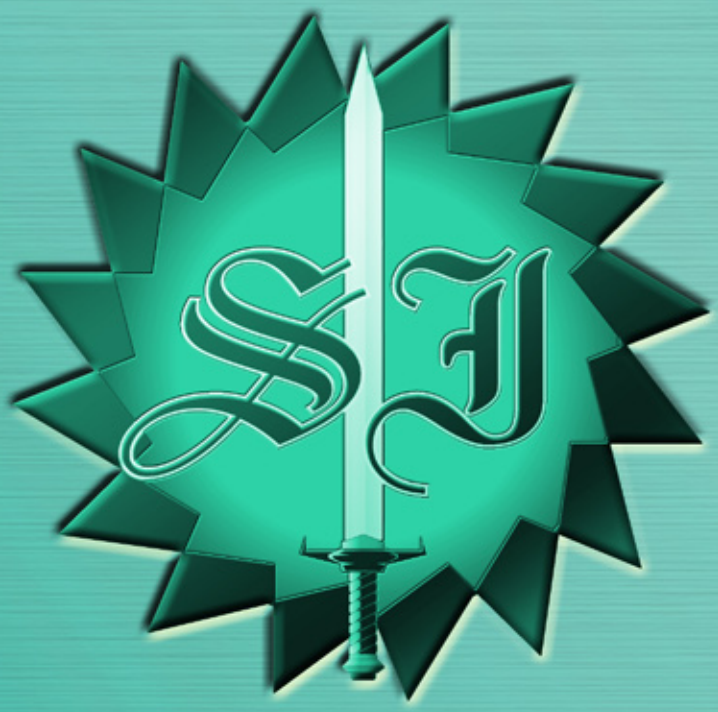

Masters and Minions
The StarCorps Dossiers

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PURIFICATION OF THE DAMNED

Star Corps DockPort Facility K
Ciotat, Lyran Alliance
4 January 3077

Director Abram Fitzhugh was not a happy man.

The sparse reception area reeked of stale sweat and burnt oil, the only sound the wheezing of the cooling unit that struggled to push out the stagnant heat. Time was wasting while he paced slowly around the gray walled perimeter, noting the threadbare carpet and the plastic chairs that hurt his back just by looking at them.

The time he spent pacing around the waiting area could be better spent structuring the new fiscal budget, or looking over his cost sheets again to see where he could trim some more of the annex's fat. Or searching for new markets for his other interests. Being on the fringe and out of the way had always been an asset for him; when corporate started sniffing around, it was never a good thing.

He stopped pacing and pulled out his data slate again, the message from Regional Director of Internal Affairs Miles Orpik still loaded. Abram looked it over again, hoping maybe this time it would tell him something different.

But he knew it wouldn't.

Sighing, he glanced at his watch for the umpteenth time, noting that the Inspector was now twenty-eight minutes late. As he began pacing again, he calculated how much money that time was worth as he gazed out the single wall-sized window to the hardpan beyond. The *Leopard* was still sitting where it had rolled to a stop over half an hour before, though now the cargo bay doors were open and a ground crawler was trundling up into position.

His mind raced through calculations as he stopped to observe the proceedings. A massive crane traversed into the bay to withdraw whatever secrets the DropShip held, and he saw a small groundcar pull away from under the *Leopard*'s wing and head towards the terminal.

That would be the Inspector.

Abram unconsciously straightened his suit and patted his thinning hair; it would never do to give the wrong impression. He knew from many corporate seminars that to have a hair out of place or a missed wrinkle would imply lack of control; there was no way he was going to project such lunacy to a high-ranking corporate shark. He wouldn't let them sniff blood in the water.

The irony was delicious, in a way—him a director of a semi-secret branch, conducting secret projects, all while running his own secret rings to satisfy his secret habits.

The Inspector-General's office wasn't going to take that away from him.

The dustlock at the far end of the room clicked over, the small panel flipping to green. With a last glance at the continued unloading, Abram squared his shoulders and faced the door, ready to receive his visitor.

Inspector Evita Jackson stepped through the cycling dustlock as it opened, zeroing in immediately on the sole occupant of the reception area. She noted briefly the sparse walls, the drab interior, and the dress and stance of the man who inevitably must be Director Fitzhugh. Smiling inwardly, Evita stepped up to the smaller man and stuck out her hand. "Inspector Evita Jackson," she said crisply, noting the oversqueezing of his hand as he attempted to dominate the introduction. She gave him no time. "You must be Director Fitzhugh?"

He swallowed noisily. "Yes, I am," he replied. He let go of her hand. "Allow me to welcome you to Ciotat, Inspector." His hand was clammy, his grip forced. She could feel his pulse; it was racing.

"Pleased to be here," Evita said. "I apologize on behalf of Director Orpik; he's been quite busy of late." She brushed her fingertips through her bangs, watching him as he glimpsed her scars. He stopped short, caught off guard.

"Oh, ah, thank you. No need to apologize, however," he replied. "As you'll see, everything is in order and our projects continue on time and on budget." He struggled to regain his footing; she pitied him for being so frail and easily distracted.

Evita smiled. "That's excellent news, Director. Please, relax. I'm not here to audit your annex. There is a matter of some importance you and I need to discuss, hence Director Orpik's suddenness in sending me here without proper notification." She glanced out the window at the *Leopard*; the heavy lift was now maneuvering the huge cargo pallets onto its massive bed.

Director Fitzhugh followed her gaze and seemed to take a moment to collect his thoughts.

"I see," the small man replied. Evita watched his neck and saw his pulse slow down. "Well, considering your position and our unexpected delivery, I suggest we head somewhere a bit more … secluded," He turned to look at her again. His face was composed now and she watched his eyes glance her over. He was assessing her now. Apparently he liked what he saw, based on the tight smile that flickered across his face.

She held out her arm, catching Fitzhugh off-guard yet again. "Shall we?"

PURIFICATION OF THE DAMNED

He nodded, taking her arm with his own. "I've made arrangements for you to have the finest suite in Tintigal."

She smiled. "Excellent. Though this is a working trip, I think I can find some time to relax." Suddenly, Evita yawned, then giggled as she covered her gaping mouth. "Excuse me, I think the trip wore me out."

Director Fitzhugh smiled warmly. "Then I will escort you to your room and see you safely to rest. Shall we begin tomorrow at ten?"

"Perfect," she replied. She would be happy to see her room, but she knew she would not immediately be resting.

Steven hated interruptions, especially during his one night of freedom. He glanced around the eatery, noting the cheap furniture and stale food, reining in his building anger. He looked over at Bernita and squeezed her hand before turning back to the woman who'd just slid into their booth near the back.

The woman laughed at them, tossing her head. "Uncomfortable, are we?"

He growled under his breath, wondering who this woman was. While the rest of the boys knew about his weekly rendezvous with his attractive lancemate, they all kept his secret safe from his wife. After all, most of them had secrets, too.

The woman's smile was oily, slick like her hair plastered to her skull. Steven heard a thumping and knew instantly the woman had a weapon pointing at him under the table. He was trapped. He placed both hands flat on the table while Bernita silently clutched his arm.

His gaze glanced off the eddied scar tissue that crept up from her collar and across her cheek.

"So Mister Trevor, I'd like to take this time to make a pitch." Her face still contained the smile, but her eyes meant death. He nodded for her to go ahead, hoping that was what she wanted.

"Good, I see we're of the cooperative type," she replied. Her right hand tapped a small data chip softly on the cheap, chipped Formica of the booth's surface. "Can't tell you how many of these meetings have ended up on the wrong side of the river." The smile again.

Steven cleared his throat, his hands pressing down on the table. "Talk," he rasped. He felt Bernita's hands relax a bit as the tension in the air bled off slightly.

"Excellent. Straight to business, then." She tossed her head again, her scar tissue buckling and flexing. "I need a couple of capable pilots to do a small job for me. No questions asked, because I won't give you answers. Just do the deed and be done, and you won't hear from me ever again."

"And what if we refuse?" stammered Bernita.

"You'd refuse my generous offer?" The woman slid the chip across the table to Bernita, who stared at it as if it was a live snake.

"Say we're looking over the options," replied Steven. Her face … it rang familiar, somehow. But he couldn't place it—she looked like a girl he'd once dated back at the academy, but also like one of his former neighbors on another system, long ago.

"Ah, covering your bets. Very good. I made the right choice, then." She laughed, and there was no emotion whatsoever in the sound. "Let's just say if you refuse, your little 'meetings' at the Red Cave Hotel going public will be the least of your problems.

"Some of those other dirty little secrets your comrades have—well, they might somehow go public, too. It'll ruin the unit, and your contract with StarCorps will be revoked. You'll see your families split up, your lives shattered. And strangely, all the evidence will point to you two as the informants."

Steven felt the blood drain from his face. "You wouldn't dare."

That smile again. "Try me," she said cheerily. "I'm just dying to ruin someone's day."

Bernita clutched his arm, looking at him desperately. Steven knew she couldn't afford to have shame brought on her family's name—her very conservative family would cast her out, shun her.

He glanced at Bernita and nodded grimly, once.

"All right. Like we have a choice."

The woman's smile disappeared, her eyes turned to ice. "You never did."

She slid out of the booth, putting a stack of Kroner on the table. "Enjoy your meal, on me. Details on the chip, as well as the private account you can use to access your payment. No funds until the task is done." She turned to leave, then looked back at them. "I'll know if you screw with me, so I'll just offer this advice. Don't."

With that, the woman glided from the restaurant, never looking back, her steps broad and firm.

It would.

5 January 3077

What started as a ten a.m. office meeting going over budget figures and cost analysis ended in a dinner break at La Jolle, a mid-range restaurant in the heart of downtown Tintigal. Evita played up her end to the hilt, charming the proverbial pants off Abram—and no doubt, the now-relaxed director was plotting to actually remove his *and* her pants at the end of the evening.

If it was necessary, she'd let him.

PURIFICATION OF THE DAMNED

She doubted it would be, however; Evita considered herself an excellent judge of people and could manipulate most of the frail population. Her thoughts flashed briefly to another world, a curly-haired, arrogant face challenging her and her methods …

She blinked, hard. She couldn't afford distractions, not now.

"… so yes, the new project now has really cut into our resources. While I'm glad we're in the final stages, I can't help but wonder about your real reason for being here?" Fitzhugh shoveled more spinach into his mouth, chewing noisily. "It can't be just for a simple check-up on our work. The Director would never waste resources on a simple bureaucratic matter."

Evita looked at him for a moment. She leaned in and whispered conspiratorially. "Well, to be honest, my audit is indeed a cover." She looked him square in the eyes. "I'm here to root out a spy in your midst." She absently scratched her left wrist as she watched his face.

Abram nearly dropped his fork and paled. "A … a … a *spy*?" He shook his head worriedly. "I had no idea …"

She nodded slightly, sympathetic. "You have to admit, a project of this magnitude would entice various organizations to attempt stealing it from you." She sipped her wine, settling back. "If that information gets out, it could compromise StarCorps future plans within Stone's circle of influence."

Fitzhugh nodded. "Well, we're distilling it down into a comprehensive corporate handbook," he noted. "The more sensitive and raw data is being compiled tonight and will be ready for transmission tomorrow afternoon." He sighed heavily. "I just can't believe one of my people would sell us out like that … Does the director know who's behind this?"

"Does it matter? Corporate intrigue is at an all-time high, thanks to a blossoming war market and the changes that people say Lear is suggesting to several prominent business leaders." She tapped a finger on her glass, thoughtful. "Of course, the usual suspects come into play; all the Great Houses, including LIC, plus the Word of Blake and possibly even Clanners. It could be anyone, though I suspect it's probably a corporate rival."

Abram pushed his plate away, the meal unfinished. "Most likely. But I can't see why the Word or a House would want this data when they have access to other, probably better resources." He dabbed his mouth with his napkin. "My guess is probably that it's Earthwerks or GM—we've had some heavy contract competition lately with them in assisting Stone in rebuilding some of the Kittery worlds."

She nodded. "Well, whatever the case, the Director is hoping my visit will either force their hand or turn over something I can use to diffuse the situation. It wouldn't do to have everything ruined so close to completion." She set her glass down and laid several L-bills on the table. "How about you compile some personnel information for me for our meeting tomorrow, say by eight a.m.? I'd like to get an early start."

He sighed. "Sounds fine, Inspector. Thank you for the meal, and I look forward to your lovely presence tomorrow."

She shook his hand and watched him lumber away, knowing full well the panic she'd set in would have him up all night attempting to cover his own secrets. Which would set up tomorrow's chain of events perfectly.

She smiled.

The alarm was beeping.

Her cockpit was on fire. The *Battlemaster* beneath her *Reaper*, thrashing as she drove her fist down and down and down …

Furiously, she scrabbled and slapped, desperately hammering the heat override switch. *It wasn't time, not yet, not yet* … The alarm refused to silence itself, screaming its warning as the heat rose and her flesh puckered and split.

Suddenly, she was awake, sweat pouring, the bedsheet ripped between her hands. Her eyes blazed around the room and locked on the bleating alarm clock. With sudden swiftness, she slammed her fist down, silencing it and cracking the plastic case.

The deafening quiet engulfed her.

She sat, breathing hard, the last vestiges of her fiery cockpit washing away from her mind. Evita stared blankly at the sheets, remembering snatches from her memory—images of a fiery ejection, burning smoke, hospital beds, masked doctors, and … *him*.

Once her equal within the Order. Now her superior.

Her face flamed from embarrassment, feeling the heavy weight of his silver-eyed gaze judging her.

"Damn you," she whispered. Her fists rocketed apart, tearing the sheet more, sundering it to the foot of the bed. "Damn you for saving me."

Her hand flew to her scarring on her cheek, traced along into her hair, down her throat. There, it dove into and across her back and down her left leg, a mass of puckered tissue and scabs. She eschewed beauty—it was a weapon she'd used well and often—and thought nothing of the marring to her skin. It was nothing.

Nothing but a reminder of her past failures.

And his *mercy*.

She snarled. She would succeed with this mission, prove to him and Apollyon that she was worthy.

Her mind turned over the plan, looking again for faults and flaws. There were none she could see. If there were, well, failure would fall upon her and no one else.

PURIFICATION OF THE DAMNED

He would not save her again; he'd been crystal clear on that point. This was her redemption, her resurrection.

Her climb back to grace.

She could not fail.

6 January 3077

Abram Fitzhugh hated early meetings. He sipped at his caff, pondering the inspector's revelation last evening and his subsequent attempts during the long night to make sure all his bases were covered. The last thing he needed was for her to spot his own activities and finger him as the spy.

The door opened with a knock precisely at eight; Evita looked no worse for wear, unlike his own disheveled self. He rose from his desk, a fake smile in place as he attempted to look refreshed and rested.

"Good morning, Inspector! I trust you are feeling better? You look fresh off the spa today."

She smiled shyly, her face turning slightly in and down in modesty. "I am, thank you. I suppose we should get started? I have some ideas on where to begin."

He nodded. "I've pulled the additional files you wanted to check over."

Evita held up a manicured hand. "Actually, I was wondering if we could skip the analysis this morning, and instead pay a visit to your think tank, see what's percolating there. I have to assess operational security protocols anyway, and this would allow me to check everyone out before we start some in-depth questioning." She smiled, almost winking at him.

Abram felt heat rise to his cheeks. "Um, yes, of course." He patted his pocket, feeling for his ID card and magnetic keys. "After you, Inspector," he gestured warmly, sliding the door open.

"With pleasure," she replied, practically swaying out the door.

He followed along behind her, trying to enjoy the view but his thoughts were elsewhere as a myriad of possibilities threatened to overwhelm him.

Evita slowly circled the "control booth," a glass-enclosed perch above the main floor of the annex's data analysis center. She kept her disdain to herself as she listened to Fitzhugh drone on about the various security procedures in place to prevent data theft. The scanning system she'd passed through before entering was at least five years out of date, for instance, and was incapable of detecting her own secrets.

The entire analysis team sat in luxurious comfort below her; modernized work stations, ergonomic chairs, and an enormous three-story window looking out over the picturesque valley seemed to be perks given to the employees to keep them happy. The entire setup was a complete joke to her. StarCorps' Internal Affairs division had no idea how to run a secret operation—or they were more wounded than they let on after ROM's terror attack last year. Which probably accounted for their "hiding in plain sight" plan.

This mission was getting easier to accomplish each moment.

She noted the time, nodded to herself, and jotted something down on her slate in response to the director's latest comment. Movement outside caught the corner of her eye. Turning, she saw the arrival of one of the security 'Mechs, a massive *Warhammer*. The heaviest machine in the hired security team's arsenal.

Fitzhugh noticed her glance. "Ah, yes, our timely patrol from our 'guardian protector.'" She could practically hear his grin from behind her. "The addition of the mercs was my own inspiration, considering our position here could be easily compromised."

Evita suppressed a snort.

She scratched her left wrist. The itch never seemed to go away. "So, Director, let's discuss your network access points. Who has authorization to—"

A tremendous crash interrupted her. She looked up, startled; even though she'd been expecting it, the suddenness still gave her a start.

Outside, the *Warhammer* staggered as a series of missiles and high-velocity shells slammed into it. Behind it, Evita could see a small BattleMech jumping over the tree line into position behind the heavy 'Mech. A *Vulcan*, she noted as she shouted, "Attack! Sound the alarm!"

She watched dispassionately as the workers below scrambled away from the blossoming firefight right outside their window. Errant shells and a missile streaked in and hammered at the ferro-glass, punching through the hardened window and showering the floor with deadly shards. More shells followed, a series of craters erupting on the opposite wall as the unseen attacker continued its assault on the *Warhammer*.

"Inspector! Get down!" Abram shouted behind her, his hands grabbing her shoulders to push her to the floor. She allowed him to do so, her right hand pulling at her left wrist, twisting and scratching at her skin. She could hear the whine of the *Whammy*'s PPC capacitors as they discharged; more glass shattering and twin explosions, then cries of the wounded from below.

Fitzhugh was in hysterics, sobbing about the impossibility of it all and cringing as each new explosion erupted. He stared at her. "How can you be so calm? We need to find safety!"

PURIFICATION OF THE DAMNED

Evita smiled.

"I will, once I'm done."

He stared at her. "Done?"

She raised her left arm in response, rolling back a layer of synthetic skin from her forearm, leaving a bloody sheen behind. Abram stared at her in abject horror. "Y-y-you're one of—"

"I am. Now shut up, and I'll let you live."

He shut up.

Alarms went off inside the building as the battle outside moved off, punctuated explosions and the crackle of PPC fire mixing with nearby sirens. Evita pressed down and a portion of her cybernetic arm opened. She reached in and pulled out a small hand device, thumbing it on.

Abram stared in mute horror. "Wh-wh-what is th-that?"

Evita looked up at him again. "Didn't I tell you to shut up?" She leaned forward, her face inches from his. Her smile was predatory.

Abram swallowed. Hard.

"Ahh, too late you've learned your lesson." She touched the device to his neck; the small electrical stunner discharged on contact with his skin, his nervous system overloaded, and his body shut down within milliseconds. His body slumped to the floor.

Wasting no time, she replaced the stunner in her arm and withdrew two data chips. Rising swiftly, she stepped to the director's console and inserted the first, activating it. The chip would copy the entire system's directory within a few minutes; she looked out at the carnage as she waited.

The *Warhammer* staggered back into view, the *Vulcan* squarely behind it. Fire streamed from the smaller 'Mech's flamer, washing over it and then across the shattered window. The superheated air ignited cloth and flesh, turning the cubicle bullpen into a charnel house. Evita watched dispassionately as the *Vulcan* took a PPC blast directly in the cockpit as the *Warhammer* twisted to its torso; she had no idea whether it was Bernita or Steven who died, nor did she care.

The datachip beeped.

Quickly replacing it with the other chip, she thumbed the initiation switch and let the ROM-encrypted virus initialize. It would be quick, as it wasn't designed to eliminate the entire database, just certain sections.

Specifically, certain biographies and summaries of some very important people who did not want to be found in the coming calamity.

So Berith had ordered.

As the virus did its work, she clenched her left hand and slammed it into the office's window, shattering it in one punch. The fire was raging out of control now and was climbing the walls near her. She picked up the inert form of Director Fitzhugh and heaved him out the shattered window into the inferno below.

The smoke was getting thicker now; she felt her new lungs contract. Her breathing became short as her body adjusted to the internal filtering; Evita paused for a moment as nausea and dizziness washed over her.

The fire reached the window and lit the brocade blinds. The chip beeped and Evita snatched it from the input as the console began to smoke from the heat. She inhaled and her mind snapped back to her *Reaper*'s cockpit, the intense heat burning her hair and skin, her hands barely grasping the ejection bar, the sudden explosion of fire and light and heat, the intense pain along her side as her seat slammed into the *Battlemaster*'s shoulder before rocketing into the sky and her mind into darkness …

A distant explosion intruded into her brain and she realized she was on the floor, gasping. Her filtered lungs labored as she pushed the chips back into her forearm and she snapped the panel shut. The synthetic skin she rolled back into place as best she could, the flap scorched and burnt.

Like the rest of her.

She would not die. Not this time.

Not ever.

Evita laughed.

The flames surging all around her, she crawled to the doorway. The doors were locked open as part of the facility's fire protocols, and she quickly stumbled out, the flames licking at her heels. She staggered down the hall, joining the last stragglers as they exited the burning annex, fire and rescue vehicles slewing into place to contain the raging fire.

She huddled with the survivors, none aware of her actions. Or her nature. To them, she was another victim of the traitorous attack.

The fire had purified her. Among the Frails, she once again walked as their superior.

Avitue smiled.

INTRODUCTION

SECRET.ACCESS: RED

Unauthorized reproduction of this file will result in criminal prosecution, pursuant to StarCorps/CE statute 42.2.5.p and may result in heavy fines and/or incarceration.

>>>File access date 20Dec77; 1442 local<<<

Dear Christiansen Enterprises Employee,

I would like to be the first to welcome you to the StarCorps family! Now that we have formally announced that the acquisition of Christiansen Enterprises will be completed on the first of the new year, I am excited to officially embrace your entrance into the StarCorps Intelligence Division, or SCID as we like to call it.

There will be many challenges that we will face together as your former company is assimilated into StarCorps. Some of you may be reassigned to important facilities or remote regions of the Inner Sphere or even the Periphery, and you may lose contact with one another for some time. No matter where you may find yourself in the next six months, you will be representing corporate interests in a constantly evolving universe. To assist you with this goal, the SCID has developed the Notable Players report, a dossier of the movers and shakers of the 3070s. Now that you have signed our non-disclosure agreement and submitted your DNA sample, we can share this report with you.

The Notable Players report will be the most important document in your first year with SCID. Knowledge of one's clientele can mean the difference between fortune and folly for a business, and if StarCorps is to engage in business with every House, Clan, state, major mercenary unit, and interstellar organization, we need to know who they are and what they want. We sell the materiel of war, but battles are not fought between small arms, armor, BattleMechs, or even battalions or regimental combat teams. Battles are fought between people. Even in space, wars are not fought in a vacuum.

You will eventually be expected to collect and analyze intelligence on the entities described in this report. You are expected to know all of the information contained within it by the start date listed in the assignment letter you will be receiving before the first of the year. You will eventually be expected to verify, expand, or append further information to this report within a year. Start studying now; there will be a quiz, and the quiz will be your career.

If you have any questions, please contact your immediate superior, whose name and contact information will be in your assignment letter. Any attempt to contact another member of SCID will trigger an investigation.

Welcome to StarCorps!

Sincerely,

Roma Gritten

Roma Gritten
Chief Intelligence Officer
StarCorps Industries

RG/ap

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Masters & Minions: The StarCorps Dossiers is a sourcebook for *BattleTech* that offers details of the people and organizations that control the tide of destiny in and around the Inner Sphere. Each chapter deals with one faction, nation, or Clan, along with its most influential people, their motivations, and goals.

As Ms. Gritten mentioned in her letter, and as von Clausewitz observed, warfare is merely the extension of policy. Many *BattleTech* or *A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG* campaigns are focused around the military struggles of the thirty-first century, and these struggles are fueled by the policies of the factions involved. The entities in this book are some of the driving forces behind these battles.

While not every *BattleTech* game needs to be centered on a clash based in the fictional setting, encounters between the forces of the various factions can lend a more authentic feel to your games. *A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG* can similarly be enhanced by bringing the player characters into the flow of the *BattleTech* universe, allowing them to make a little history of their own. Use this book as either an encyclopedia or an inspiration, helping you find or create conflicts around which you can build a campaign.

To assist players and gamemasters alike, we have included a chapter of game rules at the end of this book. In it you will find rules and guidelines for both *BattleTech* and *A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG* to help you incorporate the information in this book into your game and use this book to bring your games to life.

HOUSE KURITA

HOUSE KURITA

StarCorps is always looking for opportunities. Plunging into the twisted neo-samurai culture of the Combine has always been a challenge, but recently events have conspired to open up wonderful loopholes and desperation for us to examine. Those ambitious souls looking to expand the corporate reach of StarCorps into Kurita-space would do well to pay attention not only to the information presented, but also—in good Combine fashion—to what is said between the lines.

—Mukakebe Yojiriski
Liaison, Combine Business Development

THE DRACONIS COMBINE

The Dragon survives

Recent events have not been kind to the Draconis Combine. In the span of a decade, the Kuritan Dragon has gone from an extremely stable and powerful House to one of the weakest Successor States in the Inner Sphere. No outside enemy has conquered it. The fall of the Dragon has come from an internal war that has distracted it so badly, it nearly succumbed to the pressures raging around its borders.

A series of threats and catastrophes has pushed the Dragon to the brink of destruction; even today, rifts exist that may take decades to heal. For the Combine, the insidious actions of the Black Dragons have done more harm to most of the nation than the Blakist war, affecting nearly every world. A critical lack of leadership has hindered the Dragon's ability to recover in the midst of its problems, the least of which is the Word of Blake. Could better choices have been made by the Combine's leadership? Undoubtedly. But, as they say, "hindsight is twenty-twenty."

MISGUIDED OPPORTUNITIES

The Black Dragon coup, executed at a time when the Coordinator and his heir were outside the borders, instigated a messy avalanche of events that has brought the mighty nation to the brink of disaster. Only after Luthien was reclaimed in 3075 and the subsequent "*Misogi* War" (Purification War) that continues to rage has the Kuritan Dragon begun to ascend once more.

While the most obvious and public display of the coup has been Luthien, there have been a large number of other problems that the public, both inside and outside the borders, has not seen. Only by exhaustively analyzing data over the last decade have we started to make any logical sense of the seemingly random events we have heard are occurring within the Combine.

When the Black Dragons initiated their coup on Luthien, it triggered a series of smaller coups on several worlds, notably along the Periphery border worlds and backwater provinces. These world leaders were already leaning towards the "old ways" of the *Kokuryu-kai*, harboring concerns of poor defenses against an unspecified Clan threat and spreading rumors of the eroding of the Dictum Honorium. Believing that a return to the path that once defined the Combine as a paragon of stellar empires was more beneficial, these worlds quietly rebelled with various decisions that skewed the results to Black Dragon interests in the corporate, societal, and military arenas.

During the first six months of the coup, the Dragon lost several key manufacturing facilities and warehousing centers. As a result, the Combine faced a major shortfall of new equipment and supplies by the end of 3068. With materiel being used at a prodigious rate and no Star League funding forthcoming, front-line regiments faced slow supply lines.

Furthermore, what had been a fairly level reliance on raw materials became almost a thousand times greater nearly overnight, as other manufacturers struggled to increase production to fill the large black hole within the Dragon's supply chain. Near-instantaneous—or as close as possible, considering the nation's large scale—elevation of demand forced many corporations to push laborers to work extremely long hours, draining the available workforce. Such pressure-driven conditions saw many resource-dependent corporations such as Metals of the Mountain and Osaka Fuel falter due to equipment failure, union strikes, and other impediments. Several small outlying worlds saw their financial markets break down, causing Prefecture economies to stumble. The financial strain threatened to envelope the entire Combine.

The failures across several markets only gave the Black Dragons more fuel. Several units questioned their loyalty to the Coordinator or the Dragon (the Black Dragon, that is), and the DCMS faced a morale issue that could have escalated into another Ronin War situation. Another catastrophe that would launch the Dragon into a major civil war was not an outcome anyone desired.

With the Coordinator and his heir under blackout communications and no other central command figure to take charge, the Warlord of Pesht stepped into the role of *Gunji-no-Kanrei* and, taking decisive steps, froze several DCMS line units that had been heading to Luthien. The move was brilliant; by freezing these units, he kept the Black Dragon's propaganda from spreading, pinned more questionable units in place until there was time to deal with them, and to the public's eye, kept the Dragon visible in order to cow the more lukewarm members of the Black Dragons from taking more hostile actions. He then declared New Samarkand the Combine's temporary capital, isolating the Black Pearl even further to staunch the Black Dragon's poison from spreading.

CODE OF SILENCE

With a strict clampdown on interplanetary news, the *Kanrei* fought a two-front war for several years against the Blakists and the Black Dragons. The Blakists turned out to be the easier foe; all the *Kanrei* needed to do was point his Warlords at the fanat-

HOUSE KURITA

ics and let them go. The Black Dragons were the more insidious enemy. Aside from the outright seizure of power on Luthien, they have turned corporations, politicians, military officers and bureaucrats into their minions. The war waged in the Combine has been as much a fight of propaganda and politics as the Blakist war has been a military struggle.

Underground press, inevitable in such a strict, controlled society, has only inflamed matters, with inflated accounts, pro-Black Dragon pap, divisive cultural commentary and in some cases valuable leaked military intel finding their way into the public realm. The overt secession of the Azami worlds was the culmination of this silent war, an action that the Coordinator—seemingly recovered from his fatigue at the hand of the Blakists on Dieron—flexed his muscles to stop. While the situation has been resolved (not entirely to the Dragon's liking, no doubt), it provided the Coordinator and *Kanrei* the key assistance needed to begin extensive corrective measures.

Solidifying the ISF and O5P into a functional partnership, the Coordinator has given the tormented intelligence agencies an apparent ultimatum: root out and destroy the Black Dragons thoroughly, or watch the Combine shatter. The resultant *Misogi* War has been more successful—and more startling—than many in the Coordinator's office would have believed. Over fifty thousand collaborators on Benjamin, Pesht and New Samarkand alone were put to the sword, and the Inquisitor Teams (apparently a team made of equal parts O5P and ISF agents) have rooted out the rebel poison at the highest levels of business, industry, social, and military levels.

PRECIPITOUS PATHWAYS

The *Misogi* War has only just begun, with key Prefecture and industrial worlds being part of the first wave. Most estimates do not see this purification ending any time soon; it is believed the Coordinator intends to have every world scrubbed of the treachery of the Black Dragons once and for all. While the wisdom in this action is highly questionable, the success so far is not. Fear and national fervor has sparked like wildfire across the Dragon's worlds, giving the Combine strength in its talons just as it prepares to bring the war straight to the Protectorate.

Questions regarding the Coordinator's (and the *Kanrei*'s) actions and decisions will most likely be debated for some time to come. Slow reactions here, miscommunications there, indecisiveness, overbearing orders—these are all obvious discussion fodder for the rank and file. However, for good or ill, one thing cannot be denied by anyone: the leaders made their decisions based on their loyalty and love for the Dragon.

The damage done to the Combine cannot be calculated without a careful look at each world to see how badly wounded they were. Worlds like Luthien, Benjamin and Al Na'ir will take decades to rebuild; others like Togura and Sutama will only need months. Opportunities abound for those who know how to look for it inside the Combine's borders. However, a deep level of trust among the citizenry has been greatly harmed; with the *Misogi* War in full swing and reports of Blakist treachery abounding, many people not only retain their highly xenophobic attitudes but also now look a lot harder at their neighbors.

In short, it's a good time to invest in the Dragon. Just don't expect to make a lot of friends.

NATAR SHIELD SYSTEM SCANNER (VERSION 2.7.14)

.20Ø

System Scan Initializing

SECURITY LEVEL: DIAMOND

CLAN NOVA CAT

[One cannot examine the Dragon without looking at the Cat clasped to its breast. Nestled along the Dominion border, the residents of the Irece Prefecture are a study in contrasts. Free of Clan oppression, they are still occupied worlds, home to the homeless Clan Nova Cat. While many non-Clan residents believe the Cats continue to take advantage of the Coordinator's generosity while fighting under Stone's flag, they are secretly happy to see much of the Clan's warriors elsewhere. When the war is over, however, things may well get interesting on these so-called "reservations." –MY]

CLAN NOVA CAT

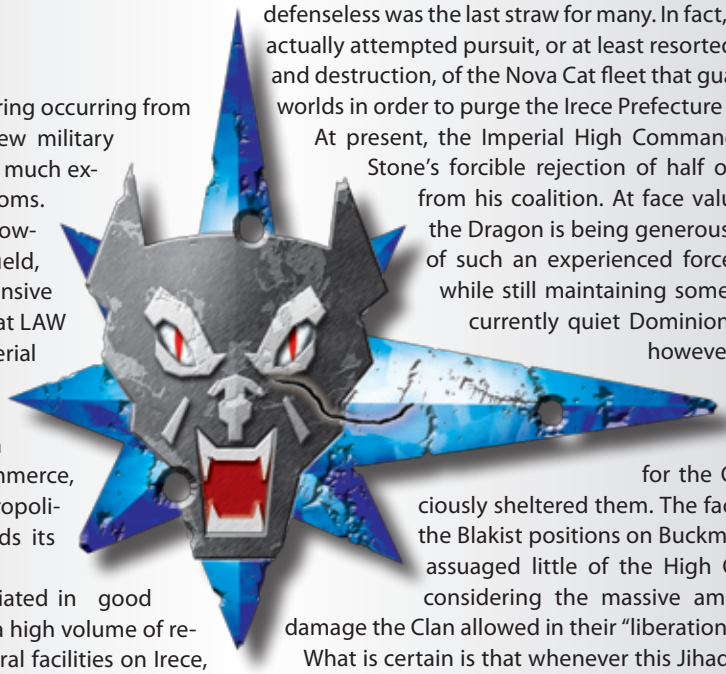
The status of the Clan within the Dragon's borders continues to cause much consternation among the Coordinator's entourage as well as Imperial High Command. The actions of the somewhat-independent Clansmen have been questionable at times, and downright traitorous at others.

The most public indication that all was not well within the Irece Prefecture came when the Clan pulled back their forces to the worlds given to them by the Dragon. Murmurings from Irece indicated that the Clan was in total shock with the complete dissolution of the Second Star League and had pulled back in itself to "figure things out." While their response may not have been ideal, the Clan was still stationed along the Dominion border, which was fine for the Warlords as war broke out across the Davion border, on Luthien and within the Dieron Prefecture.

There were deeper problems, however, and analysis of some of the events from before the historic 3067 dissolution vote reveal how these problems developed.

FELINE SHELL GAMES

The mysterious explosion of manufacturing occurring from the Nova Cats—which has put several new military designs into service—has been a source of much executive heartburn across Combine boardrooms. During the investigation and subsequent low-key arrest of former CEO Hoek Botterfield, documents came to light detailing an extensive resource and manufacturing agreement that LAW had made with the Clan, beyond the Imperial Throne's purview. Such action within the Combine is highly illegal, considering the tight controls the government has on its corporations; the Department of Commerce, Corporate Division occupies an entire metropolitan center on New Samarkand and spends its time dealing with bureaucratic red tape.



The secret deal—thought to be negotiated in good faith by the Clan—provided the Clan with a high volume of resources and the rapid construction of several facilities on Irece, which modified the Omni manufacturing technology LAW used in its own facility on Luthien. In return, LAW received technical specifications and the assistance of several Clan technicians and scientists to begin building Clan-tech factories; the Clan believed these facilities would be within the Irece Prefecture and utilized by the Clan. Instead, LAW shipped the Clan development teams to Coudoux while telling the teams they were on Mualang. Due to their isolation during the development and construction, the Clan didn't know any different. At present, the Coudoux facility is operational, and the island containing the facility is considered part of the Nova Cat's enclave, thanks to an edict by the Coordinator in 3075.

While the Clan churned out several new designs in the years leading up to and through the opening volleys of the Jihad, it was less than originally believed. Khan West, attempting to keep the Clan's damaged state from the eyes of both the Dominion Watch and even the ISF, had his Galaxy Commanders constantly rotate the new equipment throughout the Clan. Such high rotation gave the appearance of major strength to the touman, while giving the Clan's warriors the ability to cross-train with multiple platforms. So while the Clan's true size was nearly half as strong as originally believed, its warriors' experience has become incalculable.

DREAMS AND REALITY

The Clan's subsequent decision to abandon their Irece holdings to pursue some half-baked dream about a FedSuns governor was truly troubling to the High Command. Faced with multiple battle fronts, a growing ideological split, and rumblings from the Azami, watching their "pet" Clan leave an entire section of border defenseless was the last straw for many. In fact, the Black Dragons actually attempted pursuit, or at least resorted to wanton piracy and destruction, of the Nova Cat fleet that guarded the stripped worlds in order to purge the Irece Prefecture of the Clan taint.

At present, the Imperial High Command is satisfied with Stone's forcible rejection of half of the Cat touman from his coalition. At face value, it appears that the Dragon is being generous with the addition of such an experienced force to Stone's army, while still maintaining some troops along the currently quiet Dominion border. Inwardly, however, many Warlords are still seething with the Nova Cat's disregard for the Combine that graciously sheltered them. The fact that the Cats hit the Blakist positions on Buckminster and Luthien assuaged little of the High Command's pride, considering the massive amount of collateral damage the Clan allowed in their "liberation tactics."

What is certain is that whenever this Jihad ends, those Nova Cats returning to their holdings in Irece will be facing a new Dragon with a less-than-pleasant disposition.

HOUSE KURITA

HOUSE KURITA

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

HOHIRO KURITA

HOHIRO KURITA

Rank/Title: Coordinator of the Draconis Combine

Born: 3023 (53 in 3076)

Having ascended to the Chrysanthemum Throne after the passing of his father, Theodore, in 3070, Hohiro's reign as the ruling master of the Dragon has been difficult. Though Hohiro is dedicated to following the ideals laid down by his father, his time in captivity on Dieron has taken its toll.

Hohiro led a task force from Orestes to Dieron in 3068 after the world spun into a meatgrinder under relentless Blakist assault. The Word discovered his arrival, and after a brutal battle against an entrenched DCMS position, the Venatori came away with the Kuritan heir in tow. He was paraded through the streets of the capital and then taken into the stony walls of Fortress Dieron, a massive Castle Brian complex that the Word had captured earlier.

A concerted effort by an infiltration team, with aid from the few survivors of the Black Watch—who'd been shot down when they had originally attempted to land—sprung Hohiro and smuggled him off-world. By many accounts, none of them verified by the Combine, the Combine's heir apparent was near-catatonic, and he suffered severe mental duress for several months after his rescue.

After a few years of slow recovery, Hohiro regained his health. The Coordinator has been making more public appearances and declarations of late, lessening the burden of governing the Dragon's affairs from the *Gunji-no-Kanrei*'s shoulders. Rumors abound of some sort of mental or physical condition that has afflicted the Coordinator since his time in Blakist captivity, but aside from the common mental fatigue associated from those who've suffered severe post-traumatic stress disorder, the Coordinator seems to be in excellent health. His recent handling of the Azami crisis bears witness to that fact; even the *Kanrei* couldn't handle the proud people of the Arkab worlds.

Little is known about the rest of the Combine's ruling family, as they have been under heavy security and secrecy, moving from one Combine world to another to remain a step ahead of Blakist plots.

KIYOMORI MINAMOTO

Rank/Title: *Gunji-no-Kanrei* of the DCMS

Born: 3022 (54 in 3076)

A model DCMS soldier under the reign of Takashi Kurita, Kiyomori Minamoto steadily worked his way to the command of the ultra-conservative Seventh Sword of Light, leading the unit

KIYOMORI MINAMOTO

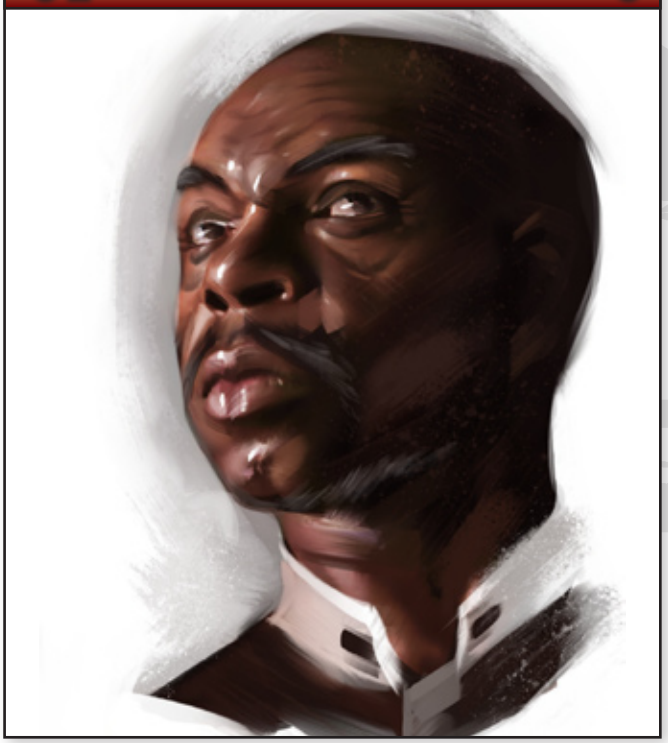
HOUSE KURITA

into the Clan invasion. Though the value of Theodore's reforms were known to him, Kiyomori resisted until the Coordinator spent a day with the regiment and worked out a compromise of beliefs that allowed the Seventh to stick to their ideals while simultaneously elevating their practices into the modern era of war.

Impressed by Minamoto's intelligence and adherence to the bushido philosophy, Theodore made Minamoto one of his lead advisors and Warlord of Pesht. Minamoto was touring the Galedon District when Luthien went under; some have thought he may have had a hand in the *Kokuryu-kai*'s resurgence, but no hard evidence exists. His actions on Benjamin and subsequent authorization of deep, bloody purges across several Combine worlds have been proof enough for many, including the Coordinator, of his loyalty to the Dragon.

While his self-promotion to *Kanrei* may be considered an act of extreme hubris, it cannot be disputed that his stepping up into the leadership of the Dragon during its hour of need spared the Combine a fractious, torturous death as fodder for the Blakists, Bears, and Draconis March forces. His gruff and seemingly abrasive attitude towards the Coordinator soon after Hohiro's return was noted, but as of late, the *Kanrei* has maintained proper decorum and honor towards the Kurita throne since dealing with the Black Dragon cancer.

SHAKIR JERRAR



Rumors from the Imperial Court strongly suggest that it was Minamoto's suggestion to strike the colors of the Fortieth Dieron and Sixth Benjamin Regulars, scattering those few survivors who pass a rigorous O5P screening test into various planetary militia as common infantry.

SHAKIR JERRAR

Rank/Title: Director of the ISF

Born: 3011 (65 in 3076)

An adoptee into the prominent Fusilli family as a war orphan, Shakir Jerrar eagerly joined the DCMS at the first opportunity. However, his oft-sharp tongue and scabrous wit got him into repeated trouble during his tour of duty with the First Proserpina Hussars, gaining him a "promotion" to a lance command within the Legions of Vega.

Jerrar's reborn devotion to the ideals of the Combine, as well as his watchfulness in reporting the worst offenders within the Legion to the ISF, garnered him a closer look by the Dragon's secret police. Satisfied with his record and devotion to the Dragon, he was approached and then trained as a *metsuke* agent, with his first assignment as a watchdog over Sorenson's Sabres, after the troubling events involving the unit on Togura.

Later, his adherence to the strict philosophies of bushido helped him during the heavy purges of the ISF after the attempted assassination of the Coordinator in 3058. He was in line to command all of the ISF's DEST forces when Minamoto tapped him as the new ISF Director after Ninyu Kerai-Indrahar perished on Benjamin in 3068.

Jerrar's reign as Director has been trying. Plagued constantly with a simmering underground war with the *Kokuryu-kai* on several key Combine planets, as well as dealing with several accusations leveled at his own loyalties (due to his wife's family's past affiliations), Jerrar has constantly had to prove himself. After a particularly heated exchange between Jerrar and the *Kanrei* on Benjamin, the ISF began a bloody purge that put the one of 3059 to shame. Working directly with the O5P under the Coordinator's orders, the ISF formed several Inquisitor teams that began purging confirmed (and suspected) Black Dragon agents from every agency under the Dragon, including local world governments. So far, only a quarter of the Combine's worlds have gone under the katana in the *Misogi* War since the purge began in 3075, with more surely to come.

MARA SELENCIA

Rank/Title: Abbess of the Order of Five Pillars (O5P)

Born: 3035 (41 in 3076)

Given over to the Order of Five Pillars on her first birthday by her unknown parents, Mara Selencia has known nothing but service to the Combine through the Order's enigmatic protection

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MARA SELENCIA

of the people of the Dragon and its spiritual honor. Considered an "unofficial" branch of the Combine government, the O5P nevertheless has seen its power rise and fall through the centuries, depending on the whims and dictums of the Coordinator.

The Order was in near-shambles when its Keeper of House Honor died by an assassin's hand in 3065. The loss was doubly hard, as Omi Kurita was not only the people's favorite but also the daughter of the Coordinator. Her loss dealt a crippling blow to the morale of the O5P and still echoes across the organization.

Abbess Selencia ascended to her position when Abbess Tomade Yamiro passed away during a visit to the Combine's new capital on New Samarkand. Overseeing the construction of a new Pillar complex, she died peacefully in her sleep. With her death, the suspicions aroused by the ISF regarding her loyalties have ended, which may well remove the wedge that was developing between the ISF and the Order. Several "accidents" have been recorded over the last ten years in operations that required the two departments to cooperate, with an increasing frequency of incidents through 3074.

Lady Selencia previously ran the Field Operations arm of the O5P, a deadly branch that rivals the DEST in fanaticism and loyalty. While DEST forces tend to use brute strength and other violent means to their ends, O5P operatives employ less aggressive (but by no means less effective) methods such as manipulation, seduction, and diplomacy. Because of Abbess Yamiro's "taint," these agents were finding it more difficult to carry out localized operations, leading the ISF to often handle things on their own terms or simply turn their heads and walk away. Still, O5P missions were more often successes than failures due to the conservative but aggressive staff underneath Lady Selencia.

Small of frame but elegant of stature, Lady Mara Selencia exudes cultural plurality and refinement of the Japanese dictum. Her rigid adherence to standard cultural protocols notwithstanding, she is known both for her tenacity and for her inability to accept "no" for an answer. She has taken steps to mend the growing rift between the O5P and the ISF, though to little success.

SAHALLI ODESSA

Rank/Title: Caliph of the Azami Brotherhood

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

Loyal to the Combine through a centuries-old understanding and agreement, the Azami relationship with the Dragon has become more than strained over the last few years. It has spiraled out of control to the point of secession.

SAHALLI ODESSA

HOUSE KURITA

Leader of the ancient Azami Brotherhood—the militaristic side of the peaceful nomadic desert people—Sahalli Odessa has had the thankless task of leading these newly liberated forces to protect what remains of Azami independence. Thrust into the spotlight due mainly to his quiet and calm nature during his years as a company commander with the Second Arkab Legion, he has been a stabilizing force among the Azami military. It was his decision to trust the Dragon one last time and journey to Benjamin to discuss the situation of the people and the Combine's lack of respect.

Odessa's personal stake in the future of the Azami worlds is large; nearly his entire clan was wiped out in the unfortunate asteroid strike on Arkab in early 3071. His only surviving daughter, Fatima, currently serves as his aide-de-camp while his cousin Jaipur is constantly with him, guarding him from Combine treachery.

Before the catastrophic events on Arkab and the Blakist occupation of Al Na'ir, Sahalli served with distinction in the DCMS, and he was often seen educating his fellow Combine officers and mates regarding Azami practices and customs. Upper-echelon officers often consulted with Odessa as an unofficial liaison when the Legion was assigned to more Combine-cultural worlds, where the Azami were seen as oddities and outcasts. His tireless diligence in promoting Azami culture was often commented on by many within the Legion, who felt that his efforts were beginning to see some results within the more hardcore DCMS.

Sahalli was asked to step in as Caliph by a majority of clan leaders to stand for the people against the neglect and failures of the Dragon. Using his wealth of experience and the grief gathered from Arkab, he successfully negotiated with the Coordinator to pull all Azami military assets back to defend their worlds. The people would not be asked to sacrifice themselves for the Dragon for the foreseeable future and would be given aid to assist in rebuilding.

Caliph Odessa returned to the Azami triumphant; for the Brotherhood, the Jihad was over—unless the Word decides to strike again. The promise of aid has been mostly that, however, and the Caliph faces an increasingly hostile people looking to remain the masters of their own destiny.

SANTIN WEST

SANTIN WEST

Rank/Title: Khan of Clan Nova Cat

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

After the Nova Cat Khans perished during the Great Refusal in 3060, Santin West took hold of the beleaguered Clan's leadership. He kept the Clan united and together during their headlong flight after the Abjurement decree from the Grand Council, leaving millions of castemen behind to be absorbed or killed by pursuant Clans. The sundering nearly tore the Nova Cats apart; the subsequent war with the raging Ghost Bears and the political aggression by Combine warlords would have crushed the life of lesser warriors.

The fact that the Nova Cats survive and even thrive in the Irece Prefecture can be credited to its leaders. Khan West and Oathmaster Minoru have become the spirit and soul of the Clan as saKhan Devalis has forged the elite warriors into a force to be feared. So says any Nova Cat warrior when asked; they firmly believe that the Khans were chosen to bring the Cats through the "Dark Time."

Fanaticism and spiritual mumbo-jumbo aside, the fact remains that the Clan still survives despite crushing odds. Khan West's incredible charisma and foresight has kept him as a popular symbol of Clan resiliency. His own exploits against the Combine during

HOUSE KURITA

the invasion—facing down Kell Hounds on Luthien in 3052, taking on masquerading mercenaries in the Periphery, and so on—has created a cult of personality around West. Any type of vision or thought he expresses is taken as divine inspiration, causing the Clan to veer off on paths that look as if they will destroy them once and for all. Their recent abandonment of the Combine to take up banners behind Stone is one such move; corporate rumor mills across the Combine expect the Coordinator to slap the Cats down hard for their abandonment of the Dominion border.

Khan West's charisma may be electric, but it can't hide the fact that the Clan is withering within the interior of the Dragon. Its resources severely depleted—the Clan sells its own technologies piecemeal to Combine corporate interests so they can purchase materials to build their own equipment—and with strict travel and other security policies in place on the Cat reservations, this once-proud Clan is simply looking to regain glory after nearly two decades of beatings. West has galvanized his people while giving them a chance to receive an honorable death against the Word of Blake.

MINORU KURITA

Rank/Title: Oathmaster of Clan Nova Cat

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

Youngest son of the late Theodore Kurita, Minoru was never truly groomed to rule the Combine. His quick mind and philosophical bent kept him studying the mystical arts rather than the path of a warrior. His quiet nature kept him out of the spotlight; his position as the second son allowed him sufficient obscurity to pursue his interests in *t'ai chi chuan, kenjitsu,* and other martial arts that fused the mind and the body.

In 3058, he was offered and accepted the task of becoming a liaison to the incoming Clan Nova Cat. The Clan, initiating peace overtures on the threshold of the Great Refusal, was accepted as subjects of the Dragon. Due to the Cat's vastly different societal culture, Theodore sent Minoru as an envoy to help guide the Clan in their new role as a Combine "protectorate" within the Dragon's borders.

Minoru took matters one step further after his arrival sparked talk among the mystical Cats. After spending some time among the Clan's leadership, he divested himself of his Kuritan nobility and became a bondsman of the Clan. Soon after, he challenged and fought his way through the Clan's ritual system to become the Oathmaster, keeper of the Clan's lore and a guide for those who sought to walk in visions.

Since then, Minoru has immersed himself into the role as the soul of the Clan. He is sought for his wisdom and expertise when warriors conduct visions, and he has been at the center of many of the Clan's recent decisions to leave Combine space and seek honor while battling under Devlin Stone's banner. After Stone's recent Trial—fought at the behest of the Coordinator—Minoru returned to Irece and the Nova Cat reservations with half of the Clan's touman to prepare for any counterattacks or Dominion aggression.

The split comes at a time when the Clan has been wholly behind Khan West's all-or-nothing drive to be Stone's "spear." Though Minoru's presence has mitigated some of the animosity by those warriors returning, the level of aggression has risen to the point that a few Combine warlords are concerned the Clan will turn and attack the Ghost Bear Dominion in retaliation for imaginary slights. Such actions would embroil the Combine in yet another war, this time with a foe that has shown its might during the liberations of Pesht, Benjamin and Luthien.

HOUSE KURITA

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

AKIRA TORMARK

Rank/Title: *Tai-i* in the ISF (*Musukosan No Ryu*)
Born: 3050 (26 in 3076)

A dedicated ISF agent assigned to operations along the Protectorate border during the Word's Jihad, Tormark catapulted into the spotlight of several high-ranking ISF and O5P operatives with a successful secret operation on Herndon. While the target of the operation is unknown, it apparently caused quite a stir as Tormark vaulted into the upper command levels of DEST by order of Director Jerrar.

Tormark is one of the few "Sons of the Dragon" who does not deny his membership in that secretive ISF organization. Such brazenness is no doubt part of a larger scheme to keep attention focused on those who are overt about their participation, allowing the more secretive members to operate in the shadows.

Interestingly enough, quiet whispers among the halls of the O5P's Field Operations division have also mentioned Tormark's name. While the spirit of cooperation between the ISF and O5P remained strained even as their relationship rebuilds under the new Abbess' orders, some names seem to be popping up in both organizations' headquarters. Alongside Tormark's name is that of *Chu-i* Thomas Alexander, a key aide in many of Tormark's operations.

It is possible there may be a shadow war brewing between the two agencies even as they carry out the *Misogi* War, as the rift that was growing under Abbess Yamiro is not one easily repaired. If such a conflict happens, it is quite possible that both agencies will be competing for assets. Tormark may well prove to be one of these, and his allegiance at this time may determine the direction of the wind in the Dragon's shadow community.

ALBERT BENTON

Rank/Title: *Tai-i* / CO of Sorenson's Sabres
Born: 2997 (79 in 3076)

Commander of one of the Dragon's most storied units, Albert Benton is one of the most unassuming and humble commanders in Stone's coalition. While his decision to leave the brutal fighting on Luthien is a sticking point for many of the Combine's Warlords, the Coordinator's approval of the move has silenced all public criticism, and Benton has been able to withdraw from the spotlight.

A competent and able officer, Benton has the distinction of being one of the rare commanders invited to the Courchevel Trial at the end of the Bear-Combine war in the 3060s. His outstanding victory and the Sabres' incredible battle history since then have helped situate Benton's command as Stone's liaison to Dominion forces. As Benton operates alongside Dominion forces, the Clan has welcomed his tactical and strategic insight in their relentless plunge into Protectorate space.

During his public appearances when speaking for the Clan to the Inner Sphere press, Benton has hinted that he is looking to retire and hand off the reins of the unit to his more capable subordinates. Finishing the fight that the Word started on Luthien is his primary goal, and nothing short of death will dissuade him.

Benton has taken good-natured flack from his fellow Sabres for retaining his battered *Black Hawk-KU*. Politely declining the Dominion's offer to provide an actual *Nova* to replace the "clearly inferior machine," Benton has instead taken advantage of the Clan technology around him and maximized his killing zones with the best technology the Dominion can provide for one of the "Courcheval Honored."

EVETTE SORENSON

Rank/Title: *Chu-i* in the First Sword of Light
Born: 3051 (25 in 3076)

Daughter to Daniel Sorenson and Julie Isesaki, Evette has desired to be a MechWarrior since listening to her father's tales. While her twin brother, Ivan, pursued the route of athletics—he recently signed with the Osaka Lightning on Minowa—she busied herself learning the intricacies of BattleMechs and military history. A top-level graduate with the Sun Zhang Academy, she landed the sole open slot in *Tai-sa* Sakamoto's command lance with the First Sword of Light. Undoubtedly, her name helped propel her into such a prestigious slot.

Her father's stubborn determination has manifested itself in Evette, and she is constantly trying to live up to her father's name and reputation. This determination helped turn the tide of battle when the First Sword hit Al Na'ir in July 3076 as part of Stone's task force. She stood firm at Killioch Pass as the wounded *Tai-sa* retreated, holding off the Word's flanking attack for critical minutes and allowing the *Ryuken-roku* to hammer the Blakist rear, breaking the Word's back along the entire flank.

Evette has a cold, stand-offish personality, enhanced by rage boiling beneath her surface. Word of her mother's death on Isesaki in March of 3076 by Word of Blake forces has certainly stoked the fire of her wrath, which she unleashes on the battlefield at the controls of her father's modified *Hatamoto*.

HOUSE KURITA

GRETCHEN NODA

Rank/Title: *Tai-sa* / Commander, Ronin (mercenary unit)
Born: 3023 (53 in 3076)

Heavily battered on Dieron during a Word of Blake assault in June of 3068, the Tenth Ghost Regiment was barely functional and in dire need of supply when they pulled back to Ashio. When the unit was ordered to hit Dieron again in the summer of 3070—after receiving very little repair and supplies—the former yakuza soldiers had had enough. With their charismatic commander Samual Noda dead and his wrathful wife now in command, the Tenth Ghost decided their term of service with the Combine had come to an end.

Gretchen Noda had assumed her husband's rank of *Tai-sa* and was the driving force behind the Tenth abandoning its post in late 3071. She solidified her power by executing the three ISF agents within their ranks, then led the unit across the Combine to Rezak's Hole, where they cleaned up the few remaining pirates. Noda decided to reorganize the unit, and so the Tenth Ghost died while the masterless Ronin were born.

Knowing full well that if the DCMS caught up with them they would be under a death sentence, Noda pulled the unit together, incorporating some of the saner pirates they captured on Rezak's Hole. Rebuilding the unit was difficult until they raided an Intersteller Expeditions base camp near an ancient Star League depot site, absconding with several tons of equipment and the two lances of vintage Star League 'Mechs recently discovered there. The Ronin then departed only days before a DCMS patrol arrived in response to IE's distress call.

Taking a lucrative contract from StarCorps, the Ronin partnered with another mercenary force in reconnoitering Odessa ahead of a small invasion force. Originally believed to be involved in some sort of corporate war, the Ronin quickly found themselves embroiled in a nasty war with the Odessan garrison and a hidden Shadow Division. Suffering nearly seventy-five percent losses, the Ronin barely survived the bloodbath and challenged their corporate contractor in a legal dispute to recover the additional losses.

Noda was outraged when during the legal deliberations she discovered the Ronin's true paymaster: Chandrasekhar Kurita. Feeling betrayed once again by the Dragon, even though "Uncle Chandy" is considered outside of the normal Kurita mold, Noda has forsworn any dealings with the Dragon or its personages. Such a declaration seems to be a toothless one: the DCMS declared the Tenth Ghost a rogue unit in 3072, to be arrested or eliminated on sight if they ever entered Combine space again.

CONNOR DELON

Title: Owner of DeLon Stables, Solaris VII
Born: 3027 (49 in 3076)

The hard-nosed son of Thomas DeLon, architect of DeLon Stables on Solaris VII, Connor took over ownership after his father passed away from congestive heart failure in 3069. Connor takes unabashed credit for the discovery of Erik Gray (despite his contract with Silver Dragon), leader and hero of the Solaris Home Defense League during the Blakist occupation. Indeed, much of the SHDL's funding and support during its underground years can be traced directly to the DeLon and Silver Dragon Stables.

Both Silver Dragon and DeLon Stables formed a quiet partnership after the occupation ended, pledging mutual support and resources to rebuild and present a solid Kuritan face to the hard-hit Kobe District. Together, the two stables spent their profits rebuilding and refinancing several projects in the area.

In 3072, Connor was arrested and put on trial for using "known criminal elements" to bomb his own facilities across Solaris City in order to manipulate new bidding wars for the rebuilding. Supposedly, Connor masterminded a complex financial scheme to recoup the losses by defrauding local businesses and civilians during the reconstruction. The charges fell through after a tearful Aldis Bromley confessed to the shoddy frame-up; scandalsheets revealed later that Aldis did it because Connor had "stolen the young Bromley's girlfriend, nova-hot star Theresé Monticello." Aldis died a year later in a car accident.

At present, DeLon runs the stable much the same way his father did. With three Top-Twenty fighters in the current Championship, the stable is making C-bills hand over fist; a sizeable portion is put aside for the betterment of the Kobe District. While the partnership with Silver Dragons is officially dissolved, rumors circulate to the contrary, especially when the topics discussed involve several construction operations in the Tangerine Desert and over in Nowhere, where representatives of both stables have been seen in possibly compromising situations with local mafiosi and few surviving yakuza members.

CORPORATIONS OF THE COMBINE

Luthien Armor Works
Corporate HQ: Pesht
Key Facilities: New Samarkand, Togura, Abiy Adi

Probably the biggest corporate conglomerate within the Combine and considered the Dragon's iconic BattleMech manufacturer, LAW is a foundational lynchpin of the Kuritan empire. LAW's primary loyalty has always been to the Kuritan throne, structuring its hierarchy and business plans to the whims of the Coordinators. Nothing during its centuries of existence has truly threatened the massive corporation—until the Jihad.

The early months of the coup on Luthien and the Blakist occupation changed the company's fortunes. At the end of January 3068, three nuclear detonations from unknown forces leveled the heavy production facilities of LAW's OmniMech manufacturing plant outside of Imperial City. The radioactive fallout and EMP waves disrupted and heavily damaged a large portion of LAW's other facilities and collapsed the corporation's elaborate headquarters tower, killing nearly half of the company's board. Other strikes by Word and Black Dragon forces on several key worlds during the next two years severely cut into the profitability of the company, forcing it to take several drastic measures just to survive.

LAW was looking to be on the upswing of recovery when it was discovered in 3074 that the CEO, Hoek Botterfield, was a high-level Black Dragon conspirator. His arrest, trial, and execution on Benjamin was a major blow to the corporation's already damaged image; investors and shareholders have been extremely reluctant to trust the company even as they brokered leveraged deals to keep the company afloat.

The Dragon knows that the failure of LAW would be disastrous to the Combine as a whole. It is unarguably one of the top five corporations in the Combine's economic landscape and the top military manufacturer. With the strict protocols, limitations, and laws set in place by the Dragon regarding trade and commercial endeavors, losing LAW would create a void that would not easily be filled by any other Combine manufacturer. With the continued xenophobic attitude of the citizenry—not to mention a majority of nobility and high-ranking officials—no outside corporation would be allowed to step in that role. If such a situation arises and LAW dissolves, the Combine could effectively find itself with an extremely limited military future on the horizon. Such a handicap would be perceived as weakness by the Dragon's enemies and could be further construed as an invitation to border invasions.

Hachiman-Taro Electronics
Corporate HQ: Hachiman
Key Facilities: Towne, Dieron, Luthien, Miyada

A key company in the vast holdings of the late Chandrasekhar Kurita, HTE is considered a cornerstone in the electronics market within the Combine. Corporate practices instituted by "Uncle Chandy" have led to sales and exports outside the Combine seeing a nearly fifty percent markup in price simply to offset the much lower and affordable prices offered to the citizens of the Dragon.

HTE supplies both military and civilian electronic components to several large corporate clients, including LAW, Wakazashi, IrTech, Ceres, and Federated-Boeing. In addition, the corporation has several arrangements and agreements with second-tier corporations such as Sapphire Sunset Metals, Contard Mining, StarCorps, and Isesaki Shipping. Being well diversified, the corporation has survived the losses of several facilities during the Jihad. Much of that success can be attributed more to the consortium of which HTE is a member; this unnamed group of corporations was originally put together by the late Kuritan lord for the eventuality of his death.

Boardroom chatter, however, suggests that much of HTE's extra capital has come from the late Kurita's own vast fortune. Such rumors burn brighter as HTE posted a significant loss in 3076 on the New Samarkand market, the first time in nearly fifty years. Astute investigation, however, shows that the losses are more attributable to several covert strikes on HTE and its consortium partners by IrTech.

All HTE compounds still employ qualified mercenary commands for site security, a stipulation that former CEO Peter Abdulsattah put into place in the late 3050s. The current CEO, Takinama Rendelli, still continues the practice but defers all arrangements to HTE's Chief of Security Marcel Webb, even as Webb serves as an advisor under Devlin Stone.

CORPORATIONS OF THE COMBINE

Independence Weaponry
Corporate HQ: New Samarkand
Key Facilities: Luthien, Donegal, Markab, Victoria, Stewart

As neutral as a weapons manufacturer can get on the interstellar political stage, Independence Weaponry services and supplies most major military manufacturers across the Inner Sphere. Based in the Combine, IW operates less as a corporation and more as a conglomerate, with each division responsible to a particular faction and their protocols. This type of setup leads to some odd situations, such as preventing any IW-manufactured weapons in the Combine from being sold, transported, or used in the manufacturing process of Federated Suns equipment, despite the fact that the weapons are identical to those produced elsewhere.

Nevertheless, IW has successfully negotiated political minefields for centuries with aplomb, including the current Jihad. Because IW has several profitable contracts with Terran-based corporations, many civilians have come to see IW as a traitor to the Inner Sphere because they have not taken a stand in the current war. IW executives maintain they will continue to follow the standard company policy of corporate neutrality.

As such, some lower-tier corporations have begun a covert war with IW; the failed Diverse Optics espionage case on Quentin in 3074 is but one of many attempts to disrupt IW's business. Many of IW's manufacturing and research facilities have hired on additional security in the form of mercenaries, often many that are not officially bonded through the MRBC.

Independence CEO Judith Hotchkiss remains in control of the corporation with over fifty-five percent of the public stock in her control. Her recent decision to relocate IW's main headquarters facility from New Samarkand to her Davion homeworld of New Ivaarsen has caused no end of uproar from much of the New Samarkand government; court rumor has it that a showdown between the Coordinator and Hotchkiss is only a matter of time.

New Samarkand Metals
Corporate HQ: New Samarkand
Key Facilities: New Samarkand, Togura, Niles, Qandahar

Responsible for a large segment of mining operations within the Oshika, New Samarkand, and Tabayama prefectures, NSM has been largely unaffected by the Jihad. With gigantic mining operations—both surface and asteroid—in several systems, it supplies the Dragon with raw materials for energy, manufacturing, trade, and other purposes. NSM also is a key supplier of material for the Outworlds Alliance thanks to an agreement forged back in 2971 with the Coordinator's blessing. Despite the recent troubles with the overbearing Ravens within the Alliance, the agreement remains in place.

NSM is also responsible for much of the Dragon's germanium mines, many of which are located through the heart of the Combine. Fortunately, such worlds have not been touched by the Blakists, though many have had troubles with local Black Dragon cells. In some cases, the mines fell under political sway, diverting material and resources to the traitors during the years they held tenuous power on Luthien. Rumors that the dip in refining and shipping has hurt several naval production projects have done little to substantiate such claims, though a shortage of LAW-manufactured ferro-fibrous armor was noticed in 3073.

The company's main problems have been with localized Black Dragon cells. The group's rhetoric has become popular in many of the mining communities; in some cases it has caused short-lived shortages and strikes that have been quickly broken up by the local constabulary. The ISF has become heavily involved in recent months, causing at least one violent confrontation on Pondicherry that ended with over two hundred casualties.

HOUSE KURITA

KEY WORLDS OF THE DRACONIS COMBINE

LUTHIEN

Noble Ruler: *Daimyo* Guilen Yokosama
Star Type (Recharge Time): GoIII (181 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days
Number of Satellites: 4 (Tsu Shima, Orientalis, Hikisaku, Occidentalis)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Tainted—Pollution)
Equatorial Temperature: 35°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Amphibian
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 7,267,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-C-A-C

Chosen as Coordinator Sanethia Kurita's industrial project in 2619, Luthien was transformed from a sleepy backwater farm world into the Combine's largest manufacturing center in less than two centuries. With the construction of Imperial City, Luthien's place as the Dragon's new capital world was secured.

Covered in kilometers upon kilometers of giant factory complexes, utilitarian housing barracks, and ribbons of ferrocrete and asphalt, the planet suffered massive environment degradation from unregulated industrialization. The "Black Luthien" moniker was well earned with skyrocketing pollution. Nearly every major Combine corporation has offices on the planet in order to be better connected with the heart of the Dragon.

The crown jewel of Luthien is the sprawling Imperial City, home of the ruling Kurita family. It was a virtual fairy-tale of a city, surrounded by verdant gardens and hectares of natural forest, before the Black Dragon coup in the waning days of 3067. The resultant fighting lasted nearly eight years and turned much of the beautiful city into piles of slag and rubble; many of the large factory complexes became victims of collateral damage as pockets of loyal Combine soldiers, Black Dragon sympathizers, and marauding Word of Blake troops fought a vicious three-way war across the surface of the planet.

The largest industrial complex resides less than ten kilometers from the center of Imperial City on a small chain of man-made islands strung along the massive Unity Plateau. Guthry Island—the largest of these isolated land formations—boasted the impressive Luthien Armor Works OmniMech production plant. Tokyo Island hosted the company's headquarters complex and LAW City until it was gutted by an underground nuclear blast; similar nuclear detonations wiped out roughly 75 percent of LAW's entire plateau chain, along with nearly half a million dead.

Covering ten square kilometers above and below the surface, the LAW industriplex produced a sizeable percentage of the system's GDP and employed millions of people, scattered across satellite facilities strung throughout the planet. With the main facility and headquarters complex destroyed, LAW faces a massive corporate crisis, the ripples of which are still being felt. Several Combine industries received massive damage to their corporate leadership during the crisis, though none felt it as hard as LAW.

On the southern continent of Aichi, mining is the largest industry with multiple operations scattered throughout the Fukui Wastes. The Buda Weapons facility and headquarters is located here; over 500 hectares of forest was transplanted nearby in late 3059 in accordance with Coordinator Theodore Kurita's Environmental Reclamation Program. Much of the continent is heavily strip-mined, creating environmental problems that the program is slowly attempting to address.

The ancient Fortress Sanethia on the continent of Sakura is the sole Castle Brian on Luthien. The fortress is heavily guarded with highly restrictive access. The massive complex was the site of Coordinator Sanethia's rule until the completion of the Imperial City, and it oversaw much of the planetary construction project instituted by Lady Kurita. After the Blakists were removed in late 3074 by the sudden appearance of Clan Ghost Bear, the Fortress has once again become the central seat of planetary authority as Luthien rebuilds itself from the horrors of the Jihad. The citizens work tirelessly to rebuild the Black Pearl so the Dragon's heart may return.

Scattered around the planet are memorials and museums that honor the First Star League, the origins of the Combine, and the Dragon's fallen. One of the largest and most popular is the Dragon's Tears Plaza, boasting a three-meter stone samurai replica for each warrior who fell on Luthien during the Clan Invasion in 3052. The interim planetary governor, *Daimyo* Guilen Yokosama, has been soliciting ideas to build a memorial to the citizenry and loyal soldiers who fell during the years the planet was under Black Dragon tyranny.

HOUSE KURITA

NEW SAMARKAND
Noble Ruler: Coordinator Hohiro Kurita
Star Type (Recharge Time): FoIV (171 hours)
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 21.94 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Jimmu, Kōshō, Chūai)
Surface Gravity: 1.05
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard
Equatorial Temperature: 35°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 3,741,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-B-C-B-B

One of the first Combine worlds colonized when humanity spread from Terra, New Samarkand was the original capital and administrative hub of the vast Kuritan empire. It enjoyed immeasurable success as the center of the Dragon's power, with vast shipyards in orbit and kilometers of office buildings to house the vast bureaucratic network needed to maintain such a large nation. That changed when Coordinator Sanethia pursued and developed Luthien as the new capital.

With the new capital on Luthien, New Samarkand began to see a heavy decline. Nearly half of the system's population transferred to Luthien, creating a heavy planetary recession that brought about an influx of pirates and vagabonds. The decline, however, opened up opportunities for two essential Combine agencies: the ISF and the cadets of the Sun Zhang MechWarrior Academy.

Though most of the Combine's main functionary apparatus was relocated to Luthien, the Dragon's Internal Security Force remained headquartered on New Samarkand. The planetary decay opened the system up to malcontents, who set up shop among the crumbling mansions and other abandoned areas, which created the perfect environment for the ISF to train its agents. Much of the criminal element was allowed to persist, giving fertile ground for the ISF to exercise infiltration, deep cover, intelligence, and other operations—including unsavory ones. In return, the ISF kept a finger on the pulse of the underworld that existed in the Combine.

The decaying cities also provided fertile ground for Sun Zhang cadets to train in an urban environment, a large-scale live-fire battlefield that has given many graduates an edge in their careers serving the Dragon. Both aerospace and ground forces continue to train among the crumbling ruins of once-vast bureaucratic enclaves and ruined towns; on occasion they are used to supplement ISF attack squads to take down a crime syndicate that has grown too big for its own good.

Much of the northern continent is flat, dotted with several hundred large quarry pits that continue to extract germanium and other precious metals from the enriched crust of the planet. New Samarkand Metal's sole germanium processing facility is located near both the coast and the main DropPort and cargo facilities for Isesaki Shipping.

New Samarkand is known for its violent typhoons that rage across much of the planet's continents. The warm seas feed the polar winds and create massive storms that can tower several kilometers as they rage inland. The storms can be violent enough to catch even veteran DropShip pilots unawares. Coastal flooding is a common problem along the Nippon coastline, which can see waters rise nearly five kilometers inland during typhoon season. Most inhabited cities lie well inland; those located by necessity on the coastal flood plains often have thirty meter or higher floodwalls to protect vital industry and assets.

Underwater facilities are not common beneath the seas, though the Buda Weapons Complex-D has been operating successfully for nearly fifty years. Located near an open fault line and sheltered from the turbulent waters because of its location within a network of large underwater caverns, the Complex has been a big success for Buda Weapons. Rumors that the facility is one of the Dragon's main secret research complexes abound, with the heavy security doing little to dissuade conspiracy theorists.

When Luthien was under siege and off the HPG grid, the *Gunji-no-Kanrei*'s decision to relocate the capital functions to New Samarkand came as a rude shock to the ruling body. The system was ill prepared for the massive influx of refugees and other emergency functionaries; much of the damaged and decayed ruins underwent a systemic revitalization in order to provide even rudimentary services. The government bureaucracy continues to limp along on the limited resources the planet provides, with many departments competing amongst themselves for resources such as power and communications. The underworld crime syndicates have blossomed out of control; the ISF has been unable to maintain their grip on them, and with the recent purges from the *Misogi* War, it looks to be possibly decades before the ISF can regain the upper hand.

HOUSE KURITA

ALGEDI

Noble Ruler: Caliph Sahalli Odessa
Star Type (Recharge Time): A7IV (168 hours)
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 27.98 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Mecca)
Surface Gravity: 0.90
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 45 C (Arid)
Surface Water Coverage: 15 percent
Highest Native Life: Microbe
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: A
Population (3067): 2,130,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-C-B-B-C

Colonized originally by a small sect of North African Azami, Algedi is a harsh desert world that sees practically no night, burning constantly under the harsh primary star. Adjustment to living in such cruel conditions takes time and patience, something that very few citizens outside of the Azami seem to possess.

There are few large cities on the planet; the capital city of Algiers handles not only daily governance of the system but also the bureaucracy of the prefecture. Additionally, the representatives of all the Azami worlds maintain enclaves here; ever since the Combine's abandonment of the people during the Jihad, these encampments have become closed and armed against ISF penetration.

Half of the world is considered off-limits to everyone except those of Azami descent. Due to the original agreement made by the people when the Combine attempted to seize the Azami and Arkab worlds, the arrangement still holds—albeit tentatively—during the current crisis. Despite the events on Benjamin and reassurances by the Coordinator, the Azami remain wary of continued betrayal by the Dragon.

Much of the surface of Algedi is rock and sand, hiding common ores and other metal resources vital to certain manufacturing processes. Mining conglomerates operate independent facilities scattered across the wastelands, some operating for the Combine but many having struck recent agreements exclusive to the Azami. The arrangements have recently gained the notice of the ISF, who are eager to discover just what the Azami people are up to during this critical time for the Dragon.

None of the life forms found on the planet's surface are native to this harsh desert world. Several species have taken well to the system's ecology, however, including Asketen sand walkers and a hybrid form of the Terran burro. The latent blood virus that plagued the Combine invaders, however, was eliminated decades ago. These days, newcomers to Algedi are afflicted with a weaker form of the virus, which only causes roughly 48 hours of weakness and low blood pressure unless a viral antidote is taken before reaching atmosphere.

Cairo Enterprises—now a division of Buda Imperial Vehicles—still maintains its sole surviving manufacturing facility in the southern Alexandrian Wastes. Practically a fortress in and of itself, Cairo does little business with Combine worlds these days; its contracts are strictly with Azami worlds. The corporation has recently added a new production annex, though what the facility is manufacturing at this time remains to be seen. ISF operations have consistently failed as of late, which speaks of possible Azami penetration into the local ISF hierarchy.

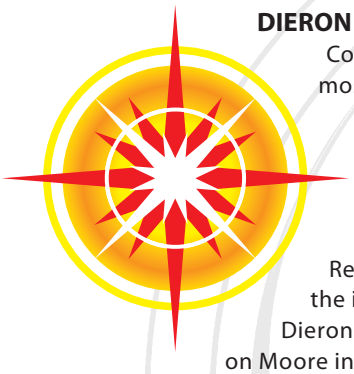
The key import to Algedi remains water filters. Though Algedi natives require less water than transplants due to several centuries of adaptation—and access to the highly coveted underground reservoirs in the Azami "Desert Paradise" portion of the planet—many of the Combine city zones require a large quantity of water to keep functionaries content. The water storage facilities have recently begun sporting heavier security and defenses in the face of the strained relations between the Dragon and the Azami people.

The large network of canyons and deep crevices that criss-cross the Saharan continent has been a centuries-old destination for high-speed desert racing among the various Azami tribes. Powered and native vehicles are used in various categories, with an entire subculture grown up around breeding and developing better hybrids and equipment to use in the races. Many tribes use the races as a means to resolve disputes and other internal matters. The desert races are closed off from most non-Azami people; being allowed to attend one is considered a great honor for those outside the Azami.

HOUSE KURITA

THE DRAGON'S TEETH: KEY MILITARY COMMANDS

[An extensive overview of the DCMS isn't available at this time, as we're still trying to piece together relevant data. Between the Purification War the ISF and O5P is conducting, and the obvious shell game the Kanrei *is playing to keep Draconis March forces guessing, it's a crapshoot as to how individual units have fared. The list below is as complete a picture as we can put together. –MY]*



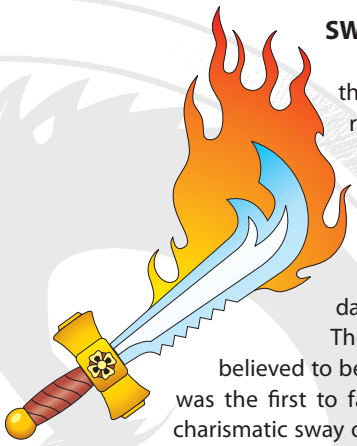
DIERON REGULARS

Considered to be some of the most stalwart and pragmatic troops the Dragon has in service, the Dieron Regulars have been brutalized over the course of the Jihad thus far. The Third Regulars were wiped out in the initial assault by the Word on Dieron, and the Forty-fifth perished on Moore in the "Day of Fire."

The biggest problem, however, has been the pervasive Black Dragon influence within several of the Regulars. The Fortieth fought among themselves before a bulk of the unit fled to Luthien to reinforce the faltering forces there; they were subsequently destroyed by the time the system was "liberated" by the Ghost Bears. The few loyal Fortieth troops that remained were subsequently wiped out defending Kessel in mid-3076.

The questionable Fifteenth showed their true colors once again as the Black Dragons fought for control of the Combine. Spreading out among neighboring worlds to seize a power base for the traitors, the Fifteenth controlled Xinyang, Braunton, and Dyfed by installing *Kokuryu-kai* sympathetic governors and "defending" the worlds with force. When word of Luthien's pacification and subsequent ISF *Misogi* War reached the Fifteenth, they stood firm against the Seventh Sword of Light. While Dyfed fell within hours, the remaining traitors went guerrilla, and the ISF spent the better part of a month rooting them out. The death toll during the *Misogi* War in the Xinyang Prefecture has been the highest so far, thanks to the *Kokuryu-kai* detonating several dirty bombs on Xinyang, Braunton, Philadelphia, and Kanowit.

The remaining Dieron Regulars were reshuffled across the Al Na'ir Prefecture, providing security to several worlds within two jumps of Dieron to protect against Blakist raiding. As a matter of honor, the Second and Eighth Regulars spearheaded Stone's coalition in retaking Dieron from the Protectorate. While suffering horrifying casualties, both regiments were key in breaching Fortress Dieron's southern defenses, knocking out the entrenched artillery emplacements.



SWORD OF LIGHT

Considered the pride of the DCMS, the Sword of Light regiments are some of the Combine's most elite units. But even their traditional fanaticism did not hold back the seeds of betrayal and treason during the Dragon's darkest time in recent memory.

The Second Sword of Light, once believed to be the steel spine of the DCMS, was the first to fall to the disease. Under the charismatic sway of *Tai-sa* Li Sak To, nearly two-thirds of the Second fell to the Black Dragon's side and seized the Imperial Palace in support of the conspiracy's coup. By the end of the fighting in 3075, over ninety percent of the regiment was destroyed; the traitorous survivors were executed and, in a stunning move, the Coordinator struck the Second from the rolls of the DCMS. In its place, the Ninth Sword of Light regiment was created around the handful of loyal samurai who survived. Currently more ceremonial than functional for the time being, the Ninth has been given the honor to serve as the Coordinator's honor guard as he travels across the Combine.

The First Sword of Light has remained in the thick of the battle, fighting Davion aggression in the Proserpina theater, raiding Blakist worlds in the Protectorate, and currently serving as the spearpoint unit of Stone's Combine theater command. The regiment fights with nearly supernatural rage, rivaling reports of Ghost Bear violence, and it has become the symbol of the Dragon's wrath.

The rest of the Sword regiments have not been idle; early in the Jihad the *Kanrei* reassigned them to Prefecture capitals near Dieron to react to any further Blakist pushes. As the *Misogi* War blossomed, the Seventh was tapped to work in support with ISF and O5P "inquisitor" teams as armed opposition was encountered. The Seventh was responsible for the destruction of the Fifteenth Dieron Regulars and freeing the Prefecture capital of Xinyang. The Coordinator has refrained from adding the other Sword regiments to Stone's coalition, aside from the First, most likely to keep watch along the Federated Suns border against Davion adventurism.

HOUSE KURITA

GHOST REGIMENTS

The Combine's Ghost Regiments were stationed along the Federated Suns border when the Jihad broke out and Luthien went dark. While the Tenth Ghost fought a losing battle against the Blakists in the Dieron meat-grinder, the other regiments were holding off AFFS forces as they jumped the border. While most of the Ghost regiments gave as good or even better than they got, the loss of command and control from Luthien and the disappearance of Hohiro Kurita was demoralizing and paralyzed many of the DCMS units, including some of the Ghost commands.

The Sixth Ghost reinforced Benjamin in late 3068, but in a series of brutal battles lost the world and failed to keep ISF Director Kerai-Indrahar alive in the process. The *Kanrei* redistributed the shamed survivors of the badly damaged unit to other Ghost regiments rather than spend rapidly dwindling supplies to rebuild it.

Due to the tenuous command structure and smoldering civil unrest on several planets thanks to Black Dragon agents, the *Kanrei* ordered the rest of the Ghost regiments to remain in place. The official reason was to guard against further Draconis March predation, though none was forthcoming. It is widely rumored that Minamoto thought the Regiments could've turned to the Black Dragons and thus stranded them in place to guard against another Second Sword situation. Such fears, however, were unfounded; the Ghost Regiments were the first units ordered to join Stone's coalition at the Coordinator's command. Because they were slowly rebuilt and somewhat removed from the fighting, the Ghosts were ready and eager to bring the fight to the Protectorate.

ARKAB LEGIONS

Increasingly distressed over the perceived slights by the Imperial Throne regarding the fate of their people and the lack of cohesive command, the Arkab Legions finally reached a breaking point when Arkab suffered a horrendous asteroid strike and cries for aid and assistance were virtually ignored.

Disgusted with the continued breach of trust by the Dragon, the Arkab Legions left their duty stations and returned to their home systems in order to protect their people and render aid. As protest mounted, the Legions grew deaf to the demands being made by the *Kanrei*—believed by the Azami to be nothing more than the Coordinator's puppet master—and remained in place.

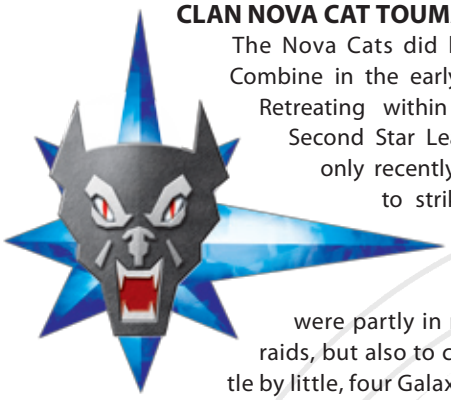
On Algedi, the Dragon pressed back, bombarding the planet even as the Azami refused to obey. They punctuated their refusal by destroying the DCA *Siriwan* with a ground-to-orbit strike and capturing those DCMS troops that had landed to force their hand. Armed with a negotiating point, the Azami grew bolder, with the various clans contemplating a complete break from the Combine.

After cooler heads prevailed on Benjamin in 3074, the Legions were told they were to remain in place, guarding the Azami worlds against further Blakist raiding. While couched in official DCMS language, the message was clear: the Azami had prevailed even as the status quo was returned. However, the peace remains fragile; after Shinonoi was struck by an asteroid—an interesting coincidence so soon after Arkab was hit—and the Combine rallied immediately to help the pro-Kuritan world, rumblings began anew about the Dragon's disregard for the Azami people.

Of all the Arkab Legions, the Second has taken the most damaging losses, with over a battalion's worth of troops and equipment destroyed during the DCMS' failed attempt to retake Algedi. While relations with the DCMS are on an even keel (though still somewhat strained), few supplies and material have arrived to replace the losses, though much of that is due to the faltering war industry across the nation in general.

HOUSE KURITA

CLAN NOVA CAT TOUMAN



The Nova Cats did little to support the Combine in the early years of the Jihad. Retreating within themselves as the Second Star League collapsed, they only recently came out of hiding to strike out randomly. As it turned out, the sporadic strikes on Word emplacements were partly in retaliation for Blakist raids, but also to cover the fact that little by little, four Galaxies had left Combine space to join with someone they had seen in a vision: Devlin Stone.

Of the two remaining Galaxies, Xi was practically destroyed during its revenge strike on the Forty-second Shadow Division that was ensconced on Luthien in 3072. Omicron Galaxy remained scattered across the Clan's holding within the Combine, as ordered by the Khan. Resentment of the Nova Cats continued to grow as it became noticeable that many of these world's protectors were missing and showing up on interstellar vids as guardians of Stone. Black Dragon sympathies grew by leaps and bounds as the people felt abandoned by another of Theodore's compromises, and Omicron became embroiled in several civil unrest incidents, finally choosing to remain within their protective enclaves.

The situation settled down after Lambda and half of Sigma Galaxy returned when the Clan lost their Trial of Refusal against Stone. Forced to send half of the Clan's forces home in order to secure the Combine's assistance, the Clan fought the Trial with honor but was no match for Stone and his Lament's command lance.

The half of Sigma that returned was immediately re-assigned to the decimated Xi Galaxy by orders of Loremaster Minoru Nova Cat, who was given control of the Nova Cat "reservation worlds" within the Combine until the Khans returned victorious under Stone's banner—or died trying.

COMBINE MERCENARY DEPLOYMENT

While the Dragon is publicly known for its frequent "Death to Mercenaries" edicts in the last century, it still employs MRBC-licensed mercenaries for various tasks. Public perception, however, has been greatly soured due to several mercenary actions during the last decade, including the Northwind Highlanders' abandoning their contract through a dubious loophole, the departure of Wolf's Dragoons from the Ghost Bear border, and the actions by Sathen's Snipers in supporting the Black Dragon coup on Luthien. Other mercenary units either fled as the Jihad broke out, like Narhal's Raiders, or were outright destroyed, such as the Eridani Light Horse.

However, with the DCMS suffering such traumatic losses in several campaigns and a slow re-supply chain due to massive disruption at several warehousing and manufacturing facilities, the edict currently in place poses a large roadblock to the defense of the Dragon. As such, mercenary contracts today are signed out to corporations or other private individuals, so that the Coordinator does not lose face with regards to the official policy. Additionally, Warlords and other regimental commanders have limited discretionary power to employ mercenaries in situations that are considered "beneath" the DCMS or outside the realm of the ISF. So while the Coordinator's policy still remains against hiring such units for use in an official capacity, mercenaries are still seen—albeit less so than in other interstellar nations—within the folds of the Dragon, defending key assets rather than planetary systems.

These are some of the more high-profile mercenary commands of at least a battalion in strength known to be operating within the Combine, including their last known location as of 3077.

Name	Exp	Location	Strength	Contractor
Chaos Irregulars (CO: Captain Ignatius Geronimo)	V	Unknown	70%	StarCorps
Crater Cobras (CO: Colonel Emil Barclay)	R	Alnasi	45%	Independence Weaponry
Devil's Brigade (CO: Colonel Alex Keller)	E	Unknown	35%	Devlin Stone, through HTE
Kaplan Security Teams* (CO: Commander Kay Evans)	R	Buckminster	100%	Wakazashi Aerospace
Kouki no Otakebi* (CO: *Tai-sa* Margenn Olgivy)	V	Minakuchi	95%	LAW
McFadden's Sky Riders (CO: Colonel Owen Reddens)	E	Kessel	60%	Isesaki Shipping
Star Seeds (CO: Colonel Marcel Webb)	V	Hachiman, Benjamin	85%	Devlin Stone, through HTE
Summer's Storm (CO: Commander Miguel Jose Valdez)	V	Dover	105%	LAW

* denotes a non-MRBC bonded unit

HOUSE DAVION

HOUSE DAVION

STATE OF THE SUNS

Coming out of the long night of New Avalon's occupation, the Federated Suns government is facing a treacherous road to recovery. Even with New Avalon free and the Princess-Regent able to move about without restrictions, the Suns is facing a dangerous and uncertain time. Never before in its seven-century history has the nation come so close to dissolution, and it will no doubt continue to teeter on the brink for some time. The fate that has befallen the Free Worlds may yet strike the land of the Sun and Sword.

Certainly the Word of Blake's withdrawal from New Avalon can be held up as a victory for the Suns, and in the last year the government has worked without pause to reassemble the pieces of the once-proud state. But that which is done in anger cannot be easily undone, and the physical and emotional scars of occupation run deep. The continued instability is in no small part a holdover from the FedCom Civil war. The Federated Suns had only just begun to rebuild from this devastating conflict when the tidal wave of the Jihad swept over the nation. Six years without a strong central government, coming after a nation-changing civil war, drove many wedges into the stability of the historically strong Crucis Pact and lit many smoldering flames of discontent. Two years later, the nation is still teetering on the edge of an internal war that threatens to overshadow their wars with the Word of Blake and Taurian Concordant.

LORDS AND LEADERS

While the Suns is not a military state, the connection between the army and the ruler is a bond that has defined the Federated Suns and given it strength time and again in the face of adversity. But with the Jihad, this connection became its Achilles Heel. With its top political and military leaders marginalized or dead, the nation as a whole ground to a standstill, isolating regions and leaving many to their own devices, with some choosing a course of independence despite the great risk. The siege of New Avalon cut off the head of the government and the military in one slice. Even though the Regent and Duke were both free, centuries of centralization suddenly crippled the nation as all major arms of the government lost their leadership and infrastructure.

During the years the Jihad has raged, the Crucis and Capellan Marches and even individual PDZs within them were left to their own self-government with minimal guidance or interference from a central authority. Only the Draconis March enjoyed anything remotely resembling normal government, and even here the constant movement of the Regent and Duke of Robinson as well as the siege of Robinson often left regional authorities to decide or react on their own. And then there were the more purposeful actions, such as Duke Hasek's Operation Sovereign Justice or Marquess Trempeleau's formation of the Filtvelt Coalition. The lifting of the New Avalon siege—coupled with a series of victories over the Word, an uneasy peace with the Capellan Confederation, and near stalemate with the Taurian Concordat—allowed the Regent to once again take a more prominent role over national politics. This role, however, has had to focus heavily on fence-mending and fence-building as the crippled nation tries to rebuild the trappings of government needed to maintain an interstellar nation.

Princess-Regent Yvonne's first actions were to restore central government on New Avalon and slowly push it out from the heart of the original Crucis Pact, just as her forefathers had done in initially creating the Suns. While the government was welcomed in the coreward regions and to some extent the Draconis March, the sudden reappearance of "big brother" was less well received in other regions of the Suns, most notably the Capellan March and Crucis Outback. While overall the Federated Suns has given an appearance of "one nation under the sun," the cracks in the façade are far too evident to be ignored, and the opportunities they present to neighbors and enemies are highly lucrative.

The Filtvelt Coalition continues to exist and shows no sign of dissolution. When Marquess Trempeleau created the Filtvelt Coalition, she called it a temporary solution. However, when the Princess-Regent sent a representative to inquire about reintegration, her factor's reception was decidedly less than cordial. Evidence points to a possible coup within the Coalition, meaning that Marquess Trempeleau may no longer hold power. This means that Filtvelt may prove to be the next battlefront for New Avalon, if the Coalition was to choose an expansionist policy. While numerous Outback leaders and even prominent military officers have called for a direct hands-on approach from New Avalon, for now the Regent seems content to maintain the status quo of the Outback. It cannot be ignored that the many breakaway groups in the Outback have formed a buffer between the Crucis March's core worlds and the tumultuous Periphery.

Meanwhile, New Syrtis remains ostensibly part of the Federated Suns but seems torn between sundering the nation internally or agitating for a return to a time when the First Prince was not the only Prince in the Suns. Duchess Hasek has faced a three-front conflict, dealing with the aftermath of her brother's ill-fated war, the expanding Blake Protectorate, and a vengeful Taurian nation bent on a bloody revenge. Naturally, after so many years with little or no direct support, the sudden resurgence of New Avalon was met with cool indifference or even hostility. The fact that many in her March see her as a successor to George Hasek's highly damaging war has added to her determination to keep New Avalon at arm's length. While the elite Twenty-second Avalon Hussars was moved to New Syrtis as part of the "Never Again" defense policy, it is an open secret that Admiral D'Angelo was also tasked with keeping an eye on Duchess Hasek's loyalty.

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More recent intelligence seems to indicate that this tension may be bleeding away. The October '76 Taurian assault on New Syrtis leveled crippling damage to the Syrtian Shipyards and devastated large swaths of New Syrtis' equatorial regions with nuclear attacks. Aid dispatched immediately from New Avalon prevented widespread loss of life, engendering good will from the people of the March, as did the restationing of one of the AFFS aerospace regiments from the Crucis March. Many in the Capellan March are now looking to New Avalon, feeling that New Syrtis is to blame for their current state.

In foreign policy, the near-total loss of the Third Crucis Lancers led the Suns to take a more hands-off approach to the Snow Raven/Outworlds Alliance. Even the usually bellicose Draconis March seems content to let sleeping dogs lie. This is no doubt due in part by the continued low-level hostility that has simmered between the Draconis March and Draconis Combine keeping energy focused toward this traditional enemy. Led by Duke Sandoval's cousin, Jerome Sandoval, the Draconis March has, at least on the surface, remained loyal to New Avalon and the Princess-Regent. With Duke Sandoval devoting so much of his attention to the Suns as a whole, it remains to be seen if this will last. The attack on New Syrtis may finally have convinced Duchess Hasek to follow New Avalon's defensive posture, while in contradiction to his own policies, the Marshal of the Armies has shifted considerable assets coreward towards the Blake Protectorate border and is working closely with Stone's Coalition to harass the Word of Blake.

PROFIT AND LOSS

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.

With FedSuns central authority smashed, the powerhouses of Kathil, Talon, and Galax destroyed and New Avalon blockaded, the still-recovering economy went into a tailspin. But war spending can be good for an economy, and the Federated Suns knows how to fight and finance war. As the Jihad progressed, the military industry of the Federated Suns adapted and responded. Panpour shifted civilian engines to military use, creating the JES Carrier, General Motors created the compliment to the Grenadier in the Hauberk LRM-equipped Battle Armor, and Clyde Shipyards moved to military production with the resurrection of the *Colossus* DropShip. While the economy was still in a fragile state by the start of 3075, its pent-up potential began to explode in response to the massive defense spending of the rebuilding AFFS.

With large factories a major target, many companies have switched to more diversified production, many times with assembly requiring parts from more than one world. This redundancy in infrastructure and fresh demand for merchant shipping has driven up the standard of living on many worlds, leading to an explosion of civil programs focused on longer-term non-military projects.

The Federated Suns' economy will most certainly slide into another recession once the current crisis is over, but for the time being it appears to be ready to aid in the defense of the Federated Suns now that central authority and command has been restored. Until then, the business opportunities are extremely high. Not only is the central government investing heavily on all fronts, but the fractionalized nature of Suns has also opened up business opportunities in every corner of the nation.

ARMS AND ARMOR

Having lost close to half of its line combat strength in the civil war, the AFFS was still reeling from this bitter conflict when the Jihad hit. The brutality of the early Jihad left the military desperately shaken and unable to effectively respond. Looking below the surface, though, we find an army whose greatest damage was a loss of command cohesion. The AFFS has always relied on a strong central command structure, which was only reinforced during the civil war. The near-absence of the Princess-Regent in the early Jihad and the isolation of Marshal Davion on New Avalon left most commands to their regional devices. With the exception of the Capellan March, this appears to have led primarily to a defensive posture, not surprising given how much violence these units had seen in the prior five years of civil war. While the AFFS has suffered extensive damage on all fronts, its diverse makeup has allowed it to quickly bring some units back to combat strength. The merging of destroyed units, enlisting of planetary militias, and a still-strong conventional defense industry aided reconstruction efforts.

Marshal of the Armies Jonathan Davion inherited a command that was scattered and fighting several smaller engagements. The will is there, but the ability for the Suns to wage war offensively has been nearly shattered. While the aerospace arm of the AFFS suffered much less in the last seven years (with the exception of its WarShips), the undeniable truth is that only boots, be they infantry or 'Mechs, can hold ground. The AFFS' first priority was to secure the central core of the nation in a triangle comprising the capital and her two regional capitals. With the greatest wealth and production capabilities in this region, its defense is absolutely paramount. Then, in response to the Princess-Regent's "Never Again" proclamation, the AFFS has begun a fundamental shift in focus, deemphasizing large frontline combat formations in favor of smaller combat units and expanded defensive formations. Marshal Davion and Duke Sandoval have focused on expanding conventional units in the planetary and March militias. While lacking the flexibility and mobility of BattleMech forces, this focus at the planetary level ensures the defense force has intimate knowledge of its world and the conventional units are easier to maintain and operate.

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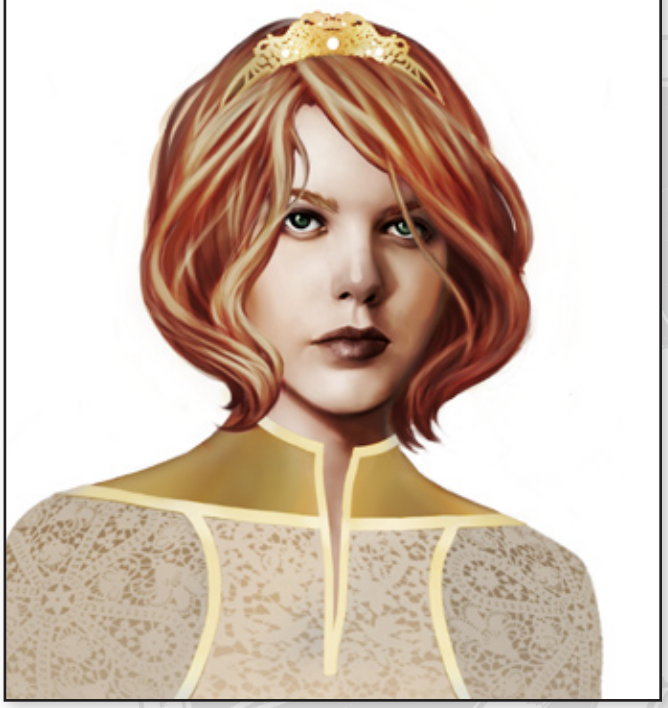
KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

YVONNE STEINER-DAVION



YVONNE STEINER-DAVION

Rank/Title: Princess-Regent of the Federated Suns

Born: 3039 (37 in 3076)

As the youngest of Hanse Davion and Melissa Steiner's five children, Yvonne was never intended to rule and never received the proper training to do so. It is one of the ironies of history, then, that she is the only one of her siblings to still hold the throne of a Great House, albeit as a regent for her own son, Harrison. Despite the circumstances of her rule, Yvonne has matured into a thoughtful and strong leader, forged in the fires of the war that has occupied nearly her entire reign to date.

The early years of the Jihad saw Yvonne denied her own capital world and forced to live in hiding on Markesan. From there, she attempted to direct the Federated Suns war effort as best she could, while at the same time dealing with the increasingly independent Capellan March and George Hasek's war against the Confederation. When Hasek's assassination effectively ended that conflict, many whispered that Yvonne had taken extreme measures to deal with the near-rebellious Duke. While most observers do not believe she has fully embraced that style of leadership, there has been a definite hardening of her personality that is evident in her actions since she returned to New Avalon, particularly as seen in her rousing "Never Again" speech delivered amongst the ruins of Avalon City.

Encouraged by her brother and her husband, Yvonne is committed to assisting Devlin Stone's coalition in any way possible and making sure that the Federated Suns is a major component of the eventual victory against the Word of Blake. This determination has begun to cause problems on the edges of her realm, with Angela Hasek and Jerome Sandoval making noises about a perceived neglect of their Marches and the upstart Raymond-Roger Marsin accusing the Princess-Regent of deliberately ignoring the Outback. Preventing her realm from splintering will be a major concern in the years to come.

TANCRED SANDOVAL

Rank/Title: Duke of Robinson, Minister of the Draconis March, Prince's Champion

Born: 3019 (57 in 3076)

Two decades older than his wife, Tancred Sandoval has become not just a husband but also a trusted advisor and co-ruler to Yvonne Steiner-Davion. As Lord of the Draconis March after his father's illness forced him to take over, Tancred was a solid supporter of Victor during the civil war, and that loyalty carried over to Yvonne as well. With the end of the war, Yvonne and Tancred were able to pursue their relationship, and while secretly oper-

TANCRED SANDOVAL

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ating from Markesan during the early years of the Jihad, the two were married and had a son, Harrison.

Though Yvonne is unquestionably the ruler of the Federated Suns, the couple tends to function almost as co-rulers, with Tancred, as Prince's Champion, taking responsibility for the bulk of the military duties while Yvonne handles the civilian and political aspects. It was in this capacity that Tancred journeyed to Arc-Royal at the beginning of 3073 and was present for the devastating bombing there. Injured in the blast, he remained on Arc-Royal for most of the year and was therefore available to meet with Devlin Stone at the behest of Precentor Martial Davion. Based in large part on Tancred's recommendation, Yvonne has thrown the support of the Federated Suns behind Stone's movement to defeat the Word of Blake.

His return to New Avalon has presented Tancred with numerous challenges, chief among which is the rebuilding of the shattered AFFS. This task is hampered by the continued independence of the March Lords, not least his own cousin Jerome, who, with Tancred's absence and preoccupation of the past few years, has appropriated many of the Ducal powers to himself. Though not yet openly rebellious, Jerome has begun to subtly defy Tancred's orders regarding minor matters, and it is only a matter of time before the two strong-willed men clash publicly.

JON DAVION

Rank/Title: Marshal of the Armies, AFFS

Born: 3024 (52 in 3076)

Encouraged by his older cousin Jackson, Jon Davion left a teaching position at Sakhara to enter active service in the AFFS a decade before the outbreak of civil war. He quickly made a reputation for himself by reorganizing the armor brigade of the Davion Heavy Guards and more than doubling its efficiency in military exercises. Though himself a MechWarrior, Davion was able to utilize his academic knowledge in ways that soon made his command the envy of many of his fellow officers.

Jon and the majority of the Heavy Guards spent the lion's share of the civil war stranded on Galax when Katherine stripped their transport assets, but they were able to participate in the final Allied assault on New Avalon. After the war's end, the Heavy Guards were posted to Salem and began to rebuild. In January 3068, they once more came to New Avalon, running the Word of

Blake blockade and forming the backbone of the defense of the capital for the next eight years.

Now that New Avalon has been liberated, Jon has succeeded his cousin Jackson as Marshal of the Armies and has immersed himself in a massive rebuilding effort across the entire realm. While Jon is eager to take the fight to the Blakists, he recognizes that the Suns is in rough shape and cannot afford to weaken its forces too much. The Taurians are still a persistent concern, and the arrival of Clan Snow Raven in the Outworlds Alliance presents a possibly grave danger to the nation's security.

Foremost among his tasks is the re-establishment of command cohesion throughout the AFFS. With both the Draconis and Capellan Marches under the command of strong, independent-minded leaders and an upstart commander in the Outback, Marshal Davion is determined to quickly and definitively demonstrate his authority.

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COLE WILLIAMS

Rank/Title: Minister of Information Intelligence and Operations

Born: 3010 (66 in 3076)

The current Davion spymaster has had a varied career within both the Federated Suns' military and civilian branches. As a Colonel in the Fifth Davion Guards, he faced Clan Jade Falcon on Bessarabia before injuries suffered in that battle forced him to retire from the field. Transferring to the DMI, he worked his way up the ranks to a regional Deputy Directorship until Katherine's coup prompted him to resign and go underground on New Avalon for the duration of her reign. With the end of the civil war, Williams was appointed to head MIIO, and he dedicated the ministry to rooting out those who had facilitated and participated in Katherine's crimes.

Accompanying the Princess-Regent's entourage to the final Star League conference on Tharkad, Williams was off-world when the Word of Blake came to the Suns' capital and began their years-long occupation. It is a testament to the strength of the rebuilt ministry that the flow of information from the AFFS forces under siege there was never completely cut off despite every effort by the Blakists. In the meantime, Williams operated a slimmed-down version of the MIIO from Markesan, where he also orchestrated the protection of Yvonne and Tancred for the years they were based there.

Now re-established on New Avalon, Williams has turned his ministry to two priorities. Based on information from Devlin Stone, he has a team of analysts combing ancient records looking for the hidden Blakist planet within the Federated Suns in the hopes of uncovering any secrets that might help win the war. At the same time, MIIO assets within the former Chaos March—now the Word of Blake Protectorate—have been charged with assisting Stone's coalition in any way they can.

A final concern that has occupied the attention of MIIO in recent months is the nuclear attack on New Syrtis, which some critics have called a failure of intelligence that can be directly attributed to Williams' focus on other threats. Though Williams recognizes the continuing danger the Taurians represent—especially given their reaction to the asteroid strike on their capital world—both he and the Princess-Regent feel the Word of Blake to be a much bigger threat.

ANGELA HASEK

Rank/Title: Duchess-Regent of New Syrtis, Minister of the Capellan March

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

Angela Hasek had already been running the day-to-day aspects of the Capellan March government when her brother was assassinated in early 3070, elevating her to Duchess-Regent for George's eldest daughter Amanda. First on her agenda was wrapping up the final actions against the retreating Capellan forces in the wake of their assault on New Syrtis.

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Chasing the Capellans out of Federated Suns territory was only the beginning, as Angela was forced to deal with not only subsequent incursions but also with the expanding Blakist Protectorate and the continuing Taurian problem. In addition, her relationship with Yvonne Steiner-Davion was strained even beyond what her brother's had been. Despite continued commands from the Princess-Regent, Angela refused to toe the line until the Twenty-second Avalon Hussars and the FSS *New Syrtis* were dispatched to not only protect the March capital but also to ride herd on the Duchess. This action, of course, engendered a fair amount of resentment on New Syrtis, which Angela is not averse to exploiting for her own benefit.

The devastating asteroid strike on the Taurian capital planet provided Angela with an opportunity to extend a hand of peace to her enemies, but the offer's rejection freed her to begin preparations for a major campaign in the Pleiades. By prioritizing this conflict, however, she ran contrary to Yvonne's preferred focus on the Blakist threat and paid the price when her miscalculation in sending the *New Syrtis* after the *Vendetta* left the door open for Taurian terrorists to launch a nuclear assault on her homeworld. In addition to the devastating effects this attack had on the planet itself, New Avalon's quick response with aid shipments and increased defense has mitigated some of the populace's resentment towards the throne, which Angela had encouraged.

Within the last year, a threat closer to home has occupied much of Angela's attention. Beginning in early 3076, a grassroots movement arose on over a dozen worlds within the Capellan March, advocating the belief that Duke George's assassination was instigated by Angela and Yvonne. Needless to say, being accused of killing her own brother did not sit well with the Duchess, and by the end of the year she had enlisted MIIO and the DMI to round up many agitators and dissidents. Though this appears to have shut down the movement for the time being, there is some evidence that it is not dead, merely dormant.

NATHANIEL HASEK

Rank/Title: Field Marshal, Capellan March

Born: 3000 (76 in 3076)

Nathaniel Hasek is one of the oldest active commanders in the AFFS, with a career that stretches back to the Fourth Succession War. As the cousin of Michael Hasek-Davion, he was loyal to the Capellan March first and the Davions second until his rehabilitation by Michael's son Morgan. From that point, Nathaniel dedicated himself to being loyal to New Avalon and was rewarded with a steady climb through the ranks, from command of the Fifth Syrtis Fusiliers to being appointed George Hasek's successor as Field Marshal of the Capellan March.

NATHANIEL HASEK

Observers of the AFFS command structure have noted a wavering of Hasek's loyalties in the past fifteen years, first with his actions during the civil war and more recently when the Princess-Regent had to resort to threats to make him rein in his troops on the Capellan front. The consensus is that while he remained loyal to Hanse Davion, Hasek has come to distrust Hanse's children and believes that they have not been good for the Federated Suns. The strong independent streak that has been a Hasek hallmark for generations seems to be reasserting itself as Nathaniel gets older.

For the time being, however, Hasek is occupied with rebuilding March forces after the disastrous Operation Sovereign Justice and the subsequent Capellan assault on New Syrtis. Of more immediate concern is the recent nuclear assault on New Syrtis by Taurian forces. Nathaniel's announcement in the aftermath of the bombing of the formation of a new unit, the Syrtis Avengers, has provoked some alarm on New Avalon but at the moment Tancred Sandoval and Jon Davion are giving Hasek some leeway.

One more disturbing development is the birth of a grassroots movement in the Capellan March that blames Duchess Angela Hasek for her brother's assassination. Field Marshal Hasek has yet to make any public statement regarding these accusations, and some within the New Syrtis government have begun to question whether he might be involved in some way.

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HELEN TREMPELEAU

Rank/Title: Marquess of Filtvelt

Born: 3002 (74 in 3076)

In retrospect, it was perhaps foreseeable that Helen Trempeleau would one day preside over a secessionist nation in the Federated Suns' Outback. Born into a minor noble family on Filtvelt, from a young age she agitated for increased attention from New Avalon to the issues facing the Outback worlds. A two-year campaign in the early 3030s resulted in several large corporations establishing scholarship programs for civilian enrollment at the Filtvelt Military Academy and was Trempeleau's first major coup. By 3046, her efforts had earned a marquesship from Hanse Davion. Helen used the additional leverage her new title gave her to begin several programs of economic development throughout the region. Her efforts were successful enough that her title was made permanent in 3057.

The fighting of the civil war spared her worlds, though chronic shortages and an economic downturn threatened to undo all of Marquess Trempeleau's hard work. Realizing that the Outback would never get respect from New Avalon, she began a populist movement to demand fair treatment. Though her original intent was to work within the system, her thoughts turned to secession when the New Avalon government, itself reeling from the opening salvos of the Jihad, was unable or unwilling to protect the Outback from increasing piracy. By early 3072, the decision was made to secede from the Federated Suns, and the Filtvelt Coalition was formed.

HELEN TREMPELEAU

Exactly how much power in the Coalition Marquess Trempeleau holds and how much is in the hands of the military of Field Marshal (formerly Colonel) Erich LeBeau is an open question. Trempeleau remains the public face of the new nation, and whispered rumors credit her with pushing Malagrotta's independence as a distraction to the various pirate bands plaguing her realm. More recently, the Marquess has been very vocal in warning Major General Marsin to respect Filtvelt's sovereignty and not cross the border in his actions against the pirates who brought down Malagrotta.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

THELOS REDBURN

Rank/Title: Count of Terrestria, Royalston

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

As the eldest son of one of the Federated Suns' most celebrated war heroes and one of the foremost Lyran historians, Thelos Redburn, in the eyes of many, had his life fairly well mapped out at an early age. To his credit, however, Thelos chose his own path, declining to enter either parent's chosen career. He was always known as a peacemaker among his siblings, and none of his family was surprised when he entered the Foreign Ministry's diplomatic corps upon graduating from the University of Saso with a degree in public policy.

Thelos' first assignment for the Ministry was as assistant to the trade delegate to the St. Ives Compact, where his family's long friendship with the ruling Allard-Liaos introduced Thelos to his future wife. Countess Merina Suarez, a minor landholder from Royalston and fourteen years his senior, met the young diplomat at a social function hosted by the Duchess while on St. Ives for an economic conference, and the two hit it off instantly. They were married after a whirlwind courtship, and three children followed in quick succession. Thelos' career continued to prosper until he was appointed as a junior ambassador to the Lyran Alliance in 3067 and stationed on Skye. The outbreak of war with first the Blakists and then the Capellans led him to return home to Royalston out of concern for his family's safety.

Theodore Redburn, eldest son of Thelos and Merina, joined Devlin Stone's movement shortly after the formation of the Kittery Prefecture and is one of the so-called "young guns" functioning in a civilian advisory capacity to Stone. Through this connection and his own personal knowledge of Stone's right-hand man, David Lear, Thelos has assumed an unofficial

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position as the Suns' ambassador to Stone's movement. Thelos has expressed concerns about the political ramifications of Stone's reforms in the Kittery Prefecture but his reports to New Avalon have so far advised cautious support.

ROSS MCKINNON

Rank/Title: Captain/CO of the Fox's Teeth

Born: 3015 (61 in 3076)

The McKinnon family has served the Federated Suns for centuries as both military commanders and patriots. Ross McKinnon, son of Ian and latest commander of the famed Fox's Teeth, has of late directed his attentions outside the Suns, even working alongside Combine units. For a man whose uncle died fighting in the Ronin War against renegade DCMS forces and whose own trial by fire came in the War of 3039, this is a radical change, and what is even stranger is that this change came about at the behest of a Kurita. However, Chandrasekhar Kurita is now dead, and rather than return to duty with the Seventh Crucis Lancers, McKinnon has led his Fox's Teeth into service with Devlin Stone.

Heeding the advice of his cousin David, who is a close compatriot of Stone and commander of the Paladins, as well as a posthumous message from Chandy Kurita, Ross met with Stone in early 3076 and pledged his support. The Fox's Teeth were immediately pressed into service and dropped behind the Protectorate border to function as raiders to distract and soften up the Blakist forces in anticipation of a full assault by Stone's coalition. The first planet they hit was Towne, where they liberated a string of reeducation camps on the Howell continent before heading off-world.

After several more raids along the border, McKinnon was let off the leash and ordered to head deeper into the Protectorate with a new mission: train local insurgent groups to resist the Blakists in order to weaken their strength from within. This mission would require the unit to operate without contact from Stone's main body of forces, but McKinnon, already sickened by his previous exposure to Blakist camps and made even more determined by the experiences of recent months, jumped at the chance. His last transmission came from Tigress and consisted of a single word: "Go."

RAYMOND-ROGER MARSIN

Rank/Title: Major General, Regamen CrMM

Born: 3037 (39 in 3076)

Though only distantly related to the famous Marsins who figured so importantly in the early years of New Avalon, Raymond-Roger has always felt he was meant for something great. This sense of destiny, along with a helping hand from his family's not-insignificant industrial fortune, propelled him to success first at NAMA and later in his military career. After being assigned as a company commander to the Remagen CrMM, he spent the early years of the civil war anxiously waiting for his unit to be called into action, but when part of the militia was finally transferred to New Avalon, he was among those left behind. Being forced to sit out the largest action of his career came as a slap in the face to the young officer and caused him to begin to question his loyalty to the throne.

That loyalty was further tested when piracy along the Periphery border went unchecked for so long that several beleaguered worlds took matters into their own hands and broke away from the Suns. With the promotion of Jaime Francis to the March Command Staff in late 3074, Marsin received command of the militia and used his new position to agitate for the AFFS to attack the piracy problem head on. Despite (or perhaps because of) some rather public criticisms of New Avalon for what he perceived as their inaction and neglect of the Outback, Marsin was given overall command of several regional militia units and immediately moved to interdict the pirates of Malagrotta. After scoring a handful of victories within the first few months, he initiated a picket line surrounding the Malagrotta systems.

Though still critical of the Princess-Regent, Marsin has toned down his public comments and apparently has begun to recognize the difficulties faced by the federal administration. In keeping with official policy, he has remained hands-off with regards to the Filtvelt Coalition, directing his attention to the active pirates operating out of Malagrotta. In particular, Marsin has offered a bounty on the head of *Voorzitter* Gary Tiqualme, who has returned the favor threefold.

ELRIC VON STEFFELBUS V

Rank/Title: CEO, Interconnectedness Unlimited

Born: 3017 (59 in 3076)

Mysterious son of a mysterious father, Count Elric von Steffelbus V is the current CEO of Interconnectedness Unlimited and has continued his father's practice of secrecy. From his estate on Rosamond, Count von Steffelbus directs the faltering empire his father built.

Since the beginning of the war with Word of Blake, von Steffelbus has become even more of a recluse than he has always been. Where once he participated in an annual religious festival outside Granite Falls, he now forgoes even that limited exposure, not having been seen in public since early 3068. Though rumors abound, the IU board of directors has repeatedly assured the public that their CEO remains alive and in control of the company. In the meantime, the stories told about von Steffelbus by the people of Rosamond vary from the mundane to the outrageous. We believe the truth to lie somewhere closer to the former; the Count is far more likely to have severe phobias about public appearances than to secretly be his own father, somehow miraculously spared the ravages of age.

Increasing the mystery surrounding Count von Steffelbus is the recent attack on his estate on Rosamond that occurred several months ago. Though the attackers were unmarked, the equip-

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ment and tactics used have led StarCorps analysts to postulate Blakist involvement. Why they would be concerned about a company mainly known for fast food, religious literature, and civilian vehicles is an interesting question without a clear answer. Our best speculation relates to rumors that IU was involved in advanced Kearny-Fuchida research as far back as the turn of the century. As far as the public is aware, that research—if it ever even existed—never amounted to any significant developments, but perhaps the Blakists know more than we have been able to find out.

Until Count von Steffelbus himself resumes public appearances, the truth is not likely to come out, as the IU board is notoriously tightlipped about the inner workings of the company.

GARMAN DOUCETTE

Rank/Title: Former XO, Malagrotta CrMM

Born: 3021 (55 in 3076)

A native of Armington, Garman Doucette attended the Filtvelt Academy on scholarship as a way to get out of his backwater existence and was in his third year there when a pirate raid on his home village took the lives of his parents and two younger sisters. With nothing left to tie him to his homeworld, Doucette threw himself into his studies, graduating in the top tier of his class and receiving a position in the Third Lyran Regulars. While serving with this unit, he came to recognize the disdain that many people held for those native to the Outback, and he developed a reputation as an outspoken defender of those worlds. Eventually, his superiors decided his confrontational attitude towards his comrades was hampering the advancement of an otherwise fine officer, and a transfer was ordered.

Reassigned to the Malagrotta CrMM in 3048, Doucette found himself in a more nurturing atmosphere and flourished. He made his way up the ranks until he gained the rank of major general in 3067 and the position of aide to the Combat Region's commander, General Kirk DeYoung. Fighting piracy and engaging in public works projects on the worlds of the region appealed to Doucette, and he gained a measure of local celebrity for wearing his Outback patriotism on his sleeve.

When pirate activity in the region increased after the secession of Filtvelt, Doucette fully supported secession for Malagrotta and even, against his better judgment, agreed with the fledgling government's emulation of Filtvelt's policy of granting letters of marques. In the case of Malagrotta, however, the policy backfired, and the Death's Consorts out of Tortuga overthrew the legitimate government.

Doucette fled Malagrotta when Gary Tiqualme took over, and he has recently turned up on Filtvelt, where he is actively petitioning Marquess Trempeleau to intervene. Using the Coalition's fears that Raymond-Roger Marsin will crush their dreams of freedom as he crushes the pirate scourge, Doucette hopes to preserve his new nation and maintain its independence from New Avalon. So far his pleas appear to have fallen on deaf ears, and he lives in seclusion on Filtvelt, hiding from the large bounty put on his head by Tiqualme.

CORPORATIONS OF THE FEDERATED SUNS

Federated Boeing Interstellar (FdBoin)

The total destruction of Fed-Boeing's Galax Megacomplex could well have signaled the death knell for many corporations. But just as they survived the Succession Wars, Fed-Boeing managed to survive the brutality of the Jihad—so far.

While their main finishing facilities were wiped out by the Blakist assault, Fed-Boeing long ago spread its facilities over a score of systems. Immediately after the attack, spare parts were flowing to the armies of the Suns, uninterrupted by the loss of the central facility. Leveraging this diversified industrial base, as well as extensive cash reserves, Federated Boeing engineered a merger with longtime partner Universal Air. UnAir's Delevan headquarters and shipyards had escaped the worst of the Jihad, but production was driven to a standstill by the Word's siege of New Avalon and its effect on nearby shipping traffic as merchants and military alike avoided the Blakist blockade. Teetering on insolvency, UnAir was eager to accept the partnership and much-needed cash infusions, as well as the ability to call upon Fed-Boeing's dedicated shipping fleet to keep supplies flowing.

The merged companies operate under the Federated Boeing name and ticker symbol, and the Delevan shipyards serve as their headquarters. These yards are surging with activity, answering orders for civilian and military DropShips and JumpShips. While the facilities are not able to manufacture or repair WarShips, credible rumors have Fed-Boeing already converting *Excalibur* DropShips to Pocket WarShips as well as researching other similar conversions to bolster the Sun's naval power.

Viability for Takeover: None

Viability for Partnership: Potential

CORPORATIONS OF THE FEDERATED SUNS

Achernar BattleMechs (AchBM)

Achernar owes it survival mainly to the inspired (though some would call it draconian) foresight of the late Jackson Davion. After the opening salvos of the Blakist assault left Avalon City's Industrial sector and Achernar's main BattleMech complex a smoking ruin, Marshal of the Armies Jackson Davion placed Achernar under martial law and instituted two key measures. These measures were originally designed to ensure the defenders of New Avalon would continue to be supplied. The measures also would lead to the eventual survival of Achernar as a viable corporation.

The first measure was the cessation of military-related manufacturing by Achernar's Heavy Industries and the complete shut down of their defense technologies division, stripping the facility of anything with a military application. Within a week of this measure, which at times was enforced by troopers wearing battle suits manufactured by Achernar, the company gave all appearances of having ceased to be a viable defense contractor.

The second measure involved far more subterfuge. While the Word's orbital assault of Avalon City appeared to destroy the mountain factory of Achernar's subsidiary, Albion Advanced Technologies, the assault only collapsed the main entrance to the factory and several storage bunkers. Planting false information in Achernar's remaining surface facilities, Jackson Davion was able to lead the Word to believe the underground factory had been completely destroyed. Throughout the long occupation, the Achernar underground factory continued to churn out spare parts, ammunition, and battle suits.

Once New Avalon was free of Blakist occupation, Achernar quickly emerged from hiding. With permission of the Sun's government, Achernar partnered with Corean Enterprises and announced it would complete its first limited production run of the *Legionnaire* BattleMech from the underground Albion Technologies' manufacturing facility within six months, a promise they delivered upon in March of this year.

Viability for Takeover: None
Viability for Partnership: Strong

General Motors (GenMo)

While diversity should have proven to be a shield for catastrophic damage, General Motors' great size has played against it, and the corporation has suffered extensively in the Jihad. The loss of Addicks to the Blake Protectorate and Galax to bio weapons, repeated attacks on the New Valencia facilities, and punitive strikes on its production facilities on Talcott and Waunakee would be enough to send any company into a tailspin. The near-total destruction of the 'Mech factories and heavy damage to the surrounding conventional facilities on Kathil as well as the destruction of their orbiting shipyards simply added to the existing blows. General Motors has indeed teetered on the brink of breaking up, but strong management and a heavy demand for war materials has kept the company operational.

With their 'Mech-production facilities drawing a disproportionate level of hostile intention, GM has shifted considerable resources towards their combat vehicle and battle suit R&D. The Hauberk battle suit has supplemented the already hugely successful Grenadier assault suits, and General Motors is exploring lightweight combat exosuits based on their highly successful Tunnel Rat series. Meanwhile the Ajax and Challenger combat tanks have continued to prove strong sellers, spawning several new variants that have expanded the demand for them. Finally GM has taken a counter move to some industrial giants, converting IndustrialMech lines to combat production, such as their new *Warlord* manufacturing line on El Dorado. Despite these successes, General Motors is hemorrhaging money as it tries to rebuild and recover from the loss of so many key facilities.

Viability for Takeover: Good
Viability for Partnership: Suggested

Federated Industries (FedArl)

With a highly diversified manufacturing base Federated industries was not only able to escape the worst ravages of the Jihad but has managed to expand, profiting from the inevitable need for arms and armor in war time. With their military dominance over small arms and body armor sales in the Federated Suns, it was only a matter of time before Federated Industries began to expand on this powerful base. The chain of successes from their Federated-Barrett division, from the Magshot to the PAB-27 body armor, led to new expansions to meet the demands of the AFFS, mercenaries under contract with the Suns, and their own Personal Defense Contractors division. With R&D focused on Novaya Zemlya, the company was able to take advantage of the Combat Training Center to field test a new exoskeleton enhancement to the PAB-27, introducing it in time for infantry units to use it in defending New Syrtis from the Capellan invasion.

With extensive connections and a distribution network throughout the Federated Suns greater then even our own, Federated Industries was an obvious key partner to pursue. Leveraging their experience with infantry personal armor and support weapons, we have been able to speed up research on militarizing our Gorilla exosuit system and future expansions into the battle suit market.

Viability for Takeover: None
Viability for Partnership: Existing

HOUSE DAVION

KEY WORLDS OF THE FEDERATED SUNS

NEW AVALON

Noble Ruler: Princess-Regent Yvonne Steiner-Davion
Star Type (Recharge Time): G5V (186 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.47 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Avatar, Galahad, Valiant)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 60 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 7,202,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-C-A-A

Capital of the Federated Suns, seat of House Davion's power, and the economic and cultural center of the nation—as well as something of a nexus for theology—New Avalon is every bit the new Earth that its original colonists hoped it would become. As both a powerful national symbol and the central hub of the government, it was a tempting target for the Word of Blake, and their occupation of it for six years all but crippled the nation. What had been strength became a weakness that nearly spelled the end of one of the strongest nations in the Inner Sphere.

Discovered in 2205 by the aptly named TAS *Camelot*, this lush planet quickly attracted colonists who genetically altered the native life to yield more terran-like foodstuffs. New Avalon grew to become the breadbasket for worlds around it. This important role assisted Lucien Davion's rise to power, one that resulted in the Davion family ruling the Federated Suns from this agricultural world.

New Avalon boasts four continents and a major island chain. Albion is the largest continent and has large prairies and forests interspersed between its mountain ranges. Brunswick is next in line, boasting most of the planet's oil production, heavy industry, and two major spaceports. Rostock is primarily a ranching continent, though some of the land is lost to the planet's only desert. Finally up north, the smallest continent, New Scotland, is covered with snow most of the year. New Scotland primarily exports raw materials to other parts of the world, mainly hard woods, metals, and rare furs. The New Hebrides island chain is located near the equator, making it a good location for citrus crops and vacation spots.

The capital of both the world and the Federated Suns was Avalon City, founded in New Avalon's first century as little more than a medieval theme park that ultimately grew into a significant metropolitan area. Looking over that shining city had been the jagged peak of Mount Davion and the royal palace built atop it, while at its foot sat the royal court—the complex of buildings that housed the bureaucracy that kept the Suns functioning. And below it all sat the famed Fox's Den, the AFFS' military command center.

Today Avalon City is a ghost town of derelict and bombed-out buildings sitting in the shadow of a headless mountain, all testaments to the long and brutal occupation of the Word of Blake. While New Avalon escaped the nuclear and bio-terror the Word leveled on so many other worlds, the long siege and occupation played a heavy toll on the world's population and industry. Only the continent of Rostock escaped significant damage, its agrarian base keeping it free of much of the six-year conflict between the Word and New Avalon's defenders. Brunswick was heavily damaged, first by orbital strikes and then by the Word occupation that commandeered or damaged much of the continent's industry. In collapsing the Fox's Den in their retreat from the world, the Word of Blake left its most lasting mark on the world.

But despite all the devastation of the long siege, New Avalon is still a breadbasket world, supplying food to systems throughout the Crucis March and currently New Syrtis. Its expansive manufacturing and electronics industries are damaged but slowly recovering with heavy assistance from the government. And in the ashes of destruction, a new city is slowly being rebuilt. While a temporary city has grown up just north of the destroyed Avalon City, construction has already begun to clear away the scars of the occupation. The Princess-Regent plans to see the city rebuilt by the end of the decade.

NEW SYRTIS

Noble Ruler: Duchess Angela Hasek
Star Type (Recharge Time): K5IV (197 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 4.12 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Varnay's Star)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 35° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 50 percent
Highest Native Life: Plant
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 254,654,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-B-A-D

New Syrtis was discovered at the height of the Terran Alliance's exploration push in the 22nd century, though due to the per-

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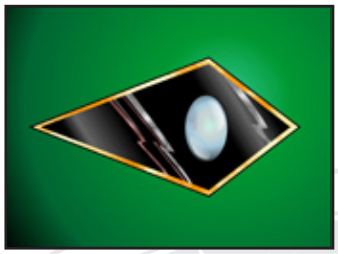


petual ice age in which the world seems to be stuck, it wasn't colonized until the late 2260s, and then only by those looking to mine its narrow equatorial temperate zone. The easy mining didn't last for long, however, and by the time the large metal companies came in with the intent of strip-mining the rest of the world, the Haseks were in power on New Syrtis. Rather than let their homeworld's fragile, if largely arctic, ecosystem be destroyed by companies looking to make quick profits, they closely regulated nearly every facet of industry, from mining to refining to manufacturing, and the once heavily mined equatorial regions converted to primarily agricultural lands able to support (barely) the planet's population. This both ensured the long-term viability of their world as well as the Hasek family's own long-term financial solvency.

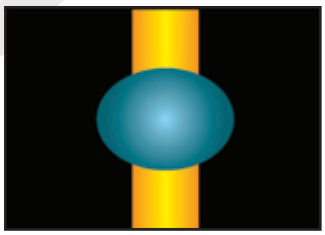
Due to its position as a military and political capital, as well as its extensive military industry, the Capellan Confederation has targeted the world scores of times throughout the Succession Wars. In the past, strong military defense and the world's extreme weather conditions have quite literally stopped every one of these attacks cold. Learning from their past failures, the Capellan Armed Forces reversed this trend with their September 3068 invasion, coming prepared to fight in the frigid conditions of New Syrtis' northern hemisphere. The area was already under-defended, thanks to George Hasek's overwhelming offense doctrine in Operation Sovereign Justice, and even hurriedly rushed-in reinforcements were insufficient to ensure a victory over the Capellan forces. The resulting six-month battle devastated the capital city of Saso, including the near-total destruction of the Tiskilwa University complex. Concerted defense by the Fourth Donegal Guard and Johnston Industries' own corporate defense force prevented more than superficial damage to the Johnston production facilities. After a protracted battle, the Capellan invaders finally retreated when Sun-Tzu shifted his focus to the Word of Blake. New Syrtis had survived another invasion and come through remarkably intact. The cost had been great, with the New Syrtis March Militia and Vanguard Legion ceasing to exist as viable combat forces. Nearly one hundred thousand civilians also died in the attack, primarily from exposure after their homes were destroyed during the fighting.

All this paled in comparison to the events of October of 3076. Responding to the Taurian siege of Brusett, Duchess Angela Hasek sent the FSS *New Syrtis* to attempt to destroy the Taurian *Vendetta* as it bombarded Brusett. With defense directives ordering heavy coverage of New Avalon, this move left New Syrtis with minimal mobile naval defense and open to a deep strike by the Taurians, who had been waiting for just an opportunity. Using both nuclear and ballistic DropShip attacks like those attempted on Panpour, they hit New Syrtis before ground aerospace forces could react. The nuclear attacks ravaged the equatorial belt of the planet, crippling the world's limited agriculture production and killing more than two million people. A direct hit on the "Cave" by a *Leopard*-class DropShip collapsed the entrances to the Capellan March command post, cutting it off from the outside for several months as it was dug out. While no Taurians escaped the Suns' counterattack, the lightning strike did more damage in one day than the entire Capellan invasion.

Having escaped significant damage in the Capellan invasion, the New Syrtis Shipyards were not so fortunate in the Taurian attack. With the *Fox*-class *New Syrtis* off chasing the TCS *Vendetta* and the Medusan Mercenary fleet still defending Firgrove, the defenses around the L4 shipyard were inadequate to stop the suicidal nuclear strikes of Taurian Tigress gunboats. The resulting damage has critically damaged the yards, which will greatly delay repairs to the crippled *New Syrtis* after her failed attempt to down the *Vendetta*. The zenith-based JumpShip repair space docks were even less fortunate, with over ninety percent of the facilities destroyed between the Capellan and Taurian attacks.

FILTVELT

Noble Ruler: Coalition Council
Star Type (Recharge Time): G5III (186 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7.47 Days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Torbjørnskjær, Færder)
Surface Gravity: 0.78
Atmosphere Pressure: Normal (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 31 °C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 55 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 2,800,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-C-C-C-A



Verdant, thriving and prosperous are words that do not typically jump to mind when one thinks of the Davion Outback. Yet these words amply describe Filtvelt, which was once the seat of the Outer March principality during the Five Princes era. Founded in the mid 24th century, Filtvelt quickly grew and became the hub of trade for the entire region of space. Prior to the Succession Wars, Filtvelt was a not only a crossroads of trade but had a thriving industrial base. The Federated Suns had been in negotiations with the SLDF to construct a forward naval resupply base at Filtvelt when Amaris seized control of Terra.

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While the end of the Five Princes era marked a change in the world's fortunes, it was the Succession Wars that commenced the real decline in Filtvelt's star. Its industrial might was continually cannibalized to keep other, more prominent worlds operational. Pirate attacks over the centuries further damaged the world's infrastructure. Only the world's extensive agriculture and livestock production kept the world from sliding into the mire that encompassed so many worlds. Feeding not only itself but exporting food as well, Filtvelt continued to be the center of trade and government for the region. The Filtvelt thunderbeast is highly valued for its meat, especially since the six-meter-tall beasts have not been successfully bred on any other world, making Filtvelt the exclusive provider of the prized meat.

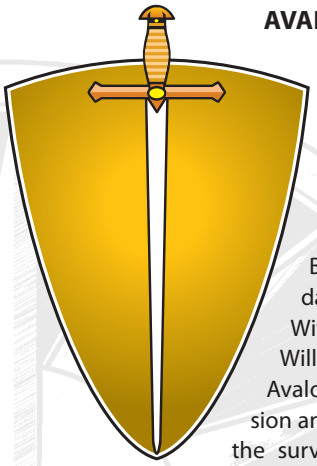
The world itself is dominated by a single Pangaea-like continent of sweeping extremes, from the towering Orgona mountain ranges with the eleven-thousand-meter Traktúra peak to the broad open northern rangelands the thunderbeast calls home. The main capital of Undredal sits on the west coast of the continent, both the planet's only spaceport and largest naval port, servicing the large fishing industry and maritime transport. The Filtvelt Military Academy and university is located here, as is most of the world's limited industrial capacity.

GALAX: DEATH OF A WORLD

Arguably the single largest naval industrial complex outside of the Titan Shipyards of Terra, Galax became an early victim in the Word's attempts to cow the Suns into submission. While the dramatic naval attack on the Fed-Boeing megaplex is well known, what occurred in the weeks and months after that attack has only recently come to light. The spirited defense by the Sixth Crucis Lancers had been believed to have spared the planet from the nuclear devastation wrought on the megaplex. Only two Word of Blake fighters reached Galax's orbit, and both of them were quickly destroyed, their airframes and external ordnance burning up in the upper atmosphere.

The Word's deadly payload, however, was biological, not nuclear in nature. The destruction of the fighters in trans-atmosphere greatly slowed the spread of the bio-weapon but did not stop it. Within a month of the Word's attack, twenty percent of the population was dead or dying. Even instituting drastic measures did little to slow the spread of the virus as it bonded with Galax's local floral and fauna, turning every living thing on the world into a carrier of the plague. The survivors of the Sixth Crucis went from saviors to jailors, spending the next several years enforcing quarantine on the planet and preventing any survivors from leaving.

THE SWORDS OF THE SUNS: KEY AFFS MILITARY COMMANDS



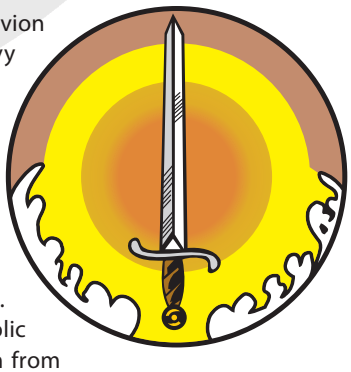
AVALON HUSSARS

Active Commands: Seventeenth Avalon Hussars, Forty-second Avalon Hussars, First Provisional Avalon Hussars, Second Provisional Avalon Hussars

Fractured along allegiance lines in the FedCom Civil War, the Brigade of Hussars was heavily damaged at the onset of the Jihad. With their commander, Field Marshal William Waters, trapped on New Avalon, the Brigade lost further cohesion and command direction, paralyzing the surviving units. Only the Twentieth Hussars participated in major offensive combat operations, suffering extensive damage during the Capellan Confederation's counterassault. Its survivors were eventually folded into the Twenty-second. The nuclear destruction of the Thirty-ninth at the hands of the Word of Blake has focused the anger of the Hussars squarely on Terra. With two of the remaining brigades protecting vital worlds, the Hussars were one of the first units to be reorganized along the AFFS' new military doctrines. This called for reducing the 'Mech command to a reinforced battalion and armor to one and a half integrated regiments, while expanding the percentage of battle armor-equipped infantry. Doing so allowed the Hussars to form two new commands. While considered provisional, they carry the names of the original Hussar Regiments.

Marshal Waters lobbied High Command successfully, and the Forty-second, First and Second Provisional have been moved to the Word border, where they have taken up an active defensive role, conducting harassing raids deep into Protectorate space

DAVION GUARDS



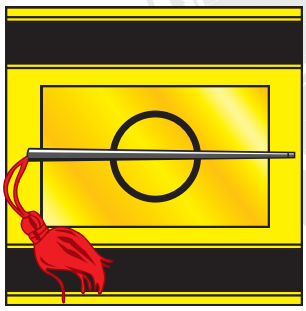
Active Commands: Davion Assault Guards, Davion Heavy Guards, First Davion Guards, Second Davion Guards

The siege of New Avalon nearly spelled the end for the proud Davion Brigade, destroying two commands outright and devastating three of the remaining units. Only their prestige and symbolic nature saved the First Davion from

HOUSE DAVION

dissolution, and even then the unit has been re-patterned on the defensive formation model, emphasizing armor and battle armor infantry. In contrast, the Assault and Heavy Guards have had no expense spared to restore these units to combat effectiveness. Both commands have been equipped in great numbers with the newest assault battle suits and C3 integrated armor units. While both are heavy units, they have split the initial production runs of the new *Legionnaire* BattleMech, using them in their cavalry strike forces. The Second Davion Guards did not take part in the siege of New Avalon, but it has its own reasons for hating the Word of Blake. After a bitter six-month campaign across the frozen expanses on Angol, the Second was finally forced to concede the world to Blakist invaders. The Second did not travel far though—relying on their large aerospace arm, a legacy of their former commander Fleet Admiral William Kossacks, they commandeered additional transport assets to ensure full mobility for the reduced command. Eschewing HPG communications for less reliable but more secure fax technology, the Second has remained highly mobile and struck at the Word repeatedly over the several years of the New Avalon siege. Only recently has the unit been pulled back for rest and refit, with the Heavy Guards taking over their harassment role.

With the elevation of Jonathan Davion to commander of the AFFS, the Guard has seen several shifts in command. Dixon Zibler was promoted to field marshal and commands the entire brigade as well as continuing his command of the Assault Guards. The Light Guards aerospace commander, Athena Davion-Ross, survived her unit's destruction and became one of Jon Davion's chief aides in the Heavy Guards. She was rewarded with the command of the Heavy Guards on Marshal Davion's promotion.



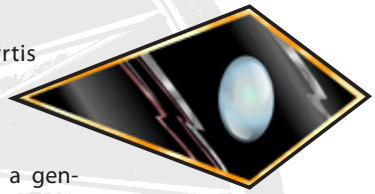
CRUCIS LANCERS

Active Units: First Crucis Lancers, Second Crucis Lancers, Fourth Crucis Lancers, Fifth Crucis Lancers, Seventh Crucis Lancers

Formed from SLDF troops that chose to remain behind during Kerensky's Exodus, the Lancers had one RCT representing each of the Crucis March administrative areas. The FedCom Civil War was the first time a Lancer RCT was ever fully deactivated, which happened after the Eighth was devastated by the Combine counterattack on Proserpina. Had the Jihad not happened, the Eighth was on the short list of units to be reactivated right after the Fourth and Fifth Davion Guards. The Jihad not only destroyed those plans but also reduced the brigade in strength even further. With its entire 'Mech regiment destroyed or captured by the Snow Ravens, the Third's conventional assets were folded into the Second and Seventh. The Sixth, still rebuilding from the Civil War, was at Galax when the Word launched their bio-weapon attack. Strict military protocols and reliance on stored rations managed to save half of their numbers. These numbers dropped heavily, however, over the five long years of maintaining the quarantine around Galax, suicide being one of the main causes of attrition. The surviving members were rolled into the Seventh Crucis lancers in late 3075 after a Free Aerospace Regiment replaced the Sixth on quarantine watch.

Despite the devastation this brigade has suffered from enemies of the Suns, they have fully stepped behind the Princess-Regent's new defensive policies, agitating for increased defensive funding for the Crucis March and participating in numerous aid and relief missions across the March.

SYRTIS FUSILIERS



Active Units: Fifth Syrtis Fusiliers, Sixth Syrtis Fusiliers, Eighth Syrtis Fusiliers, Syrtis Avengers

Operational would be a generous term for the Syrtis Fusiliers. As the point of George Hasek's sword, they were in the thick of the fighting against the Capellans. Sheer luck and its name are all that keep this formation from numbering only a single regiment. The Eighth only narrowly avoided total annihilation thanks to what some would call old-school thinking. When pulled from their harassment raids on Liao, the 'Mech regiment was sent directly to New Syrtis to aid in its defense. When the Word smashed into Genoa, only the Eighth's conventional forces remained to defend the world, and they put up a dogged defense despite the lack of 'Mech support. This defense was rewarded by a nuclear strike that devastated their high command, and since that time communication has been lost with Eighth's conventional assets. The Fifth remained operational only on paper, having suffered near-total destruction in the Capellan counter to Hasek's war. This left the Sixth as the only truly operational RCT in the brigade, having been heavily rebuilt from the salvage of the CapCon's failed invasion of New Syrtis.

Resisting the marshal of the armies' initial attempts at restructuring, Nathanial Hasek instead tried to rebuild the existing formations in full. The need for smaller mobile commands to meet the Word and the Taurians forced Hasek to abandon this for an approach more similar to that of Marshal Davion's. The formation of the Syrtis Avengers, pulling 'Mechs from the Eighth and conventional forces from the Sixth, is seen as an acknowledgement of the new direction of the AFFS without an outright capitulation to New Avalon's orders. Rumors suggest further division into smaller commands is in the offing for the Fusiliers.

HOUSE DAVION

FILTVELT CITIZEN'S MILITIA

Initially formed using the equipment from the Filtvelt Academy training battalion, the FCM was poorly equipped from the start. This changed little after the formalization of the planetary garrisons of the twenty-one-world coalition. Until recently the FCM could barely field two battalions of predominantly old, castoff BattleMechs. With no major manufacturing facilities located within the tiny breakaway state, the Militia was forced to rely on locally built equipment, the best of which consisted of a Quikscell subsidiary on Broken Wheel and the Cal-Boeing plant on Filtvelt (recently retooled to produce the Ripper VTOL). The poor state of the FCM is likely one of the drivers to the Coalition government's letters of marques policy, as most of the privateer groups that have been hired are significantly better equipped.

Since the Militia's formation, it has managed to supplement the first brigade beyond the training battalion's initial size by adding conventional armor and a large infantry contingent. In 3073 the Militia unveiled two battalions of Inner Sphere standard battle suits, believed to be purchased through mercenary cut outs. In the closing months of 3075 the Militia saw a major boost in numbers and equipment, thanks to the defection of General Garman Doucette and nearly a third of the Malagrotta March Militia. This has significantly bolstered the BattleMech strength of the FCM, though it still remains under-strength compared to the numerous privateer groups currently operating under letters from the Coalition government. While able to defend itself, the FCM is no threat as an invading force.

FEDSUNS MERCENARY DEPLOYMENT

The Federated Suns has long been the preeminent employer of mercenaries in the Inner Sphere, not only in volume but in quality. Employing more A-rated units than any other state, the Suns is the only nation to be able to claim full employment of Wolf's Dragoon three times. Excellent pay, fair treatment, application of lessons learned from the Clan Invasion days, and access to Suns' advanced technology are all factors that allow the AFFS to recruit and retain many well-respected units and help smaller units expand and grow.

The loyalty this fostered benefited the AFFS greatly in the opening days of the Jihad. When many employers were giving their mercenaries the evil eye, the AFFS was able to put centuries of faith in their mercenaries and treated them often with more prestige than March Militias and some line units. This loyalty and trust did not come without cost though, as many of the iconic mercenaries of the Federated Suns suffered heavily—at times permanently—in the fires of the Jihad, not to mention Hasek's ill-fated war. As seen below, the fate of AFFS mercenaries has generally been in line with the AFFS as a whole and sometimes far more permanent.

The Arcadians: Bent on freeing Acamar from the Blake Protectorate, the Arcadians fell victim to a well-orchestrated trap in 3075 that destroyed the unit with no known survivors.

Cunningham's Commandos: Coming out of the Capellan War relatively intact, the Commandos were mauled trying to stop a Taurian attack. Merging down to one command, the Commandos recently forged an agreement with the AFFS that will see the unit absorbed as a line unit.

Federated Freemen: Shattered after the failed Capellan invasion, the remaining Freemen disbanded, some joining the Syrtis Fusiliers and many opting to retire.

Hansen's Roughriders: Having moved from valuable foil to Taurian lighting rod, the Roughriders were "loaned" to Devlin Stone's coalition.

Harlock's Warriors: The Warriors suffered from wrong place, wrong time syndrome. With the HPG nets in turmoil they were unable to secure a proper contract with the Suns, while ending up in the wrong place more than once left the unit battered. Hoping to find safer environs and employment, the Warriors made the treacherous journey to Galatea, only to be destroyed in the Word of Blake assault on that world.

Illician Rangers: The Lancers continue to operate three of their four brigades, forming a vital link in the Capellan March defense against the Taurian assaults.

Lexington Combat Group: With New Syrtis shunting all available equipment to line units, the surviving LCG units were unable to achieve even basic maintenance. New Avalon recognized the critical situation, and in January of 3076 Jonathan Davion personally met with General Bradley to ratify the LCG becoming the Fourth Ceti Hussars with a permanent home for their families on Victoria.

The Medusans: Rebuilt from their spirited defense of New Syrtis, the Medusans are rumored to be in line to use their extensive skills to hunt down and capture the TCS *Vendetta*.

New Avalon Cavaliers: Having survived the impossible time and again, the Cavaliers ran out of lives when they were destroyed in the opening salvos of the Word siege of New Avalon.

Screaming Eagles: The Eagles continue to anchor the Rimward edge of the Draconis March, taking up the slack from the destroyed Third Crucis Lancers.

Vanguard Legion: No longer combat effective after the defense of New Syrtis, the survivors were drafted into the Sixth Syrtis Fusiliers under emergency war powers acts.

Twelfth Vegan Rangers: Down to a single merged combat brigade, the Rangers remain unbowed. They have been heavily active on the Protectorate border since the siege of New Avalon.

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HOUSE LIAO

THE CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

The Capellan Confederation has, throughout its history, often been derided as the smallest of the Successor States, or the weakest, or the poorest. Its enemies have always underestimated its prowess, dismissing it as a police state or a people chafing under the rule of tyranny. Few people outside the Confederation have ever assigned it a favorable epithet, and those few have almost always been expatriates.

And yet, after six hundred years, the Capellan Confederation remains.

THE CHAINS OF HISTORY

The Confederation today is the direct descendant of the Confederation of Franco Liao. That group of smaller realms that combined their strength to resist outside aggression formed the resolute determination that would be the hallmark of the Capellan state for centuries. The decision to place the good of the realm before the good of the individual was demonstrated in one of the Confederation's first acts, the bombardment of the city Capella Prime on Capella that destroyed an occupying Davion army and the citizens of the city in one fell swoop.

The Capellan Confederation prospered along with the rest of the Inner Sphere during the years of the Star League, and then joined the other Successor States in falling into the darkness of the Succession Wars after the Amaris Usurpation. The devastation of the First Succession War was particularly difficult on the industrialized worlds of the Confederation. Many of their production facilities—especially BattleMech production—were destroyed by bombardments and raids, and the Capellans were never truly able to recoup these losses. This meant that the CCAF remained the smallest military of the five Great Houses throughout the Succession Wars, a situation that cost them worlds one at a time and forced generations of Capellan Chancellors to choose indirect methods of gaining their objectives.

To live in the Confederation during the Succession Wars was to live in a slowly closing vise. The area of space the Confederation occupied was so narrow that virtually all worlds could claim to be border worlds. The long stretches of frontier shared with the Free Worlds League and the Federated Suns' Capellan March were almost always under some form of attack, and the CCAF quickly became adept at shifting its few resources around the realm where they were most needed. This strategy of reinforcement and stalemate let them keep a mostly secure border for many years, until 3028.

The outbreak of the Fourth Succession War was also the beginning of Federated Suns First Prince Hanse Davion's vendetta against Maximilian Liao. Several years earlier, the Capellan Chancellor's agents had succeeded in placing a double for the Davion ruler on his throne and very nearly managed to take over the Federated Suns. Hanse Davion never forgave Liao the insult, and he forged a union with the economically powerful Lyran Commonwealth to have his revenge.

The Fourth Succession War cost the Capellan Confederation roughly half of its worlds as the armies of Hanse Davion rolled like a deluge across the Tikonov and the Sarna Commonalities. Davion used overwhelming force to overcome the Capellans' flexible defensive strategy, and in two short years the armies of the Federated Suns and the Lyran Commonwealth changed the map of the Inner Sphere in ways that it had never been altered before. In a stroke, they controlled more worlds than any two other Successor States combined, and many assumed it was only a matter of time before the Steiner-Davions would rule a reconstituted Star League.

Maximilian Liao struggled with ill health after the Fourth Succession War, forcing his daughter Romano to assume the mantle of Chancellor. Romano Liao was a ruthless and cunning woman many considered insane, but she was just the tool the Confederation needed to survive when, a few short years later, the Periphery-based Magistracy of Canopus allied itself with the breakaway Andurien province of the Free Worlds and launched an invasion of the Confederation. Believing the weakened Confederation easy pickings, the two drove deeply into Capellan space before being stopped and then thrown back by the battered—but still determined—defenders.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

The coming of the Clans had little impact on the Confederation directly, but the Outreach Conference of 3051 brought some help to the Capellans in the form of technological aid intended to help bring Capellan industries to on par with the rest of the Sphere so they could contribute to the defense against the Clans. The most significant event of those years was the assassination of Romano Liao and her consort, Tsen Shang, in mid-3052. Romano's son, Sun-Tzu Liao, took over the Chancellorship and began his own quest to restore the Confederation to its former glory. One of his first steps was to secure the betrothal of Isis Marik, daughter of Free Worlds Captain-General Thomas Marik, thereby binding the two realms more closely together.

These machinations bore fruit in 3057, when the death of Thomas Marik's son Joshua forced the Liao-Marik militaries into an attack on the Federated Commonwealth's Sarna March. The attacks—meant to free the worlds taken by the AFFS in the Fourth Succession War—were marginally successful, with the Capellans recapturing only some of the worlds they attacked. The strikes destabilized the region enough, however, to throw the so-called Chaos March into disarray, making it a no-man's land of petty states and independent worlds. Sun-Tzu satisfied himself with denying those worlds to Victor Steiner-Davion and began to slowly woo or force those worlds back into the Capellan fold. His efforts were modestly successful, but a far greater triumph awaited Sun-Tzu

HOUSE LIAO

Liao. As the Successor States finally forced the Clans to a standstill on the Lyran world of Coventry, they came together to officially reform the fallen Star League. They agreed to combine their military might to drive one of the Clans from the Inner Sphere and force the others to halt their attacks, and to elect a new First Lord of the Star League for the first time since the death of Richard Cameron.

They elected Sun-Tzu Liao.

CAPITALIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Wringing this largely ceremonial position for all the political coin it could buy, Sun-Tzu let his newly formed Star League Defense Force destroy the Smoke Jaguar Clan and take the fight to the Clan homeworlds while he concentrated on his own agenda. Subtly encouraging heightened tensions along the border the Confederation shared with its breakaway St. Ives Compact, he engineered an assassination attempt that gave him the pretext to launch a military campaign to bring the wayward Commonality back into the Confederation's fold. The next two years were times of bloody civil battles, with Capellans fighting Capellans as the St. Ives Compact resisted until finally capitulating when the Confederation recaptured St. Ives itself. Duchess Candace Liao, daughter of Maximilian and aunt of Sun-Tzu, officially brought the St. Ives Commonality back into the Confederation in 3063.

As the Federated Commonwealth disintegrated in civil war, the Capellan Confederation concentrated its strength on reclaiming more of the disputed territories around the Chaos March and reintegrating the St. Ives worlds. Sun-Tzu also engineered the Trinity Alliance, an economic and military alliance with both the Magistracy of Canopus and the Taurian Concordat that freed up more military units for his purposes in the Chaos March. By the time the FedCom Civil War ground to a halt in 3067, units of all three realms were serving in each other's militaries, and the future looked profitable for all concerned. Few could guess, looking from the outside, that the peaceful détente that had settled across the Inner Sphere was about to be shattered.

Sun-Tzu Liao, satisfied with his realm's participation in the Second Star League, opted to abstain from the Whitting Conference on Tharkad. His absence, along with the plans of several other realms to withdraw from the alliance, cost the Second Star League its life and brought the Word of Blake to a terrifying frenzy and the dawn of a jihad.

FIRES OF THE JIHAD

Striking with hidden armies and secret WarShips, the Word of Blake declared war on the Inner Sphere, striking at New Avalon, Tharkad, and Luthien with devastating attacks. In the next six years they would explode from the Periphery and from the space around Terra, capturing or negotiating worlds into a "Word of Blake Protectorate" and striking across the Inner Sphere to spread panic and destruction. Every realm—nearly every world—has felt the pain of the Word of Blake's touch. The Confederation has suffered deadly attacks on such high-profile worlds as Sian and St. Ives, and its allies in the Periphery have suffered just as much. After years of setbacks the CCAF is beginning to counterattack, but it will take more force than they can bring to bear on their own to deal with the Word of Blake.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

SUN-TZU LIAO

Rank/Title: Chancellor of the Capellan Confederation

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

The Jihad tested Sun-Tzu in ways that no other national leader was tested. Over the years, perceptions of the Capellan Chancellor have ranged from spoiled brat to ruthless dictator and all points in between. He has excelled at keeping his enemies off-balance. They must always guess at his true motives or wonder about the hidden context of any agreement or encounter. The Word of Blake, however, bypassed such political games by striking with brutal force and a crippling communications blackout. Alone in the dark, Sun-Tzu survived three separate attacks on the Celestial Palace, remaining alive and well. This resilience has made him a living symbol to those he rules. He is viewed as the embodiment of Capellan Resolve.

SUN-TZU LIAO

HOUSE LIAO

The Capellan people, even those from St. Ives, no longer concern themselves with petty infighting. Their blood has been spilled, their realm has been battered, and yet through it all, Sun-Tzu has held them together with force of will and vision. When no allies could be found, he forged ties with Canopus. When all hope seemed lost, he rallied his troops and took the fight to the aggressors. Even his greatest personal and political rival, the great Kai Allard-Liao, now stands by his side. Sun-Tzu has become more than a leader, even more than a symbol. He has become the living will and hope of a people living through the most trying time in history.

The cunning youth has been replaced by a seasoned and contemplative political master. Sun-Tzu has been freed of concern for holding his title. Now he can turn all his thought and energy toward assuring that House Liao will take its rightful place in a post-Jihad Inner Sphere. He can watch the opportunist Devlin Stone with a wary eye. He can assess the aftermath of the fighting in the Federated Suns. Where once his nation was limited by paranoia and fear, it now stands united and hardened by a baptism of nuclear fires.

Sun-Tzu strives now to harness this wave of national pride into accomplishment and reform. He works to strengthen the bond he feels with the intriguing Naomi Centrella-Liao. He had known her for some time when he agreed to the marriage, and his wife has been surprisingly capable as both warrior and diplomat. The marriage of necessity edges toward genuine affection and caring. As the tide of war turns against the Word of Blake, Sun-Tzu stands poised to transform the Confederation from the least of the Great Houses into the most feared and united of nations.

KALI LIAO

Rank/Title: Lady of Highspire, Leader of the outlawed Thuggee Cult

Born: 3033 (43 in 3076)

Anastasius Focht once said of Kali Liao, "I have spent my life on the fields of battle; both militarily, and in the halls of power. Never before or since have I met such an utter personification of twisted, malicious evil as Kali Liao. That it comes wrapped in a package spawned to inspire sin makes her all the more dangerous and fearsome."

Kali remains the one thorn in Sun-Tzu's mighty paw. For generations, the Liao bloodline has been cursed with a touch of insanity that has tainted the Celestial Throne with some of history's most infamous characters. However, to simply dismiss Kali Liao as crazy and unpredictable would a woeful underestimation.

Kali Liao believes that she and she alone knows best how to preserve the Capellan Confederation. That fervent belief, bordering on religious zealotry, makes her incredibly dangerous. She, like the Blakists, blindly believes that any action she takes is justified. When a cult of Thuggee followers gathered at her feet, she became a real threat to stability in the Inner Sphere. The mass genocide of Black May was proof of her lethal power and influence.

Once contained on the worlds of Highspire and then Sian, Kali has managed to escape. It is believed that she was aided by the Mandrinn of Tikonov, but no definite proof of that has been found. She has stayed out of her brother Sun-Tzu's clutches by staying on the move. Her followers will sacrifice any price to serve her will. She is never in one place for long, and she is guarded by fanatical killers and thieves.

It has been suggested that Sun-Tzu knows exactly where his sister is at any given moment; the Maskirovka, it is said, monitors her movements, but he chooses to let her waste her energies running and hiding instead of plotting new insane schemes. Whatever the truth is, it is obvious that Sun-Tzu gives his sister far more leeway than he does anyone else in his life. Perhaps the ties the two forged in surviving as children under the insanity of first Maximillian, and then Romano Liao's Palace are stronger than his desire to see her punished for her crimes.

KAI ALLARD-LIAO

KAI ALLARD-LIAO

Rank/Title: Duke of St. Ives

Born: 3030 (46 in 3076)

Even now, some twenty years removed from the heroics of the Clan Invasion and his time as Champion of Solaris, Kai Allard-Liao is the most famous and most feared MechWarrior in the Inner Sphere. In every nation, his name is synonymous with legendary combat ability. His BattleMech, *Yen Lo Wang*, was once the most recognizable machine in the Inner Sphere. All of this notoriety and fame has come at a grave personal cost.

The political ambitions of his family and friends have kept Kai moving from battle to battle for most of his life. He has lost contact with the love of his life, been separated from his own son, and been held as hostage in order to facilitate the invasion of his own homeland. Every success or glory that Kai has won has come at a price far too high for most men to ever pay.

Kai has withdrawn to St. Ives now, and he remains focused on rebuilding his homeworld brick by brick. As a monument to the lives lost in the conflict, he is using as much of the rubble and debris as possible to forge the materials that will re-construct the city and familial estate. He has also reached out to his son, David Lear, only to be rejected. The battle weary Duke is highly mistrustful of Devlin Stone and his agenda, but he seeks to forge a relationship with his son. Because David is so firmly in cadence with Devlin Stone, Kai can do little but watch from afar and prepare to react if need should arise.

While Kai is embarrassed about his captivity and fatigued from a life spent at war, he is still among the most elite MechWarriors alive. His time on St. Ives is largely introspective and meditative, but he remains committed to defending St. Ives and all Capellans from any further waves of attack. Most recently, he has dispatched a personal, private message to Victor Ian-Steiner Davion, whom he has known since their days as graduate officers in the Tenth Lyran Guards during the Clan Invasion.

TALON ZAHN

Rank/Title: *Sang-jiang-jun* of the CCAF, Strategic Advisor to the Chancellor

Born: 3024 (52 in 3076)

Every Inner Sphere leader has a strategic advisor, and all too often, the ego that drives someone to rule a Successor State causes them to select a yes-man who will blindly follow orders. Sun-Tzu's choice of Talon Zahn was an inspired choice that has provided dividends far beyond military competence.

During the war to reclaim St. Ives, most CCAF officers were either too fanatical or too afraid of Kai Allard-Liao to be of any useful service. Zahn leapt to the forefront during the civil war, demonstrating enough loyalty to Sun-Tzu to be inspirational, while at the same time showing the will to prosecute the dogged chase that was required to track down the legendary duke. While he ultimately failed in his mission to capture Kai, he helped create the climate that allowed Sun-Tzu to reclaim St. Ives despite Kai's best efforts.

TALON ZAHN

HOUSE L

When the Jihad arrived with its apocalyptic violence, Zahn once again acted instead of panicking. Sun-Tzu is above all else a practical man, keenly aware of his own strengths and weaknesses, and those of the people around him. While Sun-Tzu is not a gifted military commander, *Sang-jiang-jun* Talon Zahn is. Sun-Tzu granted him the freedom to do whatever was needed to defend Capellan worlds from the Word of Blake.

Those actions have proved brutal but necessary. He has splintered command decisions so that no central communications network is required, he has authorized nuclear strikes on Capellan soil, and he has used the wave of national unity and pride to forge the CCAF into an elite and experienced fighting force.

Now, with the Blakist Offensive all but countered, Zahn has been freed by Sun-Tzu to take the war to their enemies. In Talon Zahn, Sun-Tzu has a general who has the expertise in battle that he himself lacks and a servant utterly loyal to the Celestial Throne. This unity of vision allows the Confederation to fight with vigor and purpose in a time when so many other armies are crumbling.

ION RUSH

Rank/Title: Master of Warrior House Imarra, Grand Master of the Blessed Order

Born: 3006 (70 in 3076)

During the Fourth Succession War, House Imarra became a symbol of Capellan defeat when they were duped into using purposefully flawed myomer bundles from stolen FedSuns research. Unwittingly, this helped Hanse Davion carry off the most daring and insulting raid ever conceived against House Liao. For the next thirty years, House Imarra was relegated to security duty on Sian. Ostensibly a position of honor, any observer of Capellan politics recognized the posting for the humiliating punishment that it was.

Ion Rush, a respected and capable warrior, rose to the rank of Grand Master of the Blessed Discipline of Warrior Houses and House Master of Imarra during this time, determined to restore Imarra as the house to bear the standard against which all other Warrior Houses were measured.

Released at last for the fighting on Styk in 3057, Rush proved Imarra was once more a viable and deadly fighting force. However, he and his troops were pulled off-world before they could achieve ultimate victory. Rush watched as Talon Zahn assumed the rank of *Sang-jiang-jun*, a position he had always felt he would hold himself. Even being amongst Sun-Tzu's inner circle of advisors has not healed the sting of that decision.

The Jihad changed everything. The strike on Sian left House Imarra badly damaged but more committed than ever to serving their Chancellor and their nation. With no choice but to free his Warrior Houses for combat, Sun-Tzu allowed Master Rush to leave Sian and engage in combat once again.

Master Rush has proved more than equal to the task. House Imarra has achieved a spectacular record of success during the desperate fighting against the Word of Blake. They have shown the ability to strike quickly and decisively, even against reinforced targets, and the MechWarriors of House Imarra are known to be among the very best fielded anywhere in the CCAF. While Master Rush may have lost out on one destiny, he will not allow the same fate to befall House Imarra or the Blessed Discipline. On the eve of counterattacks against the Word of Blake, Master Rush has poised House Imarra to be the tip of the Capellan Sword.

NANCY BAO LEE

Rank/Title: Director of the Maskirovka

Born: 3029 (47 in 3076)

The Maskirovka earned a reputation for intimidation, violence, and utter ruthlessness, and no Inner Sphere intelligence agency is more feared by its own populace. That reputation was supported by countless reports of political kidnappings, assassinations, and terrorist attacks committed upon other Inner Sphere powers.

In the time of the reformed Star League, the Maskirovka's fearsome reputation lessened somewhat. While still a cunning and unpredictable adversary, the Maskirovka was no longer required to keep the people in line. National pride unified the people of the Capellan Confederation, and for the first time the agency was required to focus more on the actions of other nations than its own unsatisfied populace.

NANCY BAO LEE

The woman who has seized the reins of this once-infamous organization is Nancy Bao Lee. Director Lee is intelligent, decisive, and resolved to provide Sun-Tzu Liao with the information he needs in timely fashion. Many of her contemporaries and rivals have underestimated her, especially because of her gender. While she remains the director of the Maskirovka, many of her rivals have vanished into thin air.

The Jihad has hurt the Maskirovka more than most pillars of government. Without communications, the passing of Intelligence is all but impossible. Still, Director Lee has done her best through the limited means available to keep Sun-Tzu apprised of the actions of both his allies and his enemies. Her rate of success is nothing short of remarkable given the trickle of resources she has at her disposal. Her knowledge of the Inner Sphere's major players and their available assets is impressive, and her judgment in predicting their courses of action has proved invaluable.

As the focus of the war has shifted to preparations for attack, Director Lee has begun a program of shoring up the support of the Trinity Alliance. She has found a surprisingly capable asset in the Chancellor's own wife, Naomi Centrella-Liao. While naturally mistrustful of someone so young and capable of deception, she has come to rely on Naomi's sway with the Magistracy of Canopus to further Sun-Tzu's goals. Within the Taurian sector, things are far more chaotic. Director Lee continues to infiltrate agents into many sectors of the Taurian government while assuring Taurian officials that the Capellan Confederation is firmly committed to upholding their part of the Trinity Alliance.

SE LIAO

MARCUS BAXTER

Rank/Title: Mandrinn of Menke and Mitchel, Commander of McCarron's Armored Cavalry

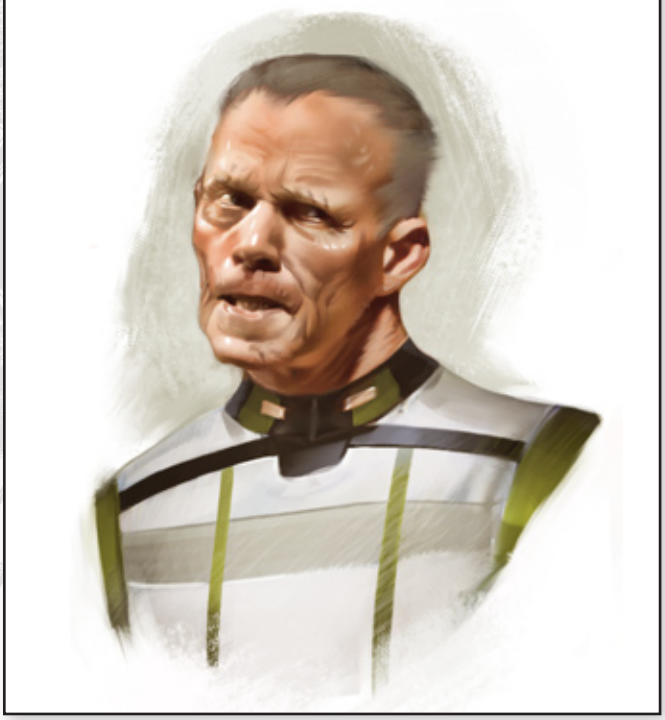
Born: 2987 (89 in 3076)

Marcus Baxter has faithfully served as an officer in McCarron's Armored Cavalry for a half century, and he was a close advisor to the unit's infamous commander, Aaron "Big Mac" McCarron. Baxter suffered through the best and worst of times with his friend and mentor. In 3050, when the death of Big Mac seemed to spell the death of the MAC itself, it was Colonel Baxter the unit turned to for salvation. His broad shoulders and calm command were the foundation the unit needed to survive.

Eventually, Baxter made the decision to accept Sun-Tzu's generous offer and formally rejoin the CCAF. The MAC was made into an independent reactionary force capable of being deployed to hotspots quickly and efficiently. The MAC saw major combat in the Marik/Liao offensive of 3057, and again during the war against St. Ives.

The invasion of Federated Suns forces stretched the MAC to its bursting point. The unit didn't have time to recover before the Word of Blake brought the Jihad to the Capellan Confederation, and the MAC was thrown into every major campaign. They were ground away steadily until even their considerable resources reached a critical mass. Without the steadying hand and wisdom of Marcus Baxter, the MAC would have likely been swallowed whole.

MARCUS BAXTER



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Baxter's focus is now on the MAC itself, rather than the survival of the nation, and he has retreated to the unit's home-worlds of Menke and Mitchel. The MAC needs time to resupply and recruit if they are to retain their fighting edge. To that end, Baxter has made concerted efforts to reach out to any surviving members of Wolf's Dragoons left straggling after the fighting on Outreach. While there is little love lost between the two units, Baxter's begrudging respect for the Dragoons makes him empathetic to their plight, as he believes such a storied unit deserved a far more glorious ending. Additionally, the MAC recruits in the St. Ives commonality as well. Baxter believes that he can in some small way make St. Ives citizens feel a part of the Confederation as a whole, which will only serve to further unify the nation.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

TY WU NON

Rank/Title: Commanding Officer of House Hiritsu
Born: 3017 (59 in 3076)

Shiao-zhang Ty Wu Non serves as the commanding officer of House Hiritsu's BattleMech forces. House Hiritsu enjoys a long tradition of Capellan pride and fighting with honor. When a spirit of unity swept the nation, House Hiritsu wondered internally what had taken the people so long to join them.

The entire Warrior House of Hiritsu faced a crisis of faith on St. Ives during the campaign of reclamation. Hiritsu warriors were loath to attack Capellan warriors who would soon be their brothers. Their solution was to treat these opponents as faceless traitors, and House Hiritsu's tactics became brutal and infamous. Only when Ty Wu Non and a handful of other conscionable MechWarriors demanded a return to the House's traditional values did the brutality end.

The Word of Blake would offer no such moral quandaries. Here at last was an enemy worthy of House Hiritsu's full vengeance and wrath. Ty Wu Non demanded everything from his men and expected nothing short of perfection. He sensed the all-or-nothing scope of the Jihad, and he refused to allow a single inch of soil or Capellan citizen to stand against the barbarians without defense. Every mission assigned to House Hiritsu was performed with superhuman zeal and tireless resolve. Ty would allow nothing else in his ranks. What had seemed brutal against St. Ives looked like salvation during the darkness of the Jihad.

Ty continues to serve as the commander of the Warrior House's forces. He is a warrior through and through, and he will only relent with the death knell of the Word of Blake. He uses whatever means he must to keep his unit at full fighting strength. The training for Hiritsu warriors is excessive and difficult, as Ty knows the most difficult battles lie ahead.

LING WA

Rank/Title: Commanding Officer of House Ijori
Born: 3036 (40 in 3076)

While the Warrior Houses represent the elite of the CCAF, not every Warrior House is held in the same high regard. In the 3050s, Warrior House Ijori was infiltrated by several members of the Thuggee cult devoted to Kali Liao. By the time these fanatics were unearthed by the Maskirovka, they had embarked upon devastating acts of terrorism including the infamous Black May incident that forever tainted the Ijori name.

The Maskirovka aided Master Denby in putting his House together once more. The intelligence agents screened every possible recruit and presented Master Denby with a capable, young, malleable force of dedicated and loyal MechWarriors. Chief among these new recruits was Ling Wa. The son of a Mandrinn, Ling Wa was dedicated to the nation and to the Chancellor himself. While young to serve as a commanding officer, he proved himself to be a flexible and innovative tactician.

It is likely, even with these strong measures, that House Ijori might never have restored their image in the eyes of the Capellan People. However, as was so often the case in recent years, the Jihad provided a crucible through which House Ijori could reclaim their honor and reputation. Ling Wa and his so-called "Baby Warriors" proved themselves the equal of any CCAF unit that faced the Word of Blake. Their skill and valor help liberate worlds from the ruthless Jihadists and earned the respect of officers throughout the CCAF.

Ling Wa is not the type to stay satisfied for long. While he is thankful for the status his unit has achieved, he is not content. He continues to lobby for newer designs and elite warriors. He trains his soldiers in live-fire exercises under extreme conditions. House Ijori's salvation has begun, and Ling Wa is committed to seeing it through to fruition.

AIGUO YANG

Rank/Title: Mandrinn of Krin, Patron of House Tsang Xiao
Born: 3011 (65 in 3076)

The Mandrinn of Krin is a loyal devotee of Sun-Tzu Liao. Under Sun-Tzu's rule as chancellor, Aiguo Yang has amassed a personal and political fortune. A shrewd investor, he entrusted the role of his personal bodyguard to an academy graduate with a top-flight family pedigree. Before the Jihad, Aiguo Yang was content to rule over his little parcel of the Confederation.

All of that changed when nuclear fires fell upon the Celestial Palace. Aiguo Yang's support and admiration of Sun-Tzu Liao was absolutely sincere. When the Word of Blake began to burn the Confederation with their fanatic assaults, Aiguo Yang committed all of his money, resources, and connections to saving his homeland. He spent much of his personal fortune outfitting a regiment of troops and arranging transportation to allow them to defend nearby systems.

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Now that the situation has stabilized, the Mandrinn has dedicated himself to a new goal. His best surviving warriors have been assembled in the model of the Warrior Houses. The entire battalion was presented to Sun-Tzu Liao as a gift. The accompanying note explained: "Since times have forced the Celestial Wisdom to deploy his House Imarra far from Sian, I have assembled a mighty force with which to defend the Imperial Palace. In ancient times, this role fell to the Rui Shi, the Lion Dogs. These men, who I have formed as House Tsang Xiao, stand ready to fulfill that most noble of purposes."

The audacity of the gift was frowned upon in many noble circles. However, Sun-Tzu himself was pleased by the effort. He granted these "Rui Shi" Warrior House status and has incorporated them into the forces that stand guard on Sian. While Aiguo Yang no longer controls this elite battalion of forces, he continues to serve as benefactor to the unit, working to provide them with the most modern designs and equipment possible.

MISTRESS HU-TU

Rank/Title: Prophetess of The Divine Spirit

Born: est. 3020 (56 in 3076—exact age unknown)

As the flames of war burn and harden a nation, national pride and a thirst for revenge are not the only emotions sweeping across the citizens of the Capellan Confederation. A deep and abiding spirituality is also taking root. It is believed by many that only divine providence has saved the nation, and that divinity is personified in the visage of Sun-Tzu Liao.

The head of this movement, named by the press the "Divine Spirit," is a woman known only as Hu-Tu. It is unclear whether this name is intended as a title (Hu-Tu being the Chinese mythology version of Mother Earth) or as her actual name. Whatever the purpose, she has quietly gained followers, and her words ring true in many Capellan hearts. Her origins and true name remain a mystery.

Hu-Tu espouses no agenda and offers allegiance to no organized religion. She claims only to be a prophet of truth. It is her belief, and the belief of her followers, that evidence of Sun-Tzu Liao's divinity can no longer be denied. Thrice, she notes, he has been attacked within the very walls of his own Palace, and yet he lives. Even the cowardly bombings carried out by the Word of Blake have not touched him.

Hu-Tu now urges the citizens of the Capellan Confederation to arise as one. The time of greatness lies before them, she says, and a living god sits on the Celestial Throne. To date, Maskirovka attempts to access her inner circle have proved unsuccessful. Whether the woman is some sort of crazed cult leader or the genuine catalyst for a national shift towards spirituality is unclear.

XAVIER BANNSON

Rank/Title: CEO of Trellis Electronics

Born: 3032 (44 in 3076)

Trellis Electronics of Victoria has a longstanding contract with the CCAF to produce communications systems as well as targeting and tracking systems. For many years, the firm enjoyed prosperous and steady growth. The local technical university supplied a constant stream of capable engineers and technicians. While Trellis was never among the corporate elite, it was a stable employer and boon to the Victoria economy.

Shortly before the Marik-Liao offensive of 3057, Xavier Bannson assumed the position of CEO. A graduate of Sian University, Xavier had proved himself as an excellent manager and decisive executive. While young for the position, the board felt he would be an excellent steward. The success of the offensive and the subsequent revamping of the CCAF would create a climate for rapid growth and expansion.

Bannson realized that the climate was changing, both within the Confederation and the Inner Sphere as a whole. He worked tirelessly to improve Trellis' production facilities and to secure the lucrative contracts offered by the re-formed Star League Defense Forces. Producing SLDF components gave Trellis engineers access to cutting-edge military electronic technologies. Soon, the small firm was pioneering advanced BattleMech components and new-generation targeting systems.

The Jihad all but shattered the economy of the Capellan Confederation. Several firms, without any way to import materials or communicate with other systems, simply ran out of money and had to halt production. Other corporations suffered direct attack by the Word of Blake forces that savaged so many worlds. Trellis, insulated to a degree by its position and relative lack of strategic targets, suffered only moderate hardship.

Bannson has held the reins with an even and firm hand through the jarring chaos of the Jihad. Now, as the CCAF gears up for a counterattack against the worlds held by Blakist forces, his company is ready to re-start mass production. The newest Capellan designs feature electronic systems manufactured and designed on Victoria, and this once-minor Corporation stands poised to become an economic power.

CORPORATIONS OF THE CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

Ceres Metals
Home Office Location: Capella
President / CEO: Duchess Evadne Rivoli
Founding Date: May 12, 2415
Business Summary:

Ceres Metals enjoys a reputation throughout the Inner Sphere as one of the preeminent conglomerates to survive the Succession Wars. Founded more than six hundred years ago, CM is a largely diversified entity with holdings in almost every segment of the market, from the mammoth BattleMechs of the main division to the Crowdbusters of the personal arms division and even the personal vehicles of Ceres Motors. Although based on Capella since its inception, CM has spread through most of the rimward Inner Sphere and (rumor has it) the nearer Periphery.

The most public product of Ceres Metal is of course the ubiquitous Capellan *Vindicator* BattleMech, produced prodigiously throughout the Succession Wars from its initial deployment in 2826 between the First and Second Succession Wars. It quickly became (and remained) the workhorse 'Mech of the Capellan Confederation, a practice CM encouraged by instituting harsh tariffs on exported parts and discounts on domestic Capellan orders.

While the *Vindicator* (and CM's other 'Mechs) holds the popular media's attention, much of the conglomerate's revenue is brought in from other sources. Ceres Motors maintains production facilities on more than half the Confederation's worlds and several outside the Confederation, and gross sales figures from personal vehicles outpace the numbers for military purchases by a huge factor. The demand for military products and concurrent recession in the civilian economic markets have brought these numbers down sharply, but Ceres has so far resisted many forcible attempts to retool their factories to wartime business, as they are unwilling to surrender the profit margins from civilian sales.

Hellespont Industrials
Home Office Location: Sian
President / CEO: Mandrinn lana Morgaine
Founding Date: July 17, 2792
Business Summary:

At the height of its prosperity, Hellespont was second only to the mighty Earthwerks as a supplier of military equipment to the Capellan Armed Forces, but the Succession Wars were not kind to the manufacturer or their facilities. Forced by circumstance to consolidate their many scattered holdings into the large facility on Sian, by the end of the Third Succession War they had become the largest supplier of conventional combat vehicles in the Confederation. That would quickly change, however, when the recovery of the Helm Memory Core brought Star League technical knowledge to the table, and the long-maligned *Raven* BattleMech to success.

Although slightly damaged during the attacks on Sian, HI remains a prominent part of the Capellan defense industry. The *Raven* is still in high demand, and HI has diversified their 'Mech production with such prominent Capellan designs as the *Men Shen* OmniMech and stealth *Sha Yu*. Indeed, their development of stealth BattleMech armor has brought them back to the forefront of the Capellan defense industry, able to name their price on many of their products.

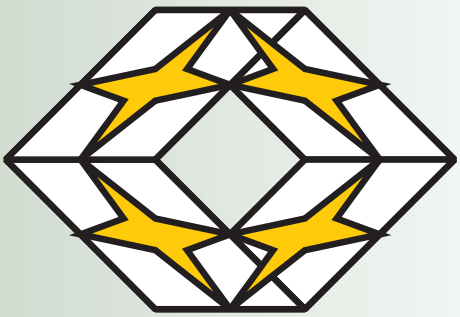
Mandrinn Alana Morgaine has led the company for more than forty years. Having risen to control three years before the outbreak of the Fourth Succession War, her stewardship of HI through that conflict and the Andurien invasion that followed led to her ennoblement by Chancellor Romano Liao in 3048. Although she will celebrate her eighty-ninth birthday in 3076, she remains in firm control of HI's board, despite the weariness that comes from fighting off the near-constant assaults on her position due to her age. Lord Aaron Morgaine, director of the HI Special Projects Division (*Mandrinn* Alana's nephew) is expected to take her seat when she finally decides to step down.

CORPORATIONS OF THE CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

Rashpur-Owens Inc.
Home Office Location: Capella
President / CEO: Lord Riley Doh
Founding Date: January 2, 2698
Business Summary:

During the Succession Wars the orbital shipyards of Rashpur-Owens were considered a shining symbol of *yin* and *yang* in the night skies of Capella. On the positive side, the yards were (for a long time) the only functioning naval construction facility in the Confederation and a symbol of Capellan pride and determination. On the negative, the yards were so old, decrepit, and prone to malfunction that the paltry handful of vessels they constructed per year cost so much more than purchasing foreign-built hulls that citizens in the know called the yards the "Citizen's Crutch" because so much was spent to keep them functional.

When Riley Doh ascended to the chairmanship of the RO board in 3051, he set about changing the yards' course. A self-made man who'd earned his citizenship working in the yards themselves, he used the small amount of free capital available to upgrade the yards' infrastructure and then began to beg, borrow, or steal in order to get his hands on newer technology. By 3056 the RO facilities had doubled production on every hull they constructed, and back-channel deals had secured the plans and molds to produce the deadly *Achilles*-class assault DropShip for the Capellan admiralty. These successes were enough to secure supplementary contracts for the massive new Necromo WarShip yards in 3066, and Doh was lobbying for a license to produce the *Defiance* OmniFighter when hostilities broke out in 3068. During a visit to the yard in 3069, *Sang-jiang-jun* Talon Zahn was so impressed with both the yards themselves and Doh that upon his return to Sian and report to Chancellor Liao, Doh was made a Lord of the Confederation.



Asuncion Industries
Home Office Location: Wei
President / CEO: *Shonso* Adam Nakoma
Founding Date: March 15, 2477
Business Summary:

While Asuncion was once a major subsystems supplier for JumpShips and WarShips, the trials of the early years of the Confederation and the Star League and the loss of the planet that gave the corporation its name forced AI into the interplanetary craft market after their relocation to Wei. Although their new homeworld again fell to an enemy realm—this time Hanse Davion's Federated Suns—AI managed to keep their business structure intact and gained a reputation for excellence for their small craft and personal environment suits. Although Justine Nakoma did not live to see Wei's reclamation by the Capellan Confederation, her son Adam welcomed the change. It was his services to the Capellan state during the transition that earned him his Capellan citizenship and title.

Recent years have made AI a common name amongst those who live and work in death pressure, with the standout being the Asuncion Escape Suit, or skinsuit as its commonly called. Adopted in 3074 as the standard undress garment of the Capellan admiralty, the AES is a lightweight pressure suit made of tear-resistant fabrics and incorporating a small air processor as a belt attachment. Since its release in 3068, the skinsuit has received nothing but stellar reviews from those who've survived quick pressure loss situations or other emergencies. With sales of the civilian interplanetary craft plummeting as all available capital is spent fighting the Word of Blake, AI is depending on the skinsuit division to carry them through the rough times ahead.

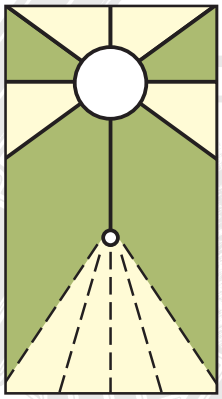
Rumors persist that AI is working on a combat platform, most likely an escort vessel similar to the Free Words-built *Aquarius* or *Lyonesse* small craft. Where they would construct such a craft remains to be seen, as most of their civilian yards are not equipped to move to military construction without massive upgrades. Where Nakoma could raise such capital in the middle of a Sphere-wide war is a mystery many are trying to sort out.

HOUSE LIAO

KEY WORLDS OF THE CAPELLAN CONFEDERATION

SIAN

Noble Ruler: Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao
Star Type (Recharge Time): GoIII (181 hours)
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Fu Hsi, Nüwa, Shennong)
Surface Gravity: 1.00
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30°C (Warm-Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Plant
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 7,200,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-C-A-C



Sian has been the capital world of the Capellan Confederation since the bombardment of Capella in 2367. The political, social, and military heart of the Confederation, Sian is the jewel in the Capellan crown, and not even repeated attacks by the Word of Blake can erase the pride all Capellans feel for their throneworld. The site of the Forbidden City and the Chancellor's Summer Palace, Sian is a lush world with strict laws in place to ensure that heavy industry stays in check and the gem of the Confederation keeps shining.

Several elite regiments garrison the planet, most notably those commonly considered the Chancellor's bodyguard regiments. The Red Lancers, lead regiment of the Capellan Armed Forces, as well as Warrior House Imarra, consider Sian to be their homeworld. In addition to those defenses, Sian is also the homeworld of the dreaded Maskirovka, the Liao secret police and intelligence apparatus. With the elite Death Commandos, the system boasts defenses that rival many Successor State capitals. Despite all this, the world has been successfully raided, most famously by the Kathil Uhlans during the Fourth Succession War, when they arrived to rescue the spy Justin Allard.

Sian is also an economic powerhouse, playing host to the powerful Hellespont Industrials manufacturer as well as the Saroyan Special Production aerospace facility, the sole manufacturer of the venerable *Transgressor* aerospace fighter. The Sian Center for Martial Disciplines is probably the best military academy in Capellan space, and the nearby Sian University hosts the most demanding and lauded officer candidate's school in the Confederation. Civil industries are not inconsequential, and the recent influx of Canopian citizenry has made the entertainment industry swell with new business and new competition.

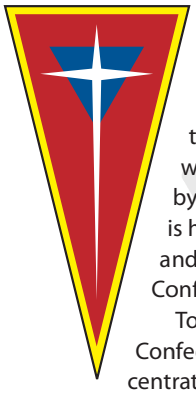
Life on Sian is comparable to life elsewhere in the Confederation, but it is of course more regimented. Unlike the capitals of other Successor States, which often try to be more cosmopolitan, Sian is the centerpiece of the Capellan caste system, and nowhere else are an individual's roles more sharply defined. The *Barduc* rule Sian under the Chancellor but during times of conflict—as now—the sword nobility rises to the occasion, and life as a servitor becomes even more harsh. Sian University, the only working research university in the Confederation, has been inundated with volunteers and applicants, as have the CCAF recruiting stations around the world—mostly from the servitor caste, as many of them, having worked alongside members of the Directorate during the reconstruction, are hungry for a better lot in life.

The recent attacks by the Word of Blake have actually eroded some of this discrimination, at least among the middle and lower castes. With so much damage done—and the threat of the loss of Chancellor Sun-Tzu Liao—the citizens of Sian have drawn together in a display of Capellan unity. The wedding of Sun-Tzu Liao to Naomi Centrella has also helped erode traditional discriminations—the open society of the Magistracy is antithetical some of the more conservative elements of the Capellan nobility, but the Chancellor's acceptance of the Canopian Magestrix has forced them to reconsider their evaluations of the Periphery nation. The sterling performance of the Canopian troops on hand during the Blakist invasions has helped this perception in the Capellan media, but it has taken the actual presence of Canopian troops on Sian to begin to force the denizens of the capital to accept them.

HOUSE LIAO

CAPELLA

Noble Ruler: Duke Gregory Liao
Star Type (Recharge Time): G8III/F6III (189 hours)
Position in System: 7
Time to Jump Point: 6.19 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Nikos)
Surface Gravity: 1.02
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 38° C (Warm-Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 60 percent
Highest Native Life: Plant
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 6,352,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-B-A-D



Capella is sacred to the Confederation as the birthworld of the Confederation, and second only to Sian in continuing national importance. All Capellans learn early the story of Capella Prime and August 2367, when the character of their nation was forged by its first Chancellor. An annual remembrance is held each August in the ruins of Capella Prime, and it is attended by almost every noble in the Confederation when events permit.

Today Capella remains a power in the Confederation thanks to the economic power concentrated there. The Capella Commonality Bank, the central banking entity of the entire Confederation, is headquartered there, as is the massive Ceres Metals conglomerate. Between them these two corporations employ a staggering four percent of Capella's total population, a number that continues to grow as the entire Commonality reaps the benefits of increased industry and capital flowing through it since the CCAF's reclamation of more and more pieces of fallen Tikonov. The House of Scions, also ensconced on Capella, does little to hinder this flow, as they are perfectly positioned to siphon a large portion of the profits for themselves.

Capella is home to one of the most important segments of the Capellan defense industry, with the standout being the sprawling complexes of Ceres Metals. The famed *Vindicator* BattleMech was created on Capella and is still in production, along with a host of other proud Capellan designs. The massive Rashpur-Owens shipyards, reconditioned at great expense, still hang in orbit like a beacon of Capellan determination, churning out hulls for the venerable *Union* and *Overlord* DropShips as well as new black-ocean sharks like the *Lung Wang*. The atrocities visited on the Necromo shipyards have forced Rashpur-Owens to expand as quickly as possible to take up the slack in the Capellan Navy's maintenance and production structure.

The Capella War College, the preeminent center for martial sciences in the Confederation, is on Capella and has been graduating trained cadets since 2270, making it one of the longest-operating academies in the Inner Sphere. Its students have been increasingly rushed through their schoolwork to fill the gaping wounds in the CAF rosters, but the instructors have managed to keep the curriculum mostly intact.

Capella has been spared most of the ravages of the Jihad where Sian has suffered most. There was a short time when Chancellor Liao considered shifting his government to Capella for security, but that plan was quickly abandoned as the people of Sian rallied to his defense. The Capella Commonality Bank has become even more integral as it attempts to hold the struggling Capellan economy afloat. The central bank of the Confederation—despite the name, it controls assets across the realm—has been struggling greatly with bad loans and rampant inflation along the Confederaton's borders as Blakist attacks disrupt trade and commerce.

The nobles of the House of Scions on Capella have been quietly amassing more and more power and influence as the Jihad claims the lion's share of Chancellor Liao's attention and funds. The breakdown of the HPG did the nobles a great service, allowing them to consolidate power within their own warrens and duchies without the direct oversight of Sian. While none of them are known to be treasonous, several years of nearly uninterrupted autonomy has given them the impetus and the wherewithal to begin to act more independently. How the Chancellor and the rest of the Directorate will respond once the current crisis passes cannot be guessed, but past practices have proven Sun-Tzu Liao to be anything but generous to those who threaten his rule.

ST. IVES

Noble Ruler: Duke Kai Allard-Liao
Star Type (Recharge Time): G8V (189 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 6.19 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Cochrane)
Surface Gravity: 1.01
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 34°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 67 percent
Highest Native Life: Plant
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 5,249,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-B-A-C

St. Ives has suffered through the last two decades, and while its pain does not equal that of the nuclear holocausts of Tharkad and Luthien or the charnel house of New Avalon, the losses have been

HOUSE LIAO

steady and persistent for the people of the capital of the St. Ives Commonality. First came the re-conquest when the Confederation reclaimed its wayward territory by force, then the destructive campaign of George Hasek to break the Commonality away from the Confederation again. Finally, the Word of Blake arrived and slaughtered more than two million citizens in their attempt to capture Tian-tan, the capital city.

St. Ives was a heavily industrialized world and managed to maintain much of that capacity through the Succession Wars. During the years of the St. Ives Compact, those industries were expanded and upgraded, giving the tiny realm a powerful military and technological edge that benefited both the manufacture of military equipment and upgraded the civilian economic infrastructure as well.

HIldCo Interplanetary, manufacturer of the *Victor* and *Blackjack* BattleMechs, has always held the flagship position amongst St. Ives' military industries, but that position has frequently been threatened by the sprawling aerospace industry present on the world. Tengo Aerospace is one of the leading aerospace firms in the Confederation, and its close association with the St. Ives military during the Compact years let it draw a great deal of technology and expertise from that realm's close friendship with the Federated Commonwealth.

Much of the St. Ives industry is underground, built into the many natural caverns that honeycomb most of the main continent. For most of its history St. Ives has depended on these natural defenses to aid them against technology raiders and insurgents, and for the most part they have succeeded. During the re-conquest, House Hiritsu targeted a surface installation of HildCo and managed to deal it significant damage, which made extracting the full yield of the underground factories impossible.

The people of St. Ives have accepted their return to the Capellan Confederation proper, and with the death of longtime ruler Candace Liao, they have transferred their allegiance to her son and heir, the famed Kai Allard-Liao, former Champion of Solaris VII and hero of the Clan Invasion. The Duke—a personal friend of Precentor Martial Victor Steiner-Davion—has sworn his allegiance to the Capellan Confederation, and his people have supported that move. Several St. Ives regiments fought against the Capellan March forces during the Davion invasion and even fought in the Capellan counterattack that penetrated as far as New Syrtis.

The world is still rebuilding from the devastating Word of Blake attack of 3070. So many dead at once left little time for proper burial and grieving, and many of the citizens are still suffering from the effects of post-traumatic stress and undiagnosed depression. The pressure of fighting against the Word of Blake has given many of them a purpose to latch onto, but the steadily weakening Blakist presence in the Confederation is grinding away at that purpose and bringing painful memories back to the forefront.

Although the Allard-Liaos have ruled St. Ives since the Fourth Succession War, members of the Overton family, who previously held the world of St. Ives even as Candace was responsible for the Commonality, have remained in positions of power. With the death of Candace and the defection of Candace's daughter Cassandra to a mercenary unit, Lord Edgar Overton, the family's patriarch, has been quietly agitating for a the return of Overton stewardship to St. Ives. Although these agitations have so far been political and peaceful, a small-but-growing groundswell of support is rising, and it may only take a spark to ignite a conflict.

THE CHANCELLOR'S MIGHT: KEY CCAF MILITARY COMMANDS

CAPELLAN HUSSARS

The Capellan Hussars have long claimed the mantle of guardians of the Capellan State, and all four regiments have performed exemplary service during the long years of the Blakist onslaught. Still at the top of the Capellan procurement chain, they have remained steadfast bulwarks against which the enemies of the Confederation have broken.

Red Lancers

The Red Lancers, longtime guardians of the Capellan throneworld of Sian, fought bravely and tenaciously in the defense of the capital during repeated attacks and then went on to help the Capellan's allies in the Magistracy when Naomi Centrella returned to Canopus.

Holdfast Guard

The Holdfast led one of the prongs of the Capellan counterattack when elements of the Federated Suns' Capellan March invaded the Confederation, striking at the Avalon Hussars on Randar. They performed admirable service and kept the interior lines of the Confederation secure during the Liao counter-invasion that followed.

Prefectorate Guard

The Prefectorate Guard, striking from Victoria, was one of the main units involved in the Liao counter-invasion of the Federated Suns. Their assault on Federated Suns positions on Frazer was a near-textbook operation, showcasing the training and professionalism of the still-young regiment, and their performance on New Syrtis continued in the same vein.

Dynasty Guard

The Dynasty Guard, guardians of the sacred world of Liao, have struggled against many invaders during the Jihad. The first to strike were the Federated Suns, who sent the Eighth Syrtis Fusiliers to tie down the Capellan border while their sister regiments invaded. They were quickly followed by the Word of Blake, who tried to drive through the heavy aerospace cordon flung up by the elite Hell's Black Aces.

HOUSE LIAO

ST. IVES ARMORED CAVALRY

The St. Ives Armored Cavalry have struggled in recent years, with the initial impetus of George Hasek's abortive Operation Sovereign Justice falling heavily on their ranks. Although the Cavalry was ultimately cleared and helped force the Davion invaders of St. Ives worlds, many in the Confederation wonder if the Lancers waited until it was clear which way the wind was blowing before committing themselves fully to the attack.

First St. Ives Lancers

With the capture of Kai Allard-Liao just before the attacks, the First St. Ives Lancers quickly moved to reclaim Capellan territory in the wake of the assault on Sian that claimed the life of Duchess Candace Liao. The First Lancers were instrumental in the recapture of St. Ives itself from Capellan March forces, and then continued to strike at Hasek-backed mercenaries on Jaipur and regular AFFS regiments on Taygeta and New Syrtis.

Second St. Ives Lancers

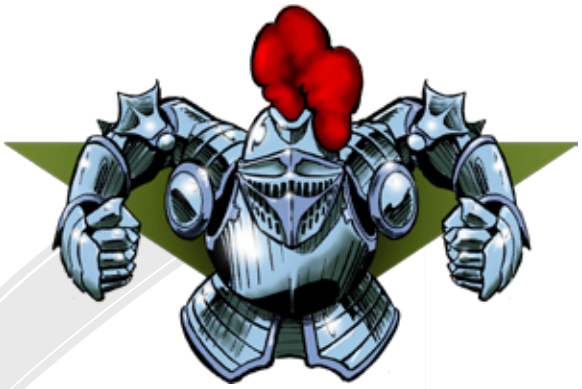
Along with the First Lancers, the Second was instrumental in the Capellan counterattack into the occupied St. Ives Commonality, and they fought with distinction to erase much of the shame of Cassandra Allard-Liao's abandonment of them after the Capellan-St. Ives war. As part of Task Force Light Horse, the Second Lancers fought on Taygeta and New Syrtis before withdrawing at that operation's conclusion.

St. Ives Academy Training Group

The St. Ives Academy Training Group proved its mettle during the St. Ives-Capellan conflict in the early 3060s, and that service guaranteed it a place on the rolls of the CAF well into the 3070s. It wasn't until the Word of Blake descended on the world of St. Ives itself that the Academy Training Group fell, spending itself almost to the last man and woman trying to keep the Blakists away from Tian-tan, the Commonality's capital city. With the damage the Jihad is doing to the rest of the Capellan military, it seems unlikely that the materiel or personnel can be allocated any time soon to reconstitute the cadre.

MCCARRON'S ARMORED CAVALRY

McCarron's Armored Cavalry, a former mercenary unit with long ties to the Confederation and now a regular part of the CCAF, is one of the most deadly formations in the Capellan arsenal. From their baseworld of Menke, the five regiments of the Big MAC range throughout the Confederation and beyond.



First MAC

The Nightriders are the premier troubleshooters of the Big MAC, and *Sang-shao* Parks has continued to lead them through the Jihad as a powerful weapon of Capellan policy. Taking part in the Capellan counter-invasion of the Capellan March after Hasek's failed Operation Sovereign Justice, the Nightriders were responsible for many Capellan successes.

Second MAC

Often paired with the elite forces of House Dai Da Chi and the Death Commandos, Angel's Regiment was a feared sight on the battlefields of the Capellan March, most especially on the plains of Valexa and Kathil.

Third MAC

The Wild Ones are the anvil against which the enemies of the Confederation break. While the other regiments of the Big MAC may be flashier, more maneuverable, or have more skilled warriors, few units can match the sheer dogged determination of the regiment sometimes called "McCarron's Thugs," as the defenders of Bacum and New Syrtis found out.

Fourth MAC

Lord Carson's Cavaliers host Faith McCarron, innovative commander and daughter of the late Archibald McCarron. Although they were driven off of Ares during the opening stages of Operation Sovereign Justice, the Cavaliers quickly rebounded and spent the next several years as the troubleshooter regiment within the Confederation.

Fifth MAC

Despites lingering fears from the Maskirovka, Kyp's Kommando performed admirable service on Aldertaine and Cammal, and since then has fought with the distinction the Strategios have come to expect from the Big MAC.

HOUSE LIAO

CONFEDERATION RESERVE CAVALRY

Long the workhorse regiments of the Sian Commonality, the CRC has performed admirably during the harsh years of the Jihad, although one regiment was lost to enemy action.

Second CRC

Second Sight was unable to stop the combined might of Khorsakov's Cossacks and the Fifth Syrtis Fusiliers from gaining the upper hand, and after several hard-fought battles the mercenaries eventually crushed the veteran regiment. There has been no chance to rebuild the unit, as all available supplies and replacements have gone to supporting the surviving Reserve Cavalry units.

Third CRC

The green Third CRC spent all of the conflict with the Federated Suns' Capellan March fighting alongside the Warrior House Lu Sann, a pairing that allowed the CRC to sponge expertise and training from the veteran Warrior House. It also had the benefit of allowing them first access to the salvage Lu Sann could not use themselves, enabling them to rebuild their lost third battalion.

Fifth CRC

The Fifth CRC learned a great deal from facing the St. Ives Janissaries in combat during the Xin Sheng hostilities, knowledge it put to good use when it responded to the Capellan March invasion. Put into the field alongside the elite Death Commandos, the Fifth held its own during the battles on Imalda and New Westin, helping to destroy the Jie Fang Legion.

Sixth CRC

The Hustaing Warriors were born during the opening shots of the St. Ives conflict, and they built an enviable reputation for service even as they built a regiment. A hodgepodge of retirees, new recruits, and captured equipment, the Sixth have given stalwart service throughout the conflict, and when it came time to strike back at the Capellan March in October 3068, they were given one of the most important missions—a raid against the elite First Federated Suns Armored Cavalry on Halloran IV.

Seventh CRC

Often derided as a political icon more than a military unit, the Seventh CRC is built from a combination of Capellan and Canopian soldiers. While this drew the unit extended Maskirovka attention, the regiment's performance on Housekarle and Sirdar was exemplary.

WARRIOR HOUSES

The Warrior Houses occupy a unique and elite niche in the Capellan military, answering only to the Grand Master of the Blessed Discipline of Warrior Houses or to the person of the Chancellor.

House Imarra

The first of the Warrior Houses, House Imarra has held the primary garrison responsibility for the Chancellor's throneworld of Sian for the past fifty years. Despite their lack of combat experience, they remain a feared force.

House Kamata

The famed luck of House Kamata was nowhere in evidence in November 3069, when repeated attacks by the Free Worlds League shattered the House.

House Hiritsu

Although careful never to insult their fellow House warriors by bragging, the warriors of House Hiritsu have given the Confederation sterling service since the late 3050s. On loan to the Taurian Concordat when the Jihad broke out, many of the House are still in the Periphery.

House Lu Sann

House Lu Sann took an active and leading role in the counterattacks to Hasek's Operation Sovereign Justice campaign, pairing with the Third Confederation Reserve Cavalry to wreak havoc wherever they landed. Unfortunately, the Word of Blake took no chances, destroying them on Herotitus in 3074.

House Dai Da Chi

House Dai Da Chi, granted a rare exception to standard Warrior House organization, fields two battalions of 'Mechs instead of one. These extra forces, combined with the ferocious battle tactics the House favors, made them one of the leading units in the Capellan retribution on Kathil and New Syrtis.

HOUSE L

House Fujita

Struck by one of Hasek's diversionary attacks during the opening days of Sovereign Justice, House Fujita barely managed to survive against the elite First Federated Suns Armored Cavalry. They have spent the majority of the Jihad engaged in only light raids while they rebuild their strength.

House Ma-Tsu Kai

Alone of the Warrior Houses, Ma-Tsu Kai has not wandered from their stronghold on Wazan, and Chancellor Liao and Grand Master Rush are content to leave them there, where they stand as a bulwark against adventurism by the many states of the Free Worlds.

House Ijori

Although they led the attack against the First Federated Suns Lancers on Overton, House Ijori was so badly damaged—having still not yet rebuilt from harsh treatment in the Chaos March—that they have spent the time since then trying to rebuild.

CAPELLAN MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

Like all Successor States the Confederation has always hired mercenaries to reinforce the Capellan Armed Forces, but since the Fourth Succession War and especially the 3057 offensive, the CCAF has heavily supplemented their garrisons with mercenary troops.

The adoption into the regular forces of such notable units as McCarron's Armored Cavalry and the Fourth Tau Ceti Rangers has driven many mercenaries to accept work with the Confederation, a willingness that has aided the CCAF during the Jihad in securing their borders as well as saving costs on contracts. The performance of long-standing contractors like the Hell's Black Aces was also top-notch, again aiding Capellan negotiators in their duties.

This aid has succeeded in deflecting a growing number of rumors that the Capellan Strategios are using mercenaries as fodder or tripwire troops as they continue to assault the Blakist inroads into the Confederation. There are persistent reports of a number of small mercenary bands that were dropped in advance of the main force on worlds like Wei and Pleione and were subsequently destroyed by bombardment when the Capellan main force arrived to obliterate the Word of Blake defenders. While we have not been able to confirm or disprove any of these reports, the sheer number of the rumors makes it likely that some, even if only a few, may be correct in practice if not in detail. With the staggering losses the mercenary industry has taken in recent years, it would be quite easy for the Capellans to "lose" many such small units and declare their loss the action of enemy forces.

As with most other realms, the majority of Capellan-employed mercenaries are fighting well according to the letter of their contracts. With the beating the mercenary image has taken in the last decade, many mercs—even in the repressive Confederation—are taking steps to prove their value to their employers, and the best way to prove that has always been with victory.

NATAR SHIELD SYSTEM SCANNER (VERSION 2.7.14)

.8Ø

System Scan Initializing

SECURITY LEVEL: DIAMOND

HOUSE MARIK

HOUSE MARIK

THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

Founded in 2271 with the signing of the Articles of Unification by the Marik Commonwealth, Principality of Regulus, and Duchy of Oriente, the Free Worlds League has had a fractious history, exemplified by the decision of Captain-General Kenyon Marik to push Resolution 288 through the Free Worlds Parliament in 2784. Giving the office of the Captain-General wide-ranging discretionary powers for "the duration of the crisis," the Resolution has remained in place for the last three centuries.

FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

Primarily founded by Terrans of Eastern European descent, the Marik Commonwealth was the first of the three founding states to establish a lasting dynasty. While both Oriente and Regulus have changed their ruling families, the Marik Commonwealth has had a Marik at the helm since its inception in 2241. And with the creation of the Free Worlds League, the Marik influence extended even further.

Wedged between Houses Steiner and Liao, the Free Worlds League has long felt the depredations of both states, but ultimately it is the foe within that has most troubled the realm. From the traitorous Selaj dynasty to the Duchy of Andurien, the Marik Captain-Generals have had to contend with many internal threats. But the main enemy of the Marik dynasty throughout the years has been itself. After fighting numerous civil wars between the branches of the family, it was a war of words that proved most damaging to the family's fortunes.

In 3067, Duchess of Augustine Alys Rousset-Marik, the niece of then-current Captain-General Thomas Marik, stood before Parliament and sparked the so-called "Great Debate," questioning the continued need for Resolution 288. This ignited a sentiment that had long been held by the scions of the Regulan and Andurien houses, but it was the first time a member of the Marik family had suggested the premise. Estranged from her uncle after he refused to rescue her mother's mercenary unit during the FedCom Civil War, Alys established herself as a potential player in the viperous world of League politics.

And then the Jihad began.

THE SERPENTS WITHIN

The Free Worlds League was soon pulled into a conflict on the Steiner border when Sirian Concordance leader Helen Thrall was assassinated by suspected Skye separatists. Soon the FWLM was engaged in a sustained conflict that saw the FWLM take significant losses before Marshal Jeremy Brett managed to wrest back control and retake the worlds the Lyrans had conquered. Then the Captain-General pulled units directly loyal to him back to the capital. Marshal Brett managed to force a stalemate with the remaining units under his command, but the recall order left many perplexed.

Whatever the reason, the recall proved to be the beginning of the end for Captain-General Thomas Marik. A hastily arranged parade honoring the returning Knights was held on Atreus. With the Knights of the Inner Sphere and most of Parliament in attendance, Blakist forces struck, launching a devastating chemical assault, wiping out most of the Knights present, and killing such luminaries as the Speaker of the Parliament. At the same time, the Word of Blake revealed the truth about the Captain-General's identity, throwing the League into chaos. "Thomas Marik" was revealed not to be a scion of the Marik family, but in reality an imposter, and the League immediately began to splinter as the various factions vying for the Captain-Generalcy—regardless of their feelings about Resolution 288—began to press their claim.

The Free Worlds Navy, pride of the League military, was torn asunder as Blakist elements took control of numerous vessels, sparking confrontations over many major worlds. At the same time, Free Worlds troops loyal to the Captain-General clashed with Blakist forces for control of the HPGs within the League. More disturbing was the wholesale defection of entire FWLM units to the Word of Blake.

Duchess Therese Brett-Marik of Tamarind, Janos Marik's eldest living child, launched a League-wide appeal for order, telling the people to throw their support behind the Captain-General. Her husband, Marshal Jeremy Brett, called for Free Worlds military units to rally against the Word of Blake. Even at this time, hampered by lack of communications, Brett's forces were pushing deeper into Lyran space. The false Thomas Marik made a desperate plea for calm, asking the various League worlds to appoint new members to Parliament and pointedly stating he intended to remain Captain-General in this time of crisis. Entire League worlds defected to the growing Blake Protectorate, and the fractious League leadership is powerless to stop it.

Marshal Brett urged the League toward unity, supporting the false Thomas Marik's call. Kirc Cameron-Jones, leader of the Principality of Regulus and outspoken critic of the Captain-General even before the Jihad, refused to send any representatives from the Regulan worlds to Thomas' new Parliament, before announcing himself the only viable candidate for the position of Captain-General. And on the 9th of August 3069, Paul Marik, backed by the Word of Blake, carried out a military coup aimed at deposing the false Thomas, and instead installed his daughter Corinne as Captain-General for the duration of the crisis. With his wife, Sheryl Halas, held hostage by Duke Paul, the imposter Thomas retreated off-world to Oriente, the stronghold of his father-in-law Duke Christopher Halas.

FAULT LINES AND FOUNDATIONS

This was when Alys Marik, reluctant instigator of the Great Debate, created her Resistance movement against the Word of Blake on former League worlds. Based primarily around her fam-

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ily mercenary unit, the Krushers, Alys' force bloodied the Word's Twelfth Division in combat, announcing yet another player on the League political scene. Alys' was not the only resistance movement, with former FWLN vessels ambushing and destroying two turncoat vessels in the Shiloh system in mid-3070.

Thus by early 3071, the League was essentially split into four distinct power blocs. On Atreus, Captain-General Corinne Marik appealed for the various worlds of the League to send representatives to reform the Free Worlds Parliament, while a power bloc supporting the false Thomas Marik (including the Ducal leaders of Oriente, Tamarind, and arguably even Duchess Alys Rousset-Marik) called for representatives to attend the "Parliament-in-Exile" on Tamarind. Opposing both blocs was the Regulan leader, Prince Kirc Cameron-Jones, declaring the Palace of Mirrors on Regulus to be his new Parliament and calling for representatives from the worlds of the League to attend. Standing apart from the chaos was the Duchy of Andurien, historically an opponent of Atreus, but waiting to see where the chips fell before throwing their support behind any one faction.

In April of that year, Cameron-Jones decided to force the issue, launching an assault on the false Thomas' base of operation, Oriente. Unfortunately for the Regulan Prince, the imposter commanded a significant naval presence; the Regulan fleet was shattered, and the false Thomas sent back with a warning regarding further Regulan adventurism. Captain-General Marik, given an ultimatum by her father, placed the world of Augustine under blockade, cutting off her cousin Alys from her homeworld. Paul Marik also gifted the world of Gibson to the Word's Precentor Apollyon, setting events in motion that would have far-reaching consequences for the entire League.

The first crack in the façade of the Oriente-Tamarind axis appeared when Richard Steiner, a man thought dead, surrendered himself to Tamarind forces. Claiming to have escaped from a Blakist internment camp, Steiner was bought before Marshal Jeremy Brett where he activated suicide implants in his body, killing the Tamarind military leader and signaling a horrific change in the way the Word of Blake waged its war of control in the League. Duchess Therese, incensed by both the death of her husband and Atreus' cooperation with those that would carry out such acts, declared the Duchy of Tamarind independent from the League, continuing a process that was begun when the world of Savannah declared itself independent before Marik commonwealth forces returned it to the fold.

In mid 3072, the Regulans learned the price for their aggression against the Word of Blake, when one of the Word's so-called "Shadow" Divisions attacked the capital world of the Principality. But more insidious, and more damaging to the Regulan people, was the revelation that the consort of their Prince was a Blakist plant. The damage that this caused to the Prince's psyche was demonstrated in the Purge that swept through every aspect of Regulan life. The Purge lasted for nearly six months and claimed countless lives in a wave of brutality that ruined the reputation of the Regulan military and removed any level of support Kirc Cameron-Jones' nascent Parliament had.

But it was the Arc-Royal summit of early 3073 that put the opposition to the Captain-General on Atreus on a new path. Surviving the bombing of the conference, Duchess Alys Rousset-Marik and Duke Reginald Brett-Marik, son of Therese, came into contact with Devlin Stone and his burgeoning Coalition. Duchess Alys threw her support behind Stone, urging her cousin to do the same. The Regulan alternative had been washed away by Kirc Cameron-Jones' paranoia, which culminated in the detention of his son and heir, Titus.

REGULUS RISING

In August 3073 the Regulan response to the razing of Regulus was shattered by the Word of Blake forces on the world of Gibson. In the aftermath, Prince Kirc was deposed by his son, and Titus soon made his isolationist intentions known, dropping any claim to the Captain-Generalcy his family had. At roughly the same time, the false Thomas Marik landed on Sian, intent on reaching a diplomatic solution with the chancellor after a series of minor incidents on the Capellan/Oriente frontier. An assassination attempt was foiled, and Thomas returned to Oriente in a stronger position due to his diplomacy.

Over the next few years there was a stalemate between the competing forces in the League, as each force shored up its position against the others. The end of the Regulan threat allowed the Captain-General to concentrate more on worlds like Savannah that had broken from the fold, and even look at Duchess Alys' underground resistance movement. Regulus and Andurien turned inwards, concentrating more on ensuring the safety of their own people than they were in engaging in the greater League politics. Only the false Thomas Marik on Oriente expressed any real desire to regain political control of the splintered realm, but with his identity now revealed, he was no longer a candidate in anyone's eyes.

THE CHASM WIDENS

In early 3075, the tables again turned on the League. Forces from the Circinus Federation took worlds on the League border, whilst the entire Rim Commonality all but declared independence from Atreus' control. The leader of the Magistracy of Canopus arrived on Andurien with a warning about continued aggression, but it was the Anduriens that saved the Magestrix when her flotilla came under Blakist assault. This more than anything else announced Andurien's revival as a major player in League politics. Later on, the Anduriens provided security for more worlds that have decided to throw off the yoke of the Captain-General and the League proper.

The Captain-General, perhaps urged to do so by her Blakist allies (some would say "masters"), ignored the loss of League worlds,

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leaving it to the nominally independent Duchy of Tamarind to reclaim them. To do so, the Tamarind forces allied themselves with units from the Lyran Alliance, signaling a new era of co-operation between the former antagonists.

In late December 3075, the industrial powerhouse of the League, Irian, declared independence from their Blakist oppressors. But the Blakists did not leave peacefully, using weapons of mass destruction in scorched-earth tactics to ensure that it would be a long time before the League could ever hope to replace the loss of the Irian facilities. This anti-Blakist sentiment was carried around the League, culminating in the nuclear scouring of the world of Campbelton by then-unknown assailants in early 3076. The attack was soon revealed to be the work of Regulan forces, which sparked a series of retaliatory raids by the Word of Blake that devastated several Regulan worlds.

With this as backdrop, Alys Rousset-Marik, through her involvement with Devlin Stone's coalition, led her forces directly against those of the Word of Blake, the multinational task force reclaiming several former League worlds that had been under Blakist sway. Thomas "Halas," as the false Thomas Marik was now known, used his influence and contacts to launch a daring raid to rescue his wife and the rebel Second Knights of the Inner Sphere from their hiding places on Atreus. The attack failed dramatically, with the Knights wiped out in running battles through the suburbs of Atreus City and his mercenary forces all but destroyed.

Thus it stands at the beginning of 3077: The League is asunder, now made up of five distinct groupings, some of which have similar goals, but all of which have their own agendas.

While Captain-General Marik is in nominal control, her position relies more and more on Blakist support. The core worlds of the Marik Commonwealth are loyal to her office, but the splintered realms that make up the League are increasingly dissenting in their support of Atrean rule.

The Duchy of Oriente has thrown its support behind the former Captain-General, even after he was revealed to be an imposter. Lately though, it has become apparent that Oriente is seriously considering a move into the same camp as Devlin Stone and his Sphere-wide anti-Blakist coalition.

The Principality of Regulus is the most active opposition group, engaging in combat with both Blakist and Marik Commonwealth forces. Once seen as a spineless pushover, Prince Titus has shown an increasingly willingness to expose the Blakists and their supporters to the same level of brutality the Regulans have visited upon themselves in recent years.

The Duchy of Tamarind stands apart from the League, but they have yet to actively engage in offensive operations against their sister states. As an entity they are more concerned about protecting the worlds in their care than they are about supplanting the Captain-General and her cronies.

The Duchy of Andurien has proved to be the biggest wildcard. Declaring independence from the League, the Anduriens have revived the specter of an alliance with the Canopians, and their territorial ambitions seem to have only just begun.

In the end, though, there is a strong possibility that all this jockeying for power will come to nothing. With the entirety of the Inner Sphere engulfed in war, an old adage rings true when it comes to the disparate states of the sundered League: Those who do not hang together will surely hang apart.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

CORINNE MARIK

CORINNE MARIK

Title: Captain-General

Born: 3023 (53 in 3076)

Formerly the commander of the Second Free Worlds Legionnaires BattleMech regiment, Colonel Corinne Marik largely kept out of the politics of the League. During the Great Debate she gave her support to her cousin Alys, but Corinne was always seen as a Thomas supporter. The revelation of Thomas' true identity changed this, with Corinne falling further under the sway of her father. When Paul Marik launched his coup to depose Thomas as Captain-General, Corinne found herself the unwilling leader of the Free Worlds League.

Captain-General Marik has done her best to moderate the influence of the Word of Blake within the League, but the revelation of

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her true uncle as the power behind the Blakists and the influence her father has over her has made it difficult to go against family. Corinne has done her best to protect the wife of Thomas Halas, but even she was not prepared for Thomas' attempt to rescue them in 3076. While understanding the former Captain-General's motives, she has expressed her displeasure at the damage that was caused for one person.

Lately, the Regulan situation has been occupying more and more of Corinne's time, resulting in the Captain-General's broadcast condemning the assault on the Loyalty shipyards. So far she has been content to let the Blakist forces in her realm respond, but it is becoming apparent that Corinne will not tolerate any further Regulan adventurism.

Corinne's greatest concern is the safety of her fifteen-year-old daughter Giselle. The younger Marik is officially studying off-world until she reaches her majority, but rumor suggests her exile from the capital is not voluntary. Corinne is especially concerned by the latest SAFE reports that suggest she may be a target for pro-Regulan forces aggression.

"THOMAS MARIK"

Title: "The Imposter," Thomas Halas

Born: 2990? (presumed 86 in 3076)

One cannot be around former Captain-General Thomas Marik—or Thomas Halas, or what have you—for very long without coming to personal judgment about his role in the Word of Blake's build-up and subsequent Jihad. Be that as it may, his fall from glory was so swift, and coupled with such wholesale destruction in his former realm, that he has been slow in recovering his bearings. Despite being now nearly a decade from his exposure and removal from the position of power he once embraced, he still functions with a continual sense of shock at all that has happened. His people no longer trust him, so much of what he once built is lost – and that may be the impetus for his current stirrings.

Thomas is not without ability and talent – far from it. To have masqueraded as a House leader for so long takes skill, cunning and intelligence, three things that Thomas has in spades. He may not have come to terms with everything that happened to him, but neither does he seem content to sit and accept his current station. The skills that helped this man build the Free Worlds League are still with him; he remains capable of pulling off impressive feats of diplomacy and political maneuvering, no matter how far his name has fallen.

His visit to Sian in 3073 most likely marks the beginnings of his "new" path of redemption. He arrived there without invitation, survived a Blakist assassination attempt, and managed to get an audience with Sun-Tzu Liao despite his deposed standing. Not only did he get an audience, he managed to negotiate an almost-truce for the entire League—not just his corner of it in Oriente. He possessed nothing that could help persuade Sun-Tzu—no shameful secrets to use as leverage, no cash for bribery—other than the rationality of his arguments, and he pulled it off anyway.

Recently, rumors persist that Thomas has a new quest to occupy himself. Relegated to the back rooms of Oriente power, eschewed by the very people who once worshipped him as the best Captain-General the League had ever seen, he has quietly withdrawn to pursue his own agenda. Duke Halas has taken considerable personal and political risk in supporting Thomas in his plans; only hindsight will prove if this trust was misplaced.

Fixated on the news of Blakist "hidden worlds," Thomas has apparently been bankrolling small mercenary bands with experience in exploration – most notably, those who have worked for Interstellar Expeditions in the past. Some conspiracy theorists suggest that the late Brooklyn Stevens is somehow connected to him – to the point that Thomas even rescued the explorer and squirreled her away from Blakist hunter teams—but no such proof actually exists. While it is true that Thomas has been hiring out private merchant JumpShips and small mercenary bands, these small-time units have been ranging along the Protectorate and Confederation border delivering much-needed aid and relief supplies, not hunting for invisible worlds.

It seems that now, Thomas is simply attempting to atone for his vast, decades-long deception.

"THOMAS MARIK"

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THERESE BRETT-MARIK

THERESE BRETT-MARIK

Title: Duchess of Tamarind

Born: 2983 (93 in 3076)

The eldest of Janos' surviving children, Therese Brett-Marik spent the early years of her life avoiding the trappings of her family before whole-heartedly embracing them when the people of Tamarind elected her their governor in 3035. After the revelation of the real identity of Thomas Marik, Therese provided Thomas Halas with her qualified support, hoping to give her children a clearer path to the line of succession. After Paul Marik's coup, in public Therese still supported the office of the Captain-General, even if in private she was agitating for an increased role for her sons Photon and Reginald.

This all changed in 3071 with the assassination of her husband, Marshal Jeremy Brett. Laying the blame squarely at the feet of the Blakists (and by extension, Corinne and Paul on Atreus), Therese all but declared her intent to claim the Captain-Generalship, declaring the Duchy of Tamarind independent from the rest of the League. While not promulgating war against the power on Atreus, Therese made it very clear that any Blakist incursions would be dealt with severely.

Since that time, Therese has largely remained out of the politics of the greater League, preferring to concentrate on securing Tamarind's borders and overall security. She has installed her son Photon into the position of Marshal her husband held, giving him control over the various FWLM elements that were in the Duchy at the time of her secession. She has also given her son Reginald tacit approval to open negotiations with Devlin Stone and his Coalition.

Duchess Therese still maintains contact with Oriente and the false Thomas Marik, but she has made it clear that she rejects Thomas' daughter's claim to the Captain-Generalcy. While she has not pressed the interests of her own children, it seems to be only a matter of time before there is yet another claimant to the throne.

TITUS CAMERON-JONES

Title: Prince, Principality of Regulus

Born: 3041 (35 in 3076)

Forever seen as a fop with no spine, Titus' deposition of his father in 3074 signaled a rebirth in the troubled Principality of Regulus. Titus spent the first few years of his rule concentrating on healing the rifts caused by his father's divisive policies, culminating in the birth of his son Lester and subsequent marriage to Colonel Michelle Ryan. Ignoring the demands of the more militant sectors of Regulan society, Titus was content to remain insular in his outlook.

TITUS CAMERON-JONES

HOUSE MARIK

That all changed in early 3076 when pro-Regulan forces carried out a series of raids against Blakist forces in the Free Worlds League. While not reported as such, the Word's retaliation was immediate, with the Regulan world of Harmony assaulted and bombed with nuclear weapons. Following this, a Blakist envoy arrived at Regulus with a missive for the prince. In late 3076 forces loyal to his father carried out a daring raid on the shipyards at Loyalty, and most observers wonder whether the new prince has the political power to force his father to acquiesce. A series of public arguments between the two suggest not.

Prince Titus broke his arm in a boating accident in early 3076 and has worn a heavy brace on his left arm since. Apparently the damage is significant, but the Prince has not let it impede his activities, nor will he accept the offers of advanced prosthetics put forward by the Captain-General as a peace offering.

Addendum 100677: Since the brutal death of his wife and unborn child in March, Prince Titus has largely withdrawn from the public eye, the last official appearance being the state service for his wife. He has, however, devoted more and more resources to the growing Regulan military machine and let civic projects that he started flounder as they are starved of funding.

KIRC CAMERON-JONES

Title: Former Prince, Principality of Regulus

Born: 3004 (72 in 3076)

Since the so-called Night of Fire in 3072, the former Regulan prince has been increasingly erratic, with his behavior described in one analyst's report as "borderline paranoid-delusional." Regardless of his mental state, the former prince still commands immense respect from a sizable portion of the Regulan populace, evidenced by the level of support his excesses during the Regulan "Purge" received.

The imprisonment of his son and heir, Prince Titus, showed that Kirc's paranoia was reaching excessive levels and forced the younger Cameron-Jones to act and replace his father. This was accompanied by a culling of the Regulan officer corps, who were seen as Kirc-loyalists first and foremost. This action more than anything has created resentment within the military toward the new Prince and garnered supporters to the elder Cameron-Jones' flag.

Since being deposed by his son, the elder Cameron-Jones has seemed content with playing the role of doting grandfather to his grandson Lester, but rumors continue to circulate regarding how much influence he still wields. The assault on the Blakist stronghold of Campbelton and the sabotage of the Loyalty Shipyards are both attributed to former-Prince Kirc, or at least to his supporter base. The Regulan populace has long shown a desire for strong action against the Blakist forces, and Kirc is seen as someone who will act on their behalf, especially compared with his son, who has largely withdrawn from the public eye since the death of his wife and second child.

ALYS ROUSSET-MARIK

Title: Duchess of Augustine

Born: 3041 (35 in 3076)

Since her speech to Parliament in 3067, Alys Rousset-Marik has been in the spotlight of League politics. Though her desire was to spark the "Great Debate" to end Resolution 288, Alys was not prepared for the aftermath of her decision, especially when the Captain-General turned out to be an imposter. Since that time, Alys has willingly embraced the role of Resistance leader against the forces of her cousin and her allies. Her so-called "Free Worlds Resistance" has been the focus of most of the SAFE and ROM activity in the League since 3070.

With her home planet of Augustine under blockade and with Blakist hunters on her trail, Alys has become adept at moving through the shadows, never staying in one place for too long.

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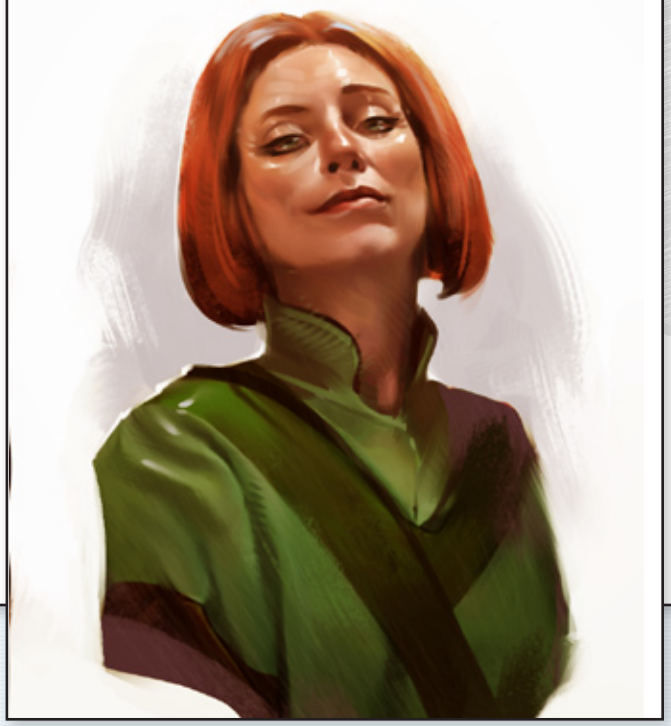
ALYS ROUSSET-MARIK

DALMA HUMPHREYS



This tactic has been expanded to her forces, with the Free Worlds Resistance never establishing permanent bases and using refitted DropShips as repair and refit facilities. Though her Krushers are the core of the resistance, many other elements of the former FWLM have joined her forces, keen to see the Blakist presence removed from the League.

Alys was an attendee at the ill-fated Arc-Royal summit, though she managed to survive the bombing that followed. This placed her into contact with Devlin Stone and his burgeoning coalition, and she has devoted more and more resources to developing a close relationship with Stone and his supporters (most noticeably Victor Steiner-Davion, her cousin Isis' new husband). After Thomas Halas' disastrous attempt to rescue his wife, Alys has become more insistent on Oriente involvement in the Stone Coalition.

In early 3076 it was revealed Alys had given birth to a second daughter Alycia in 3074 to Christopher Hampton. Alycia's whereabouts are unknown, but Alys was dealt the blow of losing Christopher to a Blakist suicide bomber in late 3075.

DALMA HUMPHREYS

Title: Grand Duchess, Duchy of Andurien
Born: 3011 (61 in 3076)

The leader of the Duchy of Andurien since the Federal regency was rescinded in 3048, Dame Humphreys is a woman of regal bearing who began her reign as one of Thomas Marik's fervent supporters, but since then she has increasingly become the successor to her grandmother Catherine's position and ideology.

Since the onset of the Jihad, Dame Dalma has demonstrated a complete lack of faith in the League proper, going so far as to order the creation of the Andurien Rangers, troops that are loyal to Andurien first and foremost. She has also willingly engaged in diplomatic discourse with the Canopians (through Naomi Centrella) reviving memories of the ill-fated co-operation between the two nations in the 3030s. Dame Dalma has also signaled Andurien's ambitions—placing the Mosiro Archipelago worlds under Andurien protection. Despite the benevolent nature of the move, it is apparent that Mosiro's continued independence is dependent upon Andurien support.

Duchess Humphreys has also courted further comparisons to her famous grandmother by retaking the "Dame" title that was lost under the Federal regency. Whether or not her successors retain the title is up for debate, but Dame Dalma has recently changed the line of succession from her brother Steven to his twenty-two year old daughter Evelyn, who is generally seen as Dalma's protégé. It is unknown what Steven feels about this latest development.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

CHRISTOPHER HALAS

Title: Grand Duke, Duchy of Oriente

Born: 2980 (96 in 3076)

A long-time supporter of Thomas Marik, Duke Christopher was faced with the hard decision of whether to support or abandon his son-in-law. When the fake Thomas Marik's true identity was revealed, the Grand Duke decided to maintain his relationship with the man despite the political and emotional flak he received. Indeed his decision to support Thomas Halas has led to further estrangement from his son Gregory, and his cousin and military adviser Fannie Halas quit her position in protest.

With his daughter being held hostage on Atreus, Duke Christopher has been reluctant to be antagonistic towards Captain-General Corinne Marik, but that has not kept him from welcoming FWLM deserters and other dissidents who cannot stomach the League's close relationship with the Word of Blake. However, the Duke has not been so circumspect in remaining silent about the actions of some of his neighbors, most noticeably the Regulans and Capellan Confederation. The target of a Regulan attempt to depose him (and the former Captain-General), Duke Christopher has made it clear to new Prince Titus Cameron-Jones that further adventurism will not be tolerated. How he reacts to the news that Regulan troops have occupied the Regulan Free States remains to be seen. In the case of the Capellans, the Duke has reluctantly left the diplomacy to Thomas Halas, trusting his advice on the subject.

With the failure of Thomas Halas' rescue attempt of his daughter in 3076 and Alys Marik's subsequent admonishment, Duke Halas has dispatched his son Duke Edgar to meet with Devlin Stone and his coalition. Whether this signal's a break with the former Captain-General is unknown, but if Oriente joins Stone's Coalition, the continued safety of the Duchy will be in great doubt given the proximity of Marik Commonwealth and Blakist forces, along with the limited numbers of loyal Oriente forces.

CHARLES CUNIN II

Title: Secretary General, Lopez

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

An ardent supporter of Dame Humphreys, Cunin has held the position of Secretary-General since just before the onset of the Jihad in 3067. A portly man with kind eyes, Cunin walks with a pronounced limp after a fall in his youth while pursuing his first great love—the sport of branthing. His appointment as Secretary-General has curtailed his regular jaunts, but he still devotes as much time as possible to the sport, despite the disapproval of a large section of the populace.

Cunin's detractors say he is under the sway of the Humphreys family, evidenced by the willingness to devote much of Lopez's rare usable terrain for the expansion of the Andurien military. Charles's son, Charles Cunin III, is currently studying at the Legionary Training Academy on Andurien, giving further credence to suggestions that Cunin is trying to build long-term ties to the Humphrey's clan.

However, Cunin's reign may soon be over as lung problems brought on by Lopez's tainted atmosphere (and exacerbated by his fondness for branthing) continue to plague him. Dame Dalma's rapprochement with Canopus has proven beneficial for Cunin, with the Dame sending several Canopian-trained physicians to help him recover. How he developed his symptoms remains unknown. The younger Cunin is tipped to replace his father at some point, but the local parliament remains skeptical over the younger man's suitability to lead.

MORTEN CHANDLER

Title: Information Broker

Born: 3039 (37 in 3076)

A former SAFE operative, Chandler is an unassuming figure that has been thrust into the limelight of the Jihad on his native Tiber. Stranded on-world, Chandler managed to avoid being swept up in Kirc Cameron-Jones' purge despite his ties to the Atrean regime primarily because of his willingness to work with the RSS. His experiences as a "hound" for the RSS PK teams led him to quit the intelligence game and simply ride the Jihad out.

However, Chandler soon found his unique talents were in demand throughout the Regulan Principality. Working on retainer, Chandler supplied various organizations with information about the Regulan regime and the events occurring within its borders, eventually leading to a very lucrative contract with Alys Marik's resistance. Since then Chandler has worked closely with the Duchess, who has put forward his name to Devlin Stone and David Lear.

But Chandler's biggest coup turned out to be entering and leaving the Gibson system without arousing the suspicion of the Blakist occupiers. Able to set up an on-world network of contacts, Chandler has been completely reticent about the methods used to get information off the fortress world. At the very least, Chandler knows the value of the information he gathers, and his prices have seen a resultant increase in price.

Addendum 150277: Chandler has not been seen since New Year's Eve, with interested parties assuming either Blakist or Regulan interests have caught up with him. Interestingly, Duchess Alys Rousset-Marik has made it clear through various channels that Chandler's whereabouts are unknown to her or to Stone.

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PHOTON BRETT-MARIK

Title: Marshal of Tamarind

Born: 3014 (62 in 3076)

Thrust into the leadership of the Tamarind military forces with the death of his famous father, Photon Brett-Marik has settled into an uneasy détente with Atreus, despite knowing full well who was responsible for Marshal Jeremy Brett's assassination. Despite his age, Photon is still beholden to the rule of his strong-willed mother, leaving the rule of the Duchy of Tamarind to her.

Photon also has let his brother Reginald handle the diplomacy between the Duchy and his cousin Alys' resistance movement, with Reginald being caught in the bomb blast during the Arc-Royal summit in early 3073. Although his brother survived, Photon is rumored to be quite cynical about Stone's motives. While his mother approves of the man, Photon has remained silent.

As commander of the Tamarind military forces, Photon's only real military action since assuming the mantle of Marshal has been a joint operation with the Lyran Alliance's Buena Archonette against the Circinian forces occupying Khon Kaen and Poulsbo. The Operation was a qualified success, with Tamarind ceding Khon Kaen to the Lyrans in return for Poulsbo, but both forces taking severe casualties against the Circinians and their Blakist allies.

Unfortunately for Marshal Brett-Marik, his son Anthony was enrolled at Princefield Military Academy at the time of Paul Marik's coup. While the safety of the younger Brett-Marik is not in question, Photon fears that external forces may attempt to use his son to pressure Tamarind into accepting certain compromises. While assurances of the boy's safety have been received from Atreus, Marshal Brett-Marik is more concerned about what their Blakist allies might do.

Recent scandal sheets suggest Photon's wife Samantha is pregnant again, but it has yet to be officially acknowledged by the family.

ARDAL THOMASSON

Title: Chairman of Parliament of Commons, Rim Commonality

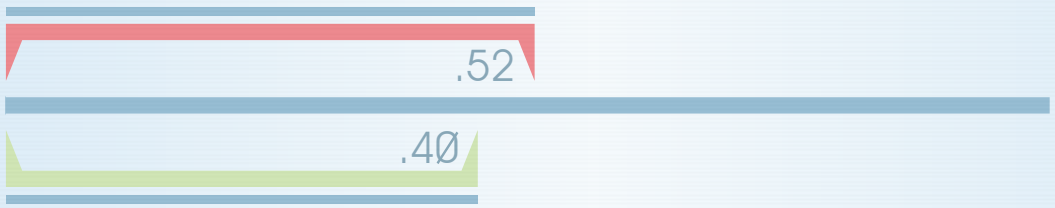
Born: 3024 (52 in 3076)

The frail but effusive Thomasson is the Rim Commonality's nominal leader, but in reality he is an acceptable figurehead for a Council of Nobles that is split between the fiery oration of Viscountess Tiffany Barfield of Tematagi, and the moderates led by The Honorable Graf Bruden, MP for Campoleone. Thomasson served as Lesnovo's representative in the League Parliament for eight years before the Commonality invoked Camlann vs. Parliament in 3075, cutting itself adrift from Atreus.

Local speculation states that the main reason Thomasson got the job was because of his close (and some would say inappropriate) friendship with Eighth Orloff Grenadiers CO Colonel Sandra Relph. The Parliament of Commons believes that this relationship will help bind the Grenadiers to the Commonality's cause. It remains to be seen how successful this approach will be.

Recently, Thomasson has been conducting a series of diplomatic visits to both the Caliphate of Astrokazy and the Niops Association. Both entities were the first to recognize the Rim Commonality's departure from League politics, and obviously the Parliament sees the two states as potential allies in the chaos of the Jihad and the sundering of the League.

NATAR SHIELD SYSTEM SCANNER (VERSION 2.7.14)



SECURITY LEVEL: DIAMOND

HOUSE MARIK

CORPORATIONS OF THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

Irian Technologies

Eight years of Jihad succeeded where every rival, government, and other forces of nature failed: IrTech—the beast—has been slain. Toppled and gutted by the very thorium-mine on which it has been thriving for centuries: internal strife.

This is all the more surprising given the way IrTech negotiated the beginning of the Jihad. In direct control of several planets, an influential partnership conglomerate, and a sphere-wide media network (and, according to some, a clandestine spy agency), IrTech weathered the first waves of the storm admirably—on their spreadsheets. On strategic and ethical levels, its neutral stance toward the World of Blake turned out to be the devil's contract every critic warned about.

As long as the campaign went well, IrTech profited, multiplying its assets in a crumbling economy. Effectuated mostly with the help of Word of Blake conquering competitors, this growth came at the cost of many favors lost. Once the tide turned, though, their former benefactors immediately stepped in to reap the benefits. Despite protests of the boards, Word of Blake effectively controlled IrTech by 3072—and clamped down hard.

IrTech's leadership splintered in the following months. Some venerable parts of the corporation remain virtually shell-shocked and, with their hands bound, undecided on a future course to take. Others—mostly sub-companies in the newly acquired territories in Lyran space—sided neatly with Word of Blake interests.

Only on Irian itself influential members of the upper echelon scrambled into action. Putting their full weight behind the ongoing rebellion, they managed to succeed in the end. But what remains among rubble and ruins is not the IrTech they knew—it's just another liberated planet, ravaged by years of intense fighting.

The once mighty corporation-state is now shattered to the core, in three separate pieces. It remains to be seen who will pick those shards up.

Kali-Yama Weapons Industries Incorporated

Operating one of the few production lines for Inner Sphere OmniMechs available in the Inner Sphere, Kali-Yama stood in the spotlight from the beginning of the Jihad. While any *Perseus* was a welcome addition to all sides of the conflict, it was the know-how in technology that made Kali-Yama particularly interesting. Pioneering early OmniMech development, Kali-Yama had at its disposal one of the most advanced research departments in League space. Currently focused on ballistic and missile development, Kali-Yama's product-to-market cycles are second to one, making the company a major competitor on a wartime market.

While tied with Irian Technologies on sheer output of military hardware, Kali-Yama suffered from a severe drawback: its dependence on export sales and outside protection. Thus, as Kalidasa willingly joined the Blake Protectorate in June 3070, Kali-Yama followed suit without a shot being fired. Their plants on Kalidasa folded neatly into the Word of Blake machinery, supplying local militias and turncoat FWL units in the area.

This decision proved especially fatal a few months later when Word of Blake special forces commandeered the site and forcibly deported the whole R&D roster—including their families—off-planet to locations unknown.

Consequently, Kali-Yama on Kendall at the other end of the League was left to its own devices. Unable to keep up its ties to the Alphard Trading Company and the Taurian Concordat, their goal reverted to selling upgraded *Hercules* and *Orion*s to the highest bidder.

The tally in 3075 reveals another Word of Blake pet industry, bereft of its former capabilities. On the plus side sits the fact that Kali-Yama's production complexes remained intact—so far—putting the company a few steps ahead of its competitors.

CORPORATIONS OF THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

Earthwerks-FWL, Incorporated

Earthwerks still appears grand and unblemished, the major player in FWL military industry. Its BattleMech assembly lanes continue to operate at near-full capacity despite the ongoing economical drought.

Contrary to IrTech leadership, the Earthwerks board seems to have found the proverbial thin red line to walk, delicately balancing their decisions between pleasing the ever-dominant Word of Blake and secretly supplying the rapidly growing opposition.

While their headquarters on Keystone is firmly under Word of Blake rule, all branches on Calloway VI and Bernardo remain independent. Sadly, the transition of power on Keystone did not occur without incident. In 3073, footage of a Word of Blake *Malak* permanently silencing protesting Earthwerks workers made it into all the major news networks.

CEO Juri McMahon was doubly saddened by these deaths, as they painted her as a staunch collaborator at the very moment Earthwerks took a more rebellious stance towards the Word of Blake. After all, the makeshift vehicle production factory cobbled together on Tiber had just reached full capacity. Newly developed Merkava Mk. IX main battle tanks left the assembly lines by the hour, re-arming the Regulan Hussars with a formidable fighting vehicle.

Other than the tragic Keystone incident, the only significant loss so far has been Asuncion joining the Word of Blake Protectorate. The move happened as personal payback when newly appointed governor Gregor Goldammer—formerly director of Earthwerks-FWL, Inc., recently fired for bribery—forcibly integrated the local *Flea* plant into the governmental structure.

All in all, Earthwerks remains on track, sights set forward. Considering the current state of disorganization in all of the Inner Sphere, it is also safe to assume that Juri McMahon will use her corporation's current position of strength to further her own personal goals. Maybe, after hundreds of years of separation, re-unification of all Earthwerks companies under an interstellar umbrella could happen again.

Free Worlds Defense Industries

While every corporation suffered to some extent in the last few years, FWDI might just come out on the worst end, primarily because Gibson Federated BattleMechs, the non-aeronautical part of FWDI, does not only work for Word of Blake—they *are* Word of Blake.

Like Brigadier Corporation, Gibson Federated ceased to exist as an independent entity. Its massive facilities on Gibson serve only one purpose: to support the Word of Blake war machine. Every new nightmare brewed up in their laboratories and analyzed so far bears the Gibson Federated mark. Demonic battle armors, angelic OmniMechs—the modern battlefield seems to be a Gibson playground. This is a status quo that makes for balanced spreadsheets at the end of the fiscal year while not contributing much to survivability should the Word of Blake lose this war.

On a side note, rumors have former Kali-Yama scientists working for Gibson Federated, fueling the accusations of a forced deportation of Kali-Yama's R&D department.

Strangely enough, considering the state of its BattleMech division, FWDI's aerospace division, Andurien Aerospace, appears to run business as usual. Affected only by the usual vagaries of war, their numbers look steady, with a slight upward tendency. They have even expanded their portfolio, resuming production of an old Star League-era aerospace fighter prototype, called the *Deathstalker*.

Andurien Aerospace's role in the future seems nevertheless clouded. Its expertise in aerospace technology makes the company an asset for every party involved. Up until a few years ago, such a position would have been a ticket to survival. But now, with the Jihad having broken taboos that lasted for centuries, nothing can be taken for granted anymore. Especially not by a corporation partnered with the Word of Blake industrial juggernaut.

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KEY WORLDS OF THE FREE WORLDS LEAGUE

ATREUS

Noble Ruler: Duchess Corinne Marik
Star Type (Recharge Time): F4V (175 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 16 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Wendigo)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 45° C (Jungle)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 8,365,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-B-A-D

The idyllic image of Atreus City was irrevocably shattered when pro-Blakist forces carried out a devastating biochemical attack on the capital in 3068. The picturesque city on the island continent of Ionia was relatively unaffected, but the chemical attacks had a horrendous effect on the populace of the city. The chromium and marble façade of the government sector became synonymous with the attack and the death of the vaunted Knights of the Inner Sphere, as well as the decimation of the Parliament. As a result, the vast majority of the Atrean public has shunned the area, preferring to remain in the commercial sectors set in the myriad of hills on which the city is built.

When Paul Marik launched his coup and installed his daughter Corinne as Captain-General in 3069, the planet saw an influx of Word of Blake members and troops, with the Word's Fifteenth Division eventually taking up residence on the mountainous continent of Paltos, though not without several influential Atreans complaining loudly to the Captain-General about the imposition on their secluded retreats. The Fifteenth regularly hosts various Marik Commonwealth forces in training exercises, and even the reticent Second Free Worlds Legionnaires have made mention of the training area the Blakists have built in the rugged area.

With the onset of the Jihad, the tourist stream that so many Atreans relied on for their livelihoods has all but dried up. While the government has attempted to provide relief for those citizens affected, the real outcome is spike in unemployment. This disaffected portion of the populace has proven a fertile ground for anti-Parliament feelings, and agents from Regulus through to Alys Rousset-Marik's resistance have been found fomenting discontent in the outer suburbs of the so-called "City of Dreams."

When Thomas Halas launched his ill-advised rescue attempt in 3076, Atreus City was the main stage of the fighting, with most of the collateral damage caused when the Fifteenth Division moved through the southern suburbs in order to cut off the Second Knights of the Inner Sphere's retreat. Several million Atreans were left homeless, and tens of thousands died in the fighting as the Second and Eighth Legions engaged the Second Knights in the grounds of the Interstellar Botanic Gardens, with the Museum of Technology another casualty of the fighting.

Ironically, the reduction in housing, employment, and security has proved a boon to the workers on the agrarian Lanan and Corin continents, as the value of their produce has sky-rocketed. With continued off-world supplies dependent on interstellar transport, many Atreans are willing to pay the added expense for local produce. While the capital has not yet experienced shortages, more than a few Atreans believe it is only a matter of time.

Whilst not on Atreus proper, SAFE's facility on Wendigo, Atreus' moon, is rumored to have been compromised. Although ostensibly a secret, the Eagle Corps "Eyrie" facility has been seen by many of the Free Worlds public as the LCCCs last line of defense, but the expected response to Thomas Halas' mercenary assault on the capital never materialized. Whether that is a result of LCCC instruction or symbolic of a deeper rift remains unknown. What is known is that a Blakist Shadow Division carried out a series of maneuvers on the moon in early 3075, at the time thought to be in conjunction with the forces of the Eyrie.

REGULUS

Noble Ruler: Prince Titus Cameron-Jones
Star Type (Recharge Time): K6III (197 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 3.91 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Zamzama)
Surface Gravity: 0.95
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 45° C (Tropical)
Surface Water Coverage: 53 percent
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 3,110,250,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-B-A-B

Devastated in the so-called "Night of Fire" in 3072, the Regulan capital was further torn apart during Kirc Cameron-Jones' divisive Purge. Regulus was once a planet known for its religious tolerance and acceptance of other cultures, but the Purge saw Regulan turn against Regulan as the paranoia that had gripped the world

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since the Blakist attack in 3072 spilled over. With the citizens quietly ignoring the increasingly excessive measures that Cameron-Jones used to "cleanse" the nation of any dissenters, the Regulan Security Service—the RSS—was given the mandate to set up a series of "filtration" camps in the hills outside the city, where suspected traitors could be sifted out from amongst the general populace.

The result of the Purge is that Regulus is only now rebuilding the shattered city, and many iconic landmarks that survived the Night of Fire have been tainted by Kirc's actions. The Palace of Mirrors, which until the Night of Fire largely served as Kirc's Parliament-in-Exile, has been irrevocably linked with the Purge after serving as the RSS's main detention facility within Regulus City itself. This, and the First Hussars former barracks at the Bagra Ghat, has been left vacant since Prince Titus assumed power. There has been talk about turning the Bagra Ghat fortress into a detention center, but recently Prince Titus declared that the Palace will become the new RDFC Headquarters building, abutting the office complex claimed by the ever-expanding RSS.

Under the new prince, reconstruction has begun slowly, with the municipal facilities like the new Dombrell Memorial hospital (named for a RCPD police officer who gave his life against the Manei Domini during the Night of Fire) ranking higher in importance than the various commercial concerns. This has served to further alienate Titus from his father's traditional supporter base, but after the brutality of the Purge, the general populace has taken Titus' assurances of support at face value, and the new Regulan Prince has done his utmost to keep his word.

The commercial district that served as the lifeblood of the planet was washed away in the sea of flame that enveloped the city's western quarters during the Night of Fire, and even now the carcasses of several scorched BattleMechs serve as a constant reminder to the populace of the price they have paid. The rampant consumerism that drove the Regulan psyche is slowly returning, but as a whole the Regulan public through the Principality has become more insular and less likely to source foreign goods in favor of locally produced items.

One of the industries that felt the biggest impact of the Blakist attack was the RHE community. Regulus, along with Gibson, was the League's largest supplier of Recreation Hologram Environments pre-Jihad, but especially after the Word assumed control of Gibson (and with it Kensai Holographiks), Regulus was primed to become leading light in the RHE sector—until the Night of Fire. While the physical plant of the RHE studios was largely unaffected during the assault, the simple fact that Sonja Amora (aka Precentor Naamah of the Word of Blake) had passed herself off as an RHE actress irrevocably tainted the industry and anyone who had had contact with her. Indeed the RHE studios were the first to feel the full force of Kirc's Purge, with most executives disappearing in the notorious filtration camps.

Recently, and it is suggested as a result of the death of his wife, Prince Titus has declared the entire continent of Tabar a military reserve and made arrangements to evacuate any civilians to Tinnin. Civilian overflights are banned, and the commercial spaceport (largely for wealthy tourists) has been nationalized and placed under the RDFC aegis. All that is known is significant heavy industry is been set up in and around Mount Rajah, including at least one new *OstWar* production facility.

Perhaps the most disturbing result of the Blakist attack has been the subtle alteration to Regulus' climate. While the changes have not yet been fully studied, meteorologists posit that the mass injection of particulate matter from the fires and aftermath of the Night of Fire into the upper atmosphere has modified the standard weather cycle. So far their only evidence in the unseasonably long wet season on the continent of Tinnin and the lower-than-usual temperatures recorded in recent years. In any case, it is of significant enough concern that Prince Titus has ordered a study into the phenomenon.

ORIENTE

Noble Ruler: Grand Duke Christopher Halas
Star Type (Recharge Time): F2III (173 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 18.75 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Escorial, Coruna)
Surface Gravity: 1.1
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 45° C (Tropical)
Surface Water Coverage: 58 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 4,020,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-B-A-B

Aside from an abortive attempt by Kirc Cameron-Jones to force Duke Halas from power, Oriente has largely been spared the vagaries of the Jihad. If anything, Oriente has benefited from the influx of disaffected peoples and military units that have fled the disintegrating provinces of the League.

The revelation that Thomas Marik was an imposter was doubly felt on Oriente, with the former Captain-General's wife coming from the Halas line. While a significant portion of the population

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felt he should either be imprisoned or suitably punished (especially the Oriente Nationalists led by the duke's son Gregory, who opposed Sheryl's marriage to Thomas in the first place), the false Thomas Marik still enjoys enormous popularity throughout the worlds of the Duchy, in no small part due to the way he turned back the Regulan assault force with minimal casualties.

The influx of both military materiel and manpower coming to Oriente has had significant impact on the daily lives of the average citizen, with the breadbasket regions of Martigues and Navarran having to share their fields with the latest military arrivals and their familiarization exercises. The First Marik Militia caused a major stir when one of their training endeavors started a serious wildfire that tore through the Martigues arboreal reserve.

The Jihad has also had the impact of forcing Oriente to start manufacturing goods on-planet rather than the traditional licensing of them to off-world industry. The relative lack of on-world heavy industry has hampered this development, though several manufacturers have been given grants to expand their physical plant with an eye to ensuring Oriente's continued prosperity. In light of Capellan and Regulan aggression, Duke Halas has ordered significant military resources be devoted to the protection of this burgeoning industry.

The vast majority of new civilian arrivals to Oriente have been given temporary accommodation in resettlement facilities set up on the Avillan Archipelago. A lack of foresight from the Office of Refugee Resettlement meant that the new arrivals were not adequately prepared for the devastating storm season, and a significant clean-up has been required, with the Second Oriente Hussars "Ponti" infantry battalion spending the 3075-3076 period assisting in rebuilding the various settlements. The ORR has asked for further military resources, but so far Duke Halas has declined their requests.

The snowy arctic continent of Burgos has largely been left untouched by both the new arrivals and the established Oriente population. However, the chalets and ski resorts that dot its landscape have become a status symbol amongst the Oriente Nationalists. This has been doubly so after Fannie Halas, former commander of the Fusiliers of Oriente, "retired" there, and the frequent visits between the Duke Gregory and General Halas are of great interest to the nascent Oriente intelligence community.

Thomas Halas also bought with him significant naval forces, units that proved decisive in turning back the Regulan assault on the planet. One of the major outcomes of the Regulan assault that was largely kept quiet was the destruction of Oriente's nadir recharge station. Since then, Halas' naval fleet has largely located around the zenith jump point, with a token response force based off Coruna, Oriente's second moon. Oriente lacks the heavy slips required for substantial maintenance, but a basic orbital dock is being slowly built in order to accommodate the large number of vessels that swear fealty to Halas.

THE SUNDERED ARMY: KEY FWLM MILITARY COMMANDS

MARIK MILITIA

Forever the bulwark of the Free Worlds League military, the Marik Militia has borne the brunt of the fighting in the Jihad, from Jeremy Brett's Operation Broken Fist to the various insurgency campaigns running rampant in the League. Despite this near-continuous action, the Militia has lost only a few regiments, both to defections and combat losses. Indeed, the loss of the Sixth Militia during the Skye/Bolan offensive at the start of the Jihad is the only major combat loss the Militias have suffered.

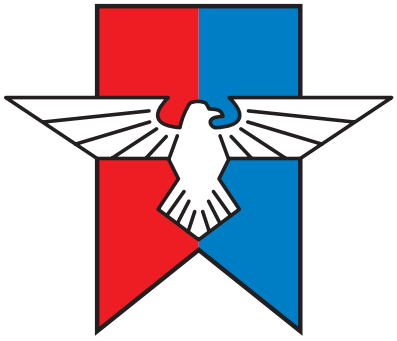
It is the loyalties to provinces, other units, and leaders that have been the biggest factor in the overall reduction of the Militias. The First Militia's long association with the Halas family saw the vast majority of the unit follow General Samuel Garibaldi to Oriente, where they still serve as the First Marik Militia, albeit under a different flag.

The Fifth Militia suffered severe losses during the Warrior House White Tiger's raid on Les Halles in 3073, but they have remained loyal to Atreus as a whole.

The Thirteenth Militia remained on Irian after its incorporation into the Blake Protectorate but retained their FWLM identity, primarily serving as trainers for the new Protectorate Militia units being raised on the planet (and only providing limited assistance during the 3073 Regulan raid on the world). While not supporting the recent IrTech takeover of the planet, the Thirteenth also did not provide assistance to the Protectorate forces, choosing to stay out of the fighting altogether.

The Fifteenth Militia was almost annihilated in the mini-civil war that took place on Berenson when the pro-Blakist elements in the unit attempted to defect wholesale to the Word. The pro-FWL survivors have since joined Alys Rousset-Marik's resistance.

The Thirtieth, Thirty-first, Thirty-fourth and Thirty-seventh Militias served as the mainstay of Marshal Brett's Operation Broken Fist, and since then have largely been quiet, maintaining a watch on the Lyran border, ostensibly under the command of Marshal Photon Brett-Marik.



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FREE WORLDS LEGIONNAIRES

Despite Thomas Halas' hopes, the revelation of his true identity provided the catalyst that caused the Legionnaires to be cut down in number through a series of defections. The Sixth Legion has been absorbed into the expanded Word of Blake Militia, the Fourth was gutted by large-scale defections to the Word, while former elements of the First, Fifth, and Ninth Legions serve as the bulwark of the newly formed Andurien Rangers. With Corinne Marik's appointment as Captain-General, the Second Legion has been posted to Atreus, where they have taken up the Honor Guard role formerly held by the First Knights of the Inner Sphere. The remaining Legions have suffered minor defections as well, primarily to Alys Rousset-Marik's resistance, but as a whole they remain loyal to the office of the Captain-General.

The Second's increased status has seen them lavished with equipment and technology, as well as placed them into a not-so-friendly rivalry with the Blakist unit on planet, the Fifteenth Division. The Blakists' role as a "mentor" unit doesn't sit well with General Parr, whose concerns have largely been ignored.

The Second and Eighth Legions also constituted the majority of the defense force that defeated the Second Knights of the Inner Sphere during Thomas Halas' mercenary assault on the capital in 3076. This has further exacerbated the tension between the Second and the Fifteenth Division, with the Blakist unit engaging in indiscriminate warfare to put the Knights down, ignoring civilian collateral damage in the action.

The Third and Seventh Legions have been used as the Marik Commonwealth's quick response force, putting out the various brushfires that have arisen in the previous years. The depleted Fourth Legion served as the vanguard of the Marik Commonwealth's assault on the rebel world of Savanna but has been largely quiet since then.

Addendum 030277: The Third and Seventh Legions have been dispatched to remove the Regulan Defense Force units currently occupying the Regulan Free States.

REGULAN HUSSARS

Since the shocking death of Colonel Princess Michelle Cameron-Jones, the Regulan Hussars have undergone an increasingly rapid expansion program, accelerating an effort that began after the reported visit of a Blakist envoy to the capital planet in early 3076. (Note: this information is largely available due to the fact the Regulans have relied heavily on SC logistics). Currently there exist approximately twelve Hussar Regiments, though staffing and equipment levels of the later-activated units are understandably low.

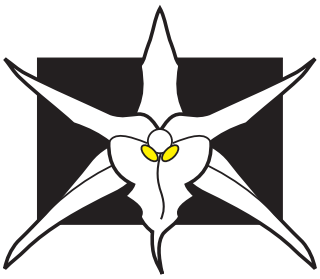
Newly promoted Colonel Lord Ihsan Hunter has taken over as the head of the First Hussars, despite having to face a trial by combat for the posting from one the former First Hussars' command officers who had been stripped of his rank in the aftermath of the Purge. Hunter is nominally in control of the Regulus ground forces, but in reality General Thomas Orfelt retains overall command.

Orfelt has also seen the need to rebuild the image of the shattered Hussars, and as such has reactivated (and devoted significant resources to) iconic units such as the famed "Rolling Thunder" company and the Second Hussars' Green Monster Assault Battalion. These units are being seen as prestige posts, and competition to be deployed with them is high.

One of the odd outcomes of the Regulan expansion is the reliance upon single chassis units, similar to the Star League-era SLDF's own policies. As such, it is not uncommon to see Regulan lances composed of a single design, continuing the theme started with the Hussars' iconic *Trebuchet* lances. Thus far the First, Second, and Fourth Hussars have seen the lion's share of new equipment, with older designs being rotated through to the newer regiments. Of particular interest to SC is the Regulans' refitting of their existing *Trebuchet* models to the Star League-era -3C standard.

Addendum 310177: Regulan units have landed and occupied the Regulan Free States, eliciting a response from both Atreus and Oriente. As of printing, the Regulan forces have not withdrawn.

FUSILIERS OF ORIENTE



Responsible for the defense of Oriente and its associated worlds, the Fusiliers have primarily managed to avoid the same fate as that of the Oriente Hussars, with only the Fifth Brigade being lost in the maelstrom of the Jihad. The First, Second, and Third Brigades took part in Marshal Brett's Operation Broken Fist at the onset of the Jihad before withdrawing when Thomas Halas recalled his units to Atreus. The Second Brigade also proved decisive in defeating the forces Kirc Cameron-Jones sent to capture Oriente in 3071.

With the revelation of the false Thomas' true identity, Fannie Halas stood down as the head of the Fusiliers in protest over Duke Halas' continuing involvement with the imposter. While Thomas is still nominally the Fusiliers commander, new CO Edgar Halas has taken over the role with reluctance, and rumor suggests only his

HOUSE MARIK

father's influence is preventing him from following in his second cousin's footsteps.

After the White Tigers Warrior House assault on Les Halles in 3073, the First, Second, and Fourth Brigades carried out a series of retaliatory raids on the Capellan worlds of Jasmine, Eom, and Boardwalk, eliciting the ire of the CCAF. Even after Thomas Halas visited Sian, the Fusiliers have maintained a close watch on the border, but further raids have not taken place as of yet.

Unfortunately for Oriente, Thomas' ill-advised rescue attempt on Atreus in 3076 has again drawn Blakist eyes towards the Duchy. This, along with the increasingly aggressive Regulan actions, is perhaps the major reason Devlin Stone's latest overtures have been seriously entertained, with Duke Edgar Halas traveling to an unknown location to meet with the resistance leader. What Thomas Halas thinks of this development is unknown.

ANDURIEN RANGERS

Dame Humphreys' overtures to several Free World Legionnaire commanders resulted in the wholesale defection of nearly three Legions to the Andurien banner. Bringing with them enough materiel to raise two regiments, the First and Second Andurien Rangers came into being, covertly supported by companies like Brooks Incorporated and Grumman Amalgamated, leading to preponderance of heavy vehicles in the nascent commands. General Tracy Fenton, formerly of the First Free World Legionnaires, is the current Rangers CO.

Like their Defenders of Andurien and Free World Legionnaires forebears, the Rangers place high emphasis on combined-arms operations, which is made difficult by the lack of BattleMech manufacturers within the Duchy itself. This has led to "retrotech" refit facilities springing up through the region, most notably on Lopez with its *Kyudo* assembly line.

The First Rangers is the first Duchy unit to see combat since the Andurien War, and they have acquitted themselves admirably, undertaking a lightning raid on the Capellan world of Principia in 3071 and turning back a determined raid by the Second Oriente Hussars against the IMBU plant on Shiro III in 3074. Since then, the First has rotated through several Duchy worlds, primarily as a deterrent against further excursions by either Oriente or Capellan forces.

The Second Rangers have for the most part served as a cadre unit, training the various Duchy militia units. Their combat debut occurred in 3075 when they assaulted and defeated the Word of Blake forces sent to the Furud system to intercept the returning Naomi Centralla-Liao. The Second then escorted the Canopian leader all the way to Sian, earning significant respect for the whole Rangers brigade in the process.

The Third Rangers are the newest formation, notably lacking in BattleMech assets, but Dame Humphreys has entrusted them with the defense of the Mosiro Archipelago worlds. Realistically, the Third companies on each of the Archipelago worlds are little more than deterrents against pirate adventurism, but the political capital the deployment has earned the Dame and the Duchy ensures their continued presence.

FREE WORLDS MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

Before the onset of the Jihad, the false Thomas Marik had significantly reduced the number of mercenary units within the FWLM, replacing them with the new units of the expanded League military. Since the beginning of the Jihad however, the various splinter states within the former League have proved a Mecca to those mercenaries wanting to avoid the Blakist occupation of Galatea or the subordination of Arc-Royal. However, employ in the League states is not without its risks.

Perhaps the most famous example of the dangers of dealing within the Free Worlds League was the Regulan task force sent to assault Gibson in early 3074. Composed primarily of mercenary forces, the now-infamous Gibson operation saw the destruction of two storied units in the Wild Geese and Thirteenth Stalking Horse, as well as the capture of eight smaller commands. Even so, Regulus has continued to be a constant source of mercenary employment.

Alys Rousset-Marik's Free Worlds Resistance has been another source of employment for the enterprising mercenary. Originally based around her own mercenary unit, the Krushers, the Resistance has gathered several disaffected commands to its banner, most notably the BattleCorps Legion, and several other former-AMC units. Duchess Marik's largesse regarding upgrades and even new equipment has seen units like the Legion of the Rising Sun, who were devastated in a Blakist assault, survive to fight another day.

Recently Thomas Halas tried the same tact as the Regulan Princes, using a mercenary strike force to support the Second Knights of the Inner Sphere in their attempt to rescue his hostage wife on Atreus. That same action saw the destruction or capture of every unit Thomas sent and a big shift of non-associated mercenaries from Oriente towards Alys' Resistance.

Interestingly, it is the nominal "official" League government that has proven to be the smallest employer of mercenary units within the former League, relying more on their Blakist allies for support.

In the end, both Gibson and Atreus show that while the pay might be good, the cautious mercenary needs to understand that when it comes to League politics, there's no such thing as an easy job.

HOUSE STEINER

HOUSE STEINER

THE LYRAN ALLIANCE

The year 2341 saw the birth of one of the most powerful houses in the Inner Sphere when the Federation of Skye, the Protectorate of Donegal, and the Tamar Pact united to found the Lyran Commonwealth. Unlike most of the other Houses, the Lyran Commonwealth was not founded as a defensive alliance, but rather as a united mercantile power. The modern Lyran Alliance remains a nation of traders, industrialists, and merchants. Shortcomings in Lyran military talent have rectified time and again by Lyran industry and Lyran money.

FORGING FIRES

The Commonwealth prospered through the Star League and, when the Star League collapsed, the ruling Steiner family sat at the helm of what seemed to be one of the most potent realms in the Inner Sphere.

However, the Lyran Commonwealth was plagued by four distinct "gremlins" that prevented the Commonwealth from dominating the Inner Sphere. The Draconis Combine mercilessly harried the Lyrans throughout the history of both realms, even forcing the relocation of the Lyran capital from Arcturus to Tharkad in the Age of War. The Free Worlds League became a bitter enemy in the savagery of the early Succession Wars, when both nations would scorch their own worlds with nuclear weapons rather than let them fall into the other's hands. The Lyrans have often been their own worst enemy on the battlefield as they allow often-incompetent nobles to buy military ranks, the so-called "Social Generals." Finally, the Isle of Skye has never been entirely happy in the Lyran Commonwealth and often takes the most inopportune moment to attempt to secede.

These four factors have weighed against the Commonwealth time and again. The Succession Wars saw a steady erosion of the Lyran border with the Draconis Combine, something only partly rectified when the 31st Century alliance with the Federated Suns brought new martial talent to the Lyran armies. While the Commonwealth did annex "the Bolan Thumb" from the Free Worlds, the fighting along that border was some of the most savage in the Succession Wars, perhaps only equaled by the land grab for the defunct Terran Hegemony. When the fortuitous Alliance with the Federated Suns enabled the Commonwealth to reclaim dozens of worlds lost to the Combine, secessionism by Skye stymied further conflicts.

Since then, new fires have scarred and tempered the Lyran Commonwealth (or Lyran Alliance, as it is now known.) The Clan invasion seized a huge swath of Lyran space in a blitzkrieg that dwarfed even the Fourth Succession War. The Lyran belief that the Federated Suns section of the Federated Commonwealth, which was unscathed by the Clan juggernaut, had left the Lyrans to suffer alone aggrated resentment not only in Skye but throughout Lyran space. Katherine Steiner-Davion would play on this resentment and other missteps by her brother, Victor Steiner-Davion, the first and last Archon-Prince of the Federated Commonwealth, to lead the Lyrans in secession from the Commonwealth in 3057. Her 3062 power grab for the Federated Suns led to the brutal Federated Commonwealth Civil, which battered and exhausted both realms. And when the leaders of the Inner Sphere met in November 3067 to elect the next First Lord of the Second Star League, the leaders of the Federated Suns and the Lyran Alliance, Yvonne and Peter Steiner-Davion, decided to withdraw their nations from the Star League—moves that led to the start of the Jihad.

WAR OF CONFUSION

For the Alliance, the "holy war" of the Word of Blake began with a literal bang when a Word of Blake WarShip opened fire on Tharkad City, which was hosting the fateful Star League conference. The resulting tremors collapsed the snow-burdened roof of a municipal fusion power plant, creating chemical fires and explosions amongst tanks of radioactive waste. Rumors of a nuclear attack on Tharkad started to circulate, and news agencies all over the Sphere reported Tharkad had been nuked and the first shots of the Jihad had been fired. The war quickly crippled the Lyran Alliance as Archon Peter Steiner-Davion was trapped on Tharkad by a Blakist siege, and many of the Lyrans' largest and most productive military industrial facilities in the hands of the Word of Blake. The Word of Blake was not alone in attacks against the Lyran Alliance and, in fact, was overshadowed for several years by other conflicts. The Clans started a new offensive against the Alliance while the Bolan and Skye regions initiated a war against the Free Worlds League, ensuring that the Alliance would be occupied and on the defensive for years. Only after Adam Steiner became the new Archon of the Lyran Alliance did the tide begin to turn. With help from Devlin Stone and his coalition, the new Archon managed to liberate his conquered industrial worlds.

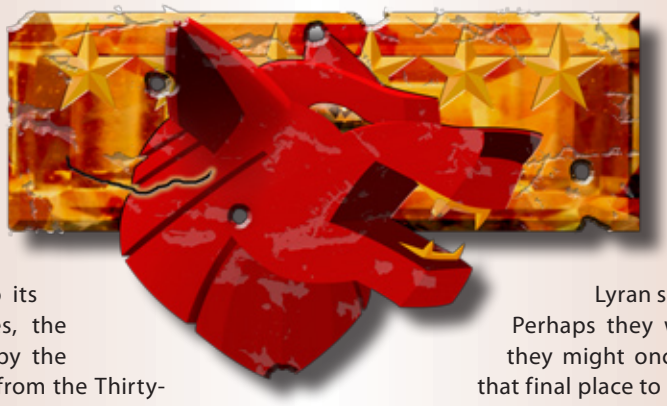
One of the more daring moves by Peter Steiner-Davion seems to have come back to plague Adam Steiner. In August of 3072, Peter appointed a number of "Archonettes" on important planets of the Alliance. The Archonettes had effective rule over small regions of the Alliance, more effectively managing military resources and reconstruction than Tharkad could in turbulent times. First introduced in 2822 during the chaos of the First Succession War by Archon Richard Steiner, this policy had only been used in that time of great crisis. However useful Archonettes were they also presented risk, particularly in a nation known for greed, ambition, and secessionism. During the Jihad, Archonettes caused problems almost as often as they resolved them. For example, on Kaumberg, the central world of the Kaumberg Archonette, the appointed Archonette Baron Erich Sheridan quickly started a private war against Lindon Ashley and his Democracy Now movement.

CLAN WOLF (IN EXILE)

Tourists, nomads, refugees, in-laws. Societies have always had groups that find themselves calling home a place that just doesn't feel that way—often by intruding on the current occupants, occasionally without their permission. Despite pledging allegiance to Archon Peter Steiner to protect the Inner Sphere from the invading clans, Clan Wolf (in Exile) has yet to find their true home. Certainly they have a place to live on Arc-Royal and wherever their garrisons are, but they are still outsiders on these planets. Opening 3072 on the offensive, the Wolves assisted in the liberation of Tharkad. While they did not contribute a lot of troops to this effort, their inclusion added to their growing political clout.

After the Wolves dodged an earlier nuclear strike, the Word of Blake decided to put an end to them, along with the Kell Hounds and what remained of Wolf's Dragoons. The Second and Thirty-eighth Divisions accompanied the Forty-third Shadow Division, and were escorted by a trio of WarShips taken from the FWL fleet: the *Agamemnon*-class *Aeneas* and *Troy*, and the *Aegis*-class *Olympus*. The invading force arrived in the Arc-Royal system on 22 March 3072, sending out a screening force of Pocket WarShips armed with nuclear weapons. The Wolf navy moved to cut off the fleet but was forced to engage the invaders, allowing some of the conventional forces to land on Arc-Royal. Unknowingly, the Blakists forces landed at what they thought was an important defense posting in a remote jungle, but it turned out to be a prison constructed specifically for Katherine Steiner-Davion, and it was empty.

As the naval battle raged above, the ground forces clashed. The Thirty-eighth and Forty-third divisions advanced, pushing through hastily thrown-together pickets. The Shadow division met stiff resistance outside the 'Mech factories, but the Thirty-eighth caught the brunt of Wolf aggression as Phelan Kell and Ranna Kerensky cut into its flank. Surrounded by the Wolves, the Blakists were annihilated. Mired by the Kell Hounds and without support from the Thirty-eighth, the Forty-third pulled back to the landing zone that the Second had secured. The Second moved to stop the advancing Wolf and Kell Hound forces but was only able to slow them down. Abandoning the Shadow Division to be the rear guard, what little of the Second had made it on planet retreated, accompanied by the surviving bits of the Forty-third. In space, the Wolves destroyed the Pocket WarShips, allowing only the *Aeneas* to flee with what little of the ground forces escaped, though they also lost two WarShips.



The next year would not be so kind to the Wolves. The Arc-Royal conference was an opportunity not only to create a strategy for fighting the Blakists and gather allies, but also a chance to show off the Wolves' strength and hospitality. An unwitting Fritz Donner spoiled these plans. Not only did the Wolves lose their second in command as saKhan Marco Hall perished in the explosion, but their shame was even greater at failing to detect the explosive mechanism in Donner, allowing harm to fall to their guests. The Wolves were able to administer medical aid to save some, but far too many of those assembled died.

The road to physical recovery has been easier than that of spiritual healing. Between the Kells and Wolf facilities, the loss of material has been replaced, though some is less advanced than the Clan warriors are used to. New recruits have stepped into the gaps created by the slim losses they suffered fighting the Blakists, and Darryl Kerensky stepped up to replace Marco Hall. The Wolves appear to be assuaging their guilt by unleashing their rage on Blakist targets.

Their biggest challenge will be finding a permanent home for themselves. They are reliant on the Alliance, through Duke Kell, for the funds to keep themselves supplied. If they cut into Wolf or Falcon territory to create their own realm, the Alliance will demand those worlds as traditional Lyran territory. While they have settled on current Lyran soil, they still seek a true home. Perhaps they will find it in the Alliance or they might once again move, trying to find that final place to call their own.

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REFORMS AND REBUILDING

Democracy Now, which began its life as a peaceful exercise to bring more democracy to the Alarion province and was transformed by Lindon Ashley into a far more militarized and radical movement, has been one of the biggest concerns within the Lyran Alliance in recent years. The decentralization of command and the chaos of the early years of the Jihad proved a perfect breeding ground for anarchists, and in a short period of time things got out of hand. At first, the different factions within the movement fought each other on a variety of worlds, and it was not long before the leader of one of the more moderate groups was assassinated. It was a short trip from that point to the beginning of a shooting war led by Baron Sheridan, and only now, after Lindon Ashley and many of his officers have been put to trial and executed, have things started to calm down.

Another major issue facing the Lyran Alliance is the reconstruction effort. Already under duress after the long and brutal Civil War, most of the Lyran military industry now lies in ashes, nuked by the Word of Blake, further destroyed during years of constant fighting, and bankrupt from the cost of reconstructing enormously expensive facilities. Hesperus II, Coventry, and Donegal, major industrial worlds of the Alliance, were the main objectives hit by the Word of Blake in their Operation Steel Hammer right at the beginning of the Jihad. Though all three planets are now liberated and resuming production, the Alliance's military-industrial complex is still mauled. Acts of terrorism and raids specifically targeted to destroy the industrial complexes—all conducted by the Word of Blake—have ensured that the formerly most powerful economy of the Inner Sphere now lies in shambles. Only the fact that the other economic powerhouse of the Inner Sphere and the Lyran rival in military sales, the Free Worlds League, has fared worse grants a window of opportunity for the Alliance to recover its position. It will take decades for the Alliance to return to anything close to their former might.

Despite the trials of the Jihad, the population has kept its confidence in their leadership. In an Inner Sphere gone mad, their spirit is exceptional. Though the public never really warmed to Peter Steiner-Davion, Adam Steiner's reign has been marked by a feeling of hope for a better future that is spreading throughout the Alliance. With Stone winning victory after victory, the Kell Hounds seemingly at every frontline in the Jihad and the liberation of Tharkad, Hesperus II, Coventry, and Donegal, the people of the Lyran Alliance feel that the tide has indeed turned.

One thing that leaves people uneasy is the presence of the Clans. Even though the Jade Falcons and Wolves declared a ceasefire to focus on the Word of Blake, and rumors persist of problems within the occupation zones, the fear of a renewed Clan invasion remains. Morgan Kell and his son Phelan, Khan of the exiled Wolves, do their best to calm the fears, but too many years and too many broken promises by the Clans have taken their toll.

The future for the Lyrans looks brighter than a few years ago, but it will take a lot of time, money, and effort to rebuild. The Alliance will undoubtedly recover, but it is uncertain how long this may take.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

ADAM STEINER

ADAM STEINER

Title: Archon of the Lyran Alliance
Born: 3024 (52 in 3076)

A more reluctant Archon couldn't be found for House Steiner. Never having had aspirations to the throne, General of the Armies Adam Steiner was thrust into the position through the final words uttered by the late Peter Steiner-Davion. "I know no one better to usher the greatness of House Steiner through the darkness ahead into the light," said the late Archon; indeed, his trust in his cousin was absolute and completely justified.

Throughout his career in the LAAF, Adam Steiner has done nothing more than what was required of him to safeguard his

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beloved Lyran nation. Ushered into the realities of war during the Clan Invasion in 3050, he was thrown into a leadership role from his former position as an academy instructor. He was so successful and such an atypical Lyran officer that his exploits leading the Somerset Strikers spawned a popular tri-vid show aimed at young Lyrans, instilling national pride into the newer generation – alongside selling trillions of L-bills in toys and merchandise. [*In proper Lyran merchant tradition, of course. –ED*]

Even though the Strikers were disbanded shortly after the invasion halted on Tukayyid, Adam continued to rise up the LAAF ladder, becoming Archon Peter Steiner-Davion's General of the Armies after the FedCom Civil War. His promotion was quickly tested when the Blakists unleashed their Jihad, hammering several key Lyran worlds and setting the nation back on its heels.

Through his strategic acumen, he spearheaded the successful assault on Tharkad that broke the Word's six-year blockade. He also assisted in planning several other assaults and was Archon Steiner-Davion's representative to Stone's Coalition on Orestes when the Archon was assassinated.

Faced with mounting pressure politically, he conducted a whirlwind romance and wedded Heather Fyhne shortly after ascending the throne. The marriage, according to many "insiders," is more of a political move than any made out of feelings for the other; much has been made over Adam's on-again, off-again relationship with Major (ret) Rachel Specter, a respected professor at the Nagelring Academy. However, neither has had any official contact with the other since the wedding, so no impropriety can be inferred.

The couple has taken young Hanse, Peter's son, and the boy's mother into their Tharkad estate. Speculation among many of the nobility is that Adam is simply protecting the severely retarded boy from the general public. While his affection for the boy is known, Adam has publicly denied allegations that he is making Hanse an heir to the throne and instead is simply just "making life more comfortable during his time here in the universe."

ROBERT KELSWA-STEINER

Title: Duke of Porrima, Leader of Skye Province; Leader of Free Skye Movement

Born: 3034 (42 in 3076)

If there is another soul alive who walks the fine line of loyalist and terrorist better than Duke Kelswa-Steiner, they must be outside of the Inner Sphere. He has been named as the leader of the Free Skye movement, has denied the claim, yet according to all sources he has stayed in that position with no repercussions for his very public lies. Were he to acknowledge his position, he would be arrested for supporting a known terrorist organization. Even if he were to avoid arrest, he would be stripped of the power and resources that make him so appealing to Free Skye. Like his father, Ryan Steiner, Robert holds a strong bitterness towards Tharkad and his ruling relatives there, despite the fact that he often drops the "Kelswa" off his last name and refers to himself as a Steiner.

Support of the war he started with the Free Worlds League is mixed; those who feel it was a good idea think Archon Peter should have supported it, while those loyal to Peter believe there was no way they could have succeeded and that the Alliance would have been better prepared for the Blakists if Skye's invasion had never happened. While inheriting his title of duke from his father, Robert also has connections to the now-defunct Tamar Pact, as his mother was the heir to the title there. This makes him the standard bearer for anyone who feels that the Archon or Tharkad has wronged them.

Kelswa-Steiner is remaining active with Free Skye, though always in indirect, covert ways. Through intermediaries, he is working with the organization to cut the region's ties with the rest of the Alliance. The Duke is also using his political power to push Tharkad farther from him.

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ERICH SHERIDAN

Title: Lord of Lords; Baron of Kaumberg; Kaumberg Archonette
Born: 3022 (54 in 3076)

While many will say there were no winners in the civil unrest on Kaumberg, Erich Sheridan has managed to jump from minor noble of Kaumberg to major player in the Lyran Alliance. The assembled nobility was poised to elect Trent Hasseldorf to rule their planet after his faction defeated the opposing LeSat family when he declined the honor. A compromise candidate, Erich Sheridan found himself named Lord of Lords and dove into his new job. Life did not make it easy on him, however. Sheridan quickly found himself embroiled in unrest from former Rim Collection citizen Lindon Ashley and the Democracy Now movement that was already affecting many nearby worlds.

After an armed confrontation, Ashley was forced to retreat to nearby Novara, home of Democracy Now. While Ashley's mercenaries were considered wanted by the MRBC for their actions, there was little Kaumberg could do without causing civil unrest by using their military forces on another Lyran planet. The creation of the Archonettes changed all that. With Novara being in Sheridan's Archonette, he demanded that Ashley surrender and his forces stand down, a demand that Ashley mocked.

Kaumberg forces, with the legal backing of the Archonette, invaded Novara in 3072 and defeated the Democratic Peoples' Army there. After years of Ashley's hiding, Sheridan was forced into hiring mercenaries to finally defeat the DPA and capture Ashley and his cohorts. Though the Democracy Now forces were tried and executed, Sheridan will still have to deal with the specter of these martyrs as they live on in their supporters. Sheridan has proposed some reforms to mollify people calling for more democracy in their government, while it is hoped that the ending of armed insurrection will help restore the economy and keep the people focused on their daily lives. Sheridan's moderate success has him primed for greater things in the Alliance, but it does not seem that he aspires to more than helping his beleaguered realm.

TAMARI LARUE

Title: Duchess of Inarcs; Inarcs Archonette
Born: 3028 (48 in 3076)

While there is always some criticism with political appointments, the appointment of Duchess Tamari LaRue to oversee the Inarcs Archonette was met with much confusion. The region did not include any high priority targets and was just outside a buffer region with the Jade Falcon OZ without including any of the border worlds. When the media outlets pressed her for a re-

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sponse, Duchess LaRue issued a scathing attack on opponents of the Archon. She then further expounded upon the value of her Archonette and the point of having Archonettes. Noting that her region needed stability in order to build into a more valuable region, she declared that she would use her powers to prove Peter's decision right.

The media was duly impressed, and criticism of Duchess LaRue has decreased, though the usual anti-Archon outlets have labeled her a shrewish yes-woman for Tharkad. Par for the course, the *Skye Observer* went so far as to accuse her of being so desperate for any attention since her looks were fading and she was without romantic attachment. The *Observer*'s readership lambasted the outlet, noting that LaRue's husband had died fighting the Jade Falcons. A retraction and apology was immediately issued, the first by that outlet in a decade.

There is more to the duchess than media sound bites, however. She has taken the valuable planet of Inarcs and made it even more important by helping Blackstone Industries rise from a minor parts supplier to an active producer of BattleMechs. LaRue may have had less to do with a decrease of pirate activity than the local Blackstone Highlanders and Falcon pirate hunting raids, but her efforts in this area should not be discounted.

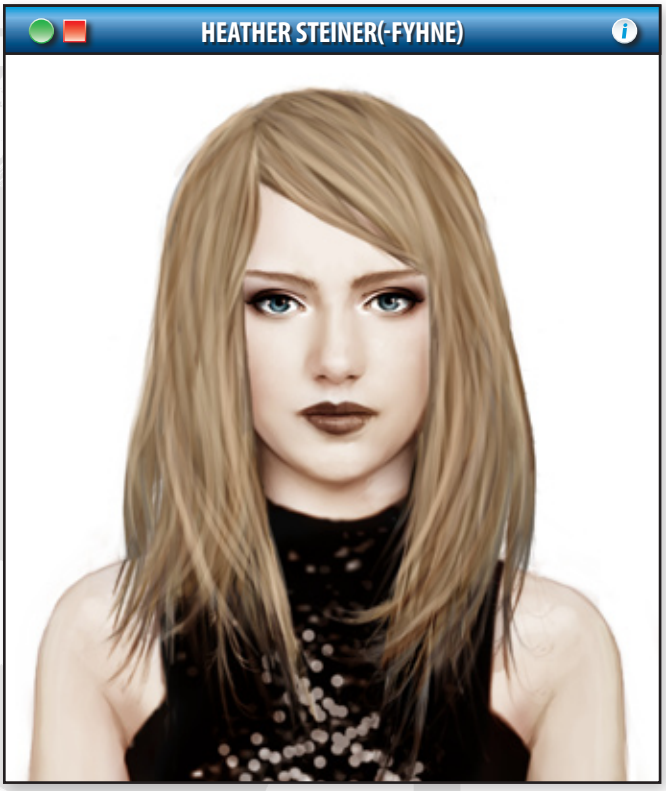
HEATHER STEINER(-FYHNE)

Title: Baronette of Arcturus
Born: 3040 (36 in 3076)

Known primarily as an heiress popular with the local press, Heather Fyhne became a national sensation following her whirlwind romance with Archon Adam Steiner just months after his cousin Peter's death and Adam's promotion to Archon. (Heather's mother, Duchess Arielle Fyhne, received the Arcturus Archonette following Peter's death, in part due to her support of Tharkad and in part due to her abilities.) While the two-month courtship was portrayed in the press as an Arthurian romance, the honeymoon has now ended. The traditional press has backed off the couple, and the scandal-hungry tabloids have moved in.

The small marriage ceremony left little time for the press to prepare a lavish slate of specials, exclusives, and build-up stories, leaving the media feeling short-changed. With the announcement of the royal couple's pregnancy soon after the wedding, the gossip columnists have wondered if the goal of the marriage was complete at that point. Following the birth of Andrew Steiner, the couple has been seen together less.

For her part, the Baronette has shown little concern for what the media says, spending time and money at Tharkad's finest and most expensive stores, concerned more with ceremony than the operation of the state, and she has been quoted as saying, "I'm doing my best to rebuild Tharkad's economy." In the evening she attends parties and dancing while her husband spends much of his time holed up in the palace with his generals and aides—perhaps one of whom is the Archon's alleged paramour. While the Archon and his wife attend official events together, supporters hope the couple recovers from their differences. Given the state of the Inner Sphere, one heir might not be enough.



MORGAN KELL

Title: Grand Duke of Arc-Royal
Born: 2986 (90 in 3076)

The last surviving founding member of the famed Kell Hounds mercenary unit, Grand Duke Kell gave up his command after the Clan Invasion to settle down and retire in peace. Unfortunately, the universe wouldn't let him enjoy the fruit of his labors: his beloved wife was killed in the same assassin's bomb that took Archon Melissa Steiner in 3055, Morgan himself was gravely injured and lost his arm in the blast. He came briefly out of "retirement" to assist Victor Steiner-Davion in his quest to overthrow his sister Katherine, personally convincing Peter Steiner-Davion to return from exile and assume the Lyran throne.

Even as the Jihad broke out, the Grand Duke remained on Arc-Royal. While not leading the Hounds in battle – he can no longer

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MORGAN KELL

PHELAN KELL

pilot a 'Mech due to extensive damage to his inner ear from a latent infection - he has been instrumental in supplying the mercenaries and governing the former Arc-Royal cordon worlds. The war has been trying on Morgan; he took the death of Colonel Dan Allard hard and mourned in private for several days, eschewing even his family. Since then, he has been but a shell of his former self, refusing to take command of the Hounds and instead focusing his efforts on keeping his world from panic and chaos. The repeated attempts by the Word to invade, poison and bomb the world into oblivion has been hard on the populace, who have looked up to the Grand Duke as a standing symbol of their strength and unity.

While Morgan has given much assistance and resources to the Hounds, the Wolves-in-Exile, the shattered remains of the Wolf's Dragoons and now Stone's Coalition, it has driven him further from the trappings of command. Lately, he has mentioned to close aides that all he wishes to do now is simply fade into the background, tired of the constant warfare and stress of the last few decades. Whether he will remain as ruler of the system is up to him, and won't likely be decided until after the Blakist Jihad is over.

PHELAN KELL

Title: Khan, Clan Wolf (in-Exile)

Born: 3031 (45 in 3076)

Phelan Kell can seem like a family member or a stranger—or, to many who know him, both. He is still his father's loving son, but has also become his father's equal in the realms of politics and war.His people see him as their savior and also wonder what he has in store for them. The people of the Lyran Alliance accept him as an ally but question if he will ever be free of the alien culture that he has embraced. Even his love, Ranna Kerensky, must wonder at times if their relationship will remain as it is or if he will try to bring Inner Sphere notions such as marriage or children into what is already foreign territory for her. What is certain is that he is a capable leader that has managed to lead his Wolves to a safe haven. So far he has maintained the balance between assisting the Alliance and keeping the Wolves' identity, but, as is the case with most balancing acts, it is not clear that he can keep that up forever.

Many questions confront Phelan. Where can his Clan find a true home? Will they ever come to terms with the Crusader Wolves? What will happen once Duke Kell dies? Phelan's succession plan is an important question, because without his personality holding the Wolves together they could collapse. The Wolves have faith that he will find the answers to these questions, and he has kept them busy, their skills sharp, and their minds focused on his goals. While middle age is starting to creep up on him, he has kept himself healthy and fit; he has not used his position as Khan to avoid many of the basic requirements that the Clans demand of their warriors.

HOUSE STEINER

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

DANIEL BREWER

Rank/Title: Duke of Hesperus II

Born: 3035 (41 in 3076)

It is yet to be determined if Daniel Brewer will be remembered as the first Duke to ever lose DefHes to the enemy or if history will be more polite to him. But tension is high at the home front as the local media is divided into two camps—one trying to glorify him for never giving up against the Word, the other trying to crucify him for losing Hesperus II in the first place.

When the first raids struck the world in 3068—weakening the defense that just had recovered from the events during the civil war—Duke Brewer's calls for more troops fell on deaf ears as the Alliance was busy fighting on all fronts. When disaster struck in 3070 and the Word of Blake returned with the Fortieth Shadow Division to conquer Hesperus II, Duke Brewer immediately decided to stay on Hesperus II and not run away, citing he could do more good at home then by going into exile.

The Word placed him under house arrest during the occupation, leaving him more or less alone. He appealed to the people of Hesperus from time to time, asking them to stay calm and accept the occupation, while in secret he managed to stay in contact with Adam Steiner and later with Devlin Stone, maybe by using a "black box." He was seriously wounded during the liberation, and it took a while for him to recover from his injuries.

Since Hesperus II has been retaken by Devlin Stone's coalition force, Duke Brewer worked steadily to bring the full industrial capacity of the planet to bear for the Alliance. Though first reports indicated that the damage was only superficial, it turned out that the Word planted a lot of booby traps, computer viruses and other hidden surprises. Output of materiel is at an all-time low at the moment, and things get worse by the day.

AKIRA BRAHE

Rank/Title: Lieutenant-Colonel/CO of the Kell Hounds

Born: 3001 (75 in 3076)

Akira Brahe took command of the Kell Hounds in what almost became their darkest hour. He already had retired from combat duty in 3067 after the FedCom Civil War, citing that he had seen enough bloodshed for two lifetimes. Instead, he chose to help the Kell Hounds by training new recruits. He was on Graceland when the Falcons struck that world in 3069 and watched the ferocious battle between Daniel Allard and Taman Malthus. After Allard went down, Akira took command, bringing Allard's body back home along with most of the survivors.

Lieutenant-Commander Brahe made it his first order of business to strengthen the Kell Hounds, and even though the Sphere was ablaze with the Jihad, he managed to rebuild the unit just in time for the retaking of Tharkad. Over the next few years, Brahe sent his troops into almost every big battle within the Lyran Alliance. He met Devlin Stone, and he and Morgan Kell agreed to fully support his war against the Word of Blake.

In the years since Akira Brahe took command, he has seen many battlefields, from Tharkad to New Exford, Skye, Hesperus II and beyond. This constant fighting has taken its toll. Our sources confirm that Akira Brahe was diagnosed with a very rare form of Ockham's Blood Disease and will die within 24-36 months. Akira is said to be retiring his command in favor of Scott Bradley Jr., longtime commander of the Second Kell Hounds regiment.

Akira and his wife Yukiko had four children, and his eldest son, Yorinaga Brahe, has recently been promoted to captain in the Hounds' Second Regiment. His other children have also become formidable soldiers, many of them fighting for the unit of their father. Leslie Brahe, his granddaughter, is a close advisor to Devlin Stone himself.

HERMIONE ATEN (KELSWA-STEINER)

Rank/Title: Duchess of Skye

Born: 3044 (32 in 3076)

When Duchess Margaret Aten and her daughter Ilse were killed by an assassin in 3064, Margaret's surviving daughter Hermione found herself catapulted to the center of the political spotlight in the Lyran Alliance. Suddenly Duchess of Skye in the middle of the FedCom Civil War, with Skye longing for freedom, Hermione matured rapidly. After a short period of mourning for her mother and sister, she married Robert Kelswa-Steiner and took the reins of power.

Since their marriage, people have tended to overlook Hermione. Duke Robert usually holds the public's attention, but behind the curtains Hermione is very influential. Their shared love for Skye is the driving force behind their political moves. Robert is the military mastermind, while Hermione manipulates media, industry, and mercenaries to do what Robert and she think is best for Skye.

In recent years, Hermione has become a great admirer of Devlin Stone and his coalition against the Word of Blake. The devastating attack on her homeworld in 3074 and the swift and determined help from Stone earned him a lot of currency with the Duchess. There are rumors suggesting their friendship might go deeper than meets the eye, but there seems to be little factual basis for that.

Hermione has focused on the rebuilding of Skye. During the long fighting, most of the industry and infrastructure collapsed and millions were left homeless. One of the first standing orders issued by Hermione after the Word withdrew were emergency reconstruction programs to re-house the homeless refugees. Next, she offered enormous tax reductions to companies that would do

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business on Skye or help with the reconstruction of industry. It is too early to be sure about the success of these measures, but the first results are promising.

TRENT HASSELDORF

Rank/Title: Commander, Kaumberg Archonette Guards/Baron von Stuttgart on Kaumberg

Born: 3007 (69 in 3076)

The current head of House Hasseldorf, a minor barony on Kaumberg in the Alarion Province, Trent Hasseldorf was born to a family legacy of service in the name of the Lyran Archons. After experiencing a disastrous combat defeat in the War of 3039 when he was a newly minted leutnant, he seemed destined to serve out his military career behind a desk until he rebelled against his familial obligation and went on to serve in the mercenary command Kirkpatrick's Invaders for the better part of twenty years. Though he eventually returned to the ranks of the Lyran regular military (at his father's deathbed behest), the fracturing of the FedCom under Katherine Steiner-Davion prompted Trent—by then the rightful head of the Hasseldorf clan—to resign his commission. That event cascaded into a civil war on Kaumberg in 3062, when the local LeSat family (longtime rivals of the Hasseldorfs) proclaimed Trent's resignation as a breach of faith between his family and its rightful liege lord on Tharkad.

Emerging from the Kaumberg Conflict victorious, but horrorstricken, Hasseldorf renounced his claim to rule Kaumberg but accepted the duty of rebuilding his homeworld's coalition defense force (the Kaumberg Planetary Guard) around the remains of his own family troops. He was still serving in this regard when the Jihad erupted and—soon afterward—the Democracy Now movement led by Kalvin Strauss and Lindon Ashley, became militant. Amid a growing crisis of anarchist terror, Hasseldorf found his KPG called upon to intervene on several nearby Alarion province worlds after Kaumberg (under its Lord of Lords, Erich Sheridan) was named the heart of a new Kaumberg Archonette.

Once something of an idealist and firebrand, more than forty years as a MechWarrior and field commander have worn away Hasseldorf's enthusiasm. Though he remains dedicated to the defense of his homeworld and its surrounding Archonette worlds, and he proclaims his faith in the Lyran leadership (particularly since the rise of Adam Steiner as Archon), the thirst for adventure and ambition that once led him to serve a mercenary command has faded away. Rumors swirl that he is considering retirement from the soldier's life. Despite this, Hasseldorf maintains the fierce loyalty from the troops under his command as well as in Kaumberg's political circles, where many apparently believe he should be the head of the Kaumberg Archonette instead of Baron Sheridan. There is no indication at this point whether Hasseldorf shares this particular view, though he has expressed some concern about Archonette Sheridan's ongoing drive to further militarize the Kaumberg Archonette despite the end of the Democracy Now threat.

THOMAS HOGARTH

Rank/Title: Leutnant-General

Born: 3007 (69 in 3076)

Born on dark and moody Gallery, Thomas was part of a family with tenuous links to the Steiners. These connections and the wealth from extensive mining interests ensured Hogarth entry into the prestigious Nagelring Academy in 3023.

Graduating in the lower third of the class of '27, Hogarth nevertheless secured a position on the staff of Colonel Ivan Petroff; commander of the Twenty-second Skye Rangers, before transferring to the Seventh Donegal Guards in 3038. Commanding one of the Guards' Assault Companies during the invasion of Kervil, Hogarth became disorientated in the tangled streets of Iron City. By sheer accident his hopelessly lost command stumbled upon the Kervil Militia mobile headquarters and destroyed it—hastening the fall of the city.

With his war record and connections, Hogarth was given command of the Furillo Tamarind March Militia in 3045. Playing the war hero to the hilt, Hogarth used his urbane wit and connections to guarantee acceptance in Furillo's high society. He became friends with Isis Steiner (Duchess of Furillo) and was a frequent visitor to her estates at Telesian. Following the deposition of Katherine Steiner-Davion, the LAAF promoted Thomas to act as liaison with Defiance Industries. This move was prompted by Caesar Steiner, who viewed Hogarth's close friendship with his mother with deep suspicion.

Stumbling once again into military success, Hogarth foiled a Blakist attack on the Defiance Industries factories on Furillo in April 3074. Promoted to leutnant-general, he has been assigned to the LAAF forces operating with the coalition against the Word of Blake.

An expert at navigating the labyrinth of the LAAF's bureaucracy, Hogarth has forged close ties with Defiance Industries over the years. Unfortunately this administrative acumen does not translate into tactical or strategic brilliance. In public he overplays the role of the archetypical "social general," a guise intended to throw his opponents off guard.

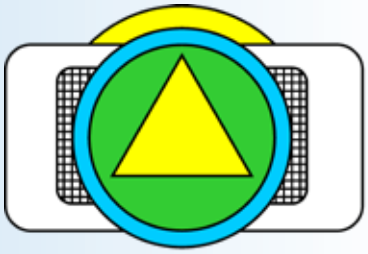
CORPORATIONS OF THE LYRAN ALLIANCE

Defiance Industries

Defiance finds itself in a situation it has never had to deal with: rebuilding. Attacks on Hesperus II have damaged parts of the massive complex of factories there, even shutting down entire lines, but never has it been under enemy control. The liberation of Hesperus resulted in immense damage, and spoiler attacks by the fleeing Blakist forces only exacerbated the situation, levying an economic toll. With Hesperus II under Blakist control the stock crashed and income nearly disappeared. In addition to the damage done to the main plant, the Tharkad facility was also captured and damaged, leaving them with only their smallest two factories, Furillo and Kwangjong-ni. Forced to use Kwangjong-ni as a regular production facility instead of a scale-up plant will likely slow some of the company's planned changes.

Everything, however, is not doom and gloom for Defiance Industries. Both Hesperus and Tharkad are free of enemy military presence, and work has started to repair the damage done. While the Lyran government is strapped for cash, it will invariably find funds to provide the company with low- or no-interest loans. Additional cash will be available when the insurance companies begin payments for inflicted damage. While the insurers may cry of excessive losses, they have been taking premiums from Defiance for centuries with hardly a claim. Defiance can also rely on the fact that this Jihad will not end soon, so once all the lines are running they will have no shortage of demand for their products, including Blakist designs that might be even better than their homegrown versions. The biggest question about Defiance's long-term prospects is a question of ownership. While the Brewers will undoubtedly be in charge, the fluctuation in stock prices might change the makeup of the board and the various alliances that keep Defiance going.

Nashan Diversified



Ask a Lyran soldier what the biggest company in the Lyran Alliance is and he'd probably guess Defiance. He'll be wrong, by a long shot. Nashan is to Defiance what the Lyran Alliance is to the Marian Hegemony. With a multitude of divisions, this conglomerate has their fingers in almost every industry. The recent occupation of Lyran planets by foreign armies has impacted their sales somewhat, as has cutting off certain markets, but Nashan has managed to ride out the troubled times better than most other companies. CEO Margaret Doons has moved resources around and pumped cash into other ventures, and her company's stock price has actually increased.

The hardest hit was Nashan's joint venture with Defiance for the spaceyards in Alarion. With the entire facility destroyed the division has closed, likely never to be revived. Nashan's other joint ventures with Defiance have turned out well, as Furillo managed to avoid any serious attacks, and demand for the defense products there skyrocketed. The other division to suffer was their core computer industry. With headquarters and many facilities on Coventry, much of the plants were closed and some of the output was appropriated by the Blakist invaders. Doons was able to keep the rest of the division operating directly from Donegal.

The most interesting question will be their underwriting division. Despite being based on Tharkad, the division was able to operate independently, but the division may have to declare bankruptcy once war-related claims start pouring in. Lobbyists for the industry have approached the Lyran government for help, but nothing here is certain. Of all the Lyran corporate giants, Nashan demands the most attention, especially due to the heavy Lyran reliance on Nashan computer and transportation divisions. Additionally, with all the volatility in the market, Nashan could announce a new division any day.

Lockheed/CBM

Like any company with a facility on Tharkad, Lockheed saw their bottom line hurt by the Blakist invasion. Fortunately for Lockheed/CBM, two of their other three facilities were untouched by the Blakist scourge, allowing them to continue producing nearly all of the Alliance's aerospace assets. Their *Eisensturm* OmniFighter (or "MoniFighter," as some of the board members lovingly refer to it) has vastly improved Lyran aerospace capabilities. As to be expected, the increased production in combat craft have managed to offset the interruption of military production on Tharkad, but the company felt the most pain in civilian sales, which have always been far larger than military sales. While the loss of factories on Tharkad cut into their income, at least they weren't paying for raw materials and salaries like they were for their civilian production. The troubled atmosphere of the Inner Sphere has come with a dramatic drop in discretionary spending from individuals and cutbacks from companies. While Lockheed/CBM has been able to retool some of their civilian factories to produce military hardware, one can still find a brand new *SpaceStream* shuttle with all the amenities selling for 250,000 Kroner below the MSRP at any sales facility.

CORPORATIONS OF THE LYRAN ALLIANCE

Despite Lockheed's sales setbacks, the receding Blakist front looks to give them plenty of time to recover and rebuild. They must balance a need for cash with their loyalty to the realm. The greatest question isn't *if*, but *how* they will rebound from the war. The *Eisensturm* facility will be repaired and refurbished, but what of the *Lightning* and *Hellcat* lines? While both lines were recently upgraded, both craft are of similar weight and speed, prompting rumors of an OmniFighter that could fill both roles. A strategic alignment at this point could help get StarCorps in on the ground floor, sharing in the returns that the *Eisensturm* gave to Lockheed/CBM.

Coventry Metal Works

No other major corporation in the Alliance has as many questions as Coventry Metal Works. Formerly the number two producer of BattleMechs in the Alliance, they felt sure they would emerge from the shadow of Defiance Industries when the Blakists conquered Hesperus II. However, perhaps their advertising campaign celebrating their new status as "Number One" should have been rethought, as karma brought them to the reality of the Jihad when Blakist forces invaded Coventry. While other companies limped along, CMW saw their headquarters turn into a Blakist staging area, their lines producing 'Mechs for an enemy that occupied their facility, while their cash reserves evaporated since they had no other facilities to provide cash flow. While the Blakists made token payments, the freeze of communications meant that the money couldn't pay Coventry's off-world creditors.

By all means, the company should be bankrupt, but given the extenuating circumstances and the long history it has with the Lyrans, the government will likely come to CMW's rescue in one way or another. While repairing Coventry's facilities is paramount, repairing the corporation's credit and reputation are needed for CMW to produce at their customary levels. The rebuilding efforts on Coventry will focus on the least damaged lines, and after that is started, CMW will try to bring back their more successful lines, while poor sellers such as the *Stiletto* and the *Vulcan* may get a makeover or be replaced. While CMW doesn't rely on civilian sales, they do need to stay in the good graces of the citizens, lest they pressure their politicians to do business with other Lyran companies. StarCorps should look into licensing in-demand 'Mechs that Coventry is unable to build in the near future. A StarCorps-produced *Commando* or *Hauptman* could do more for Coventry's market share in the Alliance than any clever advertising campaign.

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KEY WORLDS OF THE LYRAN ALLIANCE

THARKAD

Noble Ruler: Archon Adam Steiner
Star Type (Recharge Time): G6V (187 hours)
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 7.01 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Marsden)
Surface Gravity: 1.10
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 20° C (Arctic)
Surface Water Coverage: 80 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 6,991,320,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-A-A-C

Tharkad, capital of the Lyran Alliance, is a frosty world. With only a narrow tropical band and most of the rest of the world dusted in snow through the world's long winters, Tharkad has always made life hard on its people. However, soon after the world's discovery in 2310, huge deposits of gemstones and radioactive materials were found. This drove Tharkad's settlement and made it a gateway to the Protectorate of Donegal. When the Draconis Combine threatened the Lyran capital of Arcturus in the Age of War, Archon Alistair Marsden selected centrally-located Tharkad to be Arcturus's successor.

The planet is more than a hive of government bureaucracy, though Tharkad City on the Bremen continent did – until the Jihad - epitomize a House capital city. Huge Tharkan cities are also found on the continents of Franz, Grolsch, and Heidelberg, where Tharkad's industrial muscles reside. Today, those metropolises are busy with the reconstruction of the Blakist-battered world. In the years since liberation, Tharkad has also reclaimed its role as a crossroads of Lyran politics and interstellar commerce trade. Since Tharkad's liberation, domestic tourism to the tropical Tatyana archipelago has resumed (though still well below its pre-Civil War peak) as those with sufficient money seek to temporarily escape the war-damaged and snow-shrouded cities.

Until the Jihad and Federated Alliance Civil War, Archon Alistair Marsden's 2407 selection of Tharkad as the new Lyran capital paid off time and again. Its location (and stout defenses) usually spared Tharkad from direct combat, even in the

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savagery of the early Succession Wars. This allowed Tharkad to be a financial, industrial, and technological heart of the Lyran Alliance, as well as its capital. The Federated Commonwealth Civil War did relatively light damage as most of the fighting occurred outside populated areas, though Tharkad City still bore the scars of war when Archon Peter Steiner-Davion made his fateful announcement of the withdrawal of the Lyran Alliance from the Second Star League. Then, in stages, hell came to Tharkad.

The first Blakist response was with the long-lost Lyran WarShip, the *Invincible*, which was present at the final Star League conference. There is evidence, mostly from interrogations of senior Word of Blake military officers, that the *Invincible* had been intended as a "gift" to the Lyrans in thanks for voting the Word of Blake into full Star League membership, and it is now known that Lyran security was well aware of the *Invincible*'s presence at the conference, much as it tracked the WarShips of other visiting dignitaries. The Word of Blake apparently reacted poorly – basically, threw a tantrum on a grand scale – to the collapse of its dreams when it bombarded Tharkad City with the *Invincible*. The tremors from the bombardment collapsed the poorly-maintained roof of Tharkad City's primary fusion reactor – and radioactive waste processing facility – and caused a tremendous explosion as molten sodium coolant reacted to the accumulated snow and ice on the roof. The explosion and fire took place amongst huge quantities of radioactive waste that were stored as molten fluoride salts for easy circulation through the plant's neutron bombardment facility, turning a merely obnoxious chemical fire into a pall of radioactive death for the city. With Tharkad's liberation, reports are now being released to explain the lapses in security that allowed the *Invincible*'s bombardment and why Tharkad Power & Heat was so lax in building maintenance in a dangerous industrial facility.

The subsequent Word of Blake siege of Tharkad did not improve life for the people of the planet. Today, the war and the nuclear fallout have left whole districts of Tharkad City abandoned, and making the city habitable again takes time. The Triad has been destroyed, and it is unclear if it will be rebuilt or be used as a mourning monument for the victims of the Jihad. During the long years of occupation and constant battle, huge chunks of the populated area on Tharkad were devastated as well. The continent of Bremen has been hit the hardest, but Franz, Grolsch, and Heidelberg have seen their share of fighting and devastation. Not a single population center has been spared carnage. In their last efforts to keep a grip on the world, the Word of Blake resorted to house-to-house combat, digging into the middle of cities and booby-trapping hundreds of buildings. The winters took a horrible toll on the population as well as infrastructure – particularly electrical utilities – were damaged, and transportation networks crippled, leading to starvation on the wealthiest House's capital.

SKYE

Noble Ruler: Duke Robert Kelswa-Steiner
Star Type (Recharge Time): G8V/MoV (191 hours)
Position in System: 4th
Time to Jump Point: 4.48 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Luna)
Surface Gravity: 1.03
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30° C (Warm-Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 4,347,780,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-A-B-B

Skye is the heart and soul of the Province of Skye. It has been the capital world of the Federation of Skye and one of the three founding states of the Lyran Commonwealth, and the people display the same attitude as the inhabitants of Tharkad, New Avalon, or Luthien. They often are proud, even to the point of arrogance. The inhabitants of Skye generally share the opinion that the Lyran Alliance revolves around them, a theory based on some solid facts (such as the enormous industrial and economic clout of the worlds in the Isle of Skye) and no small amount of overconfidence. It is because of this mixture of arrogance, regionalism, and power that Skye has repeatedly attempted to secede from the Alliance.

Settled by people hailing from the British Isles during the 22nd century, within just a couple of generations Skye became one of the most powerful industrial centers in this part of space. In 2299, the Federation of Skye was founded, with almost fifty planets united under the rule of the McQuiston family. Soon diplomatic talks began with the ruling families of the Tamar Pact and the Protectorate of Donegal, at the end of which the Lyran Commonwealth was born.

Skye's single landmass, the continent of New Scotland, is one of the most beautiful landscapes in all the Inner Sphere. Rolling hills, mountains covered in green, marshes on the coast—for centuries the wild parks of Skye have been a tourist attraction for the citizens of the Lyran Commonwealth. Since the very first day someone set foot on this beautiful world, the people of Skye have ensured that large parts of the planet were declared protected parklands, with no industrial or human settlements allowed.

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For centuries—beginning almost right after the founding of the Commonwealth—the people of the Isle of Skye have sought to be free of tje Marsden and subsequent Steiner "oppressors." But while for most of the time the "rebellions" were more words than deed, in the 31st Century the rebellions grew increasingly serious, and the recognition of the Free Rasalhague Republic by the Federated Commonwealth ignited the powder keg. Since then, Skye's secession movement has been very real and very bloody.

The Jihad has proven quite interesting for Skye, at least in the sense of the ancient Chinese proverb. In 3068, the world was raided by a Free Worlds League WarShip allegedly under command of renegades. Troops under Sirian colors landed and waged a brutal battle for two days before retreating. This raid turned out to be only a foretaste of things to come. In 3069, the Word of Blake paid their first visit to the planet, but were stopped in space by a Lyran WarShip.

In early 3073, intelligence reports became more and more persistent that the Word planned a second assault on Skye. Robert Kelswa-Steiner tried to reinforce the planet with troops loyal to him and Skye, but eventually he had to accept help from the outside. Devlin Stone offered him troops, and Kelswa-Steiner swallowed his pride to benefit his beloved homeworld. In March of 3075 roughly three regiments worth of troops, hailing from Clan Wolf, the Wolves-in-Exile and the Com Guards, led by Devlin Stone himself, landed on the planet.

These troops arrived with barely enough time to for basic cooperative exercises when the Word of Blake attacked in June of 3075. The Word landed a total of four regiments worth of troops, both militia and mercenaries. When two allied WarShips were destroyed by Blakist nuclear weapons, it is reported that Kelswa-Steiner came close to deploying nuclear weapons of his own against the Blakist ground units. However, the different allied factions successfully defended the capital of Skye, New Glasgow, in a four-week siege that ended with a rapid retreat by Word of Blake forces.

Skye has been hit hard. Before finally retreating, the Word managed to navigate a WarShip to bombard the Sanglamore Academy complex and many key industrial complexes. Among others, Shipil Company lost their planet-based headquarters and some of their production facilities, while Avanti Motors was all but obliterated by orbital fire. The damage is in trillions of C-Bills, and Skye will take a long time to recover from the assault.

GALATEA

Noble Ruler: Duke David Nowakowski
Star Type (Recharge Time): F8II (179 hours)
Position in System: 6th
Time to Jump Point: 12.01 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Galatea Minor)
Surface Gravity: 0.99
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 55° C (Desert)
Surface Water Coverage: 35 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 552,236,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-C-C-C-C

Galatea, or the "Mercenary Star," as it has been known for centuries, was the starting point for famous outfits such as the Gray Death Legion, the Kell Hounds, and many, many more. The world mostly relied on mercenary business for survival and it prospered for hundreds of years. Sitting just three jumps away from Terra in the midst of the Skye region of the Lyran Alliance, Galatea is located near to many of the important trade routes within the realm. Being a barren world, bathed in constant UV light from a hot burning yellow-white star, this world had not much to offer for settlers. Galatea was first settled by Luddites of various Terran cultures, who built a thriving colony. In the 24th Century, the Terran Hegemony annexed the world and it later became a major military training centre during the Star League era. When the Star League dissolved in the late 28th century, it was the mercenary business that kept the planet alive.

ComStar's Mercenary Review Board (MRB) was established on Galatea and for centuries defined mercenary contracts. The Hiring Hall became the most famous place for "guns-for-hire", for retired soldiers and pretty much every adventurer in the Inner Sphere. Galaport and Galatean City thrived under the constant flow of cash to repair shops and recreational centers. Corruption was common across the planet and the situation couldn't have been better for the people of Galatea—until the Clans came in

HOUSE STEINER

3052 and ComStar launched its Operation Scorpion. The collapse of trust in ComStar was nearly fatal for MRB, an organization that was built on trust and reputation. Outreach and the Wolf's Dragoon's MRBC became the center of the mercenary universe, leaving Galatea to suffer an economic implosion and collapse into near-obscurity. Well-known and successful outfits went to Outreach, while Galatea became a second-line hiring site, a plate for units not desperate enough to try their luck in the Periphery, but not good enough for Outreach. (The irony is that this Outreach elitism would backfire in 3067 when downtrodden mercenary units revolted against the Dragoons.)

All that changed again with the Jihad. With Outreach becoming the first target for the nuclear arsenal of the Word of Blake, the Wolf's Dragoons crippled and the decision of the AMC to relocate their hiring business to Galatea, the Galatea's fortunes turned for the better. Even though the first years of the Jihad were rough for the mercenary business due to the Word of Blake's widespread use of mercenaries in actions that could only be called war crimes, extraordinary efforts by units like the Battle Corps Legion, the Langford Wraiths, and the Chaos Irregulars gradually re-established the reputation of mercenaries. Sheer pragmatism had its role, too, as the sheer quantity of the destroyed House units forced the houses to hire mercenaries once again.

Just as its fortunes were reviving, the Word of Blake dealt Galatea a solid blow. In 3072, the Word of Blake raided Galatea disguised as Northwind Highlanders. The Blakists managed to get past system defenses. Azazel's Watchers, one of the infamous Shadow Divisions, supported by Word mercenaries and WoB Protectorate Militia, conquered the world in a surprise attack. Within a matter of weeks the planetary capital, Galatean City, was under Blakist control and many of the members of the MRBC were arrested. For the next three years, Galatea was a hotbed of resistance to the Word of Blake. Mercenaries went underground and formed effective resistance groups. But whatever was thrown at them, the occupying Eleventh Word of Blake Division, held Galatea until October 3075. Then Devlin Stone's coalition hit the world, led by ComStar's 1st Division, and started a campaign to liberate battered Galatea. Fighting continued for three long months, at the end of which Galatea was freed from Blakist occupation. The price was high, though. Galatean City was destroyed, the Hiring Hall smashed, and millions were dead, wounded, wor ithout shelter. It will take years to come to rebuild what was lost in the bloody war.

THE STEINER FIST: KEY LAAF MILITARY COMMANDS

LYRAN GUARDS

The Lyran Guards are the heart of the Steiner military. The best of the best were hand-selected for this elite group of units, and only the best commanders were allowed to take them to battle. Only those loyal to the state could hope to find a place in their ranks. Unfortunately for the Alliance, the Guards have seen more battles than they could take.

Of the Lyran Guard regiments, the Tenth—one of the most elite in all the Inner Sphere—fared the worst. Trapped on New Avalon, besieged by the Word of Blake, the unit fought alongside the Davion Guards for many months, but after nearly a year of constant battle, only a fractured few remained and the unit had to be broken up.

Spearheading the liberation of Tharkad were the Third Lyran Guards. Guns blazing, they stormed the remainders of the Triad and obliterated any and all Blakist units that got in their way. Their ruthless fighting with no respect for their own lives or those of their enemies was honored by Adam Steiner with a new nickname for the unit—"The Avenging Ghosts."

On Donegal, it was the Sixth Lyran Guard that won the day. Their dedicated use of force broke the lines of the defending Word of Blake units and made sure the offensive took the capital in a swift motion, all but breaking the defenders and saving thousands of lives in the process.

All the other Lyran Guards units have seen a fair share of fighting. Some were obliterated in nuclear fire defending their home against the Word of Blake; others gave their lives when fighting the Jade Falcons and the Marik military at the beginning of the Jihad. All of them made their enemies pay dearly—but it will take a long time to rebuild this once proud and strong arm of the Steiner military.

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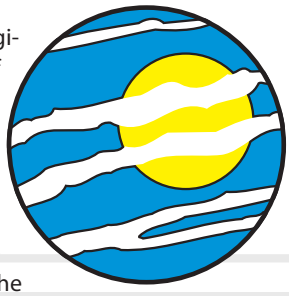
SKYE RANGERS



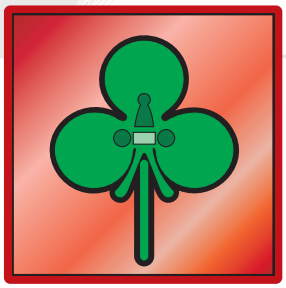
The Skye Rangers were originally the army of the Federation of Skye. And to the present day, they still have deep bonds to the Isle of Skye and often tend to listen more to the Duke of Porrima—Robert Kelswa-Steiner—than to the Archon himself. So it is no surprise that the Rangers were on the spearhead of the unsanctioned offensive against the Free Worlds League at the beginning of the Jihad. Initial victories went foul when the FWLM got around to responding in earnest and the Skye Guards, along with the Fourth, Seventeenth, and Twenty-second Rangers, had to retreat and found themselves in defensive positions.

When the Word of Blake began conquering worlds all over the Lyran Alliance and, in an effort to secure Terra, made a push for worlds in the Isle of Skye, the Rangers were busy trying to protect their homes. Often outclassed and outnumbered, the Rangers fought too many battles that could not be won. Their losses were horrible, and so they were rotated from the front to rebuild.

After they were rebuilt, the Twenty-second Rangers were send to Caledonia to await the order to raid Hesperus II, still under the control of the World of Blake at that time. Unfortunately for them, Precentor Apollyon learned of this build-up and attacked the planet. The Precentor Domini and his Fifty-second Shadow Division made planetfall after a fierce battle in space, and their daring combat drop right on top of the defenders proved fatal for the Rangers. The elite Manei Domini tore apart their opponents, granting no mercy. In a fierce and very short battle, the Rangers were eradicated, with barely a handful of troops surviving the assault. The unit has since been dissolved, with all survivors undergoing psychological treatment.

As of late, there is not a single Skye Rangers regiment with less than fifty percent casualties, and the units are in a phase of reconstruction for now. It might take another six months before they return to the frontlines.

DONEGAL GUARDS



The Donegal Guards, like no other arm of the Steiner military, stand for loyalty to the Archon. So when the FedCom Civil War began, they all sided with Katherine Steiner-Davion—and paid dearly. The Jihad began before they were able to finish rebuilding efforts, and the Donegal Guards found themselves in the middle of war again.

For the Fifth Donegal Guards, the war was over before it even started. Already shattered during their initial landings on New Avalon, the unit was down to ten percent combat capacity when the Word of Blake started their first assaults. In a matter of weeks the Fifth was all but wiped out and ceased to exist as a combat unit.

The Second and Seventh Donegal Guards took part in the attack against the Free Worlds League and found themselves on the defensive after a short line of success. Battered and bruised, they retreated into Lyran territory and tried to hold the avalanche of advancing FWLM units and later to stop the Word of Blake—with not much luck in either case.

The Eighth Donegal Guards still were on Kathil when McCarron's Armored Cavalry paid the world a visit, and they were all but shattered. When Kathil later was assaulted by the Word of Blake, the rebuilt—though still understrength—unit stood fast and paid dearly. Their punishment was short and brutal, with the Word deploying tactical nukes to wipe out the entire command.

After rebuilding efforts, the Seventh Donegal took part in the very successful attack on Coventry to liberate the world from the Word of Blake. The campaign ended in only four days, and the Guards took minor casualties. Since that time, they have guarded the world in anticipation of further attacks by the Word.

The Second and Seventh Guards are the only commands left from the brigade at the moment, but Adam Steiner has announced plans to rebuild all the Donegal Guards regiments once the war is over.

ARCTURAN GUARDS

The Arcturan Guards have a proud history, and they are as old as the Lyran Commonwealth itself. Founded when Arcturus was still was the capital of the Lyran Commonwealth, the Guards fought in almost every major campaign in which the Commonwealth was ever involved.

The Jihad began with mixed success for the different Arcturan Guards commands. Some of them, like the Fifteenth, were busy conquering worlds in the Free World League, while others like the Twenty-fifth found themselves at the receiving ends of advanced Clan weaponry and had to retreat or be shattered. In the chaos of the Jihad, the Guards were busy defending the Alliance. The Eleventh Arcturan Guard was still on Tharkad when the Word came, and most of the unit was destroyed in the ensuing years of combat.

The Twentieth Arcturan was heavily involved in the offensive that finally liberated Tharkad. The campaign was successful, Tharkad was free again, and the Twentieth sent to Atocongo to rest and regenerate. Unfortunately for them, the Word of Blake was out for revenge and sent a Shadow Division after them. When the Fiftieth Shadow retreated, the Twentieth were all but wiped out, with more

HOUSE STEINER

than seventy-five percent losses in equipment and more than half of the men dead. The veteran soldiers of the Arcturan Guards were no match for the cybernetically enhanced Manei Domini.

The new Archon, Adam Steiner, puts much trust in the Arcturan Guards and he relies on them for quick raids to probe the defenses of planets conquered by the Word of Blake. In the recent offensives against worlds of the Word of Blake Protectorate, the Arcturan Guards took part in every attack that involved Steiner units. And it seems almost certain that a unit of the Arcturan Guards will participate in the Liberation of Terra, though it is still unclear when that will come.

CLAN WOLF (IN-EXILE)

With a good defensive position on Arc-Royal, the touman has been able to quickly repair damage they received fighting the Falcons, Wolves, and Blakists. The fighting and constant training has kept their skills honed. The biggest issue with the Wolves-in-Exile is cohesiveness and a sense of purpose. With fourteen clusters worth of troops, the Wolves are of little threat by themselves against the Falcons or Crusader Wolves. However, they are a potent defensive force that neither Clan can ignore as they help secure the Arc-Royal region. Khan Kell has added a training cluster to the touman, officially part of Alpha Galaxy but often spread out in Trinaries. This allows the less-experienced warriors to accompany more seasoned comrades into battle and not be the focal point of the Clan's action but still work as a unit and improve their skills. These younger troops are outfitted with second-line or even Inner Sphere equipment until they graduate into a more established unit.

Alpha Galaxy is still the center of the Clan's fighting force. They have the most experienced warriors and best equipment but are not concerned about expending either to protect the Inner Sphere from Clan or Blakist threats. Khan Kell still assumes an active role in commanding Alpha while handling his role as Khan, though Ranna Kerensky lends a great deal of assistance. Beta Galaxy is just as experienced and capable as Alpha but is deployed more as a reserve force. SaKhan Kerensky personally commands the galaxy, which has been forced to use some Inner Sphere machines to replace the damage it has taken. The Clan's only second-line galaxy, Omega, should not be taken lightly. By far the worst equipped of the Wolves' touman, Omega is still filled with elite warriors that can cut through any force foolish enough to invade their territory. The Wolves' space assets are down to two WarShips, the *Werewolf* and *Full Moon*, due to the Blakist attack on Arc-Royal.

LYRAN MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

The use of mercenaries is as old as warfare itself, and for five thousand years they have been part of military operations on Terra and in space. The Lyran Alliance currently deploys a variety of mercenary units in their lines.

Still unknown are the whereabouts of the Knights of St. Cameron. The unit disappeared almost a year ago and hasn't been spotted since. Before their disappearance, the Knights were joined by the remnants of Archer's Avengers—the Avengers opted to become mercenaries.

When the Jade Falcons joined Stone's coalition, they confirmed the death of Archer Christifori.

The Kell Hounds, with family ties to the Archon, were part of the Jihad right from the beginning. It was an unpleasant ride in that they lost too many battles and too many good commanders. Their major objective is to hold the Clans in place while helping the LAAF to get rid of the remaining Word of Blake units.

The remains of Wolf's Dragoons, once the most powerful mercenaries in the Sphere, work for the Alliance at the moment. They haven't seen a lot of battle lately, mostly being held in reserve as they tend to break in combat. The Dragoons are but a pale shadow of their former self, barely fielding a reinforced battalion of troops.

Snord's Irregulars weren't left unscathed either. Rhonda Snord was killed in the infamous Donner Bombing on Arc-Royal, and the unit has taken major losses on the Jade Falcon front and during later campaigns against the Word of Blake. They are at the moment lent to Devlin Stone and busy liberating Protectorate worlds.

Kirkpatrick's Invaders took a major part in the recent imprisoning of Democracy Now leader Lindon Ashley. They spearheaded the offensive on Virtue that netted this invaluable price for the Alliance. This helped to calm a lot of bad feelings towards them that remained from the civil war.

CLAN GHOST BEAR

CLAN GHOST BEAR

Harlan—

This overview may be a bit less in-depth than you are used to, but I've only had two weeks to pull it together after the disappearance of my predecessor. Luckily, Dieter had some very good people working for him, as I think the attached sections show. There is still, however, no news on our efforts to find him. It's like he just vanished off the face of Alshain. Hopefully we'll know something soon.

Take care.

—Miranda

GHOST BEAR DOMINION OVERVIEW

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Clan Ghost Bear, true to its namesake, is both a fearsome predator and very protective of its own. Nowhere has the latter quality been more effectively demonstrated than in their treatment of the conquered Rasalhagian population of their Dominion. While the integration process is still in its infancy even after two decades and there are still major hurdles to overcome, it is an ongoing process, which is more than can be said for the Wolves or the Jade Falcons.

By late 3067, the Ghost Bears had settled into their new home and were well on the way toward integration with the Rasalhagian and Combine segments of their population. Though there was still resistance in some quarters, the majority of the population saw integration as a good thing. With Elected Prince Ragnar Magnusson and *Varldherre* Tor Miraborg, among others, held up as examples of cooperation with and even adoption into the Clan, the citizenry had begun to have a positive outlook on life under the Bears. With the outbreak of the Jihad, public opinion began to favor annexing the remaining Rasalhague worlds—the seven systems under ComStar protectorship—to provide the needed protection that ComStar could no longer offer. Though it would take them a few more years before acting on it, the Clan could not fail to heed the plight of those with whom they now claimed a kinship, and by mid-3071 the Bears and the remnant of the Free Rasalhague Republic were hammering out details of a merger.

Yet the integration of the FRR worlds into the Dominion has not gone as smoothly as hoped. Despite initial support for the merger, the Bears faced strenuous opposition among some segments of the populace. A cadet uprising at the Frihet Training Facility on Grumium resulted in Rasalhagian troops firing on their own countrymen. Existing resistance movements within the Dominion received a membership boost with the annexation, and there is some evidence that the more radical of these movements may have connections with Word of Blake cells, such as the one that sparked the fighting on Radstadt three years ago.

The most serious opposition to the annexation has come from within the ranks of the KungsArmé. In keeping with the policies they enacted towards former Rasalhague troops within the Dominion, the Ghost Bears offered a system of Trials to determine eligibility for KungsArmé personnel to maintain their warrior status as part of the Clan touman. A significant number of troops simply refused to undergo these Trials and protested the requirement that they prove themselves. Many of these soldiers, all of whom were discharged for their refusal, have turned to the resistance and could cause difficulties for the Bears in the near future. This resistance to integration into the touman culminated in last year's mutiny by the Second Freemen and First Kavalleri. Though the rebellion was brief and was put down by native Rasalhagian troops loyal to the Dominion, it pointed out some significant weaknesses in the process that saKhan Magnusson and the KungsArmé leadership have spent several months rectifying. This has necessarily slowed the Bear advances against the Word of Blake, especially since there is no promise that the same problems won't flare up again at a later date. The potential for further outbreaks of violent resistance within the ranks remains a concern.

WAR AGAINST BLAKE

The process of integrating the final FRR remnants occupied a large part of the Clan's attention for the first few years of the Jihad, but when they finally joined the fight, they did so with all the ferocity of their totem animal. Starting with Luthien and Pesht, the Bears have attacked Word forces mercilessly. We have numerous reports of surrendered Blakists being summarily executed on the battlefield with nary a second thought. Where the Bears have been, all Blakist presence is exterminated. Even ostensible allies like the loyalist Combine forces on Luthien or the Wolf-in-Exile fleet at Odessa have become targets when they got in the way of the Bear assault. This ruthlessness has had a galvanizing effect on Blakist defenders, as they show no hesitation to sacrifice themselves in the face of relentless fury. Cebalrai stands as an example of this attitude, with two clusters lost to neutron bombs that also wiped out the defenders.

Though the Ghost Bear fury appears unabated, they have within the past two years tempered their indiscriminate attacks on those who should be their allies. Devlin Stone deserves the credit for this, though exactly what he did to tame the Bears after meeting with the Khans on Kaus Borealis isn't known. It is likely that Stone is also responsible for the Bears' mission to the Snow Ravens, which resulted in two naval Stars being placed under Khan Kabrinski's command.

With their steady advance towards Terra, the Bears stand poised as a major component of Stone's coalition as the war looks to be moving into its endgame. Though the advance has of late stalled in the wake of the KungsArmé mutiny and the Blakist counterassault on Dyev, our best analysts expect the

CLAN GHOST BEAR

resumption of the offensive within the next few months, with Dieron a likely target.

Of all the reasons why the Ghost Bears entered the war—including the loss of Khan Bjorn Jorgensson to a Blakist suicide bomber on Arc-Royal and the deaths of millions on Radstadt—perhaps the most damning was the near-annihilation of the Tseng Bloodhouse. Though the Bear leadership has kept quiet about the latter tragedy, careful analysis of personnel transfers and replacement since mid-3073 has confirmed that fewer than three dozen warriors of the Tseng line have survived the past four years, and only a handful of those were Bloodnamed. The ultimate source of the pathogen targeting those carrying Tseng genes remains unknown (or, at least, unreported), but popular belief has it that the Blakists are responsible. If this is the case—and the Word certainly has demonstrated the scientific knowledge necessary to create such a narrowly targeted biological weapon and the willingness to use it—it is no surprise the Bears reacted in the way they did. Nearly wiping out an entire Bloodline strikes at the very heart of what it means to be a Clanner and is one of the cardinal sins of their society.

[I should note a persistent rumor that links the first known outbreaks of the pathogen with the three-way battle between the Ghost Bear garrison and invading Star Adder and Hell's Horses forces on Thule in August 3073. While this is intriguing speculation, the use of such a weapon doesn't fit with everything we know of the Clans. Nor does the timing work out; we have what I would consider reliable reports that Star Colonel Samuel of the Bears' Ninth PGC, an unBlooded Tseng and one of the first to succumb to the pathogen, was ill as early as mid-July, a month prior to the battle in question. As a result, I feel safe in recommending this rumor be discredited.—M]

RELATIONS WITH OTHER CLANS

While the Bears are building an integrated nation at home, they are also engaged in building—or, in some cases, rebuilding—relations with their fellow Clans. In particular, Clans Diamond Shark and Hell's Horses have of late enjoyed increased commercial ties to the Dominion. The Sharks, who acquired the world of Trondheim as a trading outpost in mid-3065, have been very active throughout Dominion space over the course of the last dozen years or so. For a brief period in the last years of the 3060s, a kind of "shadow war" existed between the Merchant Castes of the Sharks and the Bears, with the former often undercutting the efforts of the latter by slashing prices on high-demand civilian sector items to gain footholds on several worlds. Though the Shark merchants were able to generate some quick profits through this method, they seemingly abandoned their efforts in mid-3070 for reasons unknown, and the Bears, under the leadership of the late Merchant Factor Werner, were able to regain ground. More recently, Shark forces conducted and won a Trial for a sizable trading enclave on Tukayyid. Although they have yet to initiate any mercantile activities from this enclave, we have no doubt they intend not only to use it as a beachhead moving them deeper into the Inner Sphere, but also to reclaim lost opportunities within the Dominion itself.

The Horses, on the other hand, have been tentatively feeling out the Bears for commercial opportunities in the wake of their own relocation to the Inner Sphere. There is a long history of enmity between these two Clans, and though they have declared their feud resolved, many on both sides still harbor suspicion and hatred. Five years ago, the Horses made the first overtures to the Bears with a trading envoy sent to Alshain. The agreements that came out of this meeting are tenuous but have the potential to form the basis for a strong economic partnership in the decades to come.

Relations with the other Clans residing in the Inner Sphere range from cordial to cautiously neutral. Already mentioned is the role the Bears played in gaining Snow Raven help for Devlin Stone's coalition. Clan leaders still bear a significant grudge against Clan Wolf and Khan Ward in particular for their role in past conflicts, but recent events have taken priority over all other concerns. A curious footnote to the failed Ice Hellion incursion of a few years ago took place on several coreward worlds of the Dominion early last year; ragtag remnants of a shattered Hellions force raided Holmsbu, Constance, and Pinnacle, only to be put down by KungsArmé garrison troops (though one such cluster was lost to the raiders). And that's not the only action to have come from that direction—in August 3073, the world of Thule witnessed what experts believe to be the first overt appearance of Clan Star Adder in the Inner Sphere. Reports of this episode are confusing, but it appears as if the Adder force attacked a Hell's Horses unit engaged in raiding Thule. The resulting three-way battle has generated much speculation and even distress among our Clan Affairs Division.

THE FUTURE

Clan Ghost Bear, by every indication, has dedicated itself to eradicating Word of Blake from the Inner Sphere. They are loyal allies to Devlin Stone and are a major component of his coalition's drive towards Terra. The hardships of war and the need for expediency have meant shortcuts and concessions in the integration of the Free Rasalhague Republic, but once this conflict is over, they will face potentially greater challenges at home. With proper preparation, StarCorps could reap great benefit from dealing with the Dominion in whatever future form it takes.

CLAN GHOST BEAR

FREE RASALHAGUE REPUBLIC OVERVIEW

Unionen med Spöke Björnarna erbjuder ett löfte om ömsesidig respekt inom vårt styre, om att Rasalhague skall få förbli Rasalhague, en jämlik partner i framtiden. [Union with the Ghost Bears offers the promise of mutual respect in our governance, that Rasalhague can still be Rasalhague, an equal partner in our future.]

— Christian Månsdottir in an address to the Riksdag, October 3071

Nearly four decades after achieving a hard-won independence, the Free Rasalhague Republic voluntarily submitted itself to Clan rule. Though anticipated and advocated by many on both sides of the Tukayyid truce line, it nonetheless came as a surprise—especially to ComStar—when the Riksdag extended an invitation to the Ghost Bears and welcomed annexation.

To help ensure a smooth transition, a Unity Council has been set up to function as an advisory board to the Ghost Bear Khans, particularly the saKhan, under whose aegis the integration effort has been placed. This fourteen-member body consists of representatives from all four Estates of the Riksdag, the KungsArmé, and the Bears' Warrior, Merchant, and Laborer castes. The Council is chaired by Christian Månsdottir, who is still officially the Elected Prince Regent of the Republic. In addition to having three representatives (more than any other single faction) on the council, the Warrior Caste maintains veto power over all decisions, though it has yet to be used to any great degree. The current Warrior representatives are Selanna Jorgensson, Maribeth Nuyriev, and Carsten Bekker. Until his election as saKhan, Ragnar Magnusson served on the council and established many of the procedures and rules of its operation, as well as the tenor of its contribution to integration.

In general, the Unity Council deals with issues that concern the integration of Rasalhagian traditions and population into Ghost Bear society. This is not an easy process, but it is a credit to the desire of both sides to see this union work in the long run that there have so far been few major disagreements. The biggest issues to date have concerned the placement of Rasalhagian natives within the Clan caste system; Inner Sphere populations simply are not used to the rigid structure preferred by the Clans, and the lack of social mobility will likely continue to be a problem for decades to come.

The integration process has been immensely helped by the large number of Rasalhagians already living under Ghost Bear rule for nearly a quarter of a century. Conversely, those already under Clan domination have experienced a slight lessening of restrictions as they share in the accommodations being made for those who have willingly submitted to union with the Bears. While the final shape of Rasalhagian-Bear relations remains to be seen—and even a liberal evaluation of the process foresees another three decades before a final form is reached—remarkably they appear to have made a solid and, with few exceptions, smooth start.

FREE RASALHAGUE RESISTANCE MOVEMENTS

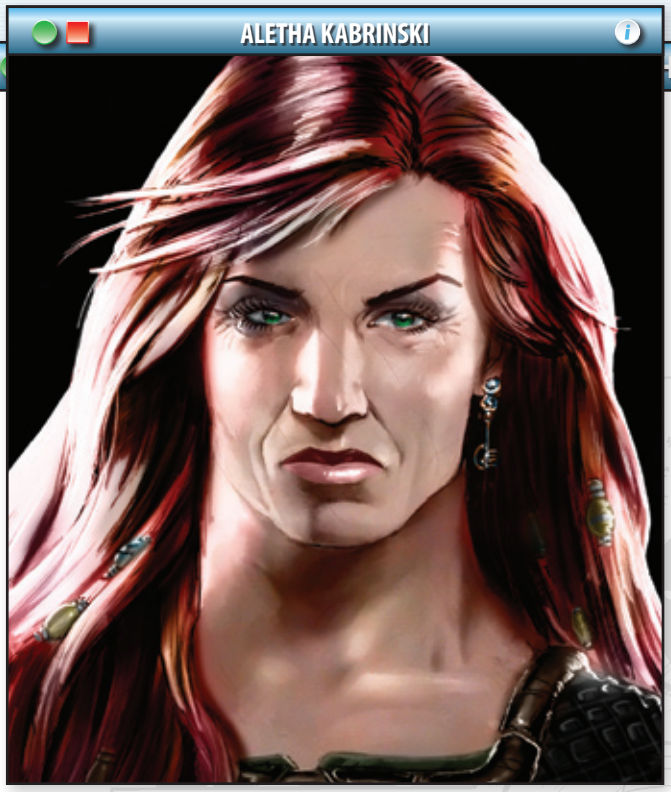
Allt dett' oshabri om sonkei ok byod' är nanka muimi wa. Fri Rasalhague är shitai ok du tetsudade shigyakuatteba! [All this talk of respect and equality is nonsense. Free Rasalhague is dead and you helped kill it!]

—Cilla Amdahl, October 3071

As befits a people with a centuries-long tradition of resistance to outside dominance, some remnants of the Free Rasalhague Republic have seen a resurgence in opposition to the Clan presence since the Ghost Bear annexation. What resistance there was prior to the Jihad had, for the most part, leveled off to a minor nuisance, at least within Dominion borders, though an active movement still maintained a presence on worlds outside of Ghost Bear authority, particularly on Orestes, Tukayyid, and Arc-Royal. The latter planet is home to a large population of Clan War refugees from the conquered FRR worlds, and much of their activity is oriented toward the Exiled Wolves led by Phelan Kell. The Arc-Royal resistance has a particularly virulent hatred for Ragnar Magnusson, whom they tried to "liberate" from the Wolves in 3054, only to have him refuse and turn the majority of the refugee community against them. That he is now a Ghost Bear and actively supports the integration of the Bears with the conquered Rasalhagian population is more fuel to their fire.

The annexation of the FRR remnants and the subsequent reorganization that saw a significant portion of the KungsArmé demobilized has given the resistance a shot in the arm and an unexpected increase in their military capabilities. Though not strong enough to take on the Ghost Bear Touman in head-to-head combat, the resistance nonetheless has managed to make itself a threat worth taking seriously. Of late, the various resistance cells have curtailed their overtly violent activities in favor of a stepped-up propaganda campaign, but the more radical groups still claim responsibility for two or three bombings a month throughout Dominion space.

Of greater concern than any individual group, however, is the emergence of an umbrella organization coordinating activities among the various groups. Details on this organization (which calls itself the Motstånd, "Obstruction") are as of yet scarce, as neither the Clan Watch nor Mimir have been able to devote sufficient resources to the problem. The identity of the organization's leaders is uncertain, but most analysts agree that Albert Gronvold-Minami and Cilla Amdahl can be counted among their number. It is apparently due to the influence of the Motstånd that resistance activities have turned more toward propaganda lately, but experts believe this to be merely the calm before the storm.



KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

ALETHA KABRINSKI

Rank/Title: Khan
Born: 3018 (58 in 3076)

Aletha Kabrinski has always been an atypical Ghost Bear. Aggressive where her comrades were cautious, hot-headed where they were calm, few would have expected her to rise to leadership over the whole Clan. Yet perhaps because of the challenges the Bears faced in the early months of the invasion, she was not only elected to a Khanship but has excelled in that position. Some of that success was, no doubt, due to the balancing effect of the late Bjorn Jorgensson's more stable personality. It is no surprise, then, that since Jorgensson's death and Kabrinski's elevation to the senior Khanship, the Bears have been acting with uncharacteristic abandon.

Despite the still-incomplete integration of the Free Rasalhague populace, Kabrinski has taken the lead in recent Ghost Bear actions, even personally commanding the assault on Luthien. Why exactly the Bears have such an animosity towards the Word of Blake is not known, but Khan Kabrinski is for once typical in the unremitting hatred she is showing towards them. While she leads this attack on Blakist positions, the important work of integrating the native Rasalhagians into Clan life has fallen on the shoulders of the new saKhan, Ragnar Magnusson.

The recent alliance with Devlin Stone has pushed Kabrinski into another area in which she is not entirely comfortable: diplomacy. It was through her efforts that the Snow Ravens contributed to the war, and she maintains strategic command of the two naval Stars they provided.

Much as she and Jorgensson led the Bears into a new era after Tukayyid, Khan Kabrinski is poised to lead her Clan into a new relationship with the Rasalhague worlds. Whether she can keep control of the berserker fury unleashed by the Bears or whether it will consume everything she holds dear will be the question moving forward.

RAGNAR MAGNUSSON

Rank/Title: saKhan
Born: 3034 (42 in 3076)

Even more than the legendary Phelan Kell, Ragnar Magnusson represents the union of Clan and Inner Sphere in a way that emphasizes cooperation and mutual respect. From his first days as a Clan Wolf bondsman through his awarding of a Bloodname and election to saKhan of the Ghost Bears, Ragnar has demonstrated that the integration of the two cultures need not be antagonistic.

Despite Ragnar's status as a Ghost Bear warrior, the people of the Free Rasalhague Republic saw fit to vote him in as Elected Prince in 3061 and came to him at the end of the decade to petition the Bears to intervene in the remaining Rasalhague worlds and save them from Blakist predation. It was through the advocacy of Star Colonel Ragnar that the Bears decided to extend their Dominion and protection to those worlds, a move they undertook in the early 3070s.

Though he had achieved much, Ragnar was hindered by his lack of a Bloodname and, as a freeborn Spheroid adoptee, it seemed unlikely he'd ever receive one. StarCorps intel assets within the Dominion have not yet nailed down exactly when or under what circumstances this changed, but it was likely after the Bears withdrew

from Luthien and Pesht in early 3075. Reports that saKhan Roberto Snuka had died on the latter world were apparently confirmed when Ragnar, now known as Ragnar Magnusson, assumed the position in March of that year. *[NOTE: We have not heard of a new ilKhan being elected and, as far as our Clan experts know, only an ilKhan can create new Bloodnames, as was done with Phelan Kell. This is perhaps an ominous sign that something fundamental may have changed in Clan society if the Bears are taking such liberties for themselves.]*

Within the last few months, saKhan Magnusson has been working with General Margrethe Minuit on restructuring the KungsArmé in the wake of the native rebellion. Once this work is completed, it is expected that he will lead his Rasalhague Galaxy into the fight against Word of Blake.

LAURIE TSENG

Rank/Title: Loremaster and Head of the Watch

Born: 3005 (71 in 3076)

As the oldest active warrior in the Ghost Bear touman, Laurie Tseng in many ways embodies the traditional aspects of her Clan. She passed her Trial of Position with the minimum required single kill and spent years methodically working her way up the ranks until, as a newly minted Galaxy Commander, she distinguished herself on Niles shortly before Operation Revival. Tseng's long experience has given her a good perspective on many aspects of combat that the average ristar warrior often misses. She favors the slow and steady assault to flashy, often risky, maneuvers that can pay off richly but also have the potential for epic failure. This approach served her well during the invasion of the Inner Sphere, when her Beta Galaxy racked up some impressive victories against tough Inner Sphere forces.

Elected Loremaster of the Ghost Bears just before the launch of the invasion, Laurie clashed repeatedly with Khan Karl Bourjon over his conduct of the war, criticizing his lack of strategic foresight and logistics concerns. Her relationship with Khans Jorgensson and Kabrinski has been much better, with her steadfastness complementing the former's staid and deliberate manner and balancing the latter's rash aggressiveness. Since the death of Jorgensson on Arc-Royal four years ago, Tseng and Kabrinski have formed a strong alliance to direct the future of their Clan, with Tseng often seeming to act almost as a third Khan.

At one point, Tseng was expected to succeed Kael Pershaw of the Jade Falcons as Loremaster of the Clans, but recent events have eroded the spirit of cooperation among the various Clans in the Inner Sphere. She still maintains good communication with the other Loremasters and has begun to take an active role in coordinating their actions as part of Stone's Coalition.

[NOTE: In the last few years, our intel sources in the Dominion have reported significant increases in Watch activity. In addition to information gathering and their other responsibilities, there are confirmed reports of Watch agents combing the battlefields in the wake of actions against the Word of Blake, often in the company of members of the Scientist Caste. It is currently unknown why Tseng has ordered these activities, and further investigation should be made a priority.]

LAURIE TSENG

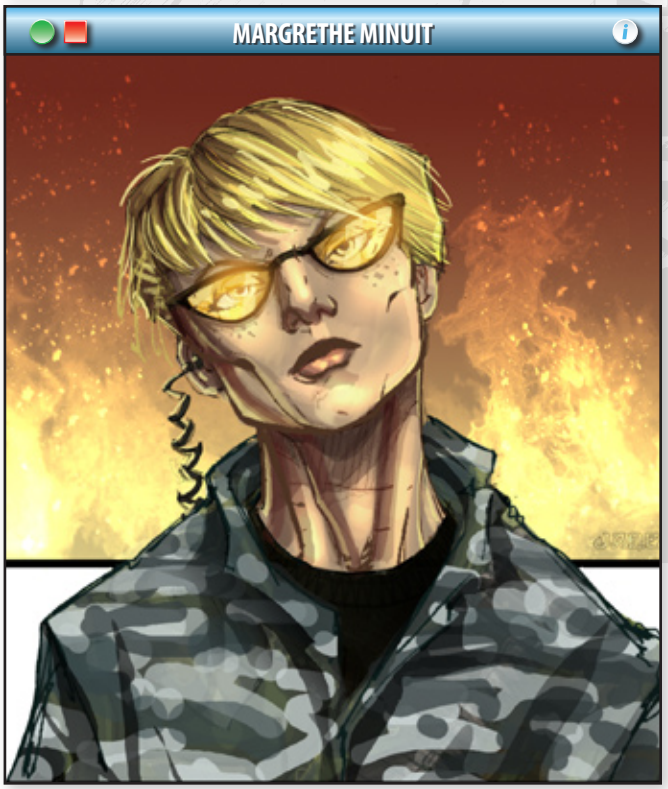
CHRISTIAN MÅNSDOTTIR

Rank/Title: Överbefalhävare of the KungsArmé (unofficial)

Born: 2995 (81 in 3076)

Christian Månsdottir has not had an easy time of it this last decade. After his unexpected election as First Lord of the Star League in 3064, Månsdottir spent his term not actively doing much. His officers in the SLDF publicly accepted this period of inactivity, but behind the scenes many expressed dissatisfaction that they were kept sidelined instead of being deployed where they could do some good during the devastating FedCom Civil War. Whether some of these officers decided to take matters into their hands or someone else was responsible, unconfirmed reports around the time of the final Star League conference claimed that Månsdottir had been subjected to a virulent poisoning for several months. Though he appeared healthy enough at the conference, close comparison of before and after images showed changes that could be attributed to a series of microgravity cosmetic surgeries. Månsdottir has never confirmed nor denied any poisoning, though it is accepted as a fact by most Rasalhague citizens.

Since the fall of the League, Månsdottir has been a vocal proponent of the union with the Ghost Bear Dominion, a position at odds with his earlier statements on the matter. When questioned about this, he admits it might seem odd but he feels union to be the best thing for a continued Rasalhague existence, citing the loss of ComStar's protection and the aggression of Clan Wolf as dangers that could be overcome by inviting in the Bears. At one point he said, "If our worlds must be subsumed by a stronger power, isn't it better it be the one that already incorporates many of our countrymen and honors our culture?" Many of those opposed to union decry Månsdottir's words as traitorous and accuse him of



selling his soul in exchange for advanced Clan medicine to help his recovery from the alleged poisoning.

Though he still holds the position of Överbefälhavare, it is largely ceremonial at this point and it is likely he will step down once tighter integration of the KungsArmé with the Ghost Bear Touman is achieved. The majority of his duties in this capacity were handed off to Generalmajor Minuit during and after Månsdottir's time as First Lord, and she continues to fulfill them under Clan rule.

MARGRETHE MINUIT

Rank/Title: General of the KungsArmé (unofficial)

Born: 3015 (61 in 3076)

If Haakon Magnusson can be called the Father of Rasalhague, then Margrethe Minuit is without a doubt the midwife of the KungsArmé. Though too young to have been part of the original Tyr movement in the 3020s, Margrethe saw action as a young lojtnant during the Ronin War, where she came to the attention of Christian Månsdottir. The young woman's skill and force of personality made such an impression on the General that he became her patron, and her subsequent career followed his own upward path.

The KungsArmé owed much of its efficiency to Minuit's organizational genius and talent for logistics. By the time of the Clan invasion, she was commander of the Skandia Province, and much of the reason why the FRR forces lasted as long as they did against the invaders can be attributed to her efforts.

Realizing that Rasalhague would never be a free and independent realm again, Generalmajor Minuit dedicated herself to working closely with those who would determine her nation's future, first with ComStar and now with Clan Ghost Bear. It was in large part due to her outspoken demands for fair treatment of her people that a compromise was reached that allowed worthy Rasalhagian warriors to join the Clan's touman. When this policy appeared to backfire in a mutiny of native forces, requiring the recall of Ghost Bear troops from the front lines, Minuit's pleas for calm and restraint were able to limit the rebellion enough that the Bears were willing to work to improve the situation rather than merely execute the bulk of the mutineers as traitors.

Margrethe and saKhan Magnusson are currently working together on restructuring the KungsArmé, with the goal of smoothing the transition to a unified Dominion by giving the native Rasalhagians greater representation in the touman. She has expressed a desire to retire once this work is complete, but with the successful Trial of Position by her son Kjell, who now holds the rank of Star Commander in the First Tyr Assault Cluster, her values will continue to enrich Rasalhague for many years to come.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

WINFRID

Rank/Title: Merchant Factor

Born: 3041 (35 in 3076)

Born in a freeborn village on Arcadia to a Merchant father and a Laborer mother, Winfrid apprenticed on a Ghost Bear trading vessel

CLAN GHOST BEAR

until his first solo negotiation at the age of nineteen. By the time of the Bears' migration to the Inner Sphere, he was fast-tracked for high position within his caste, and within a few years, Winfrid was commanding his own trade missions throughout the newly christened Ghost Bear Dominion. He gained notoriety among both his peers and the Warrior Caste with a particularly lopsided deal he struck with some Jade Falcon traders that saw them exchange four dozen PPC capacitors for a shipment of decades-old coolant lines and two tons of powdered energy drink. This transaction brought him to the attention of Merchant Factor Werner, who took the young man under his wing and began to groom him as a potential successor.

By 3072, Winfrid had learned enough at his mentor's side that he was elected as saFactor of the Merchants, and he assumed an oversight role on Ghost Bear economic contacts with the Inner Sphere. In this capacity, he worked closely with many merchants from Rasalhague and other nations and came to an appreciation of their traditions and tactics. His proposals to the Merchant Council were designed to open up trade beyond the borders of the Dominion, using existing Rasalhagian channels as a starting point.

With the death of Factor Werner in the Blakist assault on Radstadt, Winfrid was elected to succeed his mentor. All signs point to him continuing to push for greater contacts and involvement with Spheroid traders, as well as the increasingly active Shark merchant flotillas. His personal life, however, points to a potentially greater change in Ghost Bear society. Winfrid openly cohabitates with a Spheroid woman and recent reports indicate she may have given birth to his child. Even among the lower castes, such relations are generally frowned upon. Whether Winfrid's situation represents a new trend or is merely a personal quirk remains to be seen, but the implications for Clan/Inner Sphere integration are definitely intriguing.

CILLA AMDAHL

Rank/Title: Former Överste-Löjtnant in KungsArmé, now activist
Born: 3036 (40 in 3076)

At a young age, Cilla Amdahl was forced to flee her homeworld of Last Frontier before the advance of Clan Ghost Bear. Her brother Martin, a Fanjunkare in the First Freemen, died under the Bear assault. Losing the older brother she idolized was a blow from which she never recovered, and as soon as she was able, Cilla entered military training so she could begin the process of paying back the Ghost Bears. When the Tyra Miraborg Memorial Academy opened a year later, she was one of the first cadets accepted for enrollment. Entering active service with the Third Drakøns just in time for Operation Bulldog, she distinguished herself enough that she was recommended for officer candidate training and graduated two years later as a löjtnant with the First Tyr.

When the Bears responded to the Blakist crisis by annexing the remaining Free Rasalhague worlds with the acquiescence of the government on Orestes, Cilla was livid. Though she agitated for the Tyr to resist with force, most of her comrades were more or less in favor of the merger, and her pleas fell on deaf ears. The Precentor of the departing Com Guard forces offered her a slot in his command but she turned him down, preferring instead to fight for her country from within.

In the years since, Cilla Amdahl has become one of the most vocal resisters to Ghost Bear rule. She was discharged from the KungsArmé for her refusal to participate in the trials that the Bears instituted and has devoted herself to political agitation, with Christian Månsdottir and the former Command Council the most frequent targets of her vitriol. Though there is as yet no verified connection, she has been linked with several violent protests on former Rasalhague worlds and with the leaders of the KungsArmé mutiny late last year.

Amdahl's current whereabouts are unknown, as she went underground in the wake of the mutiny, though prolific anti-Ghost Bear tracts littering the streets of some cities are evidence of her continuing activities. Many of those in the government working closely with the Bear leadership fear it is only a matter of time before she progresses from advocating resistance to encouraging terrorism.

LARS BORJON

Rank/Title: Former Kapten in KungsArmé, now commander of independent unit
Born: 3047 (29 in 3076)

Lars Borjon has wanted to fight for Rasalhague for as long as he can recall, playing soldier on his homeworld of Grumium with his older siblings until one by one they entered service with the KungsArmé. When it was Lars' turn, he sailed through MechWarrior training, having a knack for piloting light 'Mechs and putting that to good use as a scout. He graduated from TMM as a Kapten just in time for the launch of the Word of Blake's Jihad and spent several tense years with the Second Freemen on Dehgolan anticipating a Blakist assault that never came.

When the Ghost Bears annexed the remaining worlds of the Republic, Borjon found himself an outcast among the Freemen for his willingness to participate in the Trials being held to determine whether individual members of the KungsArmé would join the touman. Unfortunately for him, he also found himself on the losing side of his Trial and cashiered from the service he had dearly wanted to join. In the wake of the mutiny by his old unit, however, he had a flash of insight and petitioned saKhan Magnusson to be allowed to create a unit of fellow Rasalhague warriors who had also failed their Trials. Rather than join the touman, they would leave the Dominion and offer their services to Devlin Stone and the fight against the Blakists. After some debate, the Bears agreed to his proposal as a way to get rid of potentially resentful ex-warriors and avoid more trouble while in the midst of a hard-fought war. In the end, Borjon led two reinforced companies to join up with Stone.

As Kapten of the newly christened Rasalhague Freemen, Lars Borjon has dedicated himself to Stone's cause. Primarily a recon force, his people have thrown themselves into the fight with a fury born of displaced grief over losing their homeland. Borjon himself takes a more measured attitude, saying that as long as he holds Rasalhague in his heart, he will always fight for it.

CORPORATIONS OF THE GHOST BEAR DOMINION

Odin Manufacturing
Corporate HQ: Orestes
Key Facilities: Orestes, Alshain, Tinaca

Known principally for its Puma tanks and *OstScout* 'Mechs, Odin has been a cornerstone of Rasalhagian industry since its founding in 2310. Despite its longstanding position in the Principality's economy, Odin has kept much of its corporate frame within the shelter of seven worlds; the four original complexes in Rasalhague space, one on Crimond (now Lyran space) and two somewhat newer (built in the 29th century) facilities in the Combine. This limited isolationism has kept Odin sheltered from the ravages of the Succession Wars and allowed them to retain an excellent financial position within the Rasalhague province.

While a strong manufacturer for and proponent of the KungsArmé, the company makes the majority of its profits from construction and materials manufacturing. Its prefabrication plants are known for their high-quality housing materials; Odin has been a leader in the home construction business throughout most of the FRR (and now Dominion) for decades. The Dominion's Merchant Caste recognized the company's value almost immediately when the Clan transferred all of its population from the homeworlds to the Dominion back in the '50s. Since then, Odin has enjoyed a favored status within the Clan in planning, designing, and constructing homes, military bases, and other buildings.

Odin's military manufacturing arm accounts for almost ten percent of the company's portfolio. The Clan has kept the Puma lines open; some surmise the Bears have an affinity for Odin simply due to its Star League-era connections. Whatever the case, Odin retains high influence within the Merchant and Labor castes, often being called upon to weigh in on decisions and even policies as the Clan forges ahead with the merging of the two cultures.

The Orestes complex houses the bulk of the company's military manufacturing arm within Odin's Mountain. The Alshain branch is responsible for component manufacturing and forging facilities, while the Tinaca facilities are the primary source of residential prefabrication modules. Rumors have indicated that the Clan is currently researching the Tinaca processing system to possibly redesign and manufacture high-orbital factory facilities using new "memory steel," but nothing tangible has been seen yet.

Bergan Industries
Corporate HQ: Alshain, Ares (Capellan Confederation)
Key Facilities: Alshain, Thule, Rasalhague, New Oslo, Ares (Capellan Confederation)

The largest BattleMech supplier within Rasalhague space, Bergan Industries—often identified by subsidiary names such as "Alshain BattleWorx", "Alshain Weapons" (the Alshain and New Oslo facilities aquired from GKT) or simply "Alshain"—has had its share of troubles during the Bear occupation and absorption. After the initial invasion, the company found itself split between Clan space and Inner Sphere operations for nearly fifteen years. Initially the Board of Directors ran the company from its alternate facilities on Tukayyid and Ares, attempting to run it as two different companies. The problem stemmed from the Clan approach to industry and economy, which severely curtailed standard business operations. As a result, Bergan Industries-Tukayyid suffered a four-year freefall in profitability and production, despite ComStar's intervention with several exclusive military contracts. With resources severely limited due to the Ghost Bear occupation, many of the original chassis frames for LAW, Irian, and other BattleMech manufacturers were lost. The company struggled to meet its original quotas but ended up slashing contracts by up to seventy-five percent in many cases simply because the production capacity was no longer present.

The Bergan Industries-C division underwent a massive transformation alongside the planet's societal change thanks to the Dominion's adoption of the world as its new capital. Before the Clan's full move from the Clan homeworlds, the company nearly collapsed due to the rigid exportation controls the Clan put into place on interstellar corporations; thousands of chassis frames languished in warehouses and storage facilities for years, nearly bankrupting the company. Indeed, Bergan Industries-C would've disappeared except for the Merchant Caste's intervention.

Seeing the vast chassis facilities—birthplace of nearly one hundred different BattleMech designs and variants—sitting idle, and with new modular facilities available from the Bear's Clan holdings, the Alshain facilities saw a rebirth as a fully operational Clan OmniMech and auxiliary complex, cranking out *Gladiator* OmniMechs and Golem Assault Armor; by 3068, Bergan Industries-C was producing nearly twenty-eight percent of the Dominion's BattleMech output.

Through the efforts of Merchant Factor Winfrid, the disparate facilities of Bergan Industries (excluding the headquarters on Ares)

CORPORATIONS OF THE GHOST BEAR DOMINION

were reintegrated after the Dominion annexed the rest of the FRR. With the warrior caste insistent that Rasalhague warriors use Inner Sphere equipment, the facilities on Thule and Rasalhague, along with the new complex being constructed on Tukayyid to replace the one destroyed by the Word, are being reworked to manufacture both Inner Sphere and Clan designs, giving the corporation an added edge among other Spheroid companies. As a result, the Watch has instituted a new security program designed to root out corporate spies from the Combine intent on stealing Dominion technology.

Joint Equipment Systems
Corporate HQ: Alshain
Key Facilities: Alshain, Cartago (Federated Suns), Panpour (Federated Suns)

Originally founded and firmly ensconced on Alshain since the 26th century, JES lost their main production facilities when the Bears captured Alshain during the initial Clan invasion. With that facility went most of the corporation's production capacity; only the timely restructuring of their engine facilities on Panpour to handle full-scale production of its light vehicle lines saved the financial core of the company.

Much of the JES facilities on Alshain were abandoned, as the quality of the vehicles built there was not even close to the standards for Bear PGCs. Then in 3063, the merchant caste requested and received permission from the Clan Council to approach JES and invite the company back to Alshain to resume production in order to bridge the gaps between the Rasalhague people and the Clan. The Bears would exact hefty export fees in exchange for the resources to refurbish and upgrade the large facilities. While JES would be restricted to building and exporting Inner Sphere-quality technology, the corporation would be involved in new research and development projects alongside neighboring giant Bergan Industries.

With the opening of the new facilities and the near tripling of the company's profits in 3076, JES executives relocated their corporate headquarters from Panpour to the older, more storied holdings on Alshain. Indebted to the Clan, the Board has accepted all of the Merchant Caste's mandates without question, including undertaking a 20 billion C-bill expansion of their engine production facility on Cartago. While the new facility will be producing both I.C.E. and fusion engines for light vehicles, very little of it will be for JES production; rumors on the New Syrtis Exchange floor suggest that the Clan is requiring at least half of all output from that facility be imported into Dominion space for Clan usage.

GKT
GORDON, KINGSLEY & THORPE ENTERPRISES

Gorton, Kingsley & Thorpe
Corporate HQ: Rasalhague
Key Facilities: Satalice, Radstadt, Holmsbu

GKT began life first as the most prestigious law firm on Rasalhague. The firm represented most of the planetary elite and arguably has roots in the early Terran Alliance. Regardless, the firm began acquiring other corporations during a major planetary recession shortly after the Combine absorbed the Principality. In less than a century, GKT amassed quite a portfolio, including BattleMech production facilities on Alshain and New Oslo (previously belonging to Alshain Weapons) and Satalice, conventional air support licensing, the Škoda Engineering firm—producer of a large majority of popular Rasalhagian off-road vehicles—textile mills, exporting companies, and a large stake in Raimei Aerospace, among over a hundred other acquisitions across the Inner Sphere. GKT lawyers became well known among Star League legal circles, often compared to Aldeberan land sharks and Galedonian shadow serpents due to their tenacious ruthlessness.

The conglomerate divested itself from most of its military production after the Ronin War (selling its Alshain and New Oslo lines to Bergan Industries), choosing instead to heavily invest into the nascent Republic by licensing out the production to smaller, localized facilities. The action stimulated several planetary economies and won the conglomerate a tremendous public relations coupe. The GKT firm accumulated a wealth of political clout in several systems and had an ear in the Elected Prince's court.

After the Clan settled into FRR space, GKT's political power diminished, but its diversification caught the eyes of the Merchant Caste. The Merchant Factor merged the conglomerate with its Clan methods, helping give the Bears a boost among the Rasalhague people. Currently, GKT's board is made up of eight *abtaka* merchants from the original board membership, giving the Clan a decisive edge in resolving situations with branch corporations outside the Dominion's sphere of control.

CLAN GHOST BEAR

KEY WORLDS OF THE DOMINION

ALSHAIN

Star Type (Recharge Time): F8IV (179 hours)
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 12.01 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Lemeshko)
Surface Gravity: 1.02
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 32°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 85 percent
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 2,879,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-A-A-C

Once a District capital of the Draconis Combine—and previously a major Principality world in the Kingdom of Rasalhague—Alshain has seen exponential growth in industry and population since Clan Ghost Bear captured it during the initial invasion. Of all the worlds in the Dominion, Alshain is the one the Clan holds up to prove that the integration between Inner Sphere and Clan societal ideologies can work.

Two continents dominate the northern hemisphere, deeply covered in metals and other raw materials that have contributed to Alshain being a heavy manufacturing center. Several military and industrial facilities dot the smaller islands across the southern hemisphere in merchant factor enclaves, connected via a vast network of surface and underwater rail lines. After the Clan opened the first underwater facility in 3063, a tidal wave of similar enclaves has sprung up along the shallow depths of the main continental shelves.

The planet's terrain consists of a heavy rock crust, sporadically dotted with thin, sparse forests and deep crevices. Much of the planet's oceans and seas are fresh water, with several reservoirs found underground near large pockets of natural gases and rich ore veins. The turbulent atmosphere creates "flash storms" that are common along the coastal reaches; these displays of lightning from near-cloudless skies are beautiful but exceedingly dangerous. Most buildings are grounded and EMP protected; as a result of these howling storms, there are few power lines, tubes, and transits above ground. The urban networks of Alshain are stark in contrast with other mainline systems, with nearly no trees or poles to mar the skylines. Buildings have become works of art, built to accent the landscape; the Clan has maintained the practice with many laborer architects now using the aesthetic as inspiration to build their own Great Work in the form of buildings to benefit the area.

The architectural aesthetic even stretches into space. Several of the new space docks and orbital facilities have some minimal artistic flare to their base construction. The interweaving of these gigantic steel art forms has had many of the Clan's naval commanders shed a tear upon viewing the planet after a tour away. The carefully orchestrated orbits, facilities, commercial traffic, and military maneuvers have become a kind of art form, known among naval personnel as the "Alshain Star Dance." Currently, ten slips for commercial vessel repair and manufacturing cover the equatorial orbit, while the three massive WarShip dockyards follow a geosynchronous orbit above the northern pole. The elaborate Tseng Facility complex, which produces fighters and small craft in abundance, spreads like an elaborate glass spider web over the southern pole.

Alshain Mechworks is the largest corporation on the planet, with facilities under the Oresund Sea, on the main continent of Ydre, and in high polar orbit. The corporation has seen a tremendous resurgence as a corporate power within the Merchant Factor in the last decade; it has become a dominant voice in Labor, Technician, and Merchant caste issues and a driving factor in the Clans attempts to merge the two societies.

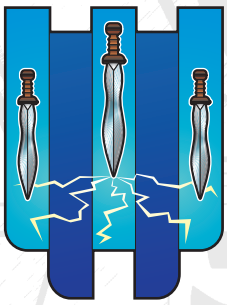
In recent years, the Scientist Caste has expressed concern over the volume of pollution in the atmosphere. Despite the new Clan-built factories, much of the mining and power facilities are ancient (by Clan standards) and are still undergoing a slow technological turnover. Because of the increased demand for material—both military and civilian—the refurbishment projects have fallen behind the demand for raw materials and have spiked pollutant levels in the atmosphere. Little has been done regarding the issue, however, as the Warrior Caste has determined it to be of low priority due to the increased need for Dominion materiel.

Alshain has always been considered a hotbed of rebellious activities. Considering its turbulent past with Rasalhagians, abandoned Combine citizenry, and Clan occupation, it has not done much to cast aside that stigma. Rooting out such deep cells has been frustrating to whichever power has been in charge, and the current climate is no exception. Though public bombings have become rare, propaganda barrages on the system's new Chatterweb links and underground newsnets are a near-daily occurrence. The Clan Watch has done its best to root out the problems but is so overburdened at the moment dealing with other Dominion issues and surveillance that the problem looks to persist for some time to come.

CLAN GHOST BEAR

ORESTES

Star Type (Recharge Time): A7V (168 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 27.98 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Parus Major, Parus Minor)
Surface Gravity: 0.99
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 65 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 6,311,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-C-A-B



One of the prime Rasalhague worlds not conquered by the Clans, Orestes rose from a standard small colony world into that of a major industrial resource center after the Truce of Tukayyid halted the Clan advance on its doorstep. ComStar, pledging to protect the weakened FRR, heavily invested in the planetary infrastructure, building several civilian and military facilities to support the Com Guard armies and providing a gigantic boost to the system's economy.

ComStar's shot in the arm was needed, as Orestes received refugees fleeing the Clan Occupation Zones. A mix of Combine, Rasalhague, and Lyran citizens all migrated to the world, which was perfectly suited to handle the massive influx of citizenry. As a result, several cultural enclaves sprang up, with most non-FRR citizens opting to work for ComStar. These refugees tended to settle better with better wages and standard of living provided from ComStar's generous pay programs, which was backed by Terran banks and other financial conglomerates. The FRR citizenry ended up in the lower classes, eking out a poor existence in overburdened infrastructure. The resentment between the Rasalhagians and the "outsiders" tended to boil over on occasion, fostering a lingering resentment towards ComStar.

Orestes was once described by a Combine surveyor as "a bland world, devoid of interest or resources worth exploiting." Indeed, at first glance, it isn't the poster world for fantastic vacations or rugged adventure. The true worth of the system resides within its inhabitants—both human and others.

Ringing the equatorial line is a vast tropical rain forest, containing trees towering five hundred meters over the landscape. Home to the Orestes viper lizard, these forests create a perpetual twilight at the surface, a perfect setting for the near-blind lizards to hunt in. These four-meter carnivores hunt in packs of thirty or more and have no problem swarming and taking down lightly armed hunters. They breed at a fast rate, which is a perpetual problem for the nearby cities and factory complexes that rely on the rich soil bordering the forest for agricultural purposes. Hunting parties are encouraged by the local governments, as long as the hunters accept the risks involved.

The *Valdherres* of Orestes have tried to maintain a balance between nature and technology as Orestes has grown. This became nearly impossible after the ComStar boom in the mid-50s; a push for more environmentally friendly policies was attempted for a brief time, but the demand for increased standards of living, more revenue, and future growth got the better of the Parliament. Corruption became a common theme across all layers of the planet's governing bodies, to the point where much of the FRR citizenry began questioning whether life under Clan rule would be more beneficial, especially as word got out from the Dominion about the resurgence of several of the conquered systems.

As the Jihad raged and the Word began raiding the system, targeting ComStar facilities and resources, the inability of the FRR government—and the stationed Com Guards—to defend the citizenry turned ugly. Demands for ComStar's removal reached a crescendo as the more pragmatic leaders called for the Dominion and First Prince Ragnar Magnusson to step in and save the Rasalhagian people from the threat. Several of the more radical groups took this as a rally call to attack Lyran and Combine cultural neighborhoods, setting off riots and firestorms that added to the Word's destruction of several key facilities. The economy destabilized, citizen morale plummeted, and then the Dominion arrived.

Since the Clan's quiet annexation, Orestes has begun to recover. While it will take time to rebuild, the Rasalhagian people have embraced the Clan's societal mores with fervor, and already its rebuilding is above the Merchant Caste's projections.

CLAN GHOST BEAR

RASALHAGUE

Star Type (Recharge Time): K4V (195 hours)
Position in System: 6
Time to Jump Point: 4.31 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Sigurd)
Surface Gravity: 1.1
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 25°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 75 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 5,390,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-A-A-C

Once the capital of the FRR, Rasalhague remains a special place to all Rasalhagians near and far. Considered the cultural homeworld for billions upon billions of Rasalhagians past and present due to its close similarities to their ancestral Scandinavian lands on Terra, it remains the emotional heart of its people, even under Clan rule.

Visitors to Rasalhague are captivated by its natural beauty, retained despite constant and consistent growth as a Principality capital under Combine rule. The ancient cultural resonance can be seen in the Scandinavian simplicity and beauty of Reykjavik, the planetary capital. An ultra-modern city, it has maintained a balance between technology, functionality, and cultural sensitivity for centuries—even under the repressive pro-Japanese cultural laws. Several of the planet's other cities mimic the capital's success, but they pale compared to the original.

The similarity to the ancient coastline of Terra's Scandinavian peninsula is striking in the number of fjords that ring the main two continents. Glacier activity was heavy on the planet and several once-highly active fault lines are in evidence. Though these lines have apparently been dormant for nearly a millennium, a string of active volcanoes and a sub-surface magma line gives testament to the planet's underlying volatility.

Nestled in the center of the Fire Mountain Chain lies the major resort city of Akureyri, home to the renowned Fire Pits. This series of underground caverns and pools are fed by the proximity of the magma line near the crust, creating a network of warm springs. Nearly 650 springs have been discovered, with over half being used as part of the city's resort trade. The resort has become a magnet to the warriors of Clan Ghost Bear to the point that the Clan has instituted a cap on the number of visits. This cap, fortunately, does not extend to the citizenry; this procedure may change as the caste system is more firmly entrenched. Originally, Akureryi catered only to the super-elite of Rasalhague society, which has been slowly breaking down as the Clan mores are implemented and enforced.

Equally majestic and important to the local planetary economy are the massive schools of majarfisch that populate the Northern Icelandia Ocean. The fish breed in the millions every year and have been a staple food for the planet's citizens since colonization. Aside from ore processing and military hardware, majarfisch are one of the planet's top exports (by profit) and are well received across former Rasalhague space. Clan Wolf merchants fought and won a series of Trials with the incoming Ghost Bears for the continued rights to export the fish to Clan Wolf worlds at a highly reduced rate for the next two decades. While concerning, the plentiful stock of majarfisch tends to keep critics of the Trial's results at bay.

Clan Wolf captured the system in July of 3050; most of the fighting occurred around Reykjavik, which the citizenry defended with fanaticism that impressed the Wolf warriors. The most grievous wound in the fighting occurred when the ancient Riksdag Complex was reduced to dust and ruin during the street-to-street fighting. Inspired by the citizenry's devotion to their ancient heritage—a cultural trait shared with the Clans—Clan Wolf devoted as much resources as it could in assisting the rebuilding efforts. As a result, the city became a fusion of Clan and Inner Sphere ingenuity and technology, regaining its place as the planetary jewel.

In 3063 and again in 3066, Clan Ghost Bear reached out and punished Clan Wolf for their temerity in manipulating Clan Hell's Horses to attack the Dominion. Part of the Bear's second retaliatory strike was taking Rasalhague from the Wolves; the planet fell quickly to Alpha Galaxy and (then) Star Colonel Ragnar at the head of the newly formed Rasalhague Bears. The symbolism of the action and the restrained victory—both Clan forces agreed to keep the battle for the system to an uninhabited island chain in the Freda Sea—almost immediately inured the civilians to their new Clan overseers.

Knowing the historic and cultural significance of the system, Clan Ghost Bear poured untold resources into building an impressive infrastructure and building good will with the populace through Star Colonel Ragnar. His work as a sort of liaison with the Rasalhague government went a long way to integrating the planet with the rest of the Dominion after several years of being mostly left alone by the Wolves. Using ideas and concepts formed during the transformation of Alshain, the Clan perfected its acclimation approach with the Rasalhagian people and has since made those guidelines standard as new Republic worlds are annexed.

Rasalhague has become a vital transportation and manufacturing center within the Dominion, with several aerospace and vehicle factories having been built over the last decade. Most of the output of these facilities goes to the Rasalhague-pure and mixed Clusters within the Dominion's touman, which has increased the sense of national and Clan pride.

CLAN GHOST BEAR

THE BEAR'S CLAWS: KEY DOMINION MILITARY COMMANDS

CLAN GHOST BEAR

Fielding one of the largest toumans of the Inner Sphere Clans, Clan Ghost Bear has felt the downside of their move to the Inner Sphere, as a lack of readily available hardware to supplement their losses is showing its effect.

As with most Clans, the Clan Ghost Bear Touman's mainstay is its BattleMech forces, though the Clan has been hampered by the lack of a steady supply of new OmniMechs. Many are being replaced by second-line designs, especially with the reluctance to salvage any Blakist BattleMech, which are always destroyed to the last rivet with a fanaticism that borders on that of the Blakists themselves. What is salvaged is generally turned over to the KungsArmé or *solahma* units, as it is deemed too tainted for front-line troops. Fighting with the Word of Blake is taking its toll, with almost two full Galaxies of troops lost to the offensive against the Blakists on over a dozen worlds.

The Ghost Bears have been one of the premier users of massed Battle Armor amongst the Clans, going so far as to create a whole Galaxy of Elementals. In traditional fighting with the Draconis Combine, the Claw Clusters accounted themselves well, but recently against the fanatical cyborgs of the Blakist Manei Domini, the Claws have found themselves equally matched in brutal close quarter combat, resulting in almost half of the Claw clusters being decimated.

The naval assets of the Ghost Bears was heavily crippled during the Trial of Retribution with Clan Nova Cat, but diligent work at the Alshain shipyards has managed to bring it back up to strength again. Three *Leviathan II* battleships form the core of the Ghost Bear Navy. To fully equip the aerospace contingents of the *Leviathans*, many units have been reassigned from frontline and second-line units and reformed into the Valkyrie Clusters, which are pure aerospace and DropShip forces assigned to each *Leviathan II*. The Ghost Bear Navy has so far been the least affected by the Jihad, having not lost a WarShip yet.

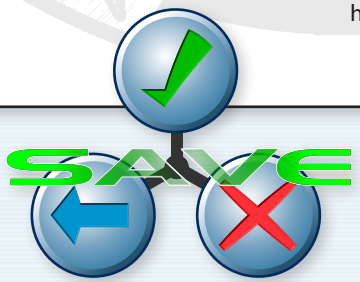
THE KUNGSARMÉ

The KungsArmé has not had an easy time since their creation. First put to the test during the Ronin Wars, they were subsequently brutalized during Operation Revival. Battered and reduced to six under-strength regiments and only saved by the Truce of Tukayyid, the KungsArmé has spent the time since trying to rebuild. The coming of the Jihad again saw parts of the KungsArmé shattered before being rapidly absorbed by the Ghost Bear Dominion.

Since 3072, the BattleMech forces of the KungsArmé have been slowly reforming under the guidance of General Margrethe Minuit and saKhan Ragnar Magnusson. In order for the KungsArmé to be effectively merged with the rest of the Ghost Bear Touman, the units were first split down into Battalions, and then each was re-organized into a Cluster, new units being named after KungsArmé units lost during the Clan invasion. This being accomplished, the MechWarriors of the KungsArmé without a proven combat record of solitaire kills were forced to undergo Clan testing rituals to maintain their MechWarrior status. Resentment over this process boiled over into open mutiny in late 3076, forcing the Ghost Bear Dominion to dispatch its native Rasalhagian units to deal with the uprising. In brutal fighting the First Tyr Assault Cluster tore the Second Freemen Cluster to shreds as the mutineers refused to stand down. Tensions since then have remained high, but the added presence of the First Rasalhague Bears and Gunzburg Eagles has ensured that the former KungsArmé units are kept in line.

The KungsArmé units have traditionally been mainly Lyran, ComStar, and Draconis Combine units, but ever since the annexation of the Free Rasalhague Republic by the Ghost Bear Dominion, second-line Clan 'Mechs have been appearing in larger numbers. In the last year salvage from battles against the Word of Blake have resulted in more Blakists machines appearing, as Clan warriors themselves refuse to use them.

The armor forces of the KungsArmé have so far not been reorganized into Clusters, but they maintain their standard battalion and regimental formations. Likewise, most of the aerospace forces retain their old unit designations, except for the core of elite pilots that has been drafted into one of the Valkyrie Clusters, serving as an honor guard for the *Leviathan II*-class WarShip GBS *Rasalhague*.



CLAN WOLF

CLAN WOLF

Nicholas Kerensky selected the Strana Mechty wolf as one of his totems, forever linking Clan Wolf to a creature known for its cunning and terrible brutality. After the campaign to rescue the Pentagon worlds from civil war, the Great Father also gifted Clan Wolf with his genetic legacy—an act that angered Clan Jade Falcon, which believed it had rightfully earned the Kerensky Bloodname. From that moment on, the rivalry between Wolf and Falcon would forever define the politics of the Clans.

Clan Wolf further distinguished itself in the Trial of Annihilation against the Not-Named Clan. Though joined by Clan Widowmaker, it was the Wolves who were more successful in battle. The Widowmakers' resentment eventually led to a Trial of Absorption a few years later—a Trial in which Nicholas Kerensky was killed by a Widomaker Khan.

Enraged by the Great Father's death, the Wolves fell upon the Widowmakers, ultimately absorbing the other Clan and making themselves most powerful among Kerensky's children. For a hundred years the Wolves were preeminent among the Clans, benefiting greatly from the development of the OmniMech and playing a key role in the invention of Elemental battle armor.

As the Golden Century drew to a close, the Clans began to look to the Inner Sphere. Kerensky's children were divided into factions: Wardens, who believed they must protect the Inner Sphere from some unknown existential threat, and Crusaders, who believed it was their duty to conquer and civilize the Inner Sphere.

The Wolfs were staunch Wardens, but they recognized the value of gathering intelligence. In the year 3000, the Wolf Khan proposed sending a scouting force to the Inner Sphere. The other Clans agreed and dispatched the Clan Wolf unit that would eventually become famous throughout the Inner Sphere as Wolf's Dragoons. Masquerading as a mercenary unit, the Dragoons fought for each of the great houses in turn, gaining insight into each of the Successor States.

In 3048, the Crusaders finally won approval to invade. Though a Warden Clan, the Wolves were also heirs to Kerensky's legacy, and so they were unanimously chosen to take part in the invasion. The Wolves again showed their superiority, racing ahead of the Smoke Jaguars, Jade Falcons and Ghost bears. As a reward for this success, the Clans elected Wolf Khan Ulric Kerensky as ilKhan. The invasion was renewed—until ComStar challenged the Clans to a proxy fight for Terra.

The battle took place on the world of Tukayyid.

In the climactic battle against the Com Guards, the Clans were defeated, forcing them to call a halt to their invasion for fifteen years. This delay was a bitter pill for the Crusader Clans to swallow. It ensured that three generations of Clan warriors would die without having the opportunity to win glory in the Inner Sphere's conquest. Challenged to defend his actions in the Grand Council, Ulric was charged with attempted genocide.

The Trial of Refusal he demanded led to the destruction of Clan Wolf.

A NEW WOLF

The Refusal War pitted Can Wolf against Clan Jade Falcon. The Wolves fought valiantly. Despite the defection of saKhan Phelan Ward—who led a force of Wolf Wardens back to the Inner Sphere—it looked as if the Wolves would win their Refusal. Only the treacherous ambush and murder of Ulric Kerensky saved a Jade Falcon victory. After Ulric's death, the Jade Falcons declared the Wolves absorbed, but they counted their victory too quickly.

Star Captain Vladimir of House Ward had survived the ambush that had claimed Ulric's life. He leveraged his knowledge of the Jade Falcon treachery to create a new clan—the Jade Wolves. He won the Ward Bloodname and was elected to serve as Khan of this new Clan. Though angered at the humiliation of having to call himself a *Jade* Wolf, Khan Vlad Ward bided his time. After the Falcon Khan Elias Crichell was elected ilKhan, Vlad uncovered his weakness and killed him in personal combat. Only then did Vlad act to rectify the insult of the Jade Wolf name. "I hereby create a new Clan," Vlad told the assembled khans. "I consign everyone who was a Jade Wolf to it." Vlad removed his green mantle and tossed it over Crichell's bloody and battered body.

"We are, once again, Clan Wolf."

CLAN WOLF IN THE TIME OF JIHAD

The Jihad has proved to be a time of great opportunity and terrible danger for Khan Vlad Ward's new Clan Wolf. In March 3069, the Wolves began an offensive along their anti-spinward border with their old rivals, Clan Jade Falcon. The offensive lasted through the end of the year, with the Wolves taking Falcon worlds from Cusset and Bessarabia rimward to Jabuka and Rasalgethi. It seems the real intent of the Wolves was not to make war on their old enemies so much as it was to construct a salient stabbing into the Lyran Alliance. Like the Falcons, the Wolves planned to take worlds from an enemy distracted by the predations of Word of Blake and win an invasion route to Terra. By January 3070 they had captured Tomans, Fort Loudon, Kelenfold, and Borghese, and there was no obvious sign their offensive was going to let up.

The key word here is "obvious."

While the Wolves were tearing through the Lyran Alliance, something seemed to be happening back in the Clan homeworlds. Though it isn't entirely clear what that something was, our commercial contacts with Clan Diamond Shark and radio intercepts of Clan *batchalls* hint at some type of attack on Clan Wolf holdings, specifically a Clan Hell's Horses attack on the world of Tiber. We can't confirm this piece of intelligence, but it seems to dovetail with the Horses' determined attack on Clan Wolf's Occupation Zone in late 3070. In November the Horses took Nyserta and Oberon VI from the Wolves—signaling their return to the Inner Sphere.

CLAN WOLF

There was more bad news for the Wolves in 3070. Year's end brought a nuclear attack on Tamar, the capital of their Occupation Zone. The brutal assault was believed to be the work of Word of Blake, and so it would eventually push the Wolves toward the anti-Word coalition that would coalesce around the mysterious Devlin Stone.

As 3071 dawned, the Wolves continued to struggle against the Horses. When we last profiled Clan Hell's Horses, they were a Crusader Clan led by Malavai Fletcher and at least loosely aligned with the Wolves. Now they appear to have a new Khan, James Cobb, who is a Warden—and obviously no friend of Clan Wolf. Throughout most of the year the Horses slashed through Wolf Space, launching two axes of advance that traveled rimward down the Wolves' spinward and anti-spinward borders.

As the Horses advanced, their supply lines lengthened even as the Wolf lines shortened. Concentrated in a smaller and smaller number of systems, Khan Ward was able to deploy his forces with more strategic flexibility and the Wolves' resistance—like that of any cornered animal—grew fierce.

By 3072, the Horses were halted and pushed back coreward of a line that stretched from Planting to Unzmarkt. But not before they took New Oslo, the site of the last operational Wolf BattleMech facility in the Inner Sphere. Presumably the Wolves are re-supplying from the Homeworlds, though if that's the case, the logistics problem has flipped—with the Horses getting the better of it.

As the decade drew past its halfway point, the Wolves found themselves pushed into a sliver of their former Occupation Zone and surrounded by enemies. With the loss of key manufacturing worlds, re-supply is suddenly a major problem for Vlad Ward, as is the difficulty of deciding of how far he will go in supporting Devlin Stone's coalition.

In the question of what the Jihad means to the Wolves, it seems history has come down on the side of danger rather than opportunity.

There is a postscript, a minor point that serves to cloud this analysis. Recently, the Clans have begun to appear skittish and close-mouthed. Clanners may be many things: brutal, violent, and short-tempered, but they typically are not overly secretive. As more time passes, Clan behavior seems to become more and more erratic. As of now we are unable to explain this change. Our best theory suggests this behavior is due to pressures placed on Clan culture by prolonged contact with the Inner Sphere. Clan society is rigid and conservative. It is not surprising that intimate contact with a radically different culture would engender a few quirks.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

VLADIMIR WARD

VLADIMIR WARD

Rank/Title: Khan

Born: 3026 (50 in 3076)

To say that our records of Clan childrearing are incomplete would be generous. While we do not know the precise moment when Vladimir of House Ward was decanted, we do know he was a rough contemporary to Phelan Kell. When Phelan was captured by Clan Wolf, Vlad developed an intense hatred of the young Kell Hound. A Crusader to the core, Vlad believed that Spheroids were weak and dishonorable—an opinion he evidently still holds. The fact that Phelan defeated Vlad for the Ward Bloodname did nothing to endear him to the Wolf warrior.

After the defection of Phelan Ward to the Inner Sphere and Ulric Kerensky's death, all surviving Wolves were absorbed into Clan Jade Falcon. Clan Wolf was dead.

Only Vlad's determination brought it back to life.

Buried alive in the broken remnants of his *Mad Cat* and the pile of rubble that had once been the Wotan Ministry of

CLAN WOLF

Budgets and Taxation, Vlad plotted the rebirth of his Clan. Vlad had witnessed the Falcon treachery that had ended Ulric's life, and he used this knowledge to force a Trial of Refusal that led to the creation of the Jade Wolves. Next Vlad earned the Ward Bloodname that Phelan had denied him. His fellow warriors, awed that Vlad had single-handedly saved their Clan, elected him Khan. After making the Falcon Khan pay for his dishonorable political maneuvering, Vlad created a new Clan—Clan Wolf. Legally this Clan was not the same as original Clan Wolf and therefore not subject to extermination that would have followed the original Wolf Clan's loss of Ulric Kerensky's Trial of Refusal.

Vlad Ward had saved Clan Wolf by replacing it.

Though a fierce Crusader, Vlad has proven he can work with Spheroids—most notably, Archon Princess Katherine Steiner-Davion of the Federated Commonwealth. The two had several secret meetings, and some speculate that Katherine was exploring the possibility of an alliance with Clan Wolf. Whatever the case, it was not to be. It's also interesting to note that when Victor Steiner-Davion finally overthrew his sister at the end of the FedCom Civil War, he gave Vlad Katherine's parole. One has to wonder why Vlad agreed to take Katherine; perhaps he sees value in having access to her political insight during his dealings with the Inner Sphere.

Ruthless, brilliant, and merciless, Khan Vladimir Ward will never stop until he achieves his dream of conquering Terra.

And his Wolf Occupation Zone stabs like a knife into the heart of the Inner Sphere.

IVAN KERENSKY

Rank/Title: saKhan

Born: 3042 (34 in 3076)

Prior to the Jihad, Star Colonel Ivan Kerensky was the commanding officer of Alpha Galaxy's First Wolf Assault Cluster. Ivan is an able battlefield commander, and his gift for strategic planning came to Khan Vlad Ward's attention when he proposed a plan to strike through Falcon space and into the Lyran Alliance.

He argued that such a plan would accomplish three things: It would allow Clan Wolf to blood its weaker galaxies, giving younger warriors much-needed experience, and clear out those older warriors who were on the verge of becoming *solahma*. By striking at the rimward point of the Jade Falcon OZ, the attack would force the Falcons to also strike the Lyrans or risk being cut off from the heart of the Inner Sphere. And finally, it was a necessary step for an eventual Wolf drive on Terra.

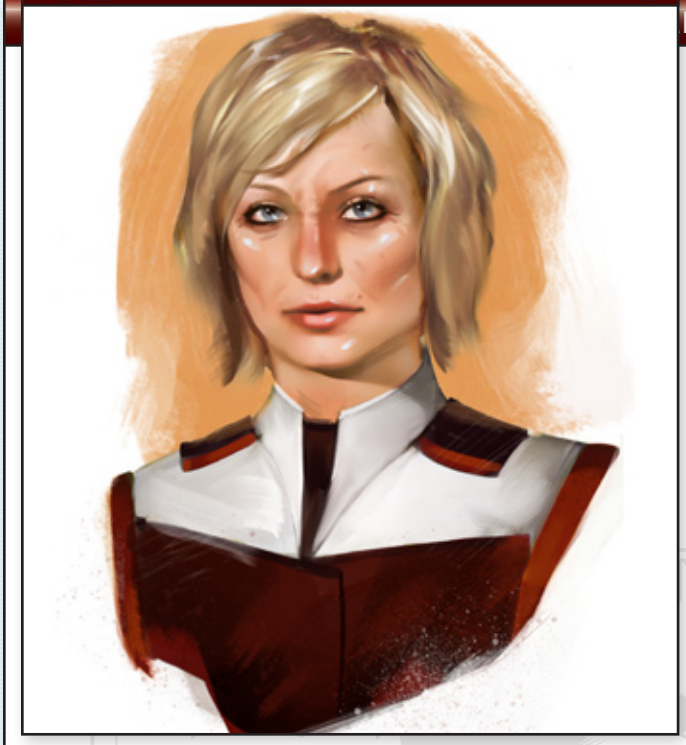
The plan accomplished all three goals. Galaxy Commander Sandra Vickers' Werewolves were tested, the Jade Falcons were forced to initiate their own attacks on the Lyrans, and the Wolves extended their rimward holdings. In addition, Ivan's Cluster took the Lyran worlds of Fort Loudon, Kelenfold, and Borghese.

The valuable service provided by Ivan to his Clan did not escape Khan Vlad Ward's attention. So when Marialle Radick was killed on Tamar, it was no surprise that Ivan Kerensky was elected saKhan.

A flexible strategist, Ivan is not as sanguine about bending Clan rules and traditions. While he shares Vlad Ward's dream of Clan Wolf becoming the ilClan, he looks askance at Vlad's penchant for political maneuvering and profoundly distrusts Katherine Wolf (Ivan feels she will always be a Steiner-Davion—whatever she may call herself).

SaKhan Ivan Kerensky is a brilliant military planner who will follow Vlad Ward all the way to Terra—as long as his Khan doesn't try to take any shortcuts.

KATYA KERENSKY



KATYA KERENSKY

Rank/Title: Star Colonel/Loremaster
Born: 3025 (51 in 3076)

Katya Kerensky was part of the minority of Wolf Wardens who did not follow Khan Phelan Ward back into the Inner Sphere. Katya's appointment to the post of Loremaster came as surprise to many Crusader Wolves, though it was a sound political move. Part of the Loremaster's duties include commanding Clan Wolf's intelligence service, the Wolf Watch. In an era where Word of Blake intrigues are tearing apart humanity, the value of good intelligence cannot be overstated.

There was a more subtle reason for Vlad's action. The post of Loremaster commands great ceremonial power, giving Katya the unrivaled ability to determine if Clan Wolf is acting in accordance with the traditions of the Great Father—but she has almost no power to dictate military policy. By naming the Clan's most powerful remaining Warden Loremaster, Vlad reduced her political effectiveness at the same time he seemed to be according her an honor. And as her duties as Loremaster and leader of the Watch increase, she has less time to devote to Delta Galaxy.

Sources indicate that Katya bitterly opposed Vlad's gathering of the Wardens into the mistreated Omega Galaxy, a point she made clear in a sarcastic message informing him that most of the Galaxy had defected to the Horses via a series of Harvest Trials.

Although Katya has long resented what she considers the arrogance of the Wolf Crusaders, she has come to believe that the Jihad is the event against which the Wardens had been meant to protect the Inner Sphere. That being the case, she has come to believe that Crusaders and Wardens finally have common cause. Both agree that they need to save the Inner Sphere from itself.

N WOLF

DIRK RADICK

DIRK RADICK

Rank/Title: Star Colonel/CO of Delta Galaxy
Born: 3026 (50 in 3076)

Originally the commander of Gamma Galaxy's Seventh Battle Cluster, Dirk Radick was a warrior with unimpeachable Crusader credentials. As Katya Kerensky's attention to the needs of Delta Galaxy faltered, Vlad Ward moved Radick into Delta as her second in command to undercut her Warden philosophy (one wonders if this plan was the brainchild of Katherine Wolf). Vlad had every reason to expect the maneuver to succeed.

Radick is horrified by the course of the Jihad, a feeling only reinforced by the nuclear strike against Tamar. He has come to believe that the Word of Blake is the ultimate expression of evil and must be stopped at all costs. He has even considered the possibility that Devlin Stone might be the man to accomplish this goal. His close service with Katya Kerensky has convinced him that she is right—in the face of such evil, the distinction between Crusader and Warden is no longer relevant. The Inner Sphere has to be saved—on that both Crusaders and Wardens can agree. So, ironically, his appointment to Delta Galaxy has reinforced Katya's control rather than subverted it.

Dirk Radick stands ready to do whatever is needed to destroy Word of Blake.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

KATHERINE WOLF

Rank/Title: Warrior

Born: 3032 (44 in 3076)

Born Katherine Morgan Steiner-Davion on 16 November 3032, Katherine (or Katrina, as she styled herself) was one heartbeat away from ruling the most powerful realm in human space, the Federated Commonwealth. Unfortunately for her, that was one heartbeat too many. Katherine's older brother Victor was Archon Prince, and Katherine had to settle for serving as Regent of the Federated Suns when court was in session on Tharkad. Unwilling to settle for being second, Katherine schemed to take her brother's throne while he was away fighting the Clan Invasion. In the end, her treachery not only cost Victor his throne, but also her mother's life, and Katherine's ambition ultimately tore her realm in two. When she was finally defeated her brother sent her to Vlad Ward as the price of avoiding war with Clan Wolf.

Not much is known of Katherine's life with the Wolves. She has lost all her surnames—Clanners are not born with last names, and only those who win Bloodnames are allowed to call themselves by a second name. Clanners look upon Spheroid last names as a perversion, but sometimes in the Inner Sphere, non-bloodnamed warriors are referred to by the name of their Clan, thus Katherine Wolf.

What we do know is who Katherine is. She is a brilliant political animal addicted to power. It's highly unlikely she would or even could change just because she was a Clan prisoner. In order to rise to power, she would have to adopt the ways of a warrior. We have learned that Katherine has learned to pilot a BattleMech, a skill she never bothered to acquire when she ruled the Federated Commonwealth.

Whatever her final role within Clan Wolf, there is no question that Katherine Wolf will find a way to cause trouble for the Inner Sphere.

CARLOS

Rank/Title: Merchant Factor

Born: 3036 (40 in 3076)

Merchant Factor Carlos is the head of Clan Wolf's merchant caste. As a non-Warrior and a Clanner without a Bloodname it would be easy to dismiss him as someone of little importance. Nothing could be further from the truth. Carlos rose to prominence within Clan Wolf by cutting brilliant deals with Clans Coyote, Steel Viper, Snow Raven and Goliath Scorpion—and sometimes even Spheroid corporations. When pressed on some of his less orthodox trades, Carlos is likely to respond with his favorite saying: "Any Clanner can trade with a Diamond Shark, but how much more skill is required to trade with a Lyran?"

Carlos attributes his success to his broader view of trade. Most Clan exchanges are little more than barter between two parties. But Carlos takes careful note of the needs of his trading partners. He can often generate impressive profits by buying goods from one partner and reselling those goods to another. Although this is not typically how Clans other than the Diamond Sharks trade, Carlos has argued to Khan Ward that his practices make Clan Wolf more efficient—and surely the Great Father would support a practice that promoted efficiency.

It is fortunate for Clan Wolf that they have such an innovative and clever trader at their disposal. Now that the Wolves have been cut off from their 'Mech factories in the Inner Sphere, they will need all of his considerable skill just to survive.

INDIRA MEHTA

Rank/Title: Tech Factor

Born: 3039 (37 in 3076)

This small woman was raised in a Warrior's sibko. She tested out, becoming an aerospace pilot in Beta Galaxy's Second Wolf Assault Cluster—the Swift Strikers. She proved to be an excellent Warrior, even winning the Mehta Bloodname. A promising future stretched out before her.

But when she was only twenty-four, she was hurt during a dogfight with a Clan Ghost Bear fighter. A laser punctured her canopy, not shattering it, but opening it to vacuum while rending her helmet with splinters. If Indira had lost an arm or a leg, it could have been replaced—but the damage done to her by vacuum exposure was neurological. She was plagued with tremors in her hands and legs, and her reflexes slowed. She would never fly again.

Rather than face the ignominy of becoming a *solahma,* she chose to become a Technician. Unable to pilot an aerospace fighter, she could still repair one. If she could not serve Clan Wolf with her throttle, she would serve it with her wrench.

Indira Mehta proved to be a brilliant Technician. She developed new, more efficient techniques for repairing OmniFighters, ensuring damaged aircraft would be returned to a fight as quickly as possible. Then she went further, developing diagnostic software that would allow a tech to quickly test and diagnose battle damage, writing a technical publication for conducting repairs in free fall, and another for fixing a fighter with nonstandard parts and tools.

She won recognition for saving battlefield commanders critical time, and soon her approach was applied to BattleMechs and vehicles as well. In appreciation for her service she was appointed Senior Technician for all of Clan Wolf.

Now that it is so much more difficult to get new war machines or replacement parts, her skills will undoubtedly be in high demand.

Editor's Note: Why isn't there an analysis here for the Wolves' leading Scientist Factor? The story of the Wolves isn't complete without a profile of the man or woman who runs their eugenics program. You're slipping Davidson. Go get me the rest of it.

WHERE DO THE TEETH COME FROM?

For a Clan that held the largest Occupation zone since the invasion, Clan Wolf ironically seems to lack major industrial capacity as the result of a well-meant but ultimately backfiring plan.

In the past they relied on well-established trade connections and a steady stream of Homeworld assets, complemented by a variety of mobile manufacturing sites, giving them a finely tuned support system coherent with Clan philosophies of flexibility, effectiveness, and efficient use of resources. Additionally, it reduced the amount of superior Clan technology in the Inner Sphere, preventing it from possibly falling into Spheroid hands.

History proved Clan Wolf wrong. Suddenly, the Homeworlds stopped delivering and the Inner Sphere tumbled into chaos. For some time, the Merchant Caste tried to string its Clan along with supplier contracts to other Inner Sphere Clans, which became more and more impossible with each year the Jihad raged on. Price tags on war machinery skyrocketed, interstellar trade practically ground to a halt, and Khan Ward's not-very-friendly neighborhood politics shut off most of the remaining sources.

Despite all the signs, it took Clan leadership almost too long to accept the worst case scenario presented by their lower castemen: Clan Wolf's military reserves would be all but depleted by the mid '70s. The first item to run out would be BattleMechs.

Actions followed; Khan Vlad Ward finally released the ban on manufacturing Clan designs in the Inner Sphere and launched a massive industrial program. Work crews swarmed out into the Occupation Zone, retooling existing Inner Sphere factories and taking mothballed installations back online. Despite their efforts, ongoing losses to the Ghost Bears, Horses, and the Blakist scouring of Tamar have further hurt the plans of establishing major factory complexes.

At this time, the true extent to which Khan Ward's economical program was—and is—effective remains unclear. So far, the only major facility identified remains the Weingarten Industriplex, an ad hoc collection of mobile facilities that has been turned to the production of Clan replacement parts and new 'Mechs for the Wolf Clan Touman.

A major reason for confusion among sources has been the manufacturer's designation of "W-7 Facilities." Believed for years to be the official branding for equipment off Weingarten, the mark has been found on *Sun Cobras* as well as the brand-new *Tundra Wolves*. Both BattleMechs are assembled off-world, on Tamar and Thun. There is also mention of "W-7 Facilities" located on Tranquil, in the homeworlds.

It is thus safe to assume that "W-7 Facilities" designates the whole of Clan Wolf BattleMech Industries, with at least three different production sites currently active. The frightening alternative—that there is a single W-7 mobile complex that is able to relocate between three planets while keeping up the current output rate—seems considerably less likely.

What remains to be seen is how or when Clan Wolf products will show up on the open market. Now a part of the Inner Sphere—even if unwillingly—it is highly unlikely that they can hold their position of strength for long without an exchange of goods.

KEY WORLDS OF THE WOLF CLAN OCCUPATION ZONE

TAMAR

System Commander: Khan Vladimir Ward
Star Type (Recharge Time): G6V (187 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 6 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Karachi, Islamabad)
Surface Gravity: 1.2
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 36° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 32 percent
Highest Native Life: Plant
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 2,194,686,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-B-D-C

Discovered and surveyed by the Tamar brothers in 2331, Tamar was to become the heart of the Tamar Pact, a little alliance of colonies abandoned by the Terran Alliance that would eventually become one of the founding members of the Lyran Commonwealth. For over seven hundred years Tamar would be a member of the Lyran state—until 3051, when Khan Natasha Kerensky and the Thirteenth Wolf Guards took the world away from Duke Selvin Kelswa and the Twenty-sixth Lyran Guards. Tamar proved to be located in the center of the worlds conquered by Clan Wolf and so eventually it became the capital of the Wolf Occupation Zone.

Tamar is larger than the average terrestrial world with a high density caused by an even larger nickel-iron core. This density leads to a high surface gravity that puts the world on the edge of human habitability limits. Natives of Tamar tend to be stoutly

CLAN WOLF

built due to the heavy gravity. The world lacks a thick ozone layer, so it doesn't filter radiation as effectively as most colonized worlds. The higher level of solar radiation gives the world's inhabitants a characteristic deep red complexion known as the "Tamar blush."

When it was first settled, the planet was rich in mineral resources, but centuries of mining depleted the planet's natural resources. The few remaining ore deposits require special technology to find and access. As their natural resources began to dwindle, the leaders of Tamar diversified. They opened spaceports and import/export centers, making themselves a trade hub for neighboring systems.

When Clan Wolf looked at Tamar, they cared little for the world's profitable trade links with their neighbors. What they cared about was the extensive infrastructure that made it possible. Aside from its central position, Tamar had the kind of port facilities that would support major military operations without any further upgrades.

Tamar proved to be an effective capital for Clan Wolf in the Inner Sphere. Then in late December 3070, a small task force of Word of Blake pocket WarShips appeared in the skies over Tamar. The Blakist naval presence was big enough to hold off Wolf aerospace assets just long enough for the WarShips to bombard pre-selected targets. In twenty minutes, the planet was dotted with seventeen mushroom clouds.

The Blakists badly hurt Clan Wolf's Alpha Galaxy and destroyed much of the planet's commercial infrastructure, including its spaceports. Although only military installations were targeted, unfortunately those installations were staffed by thousands of Labor and Technician caste civilians—and the Tamar City drop port was located just outside the city. There were tens of thousands of civilian casualties in the Tamarian capital.

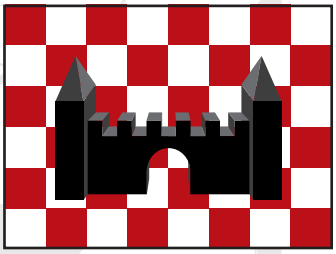
The Blakist attack was calculated to enrage the Wolves and cause them to take their anger out on the Inner Sphere. In this the Word miscalculated, though they achieved the first part of their plan: the Wolves *were* enraged. But they chose to focus their rage on a more appropriate target than random inhabitants of the Inner Sphere.

The Wolves are rebuilding Tamar now with the grim single-mindedness that only a Clan could manage. They've buried the dead, cleared away the radioactive wreckage, and drawn up plans for a newly rebuilt world. The Wolf plans would heavily militarize Tamar, making it a planet of bases, ammo depots, and training grounds.

If our analysis holds, every bit of that additional military power will be needed.

KELENFOLD

System Commander: saKhan Ivan Kerensky
Star Type (Recharge Time): F2V (173 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 18.43 days
Number of Satellites: 0
Surface Gravity: 0.9
Atmosphere Pressure: Low (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 31° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 68 percent
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: B (Clan)
Population (3076): 1,533,422,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-B-B-B



Kelenfold is a small world orbiting a bright, white star. It is largely unexceptional. Somewhat less dense than Terra, it has a lighter gravity and a smaller nickel-iron core. A less pronounced magnetic field (caused by the smaller core) leads to a higher concentration of cosmic radiation and a statistically measurable increase in the cancer rate. A somewhat more eccentric orbit and a greater axial inclination than Terran Standard combine to give this world more extreme seasons than most inhabited worlds. Light gravity also means a lower escape velocity—for molecules as well as spacecraft. Kelenfold's atmospheric is somewhat thinner than Terran Standard. Visitors to the planet are advised to drink lots of water and avoid exertion until their bodies adjust to the lower partial pressure of oxygen.

Kelenfold was initially colonized principally by Hungarian settlers (Kelenföld is a neighborhood in Budapest on the Danube that takes its name from a Ninth Century Hungarian chieftain). Hungarian culture is still dominant on Kelenfold, though, like most Inner Sphere worlds, there is a high degree of ethnic diversity in the population. Kelenfold is noted for its excellent goulash.

In short, the planet has very little to commend it to an invader, save for one thing: location. The world is well situated to serve as a jumping-off point for a Clan Wolf thrust aimed directly at the heart of the Inner Sphere. Or, to be more specific, at Terra.

CLAN WOLF

On 20 January 3070, Alpha Galaxy's First Wolf Assault Cluster landed on Kelenfold. They faced only militia forces, and by 28 January they had captured the world. The operation was a feather in then-Star Colonel Ivan Kerensky's cap. After the First Wolf Assault Cluster was rotated back to Tamar, Beta's Silver Keshik was brought in to hold Kelenfold. After Marialle Radick's death, Ivan Kerensky found himself back on this little world as Beta's new commander, facing the Lyrans across the border and putting together contingency plans that would allow his new galaxy to drive rimward should Khan Ward ever issue the order.

WEINGARTEN

System Commander: Galaxy Commander Warren Stiles
Star Type (Recharge Time): G3V (184 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 8.54 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Weintraube)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 33° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 71 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 2,788,124,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-A-B-A-B

Weingarten, which means "vineyard" in German, is an idyllic world known for its agriculture and fine wines. Its primary, size, surface water percentage, and orbital placement work together to make it very similar to Terra. The planet's slight axial inclination generates mild seasons. The long growing seasons and rich soil make this an ideal world for Terran crops, especially since none of the native animal life have the enzymes necessary to digest Terran proteins.

The planet is self-sufficient in foodstuffs and also produces a number of grape varietals that the world's many vintners turn into prized wines. Weingarten wine is so sought after that it continued to sell all across the Lyran Alliance, even after the Wolves conquered the planet.

Winemaking is a very profitable business. Since the precise blend of bacteria and organisms in the planet's soil are unique, the taste of Weingarten wine cannot be duplicated on any other world. And because wine is a luxury item, margins are astounding.

During its long history Weingarten has passed through many hands: the Tamar Pact, the Lyran Commonwealth, the Draconis Combine, the Free Rasalhague Republic, and finally Clan Wolf. The changes passed lightly over the Weingarteners. Their world had no particular strategic resources or important defense industries. Most conquerors were pleased to plant their flag in Weingarten's fertile soil, administer the profitable wine trade, and otherwise leave the general population alone. Even the Wolves wanted little more than this.

Gamma Galaxy's Seventh Battle Cluster captured the world from the First and Fourth Weingarten Armored Militia Regiments at Ghilly Ridge in November 3051. The world's militia forces had little hope of standing up to frontline Clan forces and surrendered quickly. The Rasalhague-backed government fled the planet shortly after their forces were overwhelmed.

The Wolves were content to rule Weingarten with a light hand—they were Wardens when they conquered the planet. They added several bases and live-fire ranges, but generally the Wolves saw little value in trying to change the indigenous culture. Their merchant caste felt that they could make something out of the wine trade, and they did. For the most part, life on Weingarten went on much as it always had—quiet and pleasant.

And then, in the closing days of 3070, Tamar was subjected to a brutal scouring. Khan Vlad Ward found he was no longer able to govern a great star-spanning state from a capital burned to a cinder by nuclear fire. Let no one say the Clans are not decisive. In one hectic month the Wolf Khan moved his capital to Weingarten, DropShips burning out of a blue sky, Clanners commandeering buildings. And plowing under vineyards.

The quiet little world has suddenly found itself the seat of an interstellar power. The people may not like it, but that's the way it is.

THE PROWLING WOLVES: KEY WOLF MILITARY COMMANDS

A lot has changed since the beginning of the Jihad. Clan Wolf has been badly bloodied by Clan Hell's Horses and the occupation of many of its key industrial worlds has led to a marked drop in material readiness. On the other hand, the Wolves have been blessed with plenty of opportunity to blood their young troops.

The War with the Horses, the scouring of Tamar, the conquest of Jade Falcon and Lyran territory, the loss of Omega Galaxy, and whatever might be happening in the Homeworlds has led to a massive redeployment of Wolf troops.

Clan Wolf is on the move, a fact that must be causing alarm on Tharkad, Sudeten, Csesztreg, Rasalhague and Strana Mechty.

And Terra.

CLAN WOLF

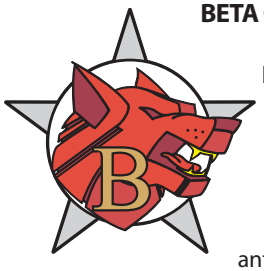
NAVAL ASSETS

The Wolves currently deploy a reinforced Naval Star in the Inner Sphere. Leading the fleet is the *Sovietskii Soyuz*-class flagship *Dire Wolf* serving with Alpha Galaxy, along with the *Cameron*-class *Bloody Fang* with Beta Galaxy, *Congress*-class *Rogue* with Gamma Galaxy, *Black Lion*-class *Stealthy Kill* with Delta Galaxy, and in addition the *Liberator*-class heavy cruisers *Jerome Winson* and *Victoria Ward* guarding Tamar after the Word of Blake scourging. The *Texas*-class battleship *Nicholas Kerensky* was lost liberating Skye, and the *Lola III*-class *Nature's Wrath* and *Vincent Mk 42*-class *Trailblazer* were lost in Clan Hell's Horses recent invasion. The rest of the Clan Wolf naval fleet is believed to be deployed to the Homeworlds or running escort duty between the homeworlds and Inner Sphere.

ALPHA GALAXY (THE WOLF SPIRITS)

Alpha was badly hurt during the scouring of Tamar. Almost the entire Golden Keshik and First Wolf Assault Cluster were wiped out by the nuclear attacks, leaving the Wolf Spirits badly understrength. Since then the Wolves have been working to rebuild their premiere Galaxy—though it has not been easy since their access to Inner Sphere BattleMechs has been interrupted. Since the scouring of Tamar, Alpha Galaxy has been redeployed to Weingarten to protect the new capital. Khan Ward has been rotating Alpha's newer clusters in and out of the frontlines to give them combat experience.

BETA GALAXY (THE SHADOW WOLVES)



Deployed along the Wolves' spinward border from Lothan through Karston, the Shadow Wolves stand ready to oppose Clan Ghost Bear, though with the Bear's preoccupation with Word of Blake, Vlad Ward has begun to redeploy some of Beta's clusters to the anti-spinward Lyran border (the Silver Keshik has been redeployed to Kelenfold). Due to the quiet along the Ghost Bear border, Beta has been relatively unscathed—except for the death of saKhan Marialle Radick during the scouring of Tamar. This one hole has been plugged by the new saKhan Ivan Kerensky, who has taken command of Beta, leaving the Shadow Wolves the most capable unit in the Wolf Touman.

GAMMA GALAXY (THE WOLF HUSSARS)

Gamma Galaxy has been redeployed to Planting, Mozirje, Feltre, and Unzmarkt along the new border with Clan Hell's Horses, undoubtedly the Wolves' most dangerous frontier. Galaxy Commander Edwina Carns' Wolf Hussars are responsible for pushing the Horses back from their point of furthest advance and then holding that line. Gamma has proved itself to be a powerful frontline unit capable of facing down a determined Clan assault. Capability is not the Wolf Hussars' problem—their problem is material readiness. All the fighting has blooded Gamma, but it has also worn down their equipment. If the Wolf Hussars do not get new supplies they may not be able to hold out for much longer.

DELTA GALAXY (THE SNARLING WOLVES)

Delta Galaxy has been deployed along the Ghost Bear border on Ferleiten, Kandis, Memmingen, and Thannhausen. As is the case with Beta, Khan Vlad Ward is considering whether or not to redeploy some of the Snarling Wolves in the face of the Bears' concentration on other things. Unlike Katya Kerensky and Dirk Radick, Vlad Ward is not interested in working with Devlin Stone. Wolves do not submit their will to others—that is the behavior of dogs. But if Vlad has to work with Stone's Coalition, Delta will be a likely candidate.

THETA GALAXY (THE WOLF REAPERS)

The Thirteenth Wolf Regulars were overrun on Steelton by Clan Hell's Horses, but not before decimating the Horses' Kappa Galaxy. What was left of the Cluster—scarcely more than a single supernova—withdrew off planet, finally accepting *Hegira* from the Horses. Now the Thirteenth is stationed on Weingarten, where it is being rebuilt while covering some of Alpha's clusters as they rotate into the frontlines. We have no intelligence on the remainder of the Wolf Reapers. We believe the balance of the Galaxy is likely stationed in the Clan Homeworlds.

CLAN WOLF

IOTA GALAXY (THE PHOENIX WOLVES)

Iota has remained on Svarstaad, Zoetermeer, Laurent, and Maestu, standing against Clan Jade Falcons on the anti-spinward border. The Phoenix Wolves assisted Gamma in pushing the Horses back. Iota Galaxy has fought enough to be regarded as veteran, but their loyalty is still questionable. Like Gamma they have serious problems with material readiness—which has not helped their morale.

KAPPA GALAXY (THE WEREWOLVES)

Kappa Galaxy has been redeployed to Cusset, Biota, La Grave, and Orkney, protecting the rimward half of the Jade Falcon border. Kappa saw action when they cut through Jade Falcon space to take Lyran worlds. Since this attack the Falcon border has been relatively quiet as the Falcons were forced to shadow the Wolf thrust into Lyran space—as well as dealing with their own concerns. The battles did Kappa some good, blooding their young warriors and making Sandra Vickers' Werewolves a stronger and more cohesive unit.

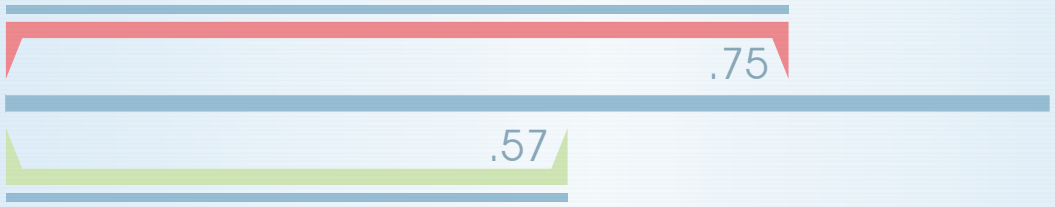
TAU GALAXY (HELLIONS' NIGHTMARE)

Little is known of Tau Galaxy, a Homeworlds garrison Galaxy. Recently the Sixth Wolf Garrison Cluster has been sighted on Wheel, taking over for Gamma's 103rd Striker Cluster. Our intelligence suggests the Sixth is an inexperienced unit. It's not clear if it will be used in a defensive role or if elements of Tau will soon see offensive action.

OMEGA GALAXY (GHOST WOLVES)

Under Khan Ward, Omega Galaxy has become a dumping ground for Wardens. This became clear when the overwhelmingly Warden Eleventh Battle Cluster commanded by Galaxy Commander Stevic Hawker was transferred out of Beta Galaxy. Other Warden warriors were plucked from numerous other units and used to fill in two understrength clusters. Omega was assigned to defend the coreward Wolf border. They were there when the Horses came calling. The Warden Horses conducted Harvest Trials, absorbing Omega Galaxy into their ranks. Only the Second Wolf Guards Grenadiers resisted the Horses. Ironically, Khan Ward's Crusader inflexibility opened the door for Clan Hell's Horses—maybe the most dangerous threat the Wolves face.

NATAR SHIELD SYSTEM SCANNER (VERSION 2.7.14)



PROTOCOL THETA INITIATED — SECURITY LEVEL: TOPAZ

CLAN JADE FALCON

CLAN JADE FALCON

CLAN JADE FALCON OVERVIEW

Aloof and somewhat isolationist, the Falcons' focus on their own goals left them unprepared for the Jihad. The first few years of the Jihad offered opportunities for gain, but then came repeated setbacks. Arc-Royal proved to be a thorn in their side, the Steel Vipers renewed the long-term enmity between the two Clans, and the Jihad finally hit home. The Clan could not keep up with its gains while enemies beset them from all directions. Lyran forces counterattacked, Ice Hellions and Hells Horses moved into the Inner Sphere while the Blakists struck from within. Faced with this strife, the Falcons have made alliances that have allowed this proud Clan to solidify its position. Seeming to be poised to move forward, the Falcons were dealt a crushing blow with the assassination of their Khan, leading to shuffling of the leadership and power struggles that consumed the Clan. The Falcons must once again find their identity while fighting to survive in an Inner Sphere completely engulfed in conflict.

PREENING AND POSTURING

In either a resource-saving or desperate move, Marthe chartered the recreation of Alpha Galaxy. Rather than pull good warriors from existing units that were seeking to rebuild, Alpha was a last-chance unit, filled with older warriors who were not ready for a *solahma* assignment, malcontents, criminals, and other undesirables. Alpha is a wake-up call for many warriors assigned to it; this is their last chance before a dishonorable death. To keep it from becoming too much of a political tool, Marthe forbid more than one warrior with a Bloodname to be assigned to the galaxy. Placed under the control of Loremaster Kael Pershaw, this allowed him to accomplish goals of the Watch that other units would balk at.

The civil war and opening salvos of the Jihad allowed the Falcons to cut deep into the Lyran Alliance. Falcon raids against the Wolves were seen by Alliance intelligence as a campaign, and their high command had left the Falcon border under-defended. After quickly taking nearly a half-dozen worlds, the Falcons looked prepared to gain more when the Wolves cut into their gains, forcing them deeper into Lyran territory. Forces were shifted forward to cover the gains, but Merchants struggled to keep up with the advance.

GUTTING THE ENEMY

Just as the Lyrans had done, the Falcons left their rear border open to a surprise assault by the Ice Hellions and Hell's Horses. In April of 3071, the Hellions cut deep into the Falcon Occupation Zone while the Horses focused more against the Wolves. For the next three months, the Hellions continued their drive into Falcon territory until a combination of Hellion over-extension and shifted Falcon forces stalled their drive. With the Hellions on the defensive, the Falcons slowly pushed back against the invaders, but it wasn't until a truce was reached with the Hell's Horses that the Falcons were able to focus completely on the Hellions.

Unable to engage an extended two-front war, a Falcon delegation under Tara Helmer was dispatched to allied forces and assisted in the liberation of Tharkad. The Falcon counter-offensive continued to push the Hellions back, and their former allies, the Horses, turned against them. This led to a combined Falcon-Horse assault on Vantaa, the last refuge for Hellion forces in the Inner Sphere. Two clusters of Falcons, led by Diane Anu, crushed the Hellions, hitting them in a Blitzkrieg-style advance. Pockets of resistance were left behind as the Hellions were crushed. A bloody naval battle accompanied the battle on the ground, leaving a mere four Hellion WarShips to surrender. Two clusters of Hellions were taken as *isorla*, split between the two Clans. Vantaa was also divided between them but was abandoned within the year as damage to the water purification plants and other vital facilities made the planet uninhabitable.

INTERNAL PAIN

As the Falcons licked their wounds at the end of the Ice Hellion war, Com Guards shifted to the Alliance border, providing a buffer for both sides. It would turn out to be a blessing for the Falcons, as a plague struck many of their warriors. Some blamed the plague on inbreeding in some lines combined with alien ecologies, others on Blakist sabotage. The latter seemed more likely as Blakists hit Gamma and Iota Galaxies' headquarters, resulting in the death of many officers, including Galaxy Commander Amelia Icaza of Gamma Galaxy. Additional attacks coincided with a severe recession in early 3073.

Nothing compared with the psychological assault that accompanied the Fritz Donner incident. The explosion that shocked the Inner Sphere left the Falcons bereft of rising star Diana Pryde. With chaos rampant, few expected Marthe Pryde to dispatch parts of Gamma Galaxy to raid a research facility in Wolf territory. Taking primarily personnel, the Falcons only escaped without reprisal due to the Wolves' similarly poor level of combat readiness. The Falcons finally managed to get a hold on the Blakist attacks as they dispatched Alpha Galaxy to clear out the Blakists' Periphery staging base.

Perhaps to show that the Clan still had teeth, Khan Pryde agreed to assist Stone's forces in liberating Coventry, dispatching two clusters under Star Colonel Quinn Kerensky. After a tremendous

CLAN JADE FALCON

space battle, the ground forces quickly mopped up the remaining Blakist forces. Decisions over who got the spoils almost turned into another battle, as the Falcons and Lyrans disagreed who bore the brunt of the Word's defense. Devlin Stone himself was forced to intercede before the disagreement erupted into open fighting.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS

The Falcons turned to rebuilding, and Marthe Pryde reorganized the Scientist and Merchant castes. Her choices of conquered Inner Sphere citizens over native Clan caste members caused a stir. There also appeared to be a shift away from further weapon development and a focus on rebuilding their shattered touman. Under her guidance, the Falcons seemed poised to return to glory—tentative cease-fires with their neighbors, planetary gains, and a strong industrial base worked in their favor, at least until disaster struck.

Khan Marthe Pryde, the forceful personality behind the Falcons, was inspecting new construction on Sudeten when a she was killed in a tragic accident. While Samantha Clees quickly stepped into the Khan position, she does not have the iron talon grip on her Clan that Marthe had. With a vacuum left by Blakist attacks on Falcon officers, fighting for positions increased until Clees put her foot down, requiring any Trial of Position for Star Colonel or Galaxy Commander to meet her approval before occurring. Her former executive officer, Uvin Buhallin, was elevated to saKhan under dispute from other commanders.

All the damage to their touman, their support castes, and their leadership has once again made the Falcons insular. External trade is minimal, relations with other nations are distant, and contribution of armed forces to Stone's alliance has ceased. Small numbers of warriors, mostly freeborn warriors from Alpha Galaxy, are being provided as liaisons and to shore up holes. As the Falcons rebuild, their leadership must make hard decisions not only on choice of arms but also strategy and tactics, as recent events have shown that perhaps their traditional ways were not the best.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

SAMANTHA CLEES

Rank/Title: Khan

Born: 3019 (57 in 3076)

As a young warrior, Samantha felt that her gender played a role in holding her back, but her loss to another woman in her first Trial of Bloodright brought a sudden end to this misconception, allowing her to excel. She quickly rose to Galaxy Commander of Delta Galaxy before turning thirty during Elias Crichell's reorganization of 3049. After Marthe Pryde's quick ascension to Khan, Samantha followed her rise, though she continued commanding Delta Galaxy even after her promotion to saKhan. Despite nearing her sixth decade, she stays in good shape and is still dangerous at the command of her *Black Hawk*. Opponents are often put at false ease by the gentle look in her eyes, which belies a fiery temper. She is like many warriors when it comes to appearance, preferring simple, practical clothing, a short haircut, and no cosmetic decoration.

Often seen as a loyal follower to Marthe, Clees' influence can be seen on many of the changes that Marthe had put forward. While Clees is a staunch Crusader, she is by no means a traditionalist, seeking to take her Clan further than it has been before. Less of a micromanager than her predecessor, she will give her subordinates more room to operate, but expectations must be met or she will step in and find someone who can get the job done. Under her stewardship the Falcons should be able to rebuild and reclaim their rightful position, though many wonder if she will be too old to be the Khan that can lead her Clan back into battle.

CLAN JADE FALCON

UVIN BUHALLIN

BRIAN PRYDE

UVIN BUHALLIN

Rank/Title: saKhan

Born: 3026 (50 in 3076)

Uvin Buhallin has been Samantha Clees' executive officer for almost two decades, often helping her command Delta Galaxy while she was busy with her duties as saKhan. When Buhallin was young, commanders were quick to trust his skills as a MechWarrior, but it took longer for them to respect his leadership skills. After overcoming that obstacle, he once again had to prove himself. Given command of the First Falcon Striker Cluster following Star Colonel Rard Hoyt's promotion to lead Epsilon Galaxy, Uvin had to show that he could tactically command this historic Cluster. While some doubted him, he has shown for nearly a decade that he could do the job. He is known for his line, "Never blink when a *Hellbringer* pilot is around." His exploits in his younger days often ended with him running out of ammunition before armor against outmatched Inner Sphere opponents.

Following his appointment to saKhan, Buhallin will once again need to prove himself. Some believe he is just a yes-man for Khan Clees, while others wonder if she is grooming him as a successor. Buhallin is not one to respond to critics directly, preferring to let his actions speak for him. This has already cost him in the political arena—giving a State of the Clan speech on Blackjack, his assurance that the future would be bright was met with skepticism from cadets at the rebuilt Jade Falcon School of Conflict. When pressed for details on the Clan's plan to reestablish defenses, Buhallin was unable to respond and quickly exited amidst a chorus of boos. While the cadets felt the results of their actions the next day out on the field, the fallout of Buhallin's speech only increased doubt of him amongst Falcon leadership.

BRIAN PRYDE

Rank/Title: Loremaster / Head of the Watch

Born: 3037 (39 in 3076)

Hardly a ristar, Brian has had to fight for every opportunity and promotion in his career. First testing out in a *Man-o'-War*, he was a solid but unspectacular warrior. The first time he attracted notice was in his Trial of Bloodright, where he entered into the Grand Melee to earn a spot. In the melee, he maneuvered between pockets of fighting, earning just one kill to move on. The remainder of his Trial continued along the same vein, culminating in his victory after detonating a natural gas line on Goat Path, consuming his opponent's 'Mech. While he managed to win his Bloodname, he won little respect and was bounced around from inglorious assignment to inglorious assignment. However, he did catch the eye of one man—Kael Pershaw.

While other leaders were looking for excellent pilots and brilliant tacticians, Pershaw wanted someone who was willing to do whatever it took to help the Clan survive, even if it meant sacrific-

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ing individual honor. The Loremaster took Pryde under his wing, ostensibly to serve the post of Loremaster but in reality seeing Pryde as his successor. The Khan apparently agreed, as Pryde easily won the Loremaster position after Pershaw's death somewhere in the Periphery.

Since Pryde replaced Pershaw, little has been seen of him outside of his Loremaster duties—just the way both he and the Clan want it. Working behind the scenes, he is no doubt keeping the Clan aware of enemy activities and was likely vital in the Clan's crackdown among the civilian castes that has virtually eliminated Blakist attacks and sabotage. While he has honed his espionage skills, Pryde has not stayed static on the battlefield. Now leading what remains of Alpha Galaxy from his *Jupiter*, he has become a superb pilot. Off duty, Pryde has made himself unwelcome at the remnants of Kooken's Pleasure Pit's casinos; his luck with dice is nearly superhuman.

DIANE ANU

Rank/Title: Galaxy Commander, Epsilon Galaxy

Born: 3025 (51 in 3076)

While many warriors claim to know every aspect of their trade, few delve as deep as Diane Anu. Not content with practicing her warrior skills and studying tactics and strategy, she spent time learning everything from basic maintenance to how to rebuild a shattered engine. Combining the breadth of her skills with her innate talents as a strategist and pilot, she quickly worked her way to Star Colonel but managed to do so making far fewer enemies and rivals than a typical Clan warrior. While her technical feats gave her Fifth Battle Cluster an advantage, pushing the limits of machines and tweaking weapon loads only goes far, forcing Anu to utilize other skills to keep her edge.

Promoted to lead Epsilon, she was instrumental in pushing back the Ice Hellion invasion. Despite being conservative from her Falcon legacy, she believed in hitting the enemy where it hurt them and not letting up. Despite the Hellions' penchant for maneuver warfare (or perhaps because of it), her forces would hit a unit, accomplish a goal, and move on. Often the Hellions would fall back, consolidate and regroup only to find that the Falcons were no longer there. While they were occasionally able to attack Falcon flanks or supply trains, far too often the main body of the Hellions' force was falling back, leaving these other forces isolated and ineffectual. After the victory on Vantaa, she requested the remainder of her Galaxy and naval support to fight the Falcons' way back to the Homeworlds. Khan Pryde dismissed the idea, but Anu has been quietly pushing the idea, insisting that the Hellions must be crushed once and for all. Anu's star has risen even further under Khan Clees, but not enough to permit a return to the Homeworlds. In a renewed assault toward Terra, Anu would certainly be at the forefront.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

QUINN KERENSKY

Rank/Title: Galaxy Commander, Gamma Galaxy

Born: 3048 (28 in 3076)

A sickly child in a Wolf sibko full of promise, Quinn did just enough to get by until her Trial of Position. Moving her *Linebacker* in close, she shattered the knee of her opponent's *Vulture* with a kick, then ripped the arm off of it and proceeded to beat her next opponent's *Mad Cat* into submission. Though admonished for her lack of Clan-like behavior, her use of physical attacks continued (though some were mere taps of an opponent to point out her superiority). Though she was sponsored in her Trial of Bloodright, her actions made her road a rough one, and she lost her left eye in the next-to-last match, gouged out by an Elemental in an unaugmented melee. Though she managed to prevail, she had upset too many traditionalists and was forced to watch as an underbid force put in a half-hearted defense in a Falcon Trial of Possession for her.

At first, her Falcon commanders used her rage against the Wolves to raid their rival and keep them off balance. Khan Pryde was able to channel her against other opponents, allowing her to crush the Blakist resistance on Coventry. An unmatched pilot and excellent gunner, Quinn has shown herself to be an able leader as well. Her troops have followed her lead in using all parts of

CLAN JADE FALCON

their 'Mechs as weapons, though upsetting the older traditionalists with their "vulgar Spheroid melee attacks." In stereotypical Kerensky fashion, Quinn has risen by silencing her critics with success. Her recent promotion by Khan Clees to replace Amelia Icaza will be a challenge for her, pulling her farther from the comfort of the cockpit and into the political arena. Kerensky still desires to obtain her genetic legacy for the Falcons, but she has realized that she must win in politics to get a chance on the field of combat.

DANIEL

Rank/Title: Merchant Caste Factor

Born: 3043 (33 in 3076)

Born to a middle class family as Daniel O'Malley, Daniel has lived most of his life under Falcon rule. When the Falcons conquered planets, they would hand over the control of businesses to the merchant caste. While this freed up the warriors to focus on their drive to Terra, the merchants were soon overwhelmed by the size of the economy that was thrust into their hands. Pushing through the growing pains, Daniel managed to work his way up the management at Olivetti Weaponry. Not only a gifted salesman, he was a natural at networking and used his skills to find where all the skeletons were hidden at Olivetti, becoming CEO just after turning thirty, thanks to the Falcons' tendency to terminate failing executives in every sense of the word.

As the Falcon economy stalled, Daniel came to the attention of the Clan's leadership by managing to keep Olivetti exceeding expectations. With the current merchant leadership unable to stimulate the economy, Marthe summoned Daniel for a meeting with her top aides, where she asked him to outline a proposal for economic recovery and what would be required to rebuild the shattered touman. During the meeting, Daniel asked for less micromanaging in the economy and a greater focus on rebuilding infrastructure. After winning grudging agreement, he then explained that he wanted to use the mobile weapon factories and the resources removed from Ironhold to expand and upgrade Olivetti. He planned to let Pandora's Red Devil Industries continue to make Inner Sphere-quality weaponry. Most of the assemblage scoffed at the idea, but he won over the Khan's support when he pointed out that the Clan could build far more Inner Sphere weapons with less resources. Given five years to show drastic improvements, the rest of the Merchant leadership was reassigned, and Daniel has restructured the caste using more homegrown talent.

KRYS

Rank/Title: Scientist Caste Factor

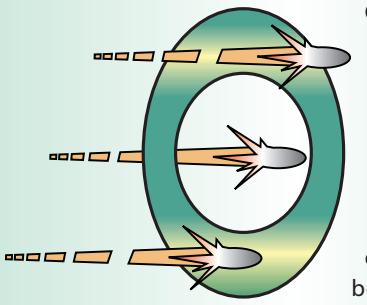
Born: 3030 (46 in 3076)

Originally a top Scientist within Clan Wolf, Krys was noticed not for her brilliant mind but for her excellent project management skills. Her ability to understand, communicate, and motivate proved invaluable when she was put in charge of the *Lobo* BattleMech project. With that achievement under her belt, she was transferred to the Occupation Zone to begin modernizing the facilities there under Khan Ward's new policies.

In late 3074, she and the rest of the Scientists on Vulcan were the objects of a Trial of Possession by a Jade Falcon raid. Noting her accomplishments, the Falcons quickly assigned her to a genetic repository project on Somerset that had fallen behind. Her skills were put to the test and the repository was completed on time, earning her a promotion as the Factor for the caste in early 3076.

Krys is a woman of exotic tastes, and her growing position of power has allowed her to acquire many of the luxuries she never had access to in the Clan Homeworlds. How long she keeps these will likely be determined by how well the scientists perform; many of their core projects have been canceled, including (puzzlingly) weapons research.

CORPORATIONS OF THE JADE FALCON OZ



Olivetti Weaponry

Once an up-and-coming company in the Commonwealth defense industry, Olivetti is now the crown jewel in the Jade Falcon OZ. Appreciating the modern facility, the Falcons began to build lighter OmniMechs, the *Fire Falcon* and *Black Lanner*, out of the facility as well as the *Locust IIC*, *Spirit*, and *Pinion*. As the length of the supply lines to the homeworlds coupled with the unrest there made rebuilding an even more difficult task, Olivetti was further expanded under then-CEO Daniel. The first two designs added were traditional Falcon designs, the *Thor* and *Loki*. These two heavies were popular 'Mechs, but there were still holes to be filled in assault and medium weights. The *Turkina* was not a surprise, but Daniel's choice to begin building the ancient *Black Hawk* likely had as much to do with Diana Pryde's popularity as the usefulness of the design in the Falcon Touman or the fact that their Khan pilots one.

CORPORATIONS OF THE JADE FALCON OCCUPATION ZONE

Due to the Falcons' distrust of their captured planets just after the initial invasion, no R&D facilities were built on Sudeten. This was a boon when the Blakist attacks began, as they focused heavily on scientists. Security around the facility is among the greatest in the entire OZ, but worker safety was not a priority until a poorly secured myomer bundle killed a Star Colonel. Since then, Daniel and his subordinates have sent additional resources to Olivetti to make it safer and more productive. Some merchants have criticized Daniel for "putting all his eggs in one nest" by making Olivetti the primary OmniMech manufacturing facility; however, the resource-intensive parts require advanced factories that can only be built with heavy assistance from Clan leadership. This makes Sudeten more efficient but also a good target for the Alliance, where the Olivetti family pushes for their birthright to be reclaimed.

Red Devil Industries

The Falcon occupation of Pandora was not as good to Red Devil Industries as it was to some other companies. Recently upgraded by the Alliance, their *BattleMaster* line was pushed into overdrive, operating nearly around the clock to produce 'Mechs for second-line forces. Strikes, uprisings, and sabotage have hampered Red Devil in the 3070s, as the workers felt pushed to the brink of exhaustion and the facility suffered. At first these instances of labor unrest were met with harsh responses, but when one of these boiled over into the 3071 massacre of over three hundred workers, Falcon leadership backed down and gave the workers a few concessions.

Given the mistrust of the facility and its location, the Falcons have not upgraded the it, content to use its output to bolster their second-line forces. Under Merchant Factor Daniel's new leadership, other lines have been retooled, producing better versions of the *Rifleman*, Condor, and Centipede primarily. The plant also continues to make small arms and artillery weapons, though these are assigned primarily to militia units. Although Red Devil's second-line units seem to be a drawback, they also provide a potentially useful revenue stream. While the Falcons would never contemplate selling Clan hardware to the Inner Sphere, if the military and Merchants could agree on trade partners, they would have no such reservations about selling Inner Sphere-quality equipment back to the Inner Sphere. Any such agreement would require a large amount of study and debate, but it is not outside the realm of possibility—especially with the Diamond Sharks on nearby Twycross to assist.

Jade Falcon Mobile Production Sites

After the first few waves in their initial invasion of the Inner Sphere, the Jade Falcons realized that they would need manufacturing facilities that could keep up with their advancing forces. Building them was not as simple as expected, and they weren't finished until the late 3060s. With the truce in place, the facilities, dubbed the Eagle Craft Group, remained on Ironhold until the Ice Hellion invasion, where they were moved to the OZ to supplement the fighting there. Providing *Thors, Ullers*, and *Griffin IICs,* the Eagle Craft Group was unable to keep up with the production capacities of permanent plants, but their mobility allowed their output to reach the frontlines quicker.

Following the defeat of the Hellions, the mobile sites were dispersed around the OZ. While this hardly offset the danger of losing Olivetti, it minimized transport times and costs. An additional advantage of the mobile facilities - and primary delay in the facilities' completion - was the relative ease at which they could be retooled to build different units. With a large *Thor* line on Sudeten, Eagle Craft Group discontinued that 'Mech and further diversified their output, filling niches that needed smaller numbers of units. This has allowed the Falcons to continue to keep some diversity in their touman while Olivetti turned out more standardized units.

Needing at least a month of setup or disassembly time, the facilities are amazingly mobile by manufacturing standards but not by military expectations. Established secondary industries make these facilities quicker and more efficient, so they are not moved upon a whim. A recent effort to catalog them was made, though for unknown reasons many have been moved to secret locations and few are producing anything at this current time. While this may be a routine shuffling, there could be other plans, perhaps even a renewed offensive despite all other indicators.

CLAN JADE FALCON

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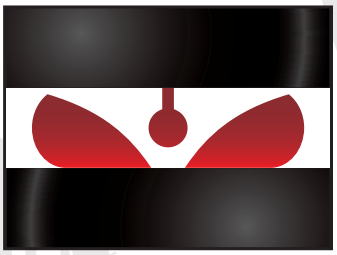
SECURITY LEVEL: TOPAZ

CLAN JADE FALCON

KEY WORLDS OF THE JADE FALCON CLAN OZ

SUDETEN

Star Type (Recharge Time): K5V (196 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 4.12 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Saar, Sule)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30°C (Cool-Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 2,352,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-A-B-C



Unsettled until the Reunification War, Sudeten became a key supply depot for Star League forays into the Rim Worlds Republic. As the war went on, more money and effort was put into fully settling the planet, leaving it fairly industrialized by the war's end, complete with a sprawling 'Mech and vehicle production facility.". The facility was a focal point of the planet's industry, making Sudeten a vibrant, growing world for the 27th and 28th centuries. The fall of the Star League did little to directly affect Sudeten, but Combine raids in the opening years of the First Succession War reduced the facility to ruins. While the damage was isolated primarily to the production facilities, the rest of the planet's industries struggled to adapt to their main customer, plunging the planet into an almost three-centuries-long recession.

Recovery came unexpectedly when Michael Olivetti, a foreman with Defiance, got the backing of some long-term investors. Arriving on Sudeten with a large amount of venture capital in 2990, he used local resources to rebuild the least-damaged parts of what was now Olivetti Weaponry. Working at an almost unheard-of rate, Olivetti's group managed to get part of the facility working by 3005. With the demand for war materiel so high, Olivetti was able to funnel their income into both repaying their investors as well as rebuilding more of the damaged Star League facility. As Sudeten's economy recovered and Olivetti became successful, Michael was rewarded with the planet as a duchy. The former count of Sudeten relinquished any claim on the planet, knowing that trying to fight both the populace and the Archon would end in failure. With the recovery of the Helm core, Olivetti continued to expand and introduced new technology into its products, just in time for the Clan invasion.

The first few months of the war were good to Sudeten; its position near the front was good for distribution to units fighting the invaders, while facilities ran faster and longer than before, struggling to meet demand. As the year moved along, the frontlines swiftly moved forward, creating panic among the populace. While the legendary Gray Death Legion was assigned to protect the planet, even they were unable to hold off the Falcon assault for more than a month as civilians and equipment were evacuated. The Falcons took hold of the world and recognized the usefulness of its industry and Olivetti Weaponry. At first they used it as an industrial base, but the Truce of Tukayyid forced them to settle into their new holdings.

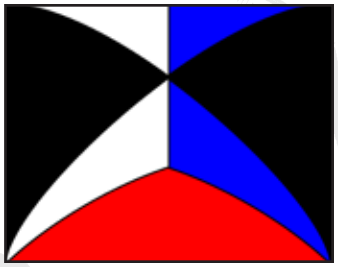
Sudeten was named the capital of the Jade Falcon Occupation Zone, and new administrative buildings were quickly erected in the former Duke's estate. The populace, unsure of their future, slowly embraced the Falcons' honor in choosing their planet. Further improvements in the planet's infrastructure have made life easier for the average citizen, though few are happy about the freedoms that were lost to get an improvement in the quality of life. The generations born since Sudeten fell to the Falcons are more supportive, producing large gaps between generations.

Sudeten is an unpleasant and wintry world with erratic weather patterns, boasting two inhabited continents with relatively small mountain ranges crossing them. Hammarr, the capitol of Sudeten and home of Olivetti industries, is found on Dargoth. With the more moderate climate, it features small deserts and prairies, with a large river delta on which Hammarr is built. Holcomb is home to a large mining industry, led by a local branch of Trellshire Heavy Industries. Trellshire operates the renowned Compton Iron Ore Mines, which provide Olivetti with much of the metal it needs. Much agriculture is ocean-based, and native sea life mingles with imported salmon and tuna. The rest of the planet's food is provided from Dargoth and Holcomb. The densely populated Jarho Islands are popular for both fishing and Sudeten tourists; off-world visitors often explore the extensive cave system in Holcomb's Vesta mountain range. A large area of Dargoth has been recently cordoned off by the Falcons for use by the warriors.

CLAN JADE FALCON

BLACKJACK

Star Type (Recharge Time): G3V (184 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 8.53 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Club, Spade)
Surface Gravity: 0.97
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 49°C (Arid-Desert)
Surface Water Coverage: 31 percent
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 1,105,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-D-C-D



Not the most hospitable planet, Blackjack offers visitors vast deserts, few minerals, and large lizards. This did not deter its first inhabitants, who were of English and French descent. Landing on the coast of the northern continent, Diamond, they found a reasonably nice area on the shores of the Blackjack Ocean for their capitol, Lott's Revenge. Located in the planet's only tropical zone and nearly engulfed by the ocean, Lott's Revenge has ample water provided by the Tyger River, flowing along the north side of the city. From here, the settlers ventured out to find ore veins that were relatively near the surface. Small settlements grew up on the planet's other two continents, Vada and Orbule, to provide for the prospectors. Many of these towns are on the shallow Montana Sea that separates the continents.

The settlers were successful enough to attract the attention of Combine and Periphery raiders, but not successful enough to obtain much aid from the Commonwealth for their defense. After centuries of mining, most of the mineral deposits were either picked clean or buried too deep to be profitable. Between the raiding and the loss of raw materials, most of the planet's industry ground to a halt. Only the massive Blackjack School of Conflict attracted off-worlders, since the school's only entrance requirement was an ability to pay the hefty tuition. The school, taught the art of combat, from basic boot camp to BattleMech piloting. Unlike the state-run academies, the school offered unofficial classes that were meant for those cadets interested in a mercenary life or quick advancement through the ranks, often through questionable means. Ethics classes were more of a formality, and critics often complained that the school turned out warriors who were barely better than bandits.

These "bandits" turned out to be one of the most successful groups at fighting the Clans in the initial invasion. Despite suffering an eighty percent casualty rate, the cadets managed to maul the Second Falcon Jaegers in an honorable and brave engagement. Some cadets were even taken as bondsman, at least one managing to become a warrior. Despite the respect that the school and the planet earned from the Falcons, they were not enough to keep from losing the planet to the Steel Vipers. The Vipers did not care for the planet, as those stationed there felt it was pointless to hold the worthless world. Upon learning that the Falcons had afforded the school such respect and honor, they laid waste to the entire campus.

Returning the planet back to the hands of the Falcons did little for Blackjack, which was finally liberated in the 3060s. The populace still maintained the caste system, despite not having captors to enforce it. The Alliance tried to rehabilitate both the world and the populace, but few resources were available. The populace put up little resistance when the Falcons again invaded. After a few weeks of fighting, the Alliance forces pulled back, leaving the world once again in Falcon hands. Some celebrated the return of the Clans, but for most it was just another flag to salute.

In the few years since reclaiming the world, the Falcons have managed to rebuild the Blackjack School of Conflict, renaming it the Jade Falcon School of Conflict on Blackjack. While the campus was in the same location, the school has taken on a much more Clan-like appearance. Trueborns are still raised in crèches, while freeborns may try out for the school once they turn thirteen. The Falcons, however, have also added a militia school, a much shorter program for training units to protect less-important worlds that the Clan can't afford to garrison. Much of this line of study focuses on fighting off raiders as well as search-and-rescue operations. The first class is set to graduate in 3077, but the Jihad may force cadets to be swept into the touman quicker than the trainers would like.

CLAN JADE FALCON

PANDORA

Star Type (Recharge Time): B7V (158 hours)
Position in System: 7
Time to Jump Point: 62.21 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Hope)
Surface Gravity: 1.02
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 40°C (Tropical)
Surface Water Coverage: 69 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 4,092,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-A-B-B-B

Pandora is an enticing planet, with four continents covered with lush plant life and a fifth encased in polar ice. Pandora was colonized as a paradise, a place to be one with nature, get back to basics, and enjoy living. As well intentioned as it was, the plan failed; too many people saw an opportunity to get even more. Consumed in warfare until the Commonwealth annexed the planet, the young nation used a mix of martial law and economic stimulus to remake Pandora from a chaotic, fractured world into a modern member of the Lyran Commonwealth. Each of the four tropical continents near the equator has extensive light industry and large tracts of virgin land. Islands in the temperate zone house much of the heavy industry while Vestiga, the polar continent, has little to offer besides ice caps and sparse wildlife.

The capital, Deliverance, is on the largest continent, Kaos, and houses the Red Devil Industries assembly facility. Most parts are built elsewhere and shipped to Deliverance for final assembly. Around the start of the 30th century, it was expanded to a manufacturing facility with many factories built to support 'Mech and vehicle production. While a boon to the local economy, the natives were somewhat xenophobic, and it was a few generations before Pandora became used to the hordes of visitors that accompanied the increased trade.

The second largest continent, Limbo, still bears the scars from the fighting that consumed the planet in its early years, as the struggles on Limbo were magnitudes worse than anywhere else. There are people scattered across Limbo, but living there are focused on rebuilding the shattered ecosystem of the continent. Limbo was expected to have recovered in the mid-28th century when the rebuilding started, but as the Succession Wars continued, dragging technological capability down with it, it was all the inhabitants could do to keep it from backsliding. Both the Helm core and recent Falcon occupation have restarted the rebuilding of the ecosystem.

The two smallest continents, Echo and Nirvana, are less developed than Kaos or the island chains. Both have light industry scattered across them and provide much of Pandora's food, but Nirvana also has a large collection of communes. From eco-revolutionaries to strange religions to a tribe of hunter-gathers, these communes are cordoned off from the rest of Pandora society. Each has an access point of some type, from a simple gate to a trading community, but Pandorans only enter with permission. So far the Jade Falcons have left these communes alone, given that all are self-sufficient and most provide some sort of trade good. How long this will last likely depends on how long external events keep the Falcons too occupied to look closer.

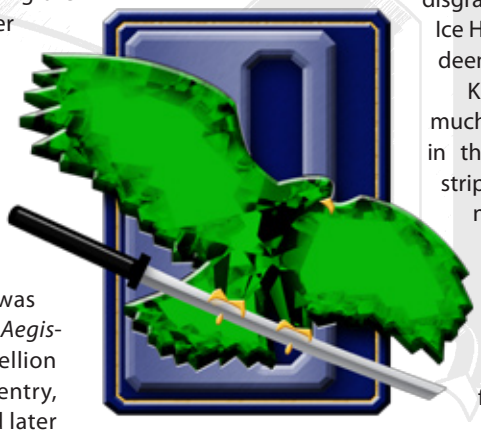
The Falcon assault on Pandora in 3064 added even more scars to this tortured planet. The 124th Striker and Jade Falcon Eyrie Clusters dropped onto the world to find it defended by only the Pandora College Training Battalion and a few conventional regiments, as the Third Lyran Guards had just left to help garrison worlds closer to the Falcon boarder. In just over three weeks, the Falcons had wiped out the training battalion and left little of the conventional units. In addition the Falcons managed to capture the entire Pandora Theater Command Center, complete with the command staff. While the fighting was quick and bloody, the Falcons did nothing to spare the planet's ecosystem in their conquest, infuriating the natives.

At first the Falcons didn't notice the resistance to their rule. Pandorans just refused to work hard for the Falcons, doing everything half-heartedly. Red Devil experienced strikes and sick outs, and when the Falcons used force to try and get the laborers back to work, the locals stepped up to riots and sabotage, further inflaming the situation. Finally Khan Pryde had some members of the Watch investigate the situation. When the Watch discovered the Pandorans' mixture of pride and shame about their planet, Khan Pryde dispatched members of the Scientist Caste to help Limbo recover. This has softened the resentment that the inhabitants feel towards their conquerors, but it will be a long time until they have fully integrated into Jade Falcon society.

CLAN JADE FALCON

THE FALCON'S TALONS: KEY MILITARY COMMANDS

Heavy losses in both their Occupation Zone and the Homeworlds have left the Falcons with only three frontline Galaxies and seven second-line Galaxies. What Falcon forces remain in the Homeworlds cannot be summarized; outside of Falcon High Command, no one has heard from them. Khan Samantha Clees has finally stepped away from Delta Galaxy, while Alpha Galaxy has been added to the rolls. Senior leadership is in short supply; between fighting the Ice Hellions and Blakist head-hunting, a lot of warriors have received promotions earlier than is typical for their careers and talents, making the touman's command structure much younger than those of its Horse and Wolf neighbors.



Khan Clees has assumed command of the Turkina Keshik which is nearly at full strength due to it being a priority when receiving new 'Mechs and battle armor. A few new faces were brought with her, but the core is the same as it was under Marthe. The *Lightning Strike* was involved in heavy naval action over Somerset and was destroyed. In the assault on Evciler, the *Aegis*-class *Janice Hazen* was destroyed by Hellion aerospace fighters. In the fighting for Coventry, the *Aegis*-class *Red Talon* was disabled and later scuttled when it was discovered that the damage was too extensive. The Falcons demanded the captured Blakist *Newgrange*-class yardship as compensation, but eventually Devlin Stone assigned it elsewhere.

With the deaths of Amelia Icaza and Diana Pryde, Quinn Kerensky has assumed command of Gamma Galaxy in hopes of stabilizing the unit. Quickly putting down a couple of traditionalists that objected to a Kerensky leading the Galaxy, Kerensky must show she can rebuild a Galaxy worn down by constant fighting. Delta Galaxy has fallen to saKhan Buhallin. While he has been running the unit for the most part for nearly a decade, he's never had to rebuild it; the unit lost almost half its warriors in the fighting with the Hellions.

Elevated to frontline status, Diana Anu will likely gain more autonomy when selecting new warriors for Epsilon Galaxy. Khan Clees has already moved Epsilon behind only the Turkina Keshik and Delta for receiving new 'Mechs. Meanwhile, the newly formed Alpha Galaxy is at the bottom, competing with *solahma* Clusters and PGCs for the least-desirable reinforcements in both men and material. Despite this status, Alpha is expected to be much busier than most of the second-line Galaxies.

Another unit with a brand new command structure is Rho Galaxy. Dorcas Helmer took over for Lizabet Danforth, who fell fighting the Hellions. The battle-tested unit has been assigned to the defense of Sudeten and has done an admirable job against Blakist raids. Iota Galaxy is also under new leadership, though hardly with the glory that Rho achieved. Mar Helmer took over for the disgraced Gran Newclay but was himself disgraced with poor performances against the Ice Hellions, leaving Temple Clees to try and redeem the unit.

Kappa Galaxy has performed well but had much of its leadership poached to fill in holes in the frontline units. Lambda was likewise stripped of some seasoned warriors, but it has not risen up like Kappa has. Some thought that Lambda might be upgraded to a frontline unit following their arrival in the Inner Sphere, but that is no longer the case; their failure to hold worlds against Wolf attacks has left Joel Thastus' future in doubt.

Omega and Mu both suffered heavy casualties fighting the initial Hellion incursion and have been slow to recover from battle. With the fighting on the Periphery border having died down, both units have been reassigned there and are highly alert, almost paranoid of another attack. Any such invasion would be devastating; both units are less than half strength.

With Blakist and pirate raids, Falcon leadership has approved local militia units to supplement traditional Clan forces. Limited in size, these units are primarily meant to discourage raiding and aid in the event of a natural or man-made disaster. They are restricted to Inner Sphere level vehicles and small arms; no 'Mechs, battle armor, or aerospace fighters will be permitted. Only worlds with little history of uprisings and resistance are allowed to have such units, which require lengthy background checks on all volunteers.

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

CLAN HELL'S HORSES OVERVIEW

Founded by General John Fletcher—commander of the Star League Defense Force's Thirty-fifth Infantry Division—the Hell's Horses place great weight on conventional armor and infantry. The Horses' victories in the Pentagon Campaign were achieved with combined arms, which only served to cement the Clan's emphasis on conventional units. Indeed, prior to the development of battle armor, the Horses even used genetic manipulation and selective breeding techniques to create superior infantrymen. Big and durable, these troopers became known as Elementals, taking their name from the new battle armor technology that made them the most powerful infantry known to man. The Horses have continued to value combined arms, finding that every unit has its use on the battlefield and to over-emphasize one type produces a poorer warrior mindset.

EVOLUTION

During the years in which the Clans grew and evolved out in the Deep Periphery, the Horses celebrated their greatest military victory. In a combined operation with Clan Coyote, the Hell's Horses annihilated Kindraa Smythe-Jewel. This fragment of the divided Clan Fire Mandrill brought the ire of both Clans down upon itself through dishonest bidding practices in a series of military Trials. Descending on the Kindraa enclave on Foster, the two Clans eliminated the Smythe-Jewel warriors in a single day. Not only did this action bolster the Horses' standing amongst the other Clans, but it also netted them several OmniMechs that provided a much-needed boost to the Horses' OmniMech development program.

Among the Clans who have established a foothold in the Inner Sphere, the Hell's Horses are relative newcomers. Although fired by the Crusader fervor of Khan Malavai Fletcher, the Horses performed poorly in the Trials held to select who would represent the Clans in their return to the Inner Sphere. Consequently the Hell's Horses first foray into the Inner Sphere did not come until late 3062. Khan Vlad Ward of the Wolves effectively ceded Engadin, Stanzach, and Vorarlberg to the Horses, apparently in an attempt to create a buffer between his weakened Wolves and the resurgent Clan Ghost Bear. The move, however, backfired spectacularly. Although he successfully goaded Khan Malavai Fletcher into attacking the Bears while they were occupied with the Draconis Combine, this only served to bring the full might of the Ghost Bear touman down on both the Wolves and Horses once the Bears and the Dragon negotiated a truce.

The enmity between the Ghost Bears and the Hell's Horses dates back to 2921, when the Bears seized the Horses' enclave on Tokasha. The fighting was costly for both sides, becoming vicious following the death of the Bear's Khan Kilbourne Jorgensson. The Horses never forgave the Bears for the loss of their vital Tokasha Mechworks Alpha, while the Bears were incensed by the death of one of their most outstanding Khans. An un-Clan-like feud simmered between the Bears and Horses for decades, only to worsen in recent years due to the hatred Khan Malavai Fletcher nursed following a battle with the Ghost Bears in 3046 in which he was seriously wounded. With only a single Galaxy in place, the Hell's Horses were quickly ejected from the Inner Sphere by the Ghost Bear counterattack. The debacle was politically costly for Fletcher, opening the door for Star Colonel James Cobb to declare a Trial of Possession and slay an increasingly mentally unstable Khan.

While the terms of the Great Refusal prevented the Clans from renewing their coordinated assault on the Inner Sphere, there were no provisions to prevent individual Clans from doing as they wished. The newly elected Khan James Cobb perceived the Inner Sphere as offering his Clan the potential of great rewards. At the same time, Cobb knew that the ancient feud with the Ghost Bears was something that neither Clan could afford any longer. The time had come to bury the hatchet—in Clan Wolf. Fletcher's adventure into the Inner Sphere had left the Hell's Horses feeling ill used by Khan Vlad Ward and, truth be told, the Wolves were far weaker than the Ghost Bears.

FORCIBLE RELOCATION

Cobb began to assemble forces for the long journey back to the Inner Sphere, quietly dealing with the Diamond Sharks to build up stockpiles of equipment at a staging point on Nouveaux Paris and contracting transport from the Snow Ravens. New weapons and equipment were designed and tested, then redesigned and retested, then put into production. The prized Tokasha Mechworks Alpha was captured from Clan Goliath Scorpion, who had themselves seized the plant after the Ghost Bears relocated to the Inner Sphere. This would be no quick and simple military operation. Cobb was determined that Clan Hell's Horses would return to the Inner Sphere to stay, and their final convoys departed the Homeworlds in April 3070. Many transports carried not weapons or troops, but members of the lower castes and the equipment to set up new manufacturing centers once the Horses were secure.

First to be targeted were Clan Wolf holdings on the Periphery frontier. In November, Oberon VI, Nyserta, and Paulus Prime were attacked. Many Wolf warriors—Wardens whom Vlad Ward had assigned to second-line units in the Periphery—were taken as *isorla*. Knowing he would need all the troops he could get, Khan Cobb used the former Wolves as the nucleus for a new Omega Galaxy. Faced with minimal resistance the Horses pushed onwards to take other Periphery worlds before plunging into the Inner Sphere proper. Here the battles became hard fought affairs as the Wolves shifted frontline troops to meet the assault. The Hell's Horses were victorious, but the mounting combat losses forced Cobb to call a temporary halt in mid-3071 while his troops finished consolidating their hold on worlds in line with Kirchbach. Equally worrying were a series of clashes with the Jade Falcons on the Horses' anti-spinward flank.

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

In April of 3071, things took an unexpected twist with the arrival of a sizable Ice Hellion force along the Periphery border of the Falcon OZ. Intel confirmed later that the Horses knew about the Hellion's intentions and must have struck a deal, as neither Clan crossed into the other's attack corridors. What Hellion Khan Montose had not expected was for the Falcons and Horses to agree to an informal truce and turn on what they both considered to be unwanted competition. The combined might of the two Clans sent the Hellions reeling with staggering losses before saKhan Conner Rood accepted the offer of *hegira*—an honorable retreat—and led the remnants of the Hellion invasion force toward home. Khan Montose defiantly refused a similar offer and died facing a combined Falcon/Horses assault on Vantaa.

With the defeat of the Ice Hellions, Cobb refocused on the more difficult task of the Wolves. Khan Ward had stripped his coreward garrisons bare to reinforce his "line of death" anchored on Ferleiten, Ridderkerk, and Zoetermeer. Knowing that the Hell's Horses could no longer muster the strength to renew the assault, Cobb contacted Khan Ward and negotiated a truce. By mid-3071 the Hell's Horses invasion was effectively over. The Horses continue to spar with the Falcons, Wolves, and Ghost Bears, but these battles are the kind of combat trials that commonly take place in the Homeworlds.

NEW BEGINNINGS

By any measure, Khan Cobb's plan to secure a permanent foothold in the Inner Sphere has been a success. Carving out their own Occupation Zone of over forty worlds in less than a year, the Hell's Horses truly have revenged themselves on Clan Wolf. Now the Clan faces the difficult task of integrating the flood of lower-caste Clansmen from the Homeworlds with the indigenous Inner Sphere population they now control. In this they have the advantage that these worlds have been under Clan governance for two decades already. However, there remain pockets of local resistance that continue to be troublesome. Apparently now out of contact with the Homeworlds, the Horses must make do with what industrial capability they brought with them or have captured. The Hell's Horses remain heavily dependent on the good works of Diamond Shark merchants.

Clan Hell's Horses has sent out tentative feelers to several Inner Sphere powers. They have established a working relationship with Phelan Kell's Wolves-in-Exile and even sent representatives to the ill-fated summit on Arc-Royal. Enterprising merchants who have gambled with entering this new Clan territory report that the Horses are willing to deal with Inner Sphere traders, with lucrative opportunities awaiting any bold enough to risk crossing the Clan frontier. Eager to get their hands on advanced Clan technology and manufacturing techniques, several Inner Sphere consortiums have begun to make overtures to the Hell's Horses.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

JAMES COBB

Rank/Title: Khan

Born: 2999 (77 in 3076)

At first glance, the Khan of the Hell's Horses strikes an imposing figure. An Elemental of the strongest Cobb bloodline, many are put immediately on the defensive when first in his presence. The Khan rarely smiles these days, and a lifetime (for a Clanner) of scowling has seemingly implanted a permanent grimace on his face.

The stress is warranted, however. Khan of a Clan that moved over three-fourths of its people, Cobb has taken great pains to learn from the mistakes of those Clans who have arrived before him. Unlike the Ghost Bears, the Horses were unable to transfer large amounts of equipment and manufacturing capabilities from the Homeworlds; Cobb chose instead to relocate as many of his people as possible. Many of the conquered Wolf worlds were flooded with Horse civilians only hours after the battles concluded, showing the incredible urgency the Khan had in transplanting his people. Why he was in such a hurry to relocate is unknown, however.

Despite his grim appearance, Khan Cobb is an affable man. He is intelligent and resourceful, shown by the incredible planning necessary to overwhelm and plant the Horses on their hard-won worlds. The Khan has been seen several times in close conferences with his Factors; he values their advice, as shown in several initiatives recently taken by the Clan across the castes. The recent

JAMES COBB

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

ties and temporary alliances with the Wolves-in-Exile – an Abjured Clan, according to Clan society – shows that the Khan is flexible in his wisdom, letting the needs of the Clan dictate his actions, rather than strict adherence to convention.

Lest one think the Khan is a peaceable soul however, remember that Cobb is as ruthless as any other Clan warrior. His double-cross of the Ice Hellions – less rumor than fact these days – shows that he will stop at nothing to safeguard his Clan, even if it means turning on his allies of convenience.

TANYA DELAUREL

Rank/Title: saKhan

Born: 3025 (51 in 3076)

Personally selected by Khan Malavai Fletcher for her amazing tactical abilities in the battles with the Ghost Bears on Niles in 3046, saKhan Tanya DeLaurel is unfailingly level-headed—often acting as a fail-safe during the unstable Fletcher's increasingly violent rages. It is rumored that she may have helped broker the deal between Fletcher and Vlad Ward that ended in the Hell's Horse's first disastrous foray into the Inner Sphere. If true, then DeLaurel was far more skillful in riding out the ensuing political storm than her Khan. Perhaps this is why she appears to have accepted the rise of James Cobb to the post of Khan with little rancor. Her political views appear guarded—she previously leaned towards the Crusader viewpoint, but without actually stating so outright. The collapse of the Crusader cause appears to have led her to reexamine her view of the Inner Sphere—a mercy for the millions of Spheroids now under Hell's Horses dominion.

The aging James Cobb chooses to delegate battlefield command to his younger saKhan. In battle she piloted her *Vulture* (taken as *isorla* from the Ghost Bears on Niles), and now a *Balius*, with cold precision that few amongst the Clans, or in the Inner Sphere, can match. DeLaurel now faces the formidable task of holding onto the Horses' extensive gains with a touman that remains critically under-strength. Although blessed with an undreamed-of supply of raw materials, the Hell's Horses remain woefully short of the means of producing the equipment they need to rebuild.

Tall for a MechWarrior, with long dark hair and piercing grey eyes, Tanya carriers herself with an air of superiority rightly earned from her masterful handling of the Horses Touman in the drive to carve out an enclave in the Inner Sphere.

TEMUCHIN AMIRAULT

Rank/Title: Loremaster and Head of the Watch

Born: 3035 (41 in 3076)

With the compact and powerful build of a Clan MechWarrior, Temuchin Amirault could not appear less like the spy master he has become as head of the Hell's Horses Watch. Holder of the Mark of the Horse—a rare distinction earned by capturing and branding one of the genetically engineered carnivorous Circian hell's horses from which the Clan takes its name—Temuchin was always on the fast track of Clan politics. Earning the Amirault Bloodname in 3058, he ascended to rank of Star Colonel and secured the coveted post

TANYA DELAUREL

TEMUCHIN AMIRAULT

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

of Loremaster under Malavai Fletcher's Khanship. A strong supporter of the former Khan, it is surprising that Temuchin was not replaced following James Cobb's election to the post. In part this could be due to the fact that while Temuchin personally supported Fletcher, his political leanings appear to be neutral. Thus, whereas many of the more ardent Crusaders were purged from positions of authority by the Warden-supporting Cobb, the Loremaster was able to retain his post.

The relocation to the Inner Sphere has brought with it a number of headaches for Temuchin. As Loremaster he is charged with protecting the Clan's heritage and traditions. Both of these have come under attack as the Clansmen mingle daily with the native populations of the worlds the Horses have conquered. As Head of the Watch, Temuchin must deal with another kind of threat. Although the new worlds now controlled by the Horses have been under Clan domination for over two decades, there remains a network of underground freedom fighters from the early days of the Clan Invasion. Aided and abetted by Inner Sphere governments (notably the Free Rasalhague Republic and the Draconis Combine), these resistance cells continue to pose a major threat to the Hell's Horses' shaky infrastructure.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

JAKE KABRINSKI

Rank/Title: Star Colonel
Born: 3041 (35 in 3076)

Formally a member of Clan Ghost Bear, Jake Kabrinski made a name for himself in several engagements with Clan Hell's Horses—even facing Khan Malavai Fletcher in battle on two occasions. His actions during the Ghost Bear-Draconis Combine War—capturing the *Kirishima*-class cruiser *DCS Urizen II* in a daring boarding action—further fueled his meteoric rise. But Jake's career as a Ghost Bear Elemental came to a sudden end in 3068 when he was captured by Hell's Horses troops assigned to the Watch during an intelligence-gathering raid on Rasalhague as a precursor to the planned assault against Clan Wolf.

When Khan James Cobb learned that his troops had taken the legendary Jake Kabrinski as *isorla*, he exercised his rights as Khan and claimed the Ghost Bear as his personal bondsman. Kabrinski's natural talent and his intimate knowledge of Clan Ghost Bear ensured he would not stay a Bondsman for long. He was freed from his bondcords and made a Hell's Horses Warrior, participating in the Branding rite and earning the prestigious Mark of the Horse.

Kabrinski's conversion to the Horses' cause appears to be complete. When choosing an envoy to send to the Ghost Bears prior to the Hell's Horses return to the Inner Sphere, Khan Cobb sent the newly promoted Nova Captain Jake Kabrinski. This appears to have facilitated the unofficial truce between the two Clans, which allowed the Hell's Horses to focus their attention on the Wolves. Now that the Horses are established in the Inner Sphere, Kabrinski continues to serve as an envoy to the Ghost Bears.

With the build typical of a Clan Elemental, the Jake Kabrinski of today little resembles the man the Ghost Bears once knew. Badly wounded during his capture, Jake only survived thanks to extensive cybernetic reconstruction.

HOLLONNA

Rank/Title: Merchant Factor
Born: 3005 (71 in 3076)

The move to the Inner Sphere has opened up a host of new markets for the merchants of Clan Hell's Horses. The duty of exploiting these falls to Hollonna, Merchant Factor for the Clan. The stakes are high, as it is not just potential profit that is at risk—the very survival of the Clan could hinge on how well the Merchant Caste can make up the shortfalls in vital material and resources that the loss of its Homeworld assets has inflicted on the Hell's Horses. Decades of dealing with sharp Diamond Shark merchants have put Hollonna in good stead when it came to negotiating with the Lyran traders who came to the Horses' new enclave thinking to take advantage of the Clan.

Not content to sit and wait for opportunity to seek her out, Hollonna has traveled extensively through the Clan Occupation Zone and has even made forays into the Lyran Alliance and Draconis Combine to touch bases with the Nova Cats, Clan Wolf-in-Exile, and prominent corporations in those realms.

Born from the iron womb as an Elemental, Hollonna crashed out of warrior training in her mid-teens and was reassigned to the Merchant Caste. While her change in assignment occurred without comment from other Clansmen, her height and build make negotiating with Hollonna an intimidating experience for the Spheroids—a fact that she capitalizes on shamelessly.

Advancing years and the strain on a physique never intended to survive so long have combined to bedevil Hollonna with a plethora of minor ills and infirmities. Though none have impacted her judgment, Hollonna is conscious of just how dependent her Clan has become on its Merchants for its long-term survival. She is currently evaluating several Merchants as her potential successor.

MOHAMMED (KEPLER)

Rank/Title: Scientist-General
Born: 3046 (30 in 3076)

Appearing far too young to be directing the research and development efforts of an entire Clan, Mohammed won his unofficial labname for his work on developing the Hell's Horses' hyper-assault Gauss weapons. His recent elevation to the post of Clan Hell's Horses Scientist-General comes in the wake of a major reorganization of the Scientist Caste. Precisely why Khan Cobb chose to remove Mohammed's predecessor and several other prominent Scientists remains unclear, but the Khan's faith in the young man appears to have been well founded.

Mohammed has been deeply involved in deciphering the secrets of Clan Smoke Jaguar's ProtoMech technology. He was also involved in technology exchanges with Clan Wolf-in-Exile, which led to the development of the *Cygnus* BattleMech. The latest project to benefit from the personal oversight of the Scientist-General

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

is an experiment to develop new Trueborn phenotypes for the Hell's Horses breeding programs. The first is a variation of the Clan AeroSpace pilot intended to pilot the Horses' growing ProtoMech forces. The second has been dubbed the "TankWarrior" phenotype, a superior armored vehicle crewmember that combines the reflexes of a MechWarrior with some of the physical toughness of an Elemental. Both projects are years from producing the first batch of new Hell's Horses Warriors, but early results from the first sibkos are reported to be promising.

The most sacred duty of the Scientist Caste is to oversee the Clan's genetic repository. Not surprisingly, Mohammed has established his office and labs on Csesztreg near the location of the Horses' primary repository. Adjacent to the touman headquarters, the complex resembles closely the Castle Brian complexes once constructed by the Star League Defense Force. The close proximity to the Clan's military headquarters suggests that the Warrior Caste is especially keen to guard their genetic heritage—or alternatively, have some reason for closely monitoring the activities of their Scientists.

CORPORATIONS OF THE HELL'S HORSES OCCUPATION ZONE

Swedenborg Heavy Industries

With plans to establish a 'Mech plant on Kirchbach following the founding of the Free Rasalhague Republic, Swedenborg Heavy Industries constructed a ballistic weaponry facility to provide components for both their new plant and other defense industries across the fledgling republic while the rest of the complex was built. Clan Wolf captured the partially completed factory and traded the components they produced with the Ghost Bears for electronics. But the Wolves lacked the resources to complete the project, and the plant received minimal Clan-tech upgrades before the world fell to the Hell's Horses in 3071.

The Hell's Horses have taken up the project where the Republic left off, expanding the existing ballistic and missile weapons lines and bringing factories online to produce armor, power plants, electronics, and energy weapons. Using these components, the Horses have established several vehicle production lines—allowing saKhan Tanya DeLaurel to quickly bring the Clan's armored formations back up to strength. The site has also become the Horses' primary source of battle armor in the Inner Sphere.

Although 'Mech production remains some years down the road, the plant has started limited production of ProtoMechs. Several orbital factory platforms have been established to provide the micro-gravity environment for manufacturing the exotic materials required to produce these increasingly common combat units.

Set on the coast near Östersund, the factory complex is surrounded by Clan-style communal accommodations. The bulk of the workforce consists of Scientist and Laborer caste members from the Clan Homeworlds, but members of the indigenous population are gradually being integrated. Temuchin Amirault's Watch maintains a significant presence to guard against partisan efforts to sabotage one of the Horses' most vital production nodes. The frequency of such attempts has been decreasing, suggesting that Khan James Cobb's efforts to normalize relations with the Inner Sphere is beginning to have a real impact.

Manufacturing Site #3

During the opening of the Clan's invasion of the Inner Sphere, the Gorton, Kingsley, and Thorpe Enterprises factories on New Oslo were relocated to Satalice. Ultimately this attempt to save vital Free Rasalhague production facilities failed when Clan Wolf subsequently captured the new site. When the Ghost Bears captured Satalice, the Wolves were virtually without weapons production capability in their Inner Sphere enclave. Returning to the gutted factories on New Oslo, Khan Vlad Ward established Manufacturing Site #3. Although limited to producing only light and medium second-line BattleMech designs, the site remained of critical importance to the Wolves. Naturally this made New Oslo a major bone of contention between the Wolves and Clan Hell's Horses, prompting saKhan DeLaurel to devote her two best Galaxies to taking the world. Until the mobile manufacturing sites the Horses brought with them from the Homeworlds are up and running, Site #3 is the Horses' primary source of BattleMechs in their new Inner Sphere holdings. Under their stewardship, the Horses have expanded operations to allow limited production of heavy BattleMechs—such as the new *Balius* design.

Faced with the limitations of their on-site manufacturing facilities, the Horses have adapted several light and medium OmniMech designs—notably the venerable *Nova*—to be manufactured with fixed weapons and equipment (something the Sharks have taken to calling *Black Hawks* as a form of differentiation from the Clan OmniMech). Efforts are underway to upgrade Site #3 to produce OmniMechs, but even the most optimistic estimate is that conversion will not be complete until mid 3077.

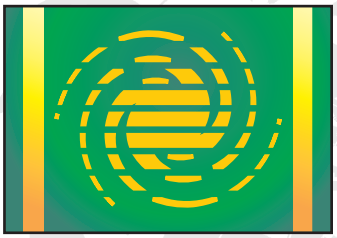
The manufacturing site was established in the shell of the old Gorton, Kingsley, and Thorpe Enterprises plant. The center of activity is located around the giant solar furnaces, a structure that the Free Rasalhague Republic considered too costly and difficult to relocate. The giant mirrors were damaged by retreating Rasalhague troops, but they were repaired with ease when Site #3 was established.

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

KEY WORLDS OF THE HORSES' OCCUPATION ZONE

CSESZTREG

Star Type (Recharge Time): MoV (201 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 3.14 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Banjnok, Egylet)
Surface Gravity: 0.92 G
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 15°C (Cold-Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 30 percent (Tainted)
Highest Native Life: Birds
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 15,026,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-B-C-D



Csesztreg was one of many worlds to be settled in the second great wave of colonization following the Reunification War. Development of new technologies such as the revolutionary Jamerson-Ulikov water purification technique opened the door for mankind to live on marginal worlds that their ancestors had bypassed. Rich in heavy metals, the systemic contamination of the water table had once made Csesztreg far too hostile. But in the mid-27th century it was that vast untapped mineral wealth that attracted a consortium consisting of miners and engineers of Hungarian descent to stake a claim to the world. Lyran industry was hungry for raw materials, and within three decades Csesztreg had achieved economic independence.

Unlike many worlds, Csesztreg prospered during the Succession Wars. The demands of the Lyran Commonwealth Armed Forces for weapons ensured employment for all. Crucially, the planet lacked the heavy industry that marked so many others as prime targets. The greatest threat was the gradual erosion of water purification technology, which led to the implementation of increasingly draconian rationing. This situation was exacerbated following the fall of the world to the advancing Draconis Combine during the Third Succession War. Eager to make use of Csesztreg's mineral wealth, the Combine shipped in thousands of Rasalhague dissidents to work the mines. Conditions were atrocious, and as many would suffer illness or death due to contaminated water as would die in frequent mining accidents.

Believing Csesztreg to have little strategic importance, the Lyran Commonwealth left the liberation of the planet until they were ready to launch the follow-up wave of assaults during the spectacularly successful campaign fought against the Combine in the Fourth Succession War. This apparent disregard for former Commonwealth citizens offended the decency of the original Lyran population, and subsequently they sided with the thousands of imported Rasalhague expatriates and chose to join the Free Rasalhague Republic. Recovered Star League technology solved the problems of acute water shortage, and Csesztreg began once more to enjoy a vibrant economy and an improved standard of living.

Csesztreg was directly in the path of the Clan juggernaut that hammered into the Inner Sphere in 3050. One of six worlds targeted in the Wolves' second wave of attacks, Csesztreg's government surrendered after the local militia was soundly trounced in the one-sided Battle of Annick Woods. Resistance to the Clans did not stop, however. The Clan's caste system uncomfortably echoed the Combine labor camps, and it would take many years before the indigenous population actually believed that they were not returning to the bad old days of Kurita occupation. The efforts of Clan Wolf to integrate Csesztreg into a modified version of the traditional caste system ultimately paid big dividends for Clan Hell's Horses. Having lived under Clan rule for two decades, the population had (for the most part) adapted to the change in management. While isolated pockets of partisan activity remained (fueled in the main by the efforts of operatives of the Free Rasalhague Republic's Mimir), the people on the whole were acceptant, if not enthusiastic, of living under Clan domination.

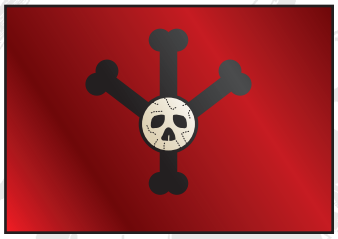
Compared to the poor worlds of the Pentagon and the Kerensky Cluster, Csesztreg is an extraordinarily rich world. The abundance of raw material, especially those needed to produce battle armor and ProtoMechs, marked the planet as one of special importance to the Hell's Horses. Choosing Csesztreg as the site of the Clan's new capital, Khan James Cobb has drawn up an ambitious program to develop the world into a major industrial hub. Combining the abundant local resources with prefabricated industrial units transported from the Homeworlds, Csesztreg is already producing impressive quantities of components, armor, and munitions for the repair and refitting of the Horses Touman. New battle armor and ProtoMech production lines have been ramping up over the past year and are expected to hit maximum capacity within months. It is estimated that limited production of combat vehicles, aerospace fighters, and BattleMechs will begin some time in late 3077.

Rather than use the overcrowded capital of Budapest, the Hell's Horses have established their new council chambers in the city of Szrged on the continent of Somogy. The Clan's primary genetic repository and touman headquarters are under construction nearby.

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

STAR'S END (NOVO CRESSIDAS)

Star Type (Recharge Time): M5V (206 hours)
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 2.45 days
Number of Satellites: 0 (Asteroid Ring)
Surface Gravity: 0.03 or less (Asteroid Ring)/0.75 (Novo Cressidas)
Atmosphere Pressure: Vacuum
Equatorial Temperature: –270.15 °C
Surface Water Coverage: 0 percent (Asteroid Ring)/
15 percent (Novo Cressidas)
Highest Native Life: None
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 55,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-D-C-F



The Star's End asteroid belt is located in a star system near the edge of an empty void approximately sixty light years in diameter. The system is notorious as the site of First Lord Simon Cameron's assassination at the New Silesia Mining Colony—the event that would ultimately see the dissolution of the First Star League and the bloody Succession Wars. The system was settled by refugees fleeing the Rim Worlds Republic to avoid persecution at the hands of the Republic's restored ruling family following the Reunification War.

For nearly two centuries they enjoyed a relatively prosperous existence mining rich lanthanum and germanium deposits while the Lyran Commonwealth and Rim Worlds Republic bickered over who actually had the rights to the system. Even as the Star League failed, the Belt became tapped out. Those who could leave fled to the Inner Sphere or pushed out deeper into the Periphery. The system became a haven for the pirates operating along the Lyran and Combine frontiers. As the supplies of spare parts, especially for JumpShips, slowed to a trickle, the pirates of the Belt became aware that their livelihood depended on the technical expertise to repair and replace malfunctioning equipment. The seven leaders of the Belt Pirates rarely agreed on anything, but they recognized a common interest in ensuring that their ships could be kept in working order. Thus the swirling rocks of the Belt became a haven of sorts for technicians with the skills to build and repair JumpShips and DropShips. Hidden within the Belt are zero-G graving docks and hangars capable of assembling JumpShips and many of their components. At times during the Succession Wars, both the Draconis Combine and Lyran Commonwealth made use of the services of the pirate yards at Star's End.

During the initial Clan Invasion, the Belt Pirates clashed with advance elements of the Wolf Clan. Dismissing the pirates as no threat after a string of easy victories, the Wolves chose to bypass the system and push on to the rich pickings of the Inner Sphere. This proved to be a mistake. Reinforced with elements of pirate bands and mercenary units that had suffered at the hands of the invading Clans, the Belt Pirates struck back with a vengeance. Though lacking the strength to really threaten forces garrisoning the worlds of the Clan Occupation Zone, their raids were a distraction that Clan Warrior pride would not long tolerate. Ulric Kerensky of the Wolf Clan, ilKhan of the Clans, dispatched several clusters of *solahma* troops to deal with the problem. While they persuaded the Belt Pirates to curtail operations temporarily, they failed to penetrate the Belt itself and root out the corsairs. Later, Khan Vlad Ward dispatched a full Galaxy to deal with the New Belt Pirates, a force made possible by an alliance between Morgan Fletcher II and Susie Morgraine-Ryan. Once again the Wolves failed to eliminate the hidden bases, but the heavy casualties suffered by the pirates created a rift between Morgraine-Ryan and Fletcher that would prove fatal.

During the fighting between Clan Hell's Horses and Clan Ice Hellion, the New Belt Pirates struck once again. At the time the Horses' attention was fixed firmly on the Hellions and Wolves, but they did not forget the New Belt Pirates. Drawn by rumors of the functional shipyards hidden in the belt, Khan James Cobb dispatched Beta Galaxy to settle the issue once and for all in early 3074. In the past the pirates had relied upon an elaborate layered defense of mines and hidden weapons emplacements, and time and again these defenses had proven themselves against fighters and DropShips. But against Clan Elementals in battle armor and ProtoMechs they were less effective. With the perimeter under pressure, Susie Morgraine-Ryan chose this moment to make a run for it, fatally compromising the Belt defenses.

With the sudden collapse of the Belt defenses, Hell's Horses troops flooded in and were able to secure the precious yards undamaged. Although primitive and of limited capacity, these yards are absolutely vital to the Clan's future now that the Homeworlds are out of reach.

THE RAGING HORSEMEN

The Horses' best attempts to expand their ability to manufacture BattleMechs in the Inner Sphere were hit by a series of setbacks, and production could barely keep up with combat losses. In preparation for a campaign into the Inner Sphere, Khan James Cobb and saKhan Tanya DeLaurel made deals with the Diamond Sharks, Snow Ravens, and Star Adders to secure vital war materiel and transport capacity. The recapture of

CLAN HELL'S HORSES

the Tokasha Mechworks Alpha was essential to the plan of strengthening the Horses touman by refitting existing formations with new equipment and raising several new Galaxies. While Alpha, Beta, Delta, Theta, and the new Kappa Galaxy traveled to the Inner Sphere, Epsilon and Zeta Galaxy were joined by Eta and Iota Galaxy and left to hold the Homeworld enclaves.

Heavy fighting against increasing Wolf opposition, clashes with the Jade Falcons, and the campaign against the Ice Hellions served to sharpen the skills of the troops assigned to the Inner Sphere, but the combat losses also sapped the strength of the Horses' frontline Clusters. One ray of light was the formation of Omega Galaxy. Built around the nucleus of captured Wolf Warriors consigned to second-line duty on the Periphery frontier for their Warden leaning, the new Galaxy performed well on Rodrigo and was further reinforced with almost two Clusters of captured Ice Hellion Warriors.

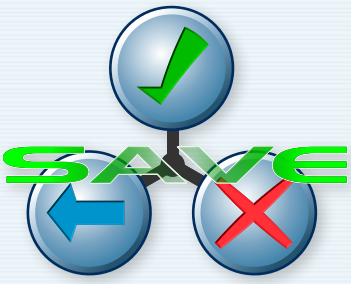
The Galaxies stationed in the Homeworlds are in even worse shape. Epsilon and Zeta had difficulty extricating themselves as they fought a rear-guard action to defend the last convoys of lower Caste refugees as they fled the Homeworlds for the new Inner Sphere territory. Losses amongst the Clusters of Eta and Iota Galaxy were so heavy that they were disbanded, and the survivors were transferred to bolster other battered Clusters.

As a result of these events, the composition of the Hell's Horses touman has altered somewhat. Casualties have forced the Horses to pare down the average strength of their Clusters, with many fielding Binaries in place of Trinaries. In an attempt to compensate for this reduction in firepower, saKhan DeLaurel has started to reinforce the Clusters with additional Stars of Battle Armor, ProtoMechs, and conventional armor. Faster and cheaper to build than 'Mechs, these alternative units allow the Hell's Horses to make the most of their currently limited production capacity.

The equipment losses, however, are easier to make good than the loss of experienced warriors. The upheaval of the move to the Inner Sphere has cost the Horses many promising sibkos. The first Inner Sphere-born sibkos will not be due to test out until 3090, and the hurried departure from the Homeworlds has left a five-year gap before the first of the sibkos transplanted to the Inner Sphere is ready. As both a stopgap measure and an attempt to foster closer integration between the Clan and Spheroid societies, the Horses have started a limited program of inducting promising members of the Inner Sphere population into conventional armor and infantry assignments.

The final withdrawal from the Homeworlds cost the Hell's Horses many DropShips and JumpShips. In addition, the WarShips *Sleipnir*, *Mount Olympus*, *Golden Clydesdale*, and *Gold Knight* were lost. The capture of the *Pack Hunter* from the Ice Hellions was some compensation, and the Hellion prize has been sent to Star's End for repair and to provide extra defenses for the vital yards.

Hell's Horses were never the strongest of the Clans when it comes to aerospace forces, and the aerospace arm of the touman continues to play second fiddle to the ground forces. The only good point of this situation is that with the limited quantities of available equipment, the Horses have a surplus of aerospace phenotypes to feed into their growing ProtoMech force. The Horses are also critically short of merchant transports and have contracted with the Snow Ravens for several squadrons of JumpShips to fill this gap. Unfortunately this necessary arrangement has cost the Clan dearly in raw materials and finished goods.



CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

Lenore—

Can you pass this report up the ladder with my strongest warnings? I know I'm kind of persona non grata around there these days, but surely the PTB wouldn't ignore a threat this big just because I'm the bearer of the news.

—Petros

Petros—

I agree with your assessment of the Sharks' threat to the corporation. However, with all the Blakist crap going down everywhere, good luck convincing the bosses. I'll try, but you've got to bring me something more concrete. Like, what's happening in the Homeworlds? Maybe challenge one of your Shark contacts for the info. If it's a Warrior, though, better make it a small one.

—Lenore

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

Once a nearly non-existent presence in the Inner Sphere, the Diamond Shark Clan has spent the past several years increasing their profile in the Clan Occupation Zones and is now turning its sights outward. Observers estimate that there's a very good chance the Sharks have pulled a Ghost Bear and moved their entire Clan lock, stock, and barrel into the Inner Sphere for good. If so, this could shift the balance of power among the Clans in ways we cannot yet foresee.

Even more than that, however, is what a wholesale migration means for the Clan Homeworlds. With the Snow Ravens setting up shop in the Outworlds Alliance, the arrival of the Hell's Horses and the calamitous invasion of the Ice Hellions a few years back, it's clear that something is happening that has everyone running for cover. The economic impact of the Sharks moving in is enormous, but it could be just the tip of the iceberg.

DEALS AND DEALMAKERS

As would be expected of a Clan that some say is more merchant than warrior, the Sharks have locked in some advantageous deals in recent years. Starting with the *Ha Otoko* and the *Mad Cat Mk II*, they have been selling Clan technology to the Inner Sphere for a while now. They provided the Federated Suns with the Undine battle armor with which they developed their Hauberk and were rumored to be marketing the so-called Clan Medium Battle Armor to various Spheroid powers, and those actions seem to have led to the Sharks being confronted by the Grand Council. Though we were not able to obtain a clear report on these events, they may be one of the proximate causes for the Sharks to move so many of their assets to the Inner Sphere. *[If the Sharks are on the outs with the rest of the Clans, you couldn't tell it by the brisk business they are doing with the ones here. Even the Ravens are sitting down with them.—P]*

MOND SHARK

Though we are used to Shark merchants driving hard bargains, their tactics lately have been a bit different. In many cases, they have been willing to lower their prices down to bargain levels, especially if the other party is willing to throw in large amounts of materials such as lumber, unrefined ores, prefab components, and food stores. Our analysts think that part of this may be hedging their bets over the current war with the Blakists; if other factions fall, they won't be useful as future markets. In addition, there may be an element of giving the customer a free (or, in this case, lower cost) taste so that later, once the war is over, the Sharks can raise their prices to more profitable levels. It also may be that their preference for raw materials is a sign that they have left the Homeworlds for good and are desperate to recoup serious losses, though exactly where these materials are ending up hasn't yet been determined.

One faction that may be hurt most by this in the future is Clan Wolf. Since losing their sole BattleMech factory on New Oslo, they have become increasingly reliant on sales from the Diamond Sharks to keep their touman functioning in the current war. Estimates that they are almost completely dependent on convoys from Twycross to re-supply their damaged materiel need to be crosschecked with our operatives in their OZ, but if this was the case it would not come as a surprise.

It is believed (but, of course, unconfirmed) that the Sharks are no longer shipping any products to the Homeworlds after the disastrous attempt to run the Star Adder blockade of York in 3073.

NEW WATERS

Since the initial invasion in 3050, the Diamond Sharks have desired a foothold in the Inner Sphere from which they could send out their merchant fleets. Starting with Nyserta, which they won from the Ghost Bears shortly before Tukayyid only to lose it again due to the severely weakened forces they fielded after that catastrophic campaign, the Clan leadership has at times been desperate to find a world they could claim as their own.

Beginning in 3065, the Sharks have maintained three holdings within the OZs of other Clans: Twycross (taken from a small Inner Sphere garrison after the Falcons washed their hands of what they consider a cursed system), Trondheim (won from the Ghost Bears), and Itabaiana (acquired from the Nova Cats in exchange for a percentage of the HarJel production and additional concessions). Lest these worlds be lost again as Nyserta was, they have stationed strong garrisons on each planet and have turned Itabaiana into their de facto capital in the Inner Sphere.

More recently, the worlds of Ramora in the Outworlds Alliance and Halfway in Lyran space have been added to the Sharks' network of trading worlds. The details of the former acquisition were not available to us, but the latter world appears to have been part of a deal the Sharks struck with Devlin Stone to aid his

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

crusade against the Blakist menace. *[How he has the authority to basically give a Lyran world to a Clan is unknown at this time.—P]* Nearly two years ago, the Sharks claimed an enclave on Tukayyid after defeating the resident KungsArmé garrison. No doubt their ignominious defeat there in 3052 played a part in selecting this world, and it remains to be seen whether they will be content with the little portion they now possess or if they will take the entire world. *[We feel certain that as the Sharks expand across the Inner Sphere, they will need to acquire more worlds; if we can figure out which ones they will want, we can perhaps use that to our advantage.—P]*

From what we can gather, they also possess a number of holdings in the Deep Periphery, though several of them are just names to our agents. Attenbrooks and Bazaar are known to function as factory worlds and clearinghouses for their trading fleets, but the exact function of Suda Bay is unknown. That location once functioned as a fleet base for the defunct Smoke Jaguars, so it is a safe bet that the Sharks are controlling at least that function of the base, though other uses they may have for the facility remain undiscovered.

Recent hints that the Sharks may have at least one base in or around the Chainelaine Isles are, as of yet, unconfirmed. Such a base would, however, fit with the observed movements of several Shark merchant fleets that have been reported as having vanished in recent months only to turn up again laden with goods to sell. From the amount of time they are off the radar, they cannot be returning to the Homeworlds or even to any of the Clan's Deep Periphery holdings. A closer depot in the Chainelaines would fit with the timetable. *[We don't know how long that base has been in operation, but I dispatched several of my people to investigate about six months ago. That they have not yet reported back is troublesome, and I suspect they were either discovered by the Shark Watch or ran afoul of one of the multitude of warring factions in the Isles. I am still deciding how to proceed and will include my decision in the next monthly report.—P]*

SEA CHANGE

With their planetary holdings still accounting for a minor portion of their Clan's resources, the Sharks have had to develop creative ways of maximizing their reach with what they have available to them. Chief among these developments is a series of changes being made to their WarShip fleet that may herald a major shift in their operational style in years to come.

Under a program instituted by saKhan Labov and Merchant Factor Lorenzo, the *Potemkin*-class *Poseidon*, which has long operated as the flagship of the Merchant Caste, has been retrofitted with a functional factory setup. In addition, four *Mule* DropShips have been permanently attached to the vessel's docking collars as habitats for the laborers and merchants who operate the factory. Operating as the core of a sizable merchant fleet, the *Poseidon* is able to act as both a mobile factory and protection for the merchant JumpShips that follow along to sell the products of its factories. In fact, the vessel is accompanied by anywhere from seven to twelve JumpShips at any given time. Though the *Potemkin*-class ship maintains an impressive offensive armament, as much as fifteen to twenty percent of its weaponry has apparently been removed to make room for the production facilities. To make up for this deficiency, Star Admiral Naomi Nagasawa has recently assigned the *Essex*-class *Tracy* as an escort for the *Poseidon* and its flotilla.

This structure is the result of a close collaboration between Merchant Factor Lorenzo and former saKhan Angus Labov, who initiated the project to alter the *Poseidon*, along with some new ideas about naval organization from Star Admiral Nagasawa. Though the *Nagasawa* and the *Terror* maintain permanent assignments over Itabaiana and Jonah's Reach, respectively, she has been shuffling the rest of the fleet around to provide protection for the increasing number of Shark merchant vessels flooding the spaceways. So far, the *Tsunami* and the *Red Tide* have had similar flotillas built around them, and it is expected that the other *Potemkin*s in the fleet will eventually follow suit.

Hampering Nagasawa's efforts is the inescapable fact that the Diamond Shark fleet has obviously taken some losses in recent years. Though because of their Periphery holdings we cannot be completely certain, at least half of their known fleet has not been sighted in the Inner Sphere. *[Even what we thought was a confirmed destruction is not so certain anymore; where the heck did the Titanic that was recently sighted at Ramora come from?—P]*

ALWAYS IN MOTION

Despite the limitations under which they have been forced to operate and the changes they are currently undergoing, the Diamond Sharks are clearly here to stay. Their recent acquisition of Ramora, Halfway, and an enclave on Tukayyid indicates that no part of the Inner Sphere will be denied their presence.

To date, the majority of their mercantile contacts with Spheroid worlds have been with either national or planetary governments. If they are to survive in these new waters, they must extend their operations to the common citizen of those worlds, and this is perhaps the biggest weakness of their plans. Many billions of people across the Inner Sphere recall the Clan invasion of twenty years ago with less than favorable opinions. The news that a Diamond Shark fleet has entered the system will more likely spook potential customers than encourage them to open their bank accounts. Overcoming this prejudice will be a major challenge for the Sharks.

Associating themselves with Devlin Stone's movement to defeat the Word of Blake is probably a good first step in that direction but is not likely to be enough in the short term. The big question will be whether the Sharks can find a solution to this problem fast enough to take advantage of the inevitable post-war rebuilding.

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

BARBARA SENNET

BARBARA SENNET

Rank/Title: Khan

Born: 3008 (68 in 3076)

Perhaps more than any other single individual, Barbara Sennet is responsible for the far-reaching changes the Diamond Shark Clan has undergone in the past two decades. From the very beginning of the Clan invasion, she has aggressively pursued new economic opportunities among not just the other Clans but also, despite resistance from both within and without, the wide-open markets of the various Inner Sphere nations. Now, with the Clan seemingly on the verge of another massive sea change, Sennet's firm and continuing leadership may be the only thing holding them steady.

When she became senior Khan after the death of Ian Hawker, Sennet was able to steer the clan away from the Crusader ideology espoused by her predecessor and embrace the spirit of Victor Davion's call for closer relations with the Inner Sphere. Alongside her saKhan Angus Labov, she encouraged Shark merchants to expand into the markets of the Great Houses, despite condemnation from the rest of the Clans.

Sennet's tactics appear to have paid off. With the recent acquisition of enclaves on Tukayyid, Ramora, and Halfway, the Sharks are expanding into brand-new markets ever more aggressively. Reports of Shark merchants on several worlds of the Federated Suns (this after the Suns purchased a number of Undine battle armor suits to use as the basis of their Hauberk design) indicate that the entire Inner Sphere may soon be opened up for economic exploitation.

As for Khan Sennet herself, though, numerous contacts in the Shark enclaves reliably report that of late she has seemed old and tired, as if the weight of the world sits on her shoulders. Combined with whatever is happening back in the Homeworlds, the years of change and pushing her Clan forward seem to have taken a rough toll on a woman who, though old by Clan standards, still has more than a few years ahead of her. Rumors that Sennet plans to retire to the Merchant Caste within the next couple of years are unconfirmed, but she has been relying more and more on saKhan Hawker to advance her agenda.

ALAN HAWKER

Rank/Title: saKhan

Born: 3033 (43 in 3076)

Alan Hawker used to be known as one of his Clan's foremost hotheads. His temper and aggression usually served him well against his enemies but hindered his career advancement for many years. Shortly after defeating a Goliath Scorpion force in a Trial of Possession for thirty-eight tons of freeze-dried ice cod from a fishery on Strana Mechty, Star Commander Alan entered

ALAN HAWKER

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

a Bloodname Grand Melee and progressed through the Trial with few difficulties. In the final combat, however, he nearly snatched defeat from the jaws of victory when his anger got the better of him and he came within one round of ammo of losing the whole Trial. Chagrined by his near loss and inspired to better his position in the Clan, the newly Bloodnamed Alan Hawker began making a concerted effort to rein in his anger. Subsequently, he forged a reputation as a dependable and capable officer, eventually working his way up to star colonel and aide to Khan Barbara Sennet.

At Khan Sennet's side, Hawker learned the finer points of command for several years. His hothead days behind him, he gained the admiration of many Diamond Shark warriors and merchants alike. The one issue in which his temper still gets the better of him is Clan Wolf, against whom he maintains a smoldering grudge for what he calls their "theft" of Ian Hawker's genetic legacy. Our analysts speculate that the lopsided deals the Sharks have recently struck with the Wolves are in large part due to Alan's influence.

Exactly when and under what circumstances Alan Hawker became saKhan of the Sharks is not known, but evidence points to it happening sometime around early 3072. Sources within the Clan have been reluctant to discuss much about what would seem to be a significant change in leadership. Though a skilled and talented warrior, Hawker does not possess the same level of skill in the economic arena that made his predecessor Angus Labov such a terror.

LORENZO

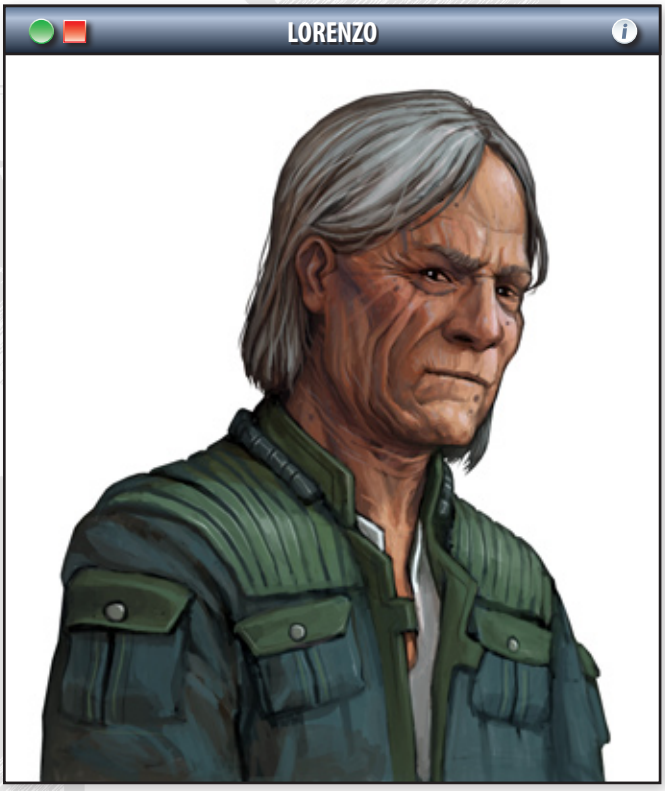
Rank/Title: Merchant Factor

Born: 3022 (54 in 3076)

In a clan known for the power of its Merchant Caste, it takes special ability to stand out and be elected leader, even more so when you are a political enemy of one of the Clan's Khans. Merchant Factor Lorenzo of the Diamond Sharks has confounded the expectations of many in his Clan by not only being elected leader of his caste but also performing those duties for close to three decades while spending much of his time in a long-standing feud with Khan Ian Hawker. Though he refuses to discuss the origins of this feud, Lorenzo flatly blames the Khan's actions during the initial stages of Operation Revival for prolonging their dispute and ensuring it would never be resolved amicably.

Under the leadership of Barbara Sennet and Angus Labov, Lorenzo has proven to be an outstanding factor. With the encouragement of Khan Sennet, he has sent his Merchants far and wide across the Inner Sphere and into the realms of the Deep Periphery. Lorenzo enjoyed an especially close working relationship with saKhan Labov, likely stemming from the latter's time among the Merchant Caste himself. Working hand in hand with his khans, Lorenzo opened markets in the Draconis Combine and pushed for the expansion of the Chatterweb into more worlds of the Occupation Zones. Strangely for a Clanner, he even enjoyed a friendship with the late Chandrasekhar Kurita and sent a delegation of merchants to the memorial service on New Samarkand last year.

Of late, Factor Lorenzo has agitated for greater protection from the Warrior Caste for Shark merchants expanding their area of operations to the war-torn planets of the Inner Sphere. Already, Shark WarShips have been sighted escorting merchant flotillas to several newly liberated worlds of the Lyran Alliance. Lorenzo has hinted to several of our agents that there may be further changes coming, though he has been vague about details.



OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

SEMI KALASA

Rank/Title: Loremaster, Head of the Watch

Born: 3016 (60 in 3076)

Semi Kalasa has always distrusted the Inner Sphere, and her work as head of the Diamond Shark Watch has not given her many opportunities to rethink that position. She does not, however, have to like the Inner Sphere to do her job well, and Semi Kalasa always does a good job. The near-complete absence of Shark military assets within the Occupation Zones since Tukayyid would normally have been a detriment to their intelligence efforts, but Kalasa has

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

utilized creative means of gathering reliable information secondhand, in many cases using other Clans' Watch organizations to do her work for her.

Born into an unremarkable sibko on Priori, Kalasa gained a reputation as a solid and reliable, if low-key, warrior through actions in the Homeworlds in the years prior to Operation Revival. She was elected to the position of Loremaster shortly before the invasion commenced and immediately began working with the Merchant Caste to gather data on both the military and economic capabilities of the Inner Sphere. As a result of these efforts, the Sharks have accumulated a mass of information over the years on both Clan and Spheroid operations that is practically unparalleled.

With the recent expansion of Diamond Shark operations deeper into the Inner Sphere, Loremaster Kalasa stands to increase the reach of the Watch even more. One of her pet projects is the connection of more worlds into the version of the Chatterweb that is slowly spreading across the Clan OZs. Though she plays up the mercantile benefits of this expansion, it has long been known that the Sharks use their access to the Chatterweb for intelligence-gathering operations. *[Now that the Sharks have begun acquiring holds on Inner Sphere worlds, the potential for electronic espionage may be too great for them to resist. We need to step up our efforts to infiltrate the Chatterweb system; this could be a major inroad into figuring out just what the hell is going on in the Homeworlds.—P]*

NAOMI NAGASAWA

Rank/Title: Star Admiral
Born: 3029 (47 in 3076)

The Canis Marinus sibko is renowned for the quality of the aerospace cadets it produces, though Naomi Nagasawa was never one of its top graduates. After barely passing her Trial of Position, the young pilot was assigned to the Sixty-first Air Assault cluster and expected to have an unremarkable career until she would finally be assigned to a *solahma* unit.

However, Pilot Naomi displayed an unexpected grasp of tactical doctrine during an engagement against the Star Adders when they came to test the will of the Sharks after their humiliating defeat on Tukayyid. Assuming command of her Star when her superior was killed, Naomi organized an attack on Adder air forces that ended up driving them from the system and saved the day for the Sharks. Shortly thereafter, Naomi was sponsored for and won a Bloodname and, within three weeks, a new rank.

Now assigned to the fighter complement of the Shark flagship *Terror of the Deep*, Nagasawa worked her way up the ranks until she was given command of the vessel and all Shark naval assets in 3070.

With the increased presence of the Sharks in the Inner Sphere, Star Admiral Nagasawa has begun to make changes in the organization of the fleet. She has met with some resistance among older commanders, though she has the support of both Khans. Still, she needs to win over the rank and file to her new doctrine, and to this end she has cultivated relationships with several influential Warriors. Nagasawa also frequently travels between her flagship in the Twycross system and the Diamond Shark capital on Itabaiana for meetings with both the Warrior Council and the Merchant Council.

The Star Admiral is admired by Shark naval crews and is known to spend a lot of her downtime with her pilots, even personally taking part in exercises from the cockpit of a *Sabutai* she has nicknamed "Raw Deal."

XOC

Rank/Title: Star Captain, Seventh Cruiser Cluster
Born: 3052 (24 in 3076)

Nova Cats would probably see Star Captain Xoc's birth from the first sibko produced after the disastrous defeat at Tukayyid as a sign that he is intimately connected to the birth of a new era for their Clan. The more practical Diamond Sharks associate no such significance to his birth but cannot deny the charisma of this young ristar. Gregarious and friendly in a way most Clan warriors are not, Xoc without a doubt is representative of a new attitude among Shark warriors.

Though no one is willing to say when or under what circumstances, Xoc apparently distinguished himself in recent military actions, earning his rank with the Seventh Cruiser and adding to his codex. It is likely he will enter Trials for the next available Hammond Bloodname, and if he is half as skilled as his supporters claim, he is a shoo-in to win. In the meantime, Xoc contents himself with talking up his vision for the future of his clan. *[He may talk up his "vision" among his fellow Sharks, but this young man is maddeningly coy about his ideas around our agents. Considering the impact the Sharks will have—and are already having—on the economy of the Inner Sphere, it would probably be a good idea to pursue this further. If Xoc truly is going to be as important to the future of his clan as his supporters claim, the sooner we know his plans, the better.—P]*

It has become clear lately that Xoc has allied himself politically with Star Admiral Naomi Nagasawa and her radical ideas about reorganizing the Shark touman. On the latter's most recent visit to Itabaiana, the two were seen several times in conference and appeared very friendly. The extent of their collaboration is unknown, but given Xoc's low position in the Shark command structure, it can't be that substantial. More likely, Nagasawa is hedging her bets by involving this young tyro with big ideas, gambling that he will one day be as important as some seem to think.

CORPORATIONS OF THE DIAMOND SHARK HOLDINGS

Trellshire Heavy Industries

Once a thriving and profitable BattleMech factory, the Trellshire Heavy Industries site on Twycross has seen several ups and downs over the course of the 31st century. When the company was hit with a financial scandal in 3012, severe economic penalties were levied against the company, and production stalled for many years. By the time of the Clan invasion, however, the factory was once more turning out such models as the BLR-1G *BattleMaster*, the STK-3F *Stalker*, and the RFL-3N *Rifleman*.

The destruction visited upon the THI facilities during the invasion was extreme enough that the Jade Falcons completely wrote off the planet as worthless and turned instead to the company's factories on other worlds, such as the OZ capital of Sudeten.

Once the Diamond Sharks took over Twycross, however, they quickly reactivated the old facilities and began pumping out both new and old designs. One of the first such was the redesigned *Phoenix Hawk IIC*, though it was soon followed by the so-called Clan Medium Battle Armor and other BattleMechs.

The Trellshire facilities on Twycross have since become one of the most important parts of the Diamond Shark industrial base. Exports have increased over the past few years, with much of that going to Clan Wolf, which suffers a lack of BattleMech production facilities of their own. New lines have opened up in the past three years, with more rumored to be in the works, including a new *Crimson Hawk* line.

With most of their factories on Itabaiana and Trondheim geared towards producing Clantech equipment, the THI site is the Sharks' number one producer of Inner Sphere technology and therefore the main source for sales to the Great Houses. A near-constant stream of merchant convoys to and from the planet keeps the factories running nonstop.

TRELLSHIRE
HEAVY INDUSTRIES

In addition to Inner Sphere BattleMech designs and Clan refits, Trellshire is the chief site for battle armor production for the Sharks. The presence of an organic compound almost identical to HarJel on Jonah's Reach makes Twycross the ideal location for construction.

Shark Mobile Production Sites

Like most other Clans in the Inner Sphere, the Diamond Sharks brought with them several mobile factories that they could set up on conquered worlds. Unlike the others, however, the Sharks appear to have installed at least one of these on a WarShip, making it a truly mobile factory.

The largest of the planet-bound mobile sites in operation is Industriplex-C on Itabaiana. This is the Sharks' primary OmniMech production site, as well as the location of a significant portion of their battle armor output. The first design produced here was the so-called Clan Medium Battle Armor, the plans for which they received from the Nova Cats as part of the deal that gave the Sharks possession of Itabaiana.

Industriplex-C also functions as the Sharks' primary research and development facility. StarCorps agents have recently verified that Scientist-General Judy Bland's efforts to create a Clan version of the Federated Suns' rotary autocannon have produced a successful prototype, and the weapon has begun shipping to various Shark units.

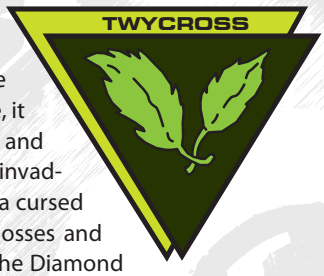
The Diamond Sharks' most innovative project to date, however, has been the installation of a complete BattleMech factory onboard one of their WarShips. Prior to about 3070, they had experimented with smaller-scale factories on several vessels, but the final culmination of those experiments came with a project initiated by then-saKhan Angus Labov and Merchant Factor Lorenzo. Tearing out a number of cargo bays and restructuring the internals of the *Potemkin*-class *Poseidon*, they were able to create a truly mobile BattleMech production site. This redesign necessitated the permanent attachment of several *Mule*-class DropShips to the *Poseidon* to house the laborers and merchants who run the factory. The *Poseidon* now forms the core of a sizable merchant fleet and produces several BattleMech designs for the Sharks, including the *Solitaire* and the *Warhammer IIC*.

With the success of this project, the Sharks are expected to move forward with more WarShip-borne factories, but none has been identified as of yet.

KEY WORLDS OF THE DIAMOND SHARK CLAN

TWYCROSS

Star Type (Recharge Time): FoIV (171 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 21.94 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Twycross III)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 65°C (Desert)
Surface Water Coverage: 40 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 1,237,735,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-C-C-D



In the annals of the Clan-Inner Sphere conflict, the planet Twycross holds special significance to both sides. For the Inner Sphere, it is a symbol of one of the earliest and most spectacular defeats of the invading foe. For the Jade Falcons, it is a cursed world, site of two embarrassing losses and a colossal economic blunder. To the Diamond Sharks, however, Twycross is an important world for the future of their Clan, one that they will protect with every ounce of their might.

First settled during the height of the Star League, the extreme weather conditions on Twycross limited the number of colonists for the first few decades. The planet is mostly desert, and its proximity to the large, hot sun results in devastating winds and storms that constantly scour the surface. The greatest of these storms is the Diabolis, which blows across the main landmass in an unending cycle. Spawning off the Diabolis, numerous other great tornadoes and other weather disturbances ensure the inhabitants of Twycross never know peace. Yet they have adapted to the nature of this planet, and most natives scarcely react to the vast storms with anything but an indifference born of familiarity.

The people of Twycross are an interesting blend of rough, frontier settlers eking out a living in the desert soil and cultured sophisticates inhabiting the few large cities dotting the planet's surface. In fact, the cultural life of Camora, the capital city and major population center, would be considered provincial at best in other areas of the Inner Sphere, but the extreme conditions and the system's position near the Periphery edge of what used to be Lyran space prevent most cultural trends from gaining a foothold here. That the world has been under Clan domination for over two decades now obviously has not helped either.

The main claim to fame of this world—apart from its place in the history of the Clan invasion—is the presence of Trellshire Heavy Industries. Once one of the premier producers of such BattleMech models as the STK-3F *Stalker* and the BLR-1G *BattleMaster*, the company's involvement in a major financial scandal in 3012 and its subsequent probation caused hardships for the planet's inhabitants for many years.

By the time of the Clan invasion, the economy had recovered, and THI was in the midst of a program of expansion when the Jade Falcons came calling. Though the Twycross TMM held out for three weeks against this onslaught, eventually they evacuated the planet, carrying vital data for the AFFC High Command regarding Clan capabilities and tactics. This data was instrumental in planning the recapture of Twycross, a campaign that would have come to a cruel end if not for the quick actions of Leftenant Kai Allard-Liao in the Great Gash.

With the fighting on Twycross, the THI facilities had been damaged to such an extent that the Falcon Khans wrote off the planet as worthless, and the populace barely noticed that they were under occupation. In 3057, the Falcons again fought in the Great Gash, this time against the forces of Clan Wolf. In this engagement, the infamous Natasha Kerensky was killed, redeeming the planet a bit from its cursed past. However, eight years later, the Falcon Guards were once more humiliated by Spheroid forces and Khan Pryde vowed her Clan would never set foot in the cursed system again. This opened the door for the Diamond Sharks, who had recently discovered a source for a HarJel-like substance on Jonah's Reach, an uninhabitable outer planet in the system. The Falcons would dearly love to gain access to this supply that was right under their nose and in doing so break the Sharks' monopoly on HarJel, but their honor prevents them from making a move.

Since acquiring the Twycross system, the Sharks have turned the planet into one of their most important possessions. They repaired and reactivated the old Trellshire Heavy Industries BattleMech factory, increasing the number of production lines in the process, and have been developing it as a major manufacturing site. Thus far, their number one client is Clan Wolf, which has no BattleMech production sites of its own. Through the canny bidding skills of Shark merchants, the Wolves are paying much more than they are comfortable with for this materiel, but they have little choice.

The Sharks maintain a sizable force on Twycross to protect the valuable production lines there. In addition to a full Galaxy, the Shark flagship, *Terror of the Deep*, is permanently stationed at Jonah's Reach.

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

ITABAIANA

Star Type (Recharge Time): G8V (189 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 6.18 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (São Cristóvão, Diamante, Cara dos Peixes)
Surface Gravity: 0.92
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 25°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 60 percent
Highest Native Life: Amphibians
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A (Clan)
Population (3076): 2,385,714,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-A-B-C

Salem IV was settled in the early 2200s by a group of Brazilians seeking their fortunes. The Terran New Habitant corporation had recently surveyed the planet and discovered significant rhenium deposits that would be accessible with a little work and felt that contracting with a large homogeneous ethnic population would be a good solution to transforming the planet into a profitable investment. When the Liberals came to power in the elections of 2237 and granted independence to all worlds more than thirty light years from Terra, the Salemites were left on their own, whether they wanted it or not.

After a few decades, when it became obvious that Terra had completely abandoned them and would not be coming back, the citizens of Salem IV held a referendum and renamed their world to better reflect their national origin. The newly christened Itabaiana soon drew the attention of the Ozawa Mercantile Association and, through that group's feud with Shiro Kurita, the Alliance of Galedon. Before long, they were made aware of the "benefits" to be had in joining the Alliance and agreed to become part of Kurita's expanding star empire. The existing Brazilian population eventually became a minority, but the planet retained the names they had given its features, and every few decades it becomes fashionable to give children Portuguese names.

During the Star League, Itabaiana was a top supplier of industrial-grade rhenium to SLDF-contracted companies. As such, it was home to a small garrison of League troops, which was a source of continued tension with the Kuritas. When General Kerensky vanished from the Inner Sphere and took the garrison force with him, Coordinator Minoru wasted no time in seizing the factories and smelting plants. Itabaiana became one of the Combine's primary sources of rhenium during the Succession Wars but paradoxically never possessed much of a defensive force. Though the populace continually complained about feeling exposed to Lyran predation, the planet came through the wars relatively unscathed. It wasn't until the Clan invasion that any significant enemy threatened Itabaiana. Due to the lack of defenses, Clan Nova Cat was able to simply walk in and claim the planet.

Unlike the Combine, the Nova Cats garrisoned the planet with a sizable force to prevent anyone from seizing the riches of Itabaiana. Despite this, however, the garrison's martial force played no role when the planet next transferred hands. The Fifth Sun Zhang Cadre narrowly defeated the Forty-fourth Nova Cat Cavaliers on the soccer field and the world passed back into Kurita hands, though it formed part of the Nova Cats' Irece Prefecture and they maintained administrative control.

The climate of Itabaiana is exceedingly pleasant, with mean temperatures and weather conditions so agreeable as to almost be dull. The terrain is fairly unremarkable, even generic, and there are few noted physical features to draw tourists or scientists. The main claim to fame of the planet is its extensive rhenium deposits, which can be found on each of the six major landmasses (Coelho, Tesouras, Mato Grosso, Cerrado, Cauda do Macaco, and Arado) in abundance. During the Kurita years, strip mining on Tesouras decimated the ecosystem there, and to this day few inhabitants call this continent home. The capital city of Brasilia lies on the coast of Mato Grosso and is the location of the planet's sole spaceport.

In August 3065, the Diamond Sharks conducted a series of Trials with the Nova Cats that resulted in a mutually beneficial arrangement between the two Clans. In exchange for two percent of the HarJel production from the Twycross system, the Sharks were given Itabaiana as a trading outpost. Additionally, the Sharks agreed to give the Cats right of first refusal on rhenium exports for the next ten years and a discount on those shipments. This has freed the Cats from the expense of extracting the ore while giving the Sharks another base from which their merchant fleets can spread.

Since the transfer, Itabaiana has become the Shark's de facto capital world in the Inner Sphere. Khan Barbara Sennet has set up her office in Brasilia, and a temporary Clan Council Hall has been erected ten miles outside of the city. The Cats had constructed a single factory complex on the Tesouras continent, and the Sharks have not only expanded it but have also added two more on Mato Grosso and Coelho.

FINS IN THE WATER: THE DIAMOND SHARK TOUMAN

Nailing down the disposition of the Diamond Shark Touman is an exercise in frustration. Unlike the other Clans with Inner Sphere holdings, the Sharks possess few worlds on which to station their forces, which means fewer opportunities for our agents to establish which units are assigned where. They seem to want to keep particular clusters on specific worlds and do not rotate them out very often, making it easy to figure out those units but difficult to discover what forces the Sharks have elsewhere. These clusters on the whole appear solid and at full strength, indicative of the Clan's intent to hold onto these worlds they have won, but these

CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

pieces of data tell us next to nothing about the total strength of the Sharks.

In addition to these planet-bound clusters, the last ten years have seen the Sharks begin permanently stationing units on WarShips, giving them a significant mobile force that defies easy analysis. Part of the problem, of course, is that with the cluster's ground forces locked up inside a vessel, our analysts cannot determine which units they actually are. More than that, though, it is nearly impossible to tell from casual observation whether a given WarShip has a cluster stationed onboard; the recent experiment with using military vessels to transport Diamond Shark merchants increases this difficulty.

[NOTE: In the sections that follow, we have made our best efforts at a complete picture of the Shark Touman. Know, however, that this picture is almost certainly woefully incomplete for a number of reasons. Ultimately, I must caution that if a Cluster or Galaxy or WarShip does not receive a mention, do not assume it no longer exists. As mentioned earlier in this report, the Sharks appear to have several Deep Periphery bases and would have forces stationed there, limiting their exposure to the Inner Sphere and our analysis.]

DIAMOND SHARK TOUMAN

Deathstrike Galaxy (Alpha)

Apart from the Thirty-ninth Strike Cluster, this Galaxy appears to have come to the Inner Sphere relatively intact. We have confirmed sightings of the Diamond Skate on Itabaiana and it appears to be at or near full strength. The remaining two Clusters likewise are approaching full strength, though it is far more obvious that they have undergone some rough fighting in recent years.

Predator Galaxy (Beta)

The recent Diamond Shark victory that gained them an enclave on Tukayyid was achieved by the Pearl Skate and the *Nagasawa*. Interestingly, Raven Ghiberti is no longer in command, with the Galaxy instead under the leadership of saKhan Alan Hawker. The Seventh Cruiser and Sixth Strike Clusters maintain their postings on Itabaiana and Trondheim, respectively.

Snapping Jaws Galaxy (Gamma)

This galaxy has long been stationed in the Twycross system, on which the Sharks place great importance. The one cluster that has not made an appearance lately is the Emerald Skate, under the command of Angus Labov. Coupled with Alan Hawker as the new saKhan, this probably indicates Labov and the Skate are no longer among the living.

Bloodscent Galaxy (Omega)

All of this Galaxy's clusters appear to be at full strength and are maintaining the same postings they have held since the mid-3060s.

Fox's Whelps Galaxy (Sigma)

As of 3067, all of the Fox's Whelps clusters were stationed in the Homeworlds as the primary garrison force of the Clan. The Moonstone Skate and Galaxy Commander Duaine Borghev were recorded as visiting Itabaiana just two months ago, but the rest of this Galaxy remains unconfirmed. They either remain in the Homeworlds or are possibly posted to the Sharks' Deep Periphery holdings.

Other Forces

We have no current information on the Starstrike (Lambda Spina), Steelsoul (Rho Spina) or Territorial Waters (Zeta) Galaxies, as none of their Clusters have appeared in the Inner Sphere recently.

Naval Assets

Our picture of the Diamond Shark naval assets is just as incomplete as that of their regular forces. A number of WarShips have not been seen in the Inner Sphere in several years, but what that means for their status is unknown. It is possible they are protecting the Sharks' Homeworld assets or their Deep Periphery holdings, or they could be destroyed in the fighting that seems to have broken out in the Homeworlds. In particular, the Black Diamond Naval Star has a higher percentage of missing vessels than either of the other groups. We have recent confirmed sightings of the *Potemkin*-class *Poseidon*, *Tsunami*, *Red Tide*, and *Kraken*; the *Sovetskii Soyuz*-class *Nagasawa*; the *Nightlord*-class *Terror of the Deep*; the *Lola III*-class *Space Hunter*; the *Carrack*-class *Devourer*; and the *Essex*-class *Tracy*.

In addition, there are a couple of oddities we have recorded. First, we confirmed through the Chatterweb reports that the *Potemkin*-class *Titanic* was destroyed running the Star Adder blockade of York in 3073. Yet, in October 3076, a Diamond Shark *Potemkin* sighted above Ramora allegedly identified itself as the *Titanic*. Given the prickly nature of the Snow Ravens to queries from outsiders, we have not yet been able to investigate this appearance or what it means.

The second oddity our agents have reported is the appearance of a previously unknown *Essex*-class destroyer in the Shark fleet. First sighted over Twycross in 3075, it was identified as the *Architeuthis*, a name that does not match any known Clan vessel. Where this *Essex* came from is a mystery.

CLAN SNOW RAVEN | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

CLAN SNOW RAVEN

There is much that sets Clan Snow Raven apart from the majority of Kerensky's heirs. They waste nothing, take only the most calculated of risks, and—while they value their honor above all else—they hold wisdom and cunning in higher esteem than bravado and martial prowess. Though no Snow Raven would count it as a compliment, they have more in common with the pragmatic Clan Diamond Shark than any of their more flamboyant cousins. Do not count on what you think you know of Clanner mores and psychology when dealing with the Snow Ravens, whether on the battlefield or in the negotiation chamber. They have studied the Inner Sphere enough to anticipate your prejudices and are canny enough use your preconceptions against you.

POLITICS AND MACHINATIONS

The Snow Ravens are arguably the most politically astute of all the Clans. Subtlety is their byword; they are reputed to have elevated misdirection without lying to an art. "Without lying" is key—less than a century ago a Khan who sabotaged Clan Diamond Shark dishonorably was killed and replaced by his saKhan. Thus while Snow Raven negotiating tactics may seem Machiavellian to the point of making Capellans appear blunt, their integrity and honesty within the context of their own code of honor cannot be questioned (in fact, it should not be questioned unless you are prepared to duel to the death). It should be noted that no one rises to authority within Clan Snow Raven who has not first been inducted into the Order of the Raven. Membership in the Order requires conspicuous gallantry and sacrifice in putting the honor and goals of the Clan ahead of one's own well-being. While leadership in many Clans is decided by military success and duels, the Snow Ravens rely on a series of evaluations so constant that nearly everything can become a test. Closely guarded by the Loremaster is a complex ranking system known as "the list" that delineates the exact ranking of every warrior based on his or her success in these tests.

The Snow Ravens are insular, even by Clan standards. They seldom take bondsmen; those that are taken find it rare to be adopted fully into the Clan.

There is little data on events in Clan space, particularly in the centuries before their invasion of the Inner Sphere, so it would be risky to give any theories particular weight or regard "common knowledge" as more than speculation based on rumor. That being said, these rumors and speculations, taken in conjunction with what can be observed, can provide useful clues and insights. One legend in standard currency is that Clan Snow Raven suffered terrible devastation at some point in their early history. It is almost certain nuclear weapons were involved and that their assailants were Clan Wolverine, the annihilated Clan all modern Clans refuse to name. The reasons behind not naming the Clan are tied to the idea that never mentioning a vanquished enemy somehow adds to their destruction, and it is an example of the almost superstitious traditions that once hampered Clanners' ability to adapt to new ways of thinking and limited their responses when faced with the unexpected. While the Snow Ravens have overcome this philosophical rigidity more than most Clans, this is one tradition they still adhere to. Despite the Snow Ravens' seeming flexibility, it is always good to remember they are still one of the Clans, and the traditions and assumptions common to their people should always be kept in mind when dealing with them.

RUMORS AND THREADS

A more recent rumor—one that seems to have the weight of truth, though its sources are among the Snow Ravens' bitterest enemies and it cannot be corroborated by independent sources—is that Clan Snow Raven has lost their Homeworld to Clan Star Adder. Believed to be the largest and best equipped of the Clans, particularly since they have not expended a significant fraction their resources against the Inner Sphere, the Star Adders would be well able to defeat, if not destroy, the Snow Ravens if they so desired. It is assumed by some that they have already done the first and are bent on the second. As noted elsewhere, Clan Snow Raven naval assets, civilian JumpShips, and Mobile Production Sites have arrived in Outworlds Alliance space showing battle damage that cannot be attributed to any action against the Word of Blake or Inner Sphere nation. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Star Adders are bent on annihilating the Snow Ravens. The Clans as a whole value overall stability through the judicious balance of powers—a fundamental principle that has no doubt kept them from destroying each other in years past. It is difficult to imagine circumstances that would provoke the Grand Council to permit internecine warfare on this scale. The most likely explanation for both the Snow Ravens' presence in the Outworlds Alliance and the apparent condition of their assets is that the Clan suffered a significant setback in the Homeworlds region and is diversifying their holdings and decentralizing essential resources by establishing a secondary base of operations.

Whatever the particulars of recent events, it was their near-destruction early in their history that shaped Snow Raven culture and battle tactics. The Snow Raven respect for their Scientist and Technician castes is second only to that of Clan Diamond Shark. It has been observed that in any situation, whether positioning one of their orbital factories or occupying a world like Dante, the Snow Ravens take the security of their non-Warriors seriously. The most obvious reason for this is their heavy reliance on naval technology, but it also indicates an ingrained awareness of limitations, or perhaps limited resources. Whereas most Clanners would not admit the importance of the noncombatants who make day-to-day living possible, the Snow Ravens treat these support personnel as assets to be protected. In the same manner, Snow Ravens are slow to commit ground forces. BattleMechs and Elementals do not engage until aerospace or naval assets have first done what damage they can. Even with conventional forces, it is standard Snow Raven doctrine

to employ saturation artillery in conjunction with aerospace strikes before committing infantry and armor. This arms-length combat—very different from the Clan norm—would seem to be an artifact of generations spent husbanding limited resources.

TOIL AND TENACITY

It has been be surmised from their extensive fleet, particularly their remarkable space-going Mobile Production Sites, that Clan Snow Raven is used to making do with few planetary assets. Whether this is by necessity or preference is subject to debate. Contributing to the impression that Clan Snow Raven is not particularly concerned with blue-sky real estate—and underscoring the degree to which their military philosophy differs from that of most Clans we have encountered—is their punitive bombardment of Galedon. No one who values a world would mete out such wholesale destruction reminiscent of the wars that led to the Ares Conventions. Their orbital strikes against Dante were surgical in their precision while still being devastatingly destructive. First-hand observations have confirmed that no city, military base, pirate stronghold, or major manufacturing center remains. The Snow Ravens wiped the world clean in a way no planet-based power would have considered.

Though their battles on other worlds were not as brutal, the workmanlike efficiency of Snow Raven warfare has been a constant. Some analysts believe they are conserving resources, a possible indication that the Clan is in a weakened or diminished state. However, given their history, it is more likely a manifestation of their ingrained pragmatism. Or perhaps they have come to know enough of Inner Sphere ways to not waste Clan traditions and Clan concepts of honor on enemies that appreciate neither.

Close observers, however, believe that the two worlds the Snow Ravens hold within the Outworlds Alliance—Quatre Belle by treaty and Dante by possession—could make up as much as one-fourth to one-third of their actual planetary holdings. Lest that estimate be given too much weight, it is good to remember that as nearly as we can determine, Clan Diamond Shark controls even fewer worlds yet remains one of the most vital and influential of the Clans.

In dealing with Clan Snow Raven it is best to bear in mind that there are always levels beneath levels and wheels within wheels. Whatever you know beyond a doubt to be true about their actions, their objectives, and their motives is almost certainly wrong.

OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

When retired admiral Julius Santiago Avellar chose to make Alpheratz his home in 2413, the planet was an inconspicuous backwater world in an unincorporated region of the Periphery. Blessed with abundant resources and a temperate climate very similar to Terra and left unspoiled (or undeveloped, depending on one's perspective) by colonists who shared Avellar's desire for a simpler life, Alpheratz seemed tailor-made for dropping quietly into obscurity. No one could have anticipated the consequences when Avellar began to write of his experiences and begin the spiritual journey that led to his giving up war. The population of the world grew tenfold in a dozen years as people moved by his simple philosophy of peace came seeking a homeland free of war. At first there was economic and political chaos, of course, but Avellar and others—some of whom recognized the economic benefits of the world's untapped resources—rose to the occasion. His legacy, which endured over six and a half centuries, was a nation of thirty-seven semi-autonomous worlds united by their dedication to peace, equality, and freedom.

A nation not regarded as powerful, or even particularly significant, by its more martial neighbors, the Outworlds Alliance takes pride in declaring that though it has been occupied, it has never been conquered. This claim is strictly true only if one defines "never" as since the Reunification War. The Alliance was still a loose association of worlds lacking a central government when the Star League sent Terran Hegemony and Draconis Combine forces to garrison several Alliance worlds "for their own protection." Riots errupted on these worlds, most notably on Santiago. Most historians credit "the "Santiago Massacre" and other such incidents with triggering the Reunification War. This universally accepted credo reveals much about the mindset of the Alliance citizens. They traditionally attribute their freedom to their commitment to nonviolent respect. That this philosophy allowed the Word of Blake to subjugate Dante and secretly transform it into a base for dozens of ersatz pirate bands is not lost on the citizens of the Alliance; they are not idiots. They see Dante not as a refutation of their beliefs, but as a warning that the respect and acceptance they offer must be tempered with vigilance. How they will meld their fundamental tenets with their deepening alliance with the martial Snow Ravens remains to be seen.

THE LAND OF DEMOCRACY

To an outside observer, the people of the Outworlds Alliance seem to love democracy and independence from a central government to the extent the Alliance central government is almost a non-entity. Checks and balances, like the requirement for a unanimous Executive Parlimentary vote to approve any new legislation, has kept the Alliance nearly paralyzed (though it makes the Alliance President and MPs past masters of political horse trading). Planetary Parliaments, while constrained to protect the basic rights of citizens outlined in the Alliance Charter, have comparatively free hands to run their worlds as they and their electorates see fit. Case in point is the Alliance's ability to maintain continuity of government when the Word of Blake destroyed their capitol. In any other nation the wholesale slaughter of the legislature would have been a crippling, if not fatal blow. True, the survival of President Avellar provided a rallying symbol, but the nation not only recovered but rebounded because of the redundant institutions already in place. The chair of

every planetary parliament also sat on the Executive Parliament, ensuring there were people in authority on each of the Alliance's thirty-seven worlds with the knowledge and the resources to keep the nation functioning. One of those thirty-sevenworlds was a Word of Blake stronghold—with a Word of Blake operative sitting on the Executive Parliament, privy to every secret and mechanism of the Outworlds' government and military. Such a viper in the nest could have brought the nation down from within, but while the Blakists slowed and misdirected some of the Alliance's early efforts, they were unable to subjugate the whole as they did other, more traditionally organized nations. "Over-engineered" is the descriptor that comes to mind when considering the complexity and structure of the Outworlds Alliance government, but their supporters would point out that their engineering made the government strong enough to withstand a deep crisis.

How will this complex, cumbersome, yet flexible system mesh with the linear, efficient, but tradition-bound structure of Clan Snow Raven? If this union is to grow and move forward, both partners will have to change and adapt at a fundamental level. If they are smart and patient enough they will take what is best from each system and alloy them into a new and stronger whole. But these are two peoples known for their entrenched and unflinching resolve to hold fast to what they believe to be right. It is possible that this melding will degenerate into internal strife as each tries to bend the other to its will, leading to an ideological conflict that will likely produce no clear victor.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

LYNN MCKENNA

Rank/Title: Khan of Clan Snow Raven

Born: 2991 (85 in 3076)

One would be well advised to consider Khan Lynn McKenna's appearance carefully. She is so slightly built that she is frequently assumed to be a member of the aerospace phenotype. Her thick halo of downy white curls frames a round and pleasant face one associates with kindly aunts at holidays. One's first instinct is to relax in her presence—until one remembers that for nearly forty of her almost ninety years Lynn McKenna has been the undisputed Khan of a Clan famous for relentless perseverance and infamous for ruthless politics.

Legend has it that Khan McKenna developed her political acumen and indomitable spirit as a child. The story is she was singled out for particular abuse due to her tiny stature, but she turned the tables on her tormentors, defeating those she could through determination and tenacity that outlasted strength, and turning those she could not defeat against each other. The truth of this tale—accepted as gospel among the Snow Ravens—cannot now be verified. But it also cannot be disputed that in many ways Khan McKenna embodies the ideals and attitudes

that shape Snow Raven thought, making her as much symbol as leader of her people.

With the loss of so many leaders among the Snow Raven Warrior Caste over the last decade, Khan McKenna has taken unusual steps in preparing a pool of potential successors. It has been observed that there is a cadre or college of candidates without official public rank who take part in the administration of the Clan. Though the mechanics of the system are a closely guarded secret, it is generally known these men and women must match wits daily in competitive and cooperative contests. Deaths and disappearances of candidates indicate these are not friendly competitions.

ALBERTO CROW

Rank/Title: saKhan of Clan Snow Raven

Born: 3037 (39 in 3076)

Alberto Crow became a Star Colonel of the Sixth Raven Regulars at age twenty-three, taking command of two hundred MechWarriors, Elementals and Aerospace pilots at an age when most MechWarriors of the Inner Sphere are completing their academy tour. Nothing in his career since has indicated that this meteoritic rise was a fluke. Nor is this a simple product of his youth, energy, and luck—though those are certainly factors. Details of Clan on Clan campaigns are lacking, of course, but Clanners love a good war story, and there is no shortage of anecdotes and "eyewitness" accounts in circulation. Crow has a reputation for being habitually victorious. If he has any flaw, it may be that his eye is always too much on the prize. Accounts indicate

ALBERT CROW

Crow spent months politically isolating his predecessor, saKhan Broderick Sukhanov, before Sukhanov was critically wounded in the Dante accident of 3071. At first glance, that would seem to be patience; however, those same months saw a significant rise in Trials of Position and Grievance within the Sixth Raven Regulars, evidence that officers of his command were taking advantage of his upward focus to realign and consolidate their own positions. His campaigns against the Draconis Combine have been well orchestrated but brutal; the saKhan does not shy from inflicting collateral damage in achieving his objectives. For all his acumen and savvy, at little more than one-third the age of the current Khan, Crow lacks the maturity and wisdom the Snow Ravens look for in their leaders. Nor is he a member of Khan Lynn McKenna's "college of successors." However, given his power and popularity, it would not be unreasonable to assume that whoever assumes the Khanship of the Snow Ravens after Lynn McKenna's passing will do so only with Alberto Crow's support. Or his head on a pike.

N | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

MITCHELL AVELLAR

Rank/Title: President of the Outworlds Alliance

Born: 3035 (41 in 3076)

At forty-one, Mitchell Avellar has been President of the Outworlds Alliance for nearly half his life. In his twenty years as leader of the Alliance, he strengthened the national identity of the disparate worlds, managing to build consensus where once there was barely cooperation. Before the Blakist Jihad exploded, the success of Avellar's "Long Road" economic initiatives domestically and his trade agreements with neighboring states had done much to revitalize the Alliance's infrastructure and industry. He had all but silenced the separatist movement and consolidated more authority to the office of president than any of his predecessors.

Though the war has grievously depleted Alliance military capability and resources, there is every sign that the nation will recover. Part of that recovery will be a rebuilding of the AMC, and for that the Alliance will need to look beyond their domestic manufacturing capabilities. However, the AMC will never be a major military power, and not only because martial force is contrary to the philosophy of the Alliance. In light of that fact, Clan Snow Raven seems to be assuming some responsibility for national defense.

Since the destruction of Famindas on Alpheratz, Avellar has become more closely tied to the Snow Ravens. Indeed, for a few weeks after the destruction of the capital, Avellar and his cabinet were housed aboard a Snow Raven WarShip, ostensibly for their own protection. While turning to the more powerful Clan for protection when the Alliance security infrastructure was so obviously compromised was prudent in the short run, it may have cost Avellar politically because it created the impression of the leader of a pacifist nation barricading himself behind a wall of guns to protect himself. Nonetheless, Avellar continues to be a dynamic leader. Though he is depicted by his detractors as catering to the whims of invaders, the emerging alliance between the Snow Ravens and the Outworlds Alliance would be a much more Clan-centric were it not for his tenacious championing of the values and needs of his people.

MITCHELL AVELLAR

CLAN SNOW RAVEN | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

MAURICE AVELLAR

Rank/Title: Senior Chairman / Commander of Alliance Military Corps

Born: 3024 (52 in 3076)

Technically second in command of the Alliance Military Corps, Senior Chairman Maurice Avellar has been their de facto commander since his cousin elevated him to the position twenty years ago. The promotion was seen as blatant nepotism at the time, a perception that made his early years difficult. However history has proven President Avellar knew what he was doing, even though he was caught flat-footed by the Word of Blake—but then, one would be hard-pressed to find a military commander who wasn't. In all other respects Maurice has been an exemplary leader.

In a nation that eschews violence, the military runs the risk of becoming the haven of last resort for individuals unable to succeed in other arenas. Maurice Avellar purged many of these dead-enders from the AMC through in a series of competency and aptitude assessments. Even before the infusion of Clan Snow Raven expertise, he had initiated a reform of the military training camps, raising both the instruction and the expectations for infantry and armor to levels never before attained by the Alliance. While much has been made of the time it took the Outworlds to understand and respond to Word of Blake attacks, the fact that they responded so well and so thoroughly is a testament to Maurice Avellar's twenty years of effort. It is true that they learned much fighting beside Clan Snow Raven, but they would not have understood those lessons without the foundation laid by Avellar.

It is significant that Maurice Avellar began his career with the Avellar Guards—an infantry regiment. The Alliance Ground Defense Arm has always been the least respected and most poorly equipped arm of the nation's military. Avellar has always led from the front, bivouacking and marching with his men. He understands the needs of the common soldier and the importance of boots on the ground in ways few commanders can. That he has not only won over both the elite—and elitist—Alliance Aerospace Arm but forged the AAA, AGDA, and non-military Alliance Service Arm into a unified whole speaks volumes. Even with Clan Snow Raven taking the lead in matters of defense, any military decisions made by the Outworlds Alliance will be made by Senior Chairman Maurice Avellar.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

KLAUS HARPER

Rank/Title: Loremaster of Clan Snow Raven/Head of the Watch

Born: 3022 (54 in 3076)

Twenty-one years ago Star Colonel Klaus Harper, commander of the First Raven Phalanx, turned down an opportunity to become saKhan under Khan Lynn McKenna and took on the role of Clan Loremaster. His decision was controversial, reportedly damaging his relationship with his Khan and standing within House Harper. Time, however, has proven the wisdom of his choice. Harper is regarded as a voice of wisdom within the Clan, building consensus among competitive factions. His utility in ensuring the nuts-and-bolts, day-to-day success of Khan McKenna's leadership cannot be underestimated.

Loremaster Harper defies stereotype. Large even by Elemental standards, the map of war is writ large on his battered face and scarred hands. Yet his voice is that of a scholar—or a priest—and his knowledge of all things even tangentially related to Clan Snow Raven's history and heritage is encyclopedic.

All of which begs the question of where he stands in relation to Khan Lynn McKenna's evident intention to form a union with the Outworlds Alliance. There is nothing in the traditions of the Clan that supports this course of action, nor can one logically reconcile the pacifism and egalitarian inclusionism of the Alliance with the Clan's meritocracy—a philosophy often manifested in deadly competition. And yet whatever path the Snow Ravens follow, Loremaster Klaus Harper is certain to be deeply involved.

At this point all that can be accurately said of the Loremaster is that he is playing a far deeper game than is apparent.

CLAN SNOW RAVEN | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

BARNABAS HUARD

Rank/Title: Baronet, Chairman of Baliggora Planetary Parliament

Born: 3014 (62 in 3076)

Barnabas Huard is something of an anomaly in the Outworlds Alliance—descended from one of the few members of pre-Fed-Suns peerage to heed Julius Santiago Avellar's call to universal nonviolence centuries ago, he is the only member of the egalitarian Alliance Executive Parliament to profess a desire to establish a new nobility and styles himself a "baronet for the people. In addition to being one of the longest-seated members of the AEP, Sir Barnabas, as he styles himself, is also de facto ruler of Baliggora. The office of Planetary Governor is held by a political "ally" who is little more than a figurehead in his employ. Baliggora is a self-sufficient world with adequate resources and a well-developed industrial base and domestic infrastructure courtesy of ComStar. The planet was headquarters for Spinward Operations of the ComStar Explorer Corps for decades, allowing it a level of prosperity few other worlds in the Outworlds Alliance could equal. This unearned affluence engendered a sense of entitlement in the Baliggorans and—as is often the case when a world views itself as better than its neighbors—Baliggora came to perceive itself as being somehow held back or burdened by the poorer worlds of the Alliance. This perception evidently fueled Huard's conviction that the Alliance should be dissolved and each world left (or "given the chance," to use his phrasing) to succeed or fail on its own. While nearly 75% of the Alliance's Star League-era member planets did secede during the Succession Wars, they did so on their own - Huard's more radical proposition would actually dissolve the entire Alliance. Avellar's highly effective "Long Road" economic initiatives strengthened the bonds of the nation and silenced Huard's separatist rhetoric for a time. However, the growing presence and influence of the Snow Ravens has once again galvanized the anti-Alliance movement. Decrying the central government for becoming a vassal of the Clan invaders, Huard is once again advocating that the Alliance be dissolved, allowing each world to decide its fate independently. He is also rumored to be seeking outside assets to strengthen the Baliggora Planetary Militia.

MAYA AVELLAR

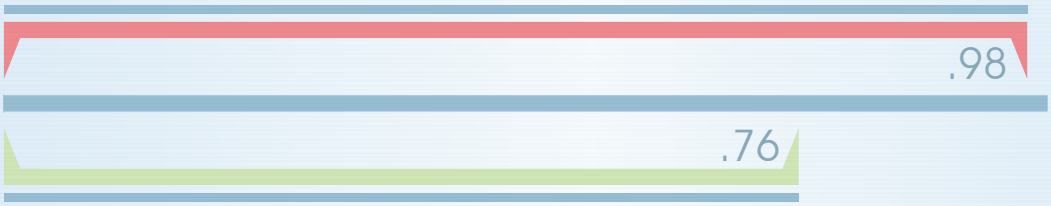
Rank/Title: Heir Apparent of the Alliance

Born: 3052 (21 in 3076)

Maya Avellar, niece of Mitchell Avellar, was long considered the childless president's heir apparent. *[Editor's Note: That's not a typo. For a nation that prides itself on its democratic ideals, the Outworlds Alliance reveres tradition. There has not been a president who was not in some way a descendant of Julius Santiago Avellar.]* Maya is very much a product of the Long Road; the political corruption and ethical ambiguity that had tainted the office of president before her uncle assumed the office is completely alien to her. She has an unwavering vision of what the Outworlds Alliance should be and every confidence the nation will rise to its potential—what she sees as its destiny.

The coming of Clan Snow Raven dealt her idealism a serious blow. She could not see how the pacifistic Outworlds Alliance could embrace partnership with a people who gloried in their martial prowess without sacrificing their fundamental values and beliefs. That her uncle seemed bent on binding the Alliance to the Clan obviously distressed her. She spoke out against any alignment. Her speeches were unfailingly respectful—both of her uncle and the Snow Ravens—but she was unyielding in her position. In her words, light could have no fellowship with darkness—Clan Snow Raven and the Outworlds Alliance could not ally without giving up that which each valued most, that which makes each unique. Her speeches were eloquent, even elegant, but had no effect on the unification process.

Realizing at last she could not change the path her nation was on, Maya announced she was exiling herself, washing her hands of what the Outworlds Alliance was becoming, but promised to return whenever the people decided they were ready to resume the path Julius Santiago Avellar had blazed. Parallels between her choice and that of her ancestor were inevitable. At this time her exact location is unknown. Popular rumor is that she has found a verdant world in the deep Periphery to mold into a new utopia, though the actions of the government indicate they believe she is in Commonwealth space. Of course it is not difficult to lose a single human being who does not want to be found among thirty-seven inhabited worlds—it is quite possible the assumed heir to the presidency has not gone anywhere.



CORPORATIONS OF CLAN SNOW RAVEN AND THE OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

Clan Snow Raven Mobile Production Sites

Though technically not a company per se, one of the most remarkable innovations Clan Snow Raven has brought to the Outworlds Alliance are their Mobile Production Sites. There is little direct information—the Snow Ravens do not permit outsiders in, or even close to, these orbital factories—but these sites seem capable of producing everything the Snow Ravens need to remain self-sufficient. Supporting this supposition is the fact that in the last half-decade there have been no documented Clan Snow Raven convoys either to or from the Outworlds Alliance. *[Editor's Note: At first glance this would indicate the Snow Ravens wish to conceal the exact location of their homeworlds from the nations of the Inner Sphere. However, considering the Inner Sphere discovered the location of the Clan homeworlds in the 3060's, then perhaps the reverse is correct: that they do not want the Clans of their home space knowing the location of their developing satrapy in Outworlds Alliance space. This theory carries serious implications about their relationship with other Clans. It would be unwise to speculate without more thorough investigation.]*

Perhaps more significant than the self-sufficiency these Mobile Production Sites give the Snow Ravens living in the Outworlds Alliance is the fact these orbital factories are making themselves a part of the national economy. In recent years they have begun producing materials and goods for Alliance sources on several worlds, trading finished goods for raw materials. The orbital plants can produce anything from precision instruments to prefabricated buildings to personal vehicles on remarkably short notice. The Snow Ravens' ability to move the production sites to wherever they are needed gives them a flexibility no competitor can match. Obviously local manufacturers resent the mobile production sites and routinely lodge complaints whenever one of the massive satellites is towed into orbit above their world. However given the essential role the Mobile Production Sites play in the ongoing rebuilding of Alpheratz, the central government does little in response to these protests.

Lushann Industrials Limited

Lushann Industrials Limited has long been the premier producer of combat lasers in the region. The Lushann "Redbeam" large laser is known for its over-engineered durability, though its boxy design makes it better suited to heavy tanks than BattleMechs. Lushann brings other systems to the table through Mitchell Avellar's far-reaching mutual investment program with the Draconis Combine, which contributed to Lushann Industrials' full licensing agreement with Diverse Optics Incorporated of Kessel. Lushann produces several Diverse Optics weapons systems—including the Sunbeam extended-range large laser, a variety of pulse lasers, Zippo plasma-based flamers, and several models of lighter—and less expensive—Magna pulse lasers.

Despite its importance to the Alliance, Lushann Industrials Limited is actually the planet Lushann's smaller industry. Though now a semi-arctic wasteland from pole to pole, for millions of years Lushann was thick with vegetation; great swamps and forests covered the globe. As a result Lushann is the largest producer of petrochemicals in the region. Employees of the oil giants outnumber those of the weapons manufacturer by a margin of almost two to one; almost everyone on the planet works for one giant or the other.

One would expect a world boasting two such vital industries to have been a regular target of the Blakists, but there is little evidence the Word of Blake took significant interest in the planet. Or it may be that they chose to avoid the First Regiment of the Fourth Alliance Air Wing, garrisoned on Lushann's southern continent. Some speculate that the fact that all LIL manufacturing facilities are located underground—and thus impervious to most assaults—prevented attack. Whatever the reason, Lushann Industries Limited came the conflicts relatively unscathed.

Most of Lushann Industrials' markets beyond the borders of the Outworlds Alliance were worlds of the Federated Suns. In the current uncertainty there is no indication whether many of those markets are still in a position to buy what Lushann builds. For want of guaranteed markets, many of the assembly lines, while fully operational, remain silent.

Praxton Fusion Products

Remarkably, Praxton Fusion Products suffered very little sabotage at the hands of the Inferno terrorists operating out of Dante compared to other manufacturing centers—most notably United Outworlders Corporation. There is no known reason for this, though some speculate the Blakists anticipated a need for Praxton's reliable Nissan series of standard and extra-light fusion engines.

Other forces in the region also saw the value of Praxton's products. The recent upheavals saw almost constant raids from pirates and rogue mercenary commands hoping the Alliance Borderers stationed on Praxton had been depleted to support

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other commands. They found, however, both the planet's native defenders and the Joyless Rogers of nearby Ferris were more than ready—the Military Review Board's standing order that the Alliance's sole producer of fusion engines under no circumstances be left undefended, has never been rescinded. It is an open secret that there is substantial evidence that at least one of those "pirate" raids, was in fact conducted by elements of the Federated Suns. Whether they were acting on falsified orders generated by the Blakists—as has happened on more than one occasion—or a covert operation sanctioned by the AFFS is not known. In keeping with his pragmatic policy of not allowing past mistakes—or past hostilities—to interfere with forward progress, President Avellar has chosen not to pursue the matter.

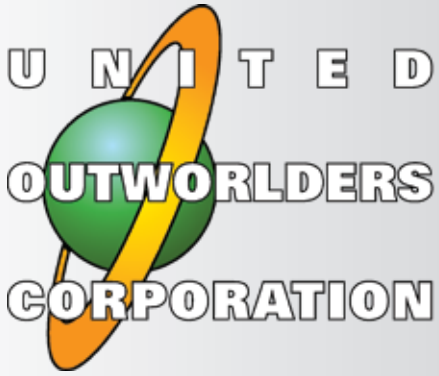
Now, as the Outworlds Alliance works to rebuild its infrastructure, Praxton Fusion Products is stepping to the fore, voluntarily diverting a portion of its income to finance reconstruction on nearby worlds devastated by the war. Their 120 to 220 series fusion engines are the heart of a dozen light and medium BattleMech designs, not to mention several aerospace fighters and tanks. Orders for the rugged Nissans have been placed by scores of repair and salvage companies as well as new equipment manufacturers serving regional militaries and planetary militias (priority is of course given to the needs of the Outworlds Alliance). Operating at full capacity, Praxton Fusion Products is backlogged into the middle of next year.

United Outworlders Corporation

United Outworlders Corporation was at one time the largest single weapons producer in the Outworlds Alliance. Their sprawling industrial complex, located on Ramora, near the rimward border of the Alliance, employed a noticeable percentage of the planet's population, either directly or indirectly, and its voracious need for raw materials bolstered the economies of a half-dozen neighboring worlds. UOC manufactured components ranging from light machine guns to the most devastating autocannons, but their reputation was based on their extensive aerospace production capabilities. Expanded as part of a joint Draconian-Alliance aerospace manufacturing initiative, the UOC aerospace plant on Ramora produced several variants of the light *Seydlitz* and the robust medium *Lightning* aerospace fighters as well as the *Corax* light OmniFighter. They also provided other manufacturers throughout the region with aerospace frames used in several other designs.

Perhaps because of this diversity, and because it provided components integral to so many weapons systems essential to manufacturers throughout the region, United Outworlders Corporation was the target of several Word of Blake attacks. The Inferno terrorist organization based on Dante was almost certainly responsible for UOC's autocannon assembly plant fires and habitat bombings that killed hundreds, and the Word of Blake is the most likely source of the false intelligence that prompted the Federated Suns' Screaming Eagles mercenary force to assault the planet. Most citizens of Ramora hold the terrorists responsible for the resistant influenza epidemic that claimed scores of lives last year, though there is little evidence to support that charge. The destruction of the Snow Raven's Swift Wing Naval Star while undergoing repairs in the Outworlds Alliance orbital shipyards did not directly involve UOC, but that incident is indicative of how thoroughly the terrorists had infiltrated Ramora.

Today United Outworlders Corporation is rebuilding with the wholehearted support of both the populace and the Alliance government. Full production capability is still years away, but the first run of *Lightnings* is already going through final quality evaluation prior to delivery to the Outworlds Alliance AAA.



CLAN SNOW RAVEN | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

KEY WORLDS OF THE OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

ALPHERATZ

Star Type (Recharge Time): K5V (196 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 4.12 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Aisha)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 3,099,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-A-B-A-C

Five years ago Famindas, capital city of both Alpheratz and of the Outworlds Alliance, was destroyed by the Word of Blake. The Alliance Executive Parliament, the central offices of every national ministry and administration, and over 100,000 people were immolated in a single thermonuclear explosion targeted to decapitate the Outworlds Alliance. The attempt failed. What was meant to be a mortal wound has become a symbol of resilience and determination as the Alliance rallies to rebuild the world.

A measure of how dedicated the people of the Alliance are to their ideal of nonviolent perseverance is the fact the planet so sorely wounded has not become a fortress. It is not defenseless, of course. The First Alliance Air Wing and the Avellar Guards BattleMech battalion are stationed on Alpheratz, and there is no shortage of volunteers for the planetary militia. But these forces have always been present, and there are no plans to fortify beyond traditionally established levels. President Avellar has stated that the Outworlds Alliance will not violate its foundation and ideals by diverting resources needed to ensure the health and safety of the people to create a palace guard. Nor will he pull forces needed to defend other worlds back to the capital because no planet of the Alliance should be left unprotected: "The Alliance stands or falls as a nation, with no world left alone."

It is significant that Clan Snow Raven has stepped forward as a major partner in rebuilding the infrastructure of Alpheratz. Though no Clan technicians or workers are involved on the ground, an orbital Mobile Production Site has been producing much-needed construction material.

Snow Raven agronomists and ecologists have also been involved in the ongoing efforts to contain and reverse the long-term effects of the massive nuclear strike. While Famindas and much of the western coastal plain of North Continent remain unsafe, evaluators agree the region is salvageable. The area could be safe for repopulation in as little as two or three years. The Bolliard Mountains prevented fallout from spreading eastward, and the vast agricultural region was undamaged, though the aquifer and soil will need to be monitored for long-term secondary and tertiary contamination.

In addition to food production, North Continent is home to two of the Outworlds Alliance's leading manufacturers. Alliance Defenders Limited is best known for their solid *Merlin,* ubiquitous mainstay of the AMC's heavy BattleMech units, but also produces *Locust, Stinger,* and *Wasp* light BattleMechs in limited but steady quantities. The ADL components plant at Famindas produced frames for a wide variety of BattleMech designs for export to 'Mech assembly plants in both the Combine and Federated Suns was badly damaged. ADL estimates it will be back in production by the end of next year. More fortunate was Arenthir Electronics, makers of a wide variety of targeting arrays and communication systems. Nestled in a high valley of the Bolliard Mountains, it was unscathed by the bombing.

Mountain Wolf BattleMechs, in the heart of South Continent, is again in full production. The first run of *Night Hawk* light BattleMechs is expected to be ready for field trials by the end of next month.

It should be noted that unlike Dante and Quatre Belle, which are essentially Clan worlds at this point, Alpheratz holds few representatives of Clan Snow Raven's Warrior Caste. However there are over a hundred Scientist Caste and Technician Caste professionals working side-by-side with Alliance scientists and technicians to clean up the fallout and counter the ecological damage. This level of involvement and cooperation is unprecedented, and it says much about the Clan's and the Alliance's commitment to this nascent union.

The new seat of government for the Outworlds Alliance is the city of Carolinas on South Continent. The campus of a former community college has been appropriated as the new Executive Parliament complex. The former school and the community of administrative and ministerial offices that has grown up around the new Executive Parliament is referred to as the "Famindas District," a reminder of the nation's commitment to rebuild.

CLAN SNOW RAVEN | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

QUATRE BELLE

Star Type (Recharge Time): F4IV (175 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 16.10 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Isis, Gaia, Pluto)
Surface Gravity: 0.90
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 35°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 85 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 14,900,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-C-B-B-A

Beyond the borders of the Outworlds Alliance, Quatre Belle is known only as the location of a nearly defunct Star League orbital naval yard. The long-abandoned shipyard had a life of sorts as an orbital waystation and cargo-storage facility. There was sufficient tech and personnel for minor repairs and limited upgrades, particularly to older vessels, but for the most part the heavy shipbuilding equipment had been scavenged for parts and scrap metal generations ago. It is unclear whether pirates used the shipyards. The sprawling network of orbital dry docks was too extensive for the natives of Quatre Belle to monitor effectively, much less defend.

Within the Alliance, Quatre Belle was known as a world of rugged beauty. Alamance, the mountainous southern continent, is home to the fabled Belle highland sheep. These majestic bighorns, which can weigh upwards of five hundred kilograms, are a prized trophy sought by big game hunters from New Samarkand to St. Robert. A modest but profitable tourist industry centered on these magnificent beasts and the rugged grandeur of their natural habitat flourished for over a century, but it came to an abrupt end due to the war.

The domesticated Belle Piedmont sheep, at four hundred kilograms, is responsible for about one-third of the world's agricultural wealth. Though best known for their rich, golden wool, the sheep of Quatre Belle, unlike the sheep of Terra, are highly productive dairy animals. Belle sheep cheese can be found on the menus of some of the finest restaurants spinward of New Avalon.

Isis and Gaia, the two original moons of Quatre Belle, orbit in apparent formation. Though this shared orbit is an illusion, the fact that they are never more than sixty degrees of arc apart produces tidal forces many visitors imagine they can feel in their bones. Not surprisingly, their combined gravities produce extreme tides that make most coastal regions uninhabitable. These deep tides, however, also keep the oceans in constant turmoil, producing some of the richest plankton fields in the Inner Sphere. This abundant protein—used in everything from food supplements to animal feed—is the primary engine of Quatre Belle's economy.

Quatre Belle's third moon, Pluto, is a deep-space interloper captured tens of thousands of years ago. Its eccentric, nearly polar orbit is far enough beyond that of the native moons that the massive planetoid has little effect on them or the ocean's tides. However it is Pluto's mass that led to the Star League's construction of an orbital shipyard above Quatre Belle. Pluto is composed almost entirely of heavy metals, evidently stripped of lighter elements by a stellar conflagration billions of years ago.

The Star League naval yard orbits beyond Isis and Gaia, but within the orbit of Pluto. It is extensive, with habitats and dry docks and construction cradles widely spaced across a full degree of arc. Beyond the resources of the Outworlds Alliance to restore or develop, this yard is what has attracted Clan Snow Raven to Quatre Belle. Two of their Portable Manufacturing Sites have taken up position within the complex. No close observation is possible, of course, but from what can be seen at range they are focusing their efforts on the JumpShip cradles. It takes no great leap of the imagination to see that a Clan so reliant on space travel would not only prize the yards highly but would have the technical wherewithal to restore and use them. Indeed, while complete restoration is no doubt years away, the only limiting factor on full production will likely be the number of Snow Raven technicians available—and the Clan's ability to prevent the occasional act of sabotage, like the one in 3074 that nearly destroyed half of one of the new portable systems.

Most inhabitants have chosen to establish colonies along the chains of volcanic islands that gird Quatre Belle's equator, which at first glance seems counter-intuitive. True, these islands are not tiny atolls subject to the tides and sea; their median size is roughly 500,000 km². Nor are they barren, rocky citadels—while not verdant, they are well able to produce enough food crops to make the colonies fully self-sustaining. But the selection of such sites on a world that already has the developed resources, both technical and agricultural, to support new population centers seems to be a needless waste of effort—until one realizes the choice is a message. At one level it is a reflection of the high premium their Clan places on privacy, but more importantly it makes plain their intentions toward the native Population (3076): the Snow Ravens have come not to take the world, but to share it.

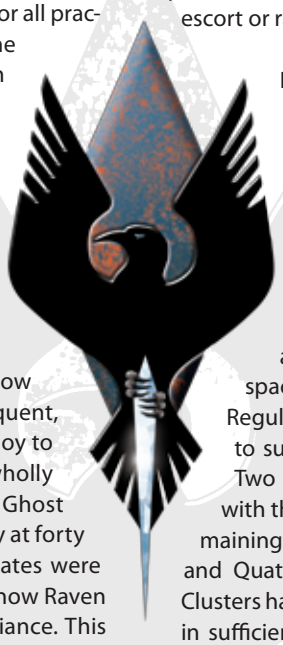
Quatre Belle may well prove to be a metaphor for the final shape of the growing union between the Outworlds Alliance and Clan Snow Raven.

CLAN SNOW RAVEN | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

THE RAVEN'S EDGE: KEY RAVEN AND OUTWORLDS MILITARY COMMANDS

CLAN SNOW RAVEN TOUMAN

It has become generally accepted that the presence of both Khan McKenna and the Snow Raven's Command Naval Star under the command of saKhan Alberto Crow indicates that for all practical purposes the Outworlds Alliance is now the home base of Clan Snow Raven touman. However, it is worth remembering that when it comes to Clan behavior, what they let outsiders see is seldom the truth.



The number of Snow Raven naval assets stationed in the Outworlds Alliance does give one pause. Even after the Swift Wing Naval Star was destroyed in space dock above Ramora and an unconfirmed number of vessels of the Storm Crow Naval Star were lost in the Galedon debacle, approximately twenty Clan Snow Raven WarShips have been observed (an exact evaluation of Snow Raven forces is rendered problematic by their frequent, apparently random shuffling of assets, no doubt a ploy to prevent assessments such as this one from being wholly accurate), including two naval stars on loan to Clan Ghost Bear. Previous estimates placed the Snow Raven navy at forty to forty-five WarShips. Even given that those estimates were extrapolated from minimal data, well over half the Snow Raven fleet is now within the borders of the Outworlds Alliance. This could be a gesture indicating the Clan's commitment to the developing alliance, or it could be—as several factions within the Outworlds Alliance have opined—a show of force to stampede the Outworlds into a closer union more quickly than they would like. A third possibility, one not considered by local analysts, is that Outworlds space has become a fallback position for a Snow Raven campaign elsewhere.

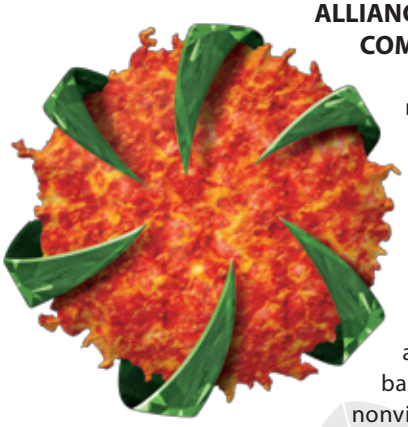
It may be significant that five of the Snow Raven vessels are *Potemkins*—one of which reportedly arrived filled to capacity with civilians—indicating a sizeable transfer of assets. Of particular note is the presence of the *Conqueror*, first ship of the Clans' *Conqueror*-class of carrier/cruisers, and the Clans' formidable *Sovetskii Soyuz*-class heavy cruiser, the *Storm Crow*, fresh from a complete repair and refit at the barely functional Quatre Belle naval yard, but the other remains unidentified. The remainder of the fleet, with the exception of two *Aegis*-class heavy cruisers, comprises fast, heavily armed destroyers and corvettes best suited to escort or raiding missions.

The most convincing evidence that the Snow Ravens are not showing their full hand is the presence—or more accurately non-presence—of their ground and aerospace forces. While it is not wise to take estimates of Clan assets as gospel, most reliable intelligence credits the Snow Raven touman with some twenty-two to twenty-six Clusters of 'Mech/combined arms and aerospace forces. *[Editor's Note: The composition of Clan Clusters is maddeningly vague and fluid.]* Of these, thirteen, or approximately half, have been observed in Outworlds space, and four of these—the Sixth and Seventh Raven Regulars and the Fifth Raven Auxiliary—are understrength to such an extent they can hardly be considered viable. Two Trinaries of the Fifth Wing Cluster were destroyed with the Swift Wing Naval Star above Ramora, while the remaining two defend the Snow Raven strongholds of Dante and Quatre Belle. Elements of the Fourth and Ninth Wing Clusters have been observed deployed throughout the Alliance in sufficient numbers to indicate both are near full strength. Also definitely identified and at or near full strength are the First Raven Phalanx, the Ninth and Ninety-seventh Raven Striker Clusters, the Fifth Raven Stoop Cluster, the 100th Battle Cluster, the Third Raven Auxiliary, and the Twelfth Garrison Cluster.

So while the presence of half the Snow Raven touman within the Outworlds Alliance represents a serious commitment to the union that is forming between the Clan and nation, it should not be forgotten that at least half their military might—and the unknown bulk of their technical and economic assets—are unaccounted for.

CLAN SNOW RAVEN | OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE

ALLIANCE MILITARY COMMAND



Few militaries have matured as rapidly as that of the Outworlds Alliance. The Alliance Military Command was originally intended to protect member worlds against pirate raids and—as befits a culture based on principles of nonviolence and individual freedoms—did so with the least expenditure possible. AMC officers bear the non-martial titles of supervisor, section leader, director, and chairman—positions that correspond roughly to lieutenant through colonel in more traditional militaries. There are no generals, as the Military Review Board makes all command decisions. They eschew all traditional military accoutrements such as campaign ribbons, and they award medals (usually posthumously) only for sacrifice in saving lives. It is not surprising that the AMC seldom commanded the respect of their neighbors.

This was particularly true in the case of the Alliance Ground Defense Arm. The AGDA's support reflected the low regard of a nation that disdained physical aggression. Individual soldiers were expected to provide their own kits, and the quality of issued materiel varied unpredictably due to the quartermaster's practice of buying job lots of military surplus from neighboring nations. Difficult as it is for most in the Inner Sphere to imagine, this disregard extended to MechWarriors. It was generally assumed—and generally true—that BattleMech pilots were failed aerospace candidates; as such they were considered little more than second-raters who owed their position to an inability to do better.

In a military devoted to keeping raiders off-world rather than taking and holding objectives, ground forces were seen as an unnecessary drain on the nation's economy. There were no formal military academies for AGDA officers—instruction on organization and management was provided in addition to the standard soldier's curriculum at militia training camps.

Nearly two decades ago Senior Chairman Maurice Avellar initiated programs to build the AGDA into a true military force. However their current state of proficiency and readiness is the work of the Blakists of Dante—with a little help from Clan Snow Raven. Galvanized by terrorist atrocities, the ground forces of the Alliance struck back with a valiant if unschooled ferocity that stunned their enemies and impressed their allies. Coordinating closely in the campaigns of Ramora and Dante, the Snow Ravens provided invaluable guidance in strategy and tactics. Today the AGDA training camps provide pragmatic instruction in all phases of military operations. Quartermasters now make purchase decisions based on quality and effectiveness rather than economy. The re-outfitting process is slow, but by the end of the decade AGDA will be the equal of any military in the region.

Unlike the AGDA, the Alliance Aerospace Arm has always been esteemed as the elite of the Outworlds Alliance. Priding themselves as defenders of worlds, the pilots of the AAA can—and frequently have—prevail against numerically superior opponents. While any number of statistics and battle accounts documenting the prowess of the AAA can be found, one needs no other testimony than this: The Warrior Caste of Clan Snow Raven, self-proclaimed masters of Clan aerospace combat, have never treated the pilots of the AAA with anything other than respect.

Though badly mauled by the Dante terrorists within and Draconis and Federated forces without, the AMC is rebuilding rapidly. Or perhaps building is a better term, since this new military, forged in fire and with the unprecedented support of the populace, is tougher and more professional than any in Alliance history. Organized around four aerospace wings—each of which corresponds to a traditional regiment—the AMC fields an estimated 176 aerospace fighters and eight combined-arms battalions, which include an estimated fifty-four BattleMechs. In keeping with Outworlds Alliance egalitarianism, these assets are evenly distributed among the four wings. *[Editor's Note: Is this correct? That seems low even for the historically 'Mech-light Alliance!]*

MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

Canopians know suffering. For example, the first Star League didn't take kindly when a nation built primarily on service industry and raw material extraction turned down their offer to join. The Canopians fought as well as they could, but it was not a hard task for the SLDF to tear through their meager forces. While the Canopians could have made occupation expensive for the invaders at a cost of reprisals, such a tactic typically only works as a delaying action. If no help is forthcoming to the occupied nation, the delay only means that the inevitable takes slightly longer to arrive. No one came to save the Canopians, and eventually the Magistracy made some minimal contributions to the Star League so they could return to what it did best: generating profits for their coffers.

Eventually, though, as independence movements traveled through the Periphery, the Canopians tried to shake off their unwanted shackles and fight for their independence. With the backing of House Amaris, the Canopians had a much better equipped fighting force than the first time they defied the Star League. Despite this, they were still no match for the might of Kerensky's armies. The Canopians fought long and hard, but they netted the same results as the last time: death, destruction, and virtual enslavement. This time, however, there was an unexpected rescuer.

PERSISTENT PROGRESSION

With the fall of the Terran Hegemony, the Succession Lords were far too concerned with watching one another and picking the corpse of the Hegemony clean to bother with the shattered worlds of the Periphery. The Canopians recovered and moved on, only to see these distracted foes look to the exposed worlds of Canopus again as easy pickings. The Magistracy was spared the direct horrors of the First Succession War, only having a brief and fruitless war with the Concordat in 2813. However, the many high tech factories that the Magistracy's worlds depended on were located in the Inner Sphere and were rapidly being nuked into craters, depriving the Magistracy of critical water filters, electronics, terraforming equipment, and JumpShips. And pirates began pillaging the facilities in the Magistracy.

Two centuries later the Canopians looked to improve their status, seeking alliances with the Inner Sphere. After a disastrous attempt to merge with the Duchy of Andurien they found a willing alliance with the Taurians and Capellans. Joining together, the other two realms could defend one another from Davion aggression while they would use the Magistracy as a conduit for trade and support. This benefited the Magistracy as the two other realms helped expand their industrial base, and increased tourism contributed more money to the now-growing realm. All was going well until the Jihad broke out.

Unprepared for the Blakist assault and with many of their best units defending the Confederation, the Canopians felt the burn of suffering once again. Their Magestrix and top general were captured. Their capital conquered, core worlds occupied, their heir under attack in a foreign realm—all contributed to an unprecedented level of chaos. Rebuilding will be a massive undertaking, and with all of their allies suffering from the same or worse, it will be up to the Magistracy to bail itself out of the poor situation it finds itself in.

BLOODY AND BLIND

No one has been able to trace the source of the blackout, but it started on Canopus and spread to other core worlds soon thereafter. Messages were sent by JumpShip, but the small realm did not have the resources to dispatch JumpShips solely as message carriers. This was soon followed by a Blakist sneak attack on Canopus itself. Using a pirate point, the Thirty-fourth Division landed near the Thistledown Fields spaceport. As the aerospace fighters fought above, the division marched on Crimson. Raventhir's Iron Hand intercepted the invaders and met them on the outskirts of Crimson grounds, where emplacement bunkers were able to back up the outnumbered defenders. The Iron Hand actually stopped the Thirty-fourth briefly as the 'Mechs and combat vehicles fought their opponents to a draw, but with a third of their number protecting the VIPs in the palaces, the Infantry Guard was slaughtered by the Blakist infantry.

Mired in the sea of blood and combat, the Iron Hand was unable to disengage; only a few ejected MechWarriors were able to escape death or capture. The Blakists then marched on the palaces of Crimson, placing the entire area under lockdown. Believing the planet secure, some of the Thirty-fourth was dispatched to the surrounding worlds while the remainder appropriated the industrial areas of Canopus. An eerie calm filled Canopus for a few months before guerrilla attacks started up, some against infantry and soldiers out of their vehicles, others by the First Cuirassiers against armored targets.

Sure that the resistance had experienced leadership, Blakist officials attempted to interrogate the captured high command, only to find them missing. With the situation turning into a quagmire for the Thirty-fourth, the Forty-first Shadow Division was dispatched to clean up the situation in April of 3071. Upon their arrival, they firebombed Crimson, hoping to flush out the high command staff from hiding. They didn't, but managed to kill at least some, including the Magestrix, and the resistance became unorganized, making the mission a success in the Blakists' eyes. After hunting down the remaining Cuirassiers, they headed off-planet, assisting the Thirty-fourth in conquering Megarez, Royal Foxx, Adherlwin, Borgan's Rift, Fanardir, Gallis, and Early Dawn. They also raided most of the other major worlds, keeping forces pinned on Bass and Lindenmarle.

MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

Word of the attacks on Crimson reached the ears of Ramilie's Raiders and they launched an assault on Canopus. Engaging elements of the Thirty-fourth as well as an entire Level III of Uriel's Blinding Fire, the Raiders were shattered, with just a few lances escaping the carnage to join the rebels. Their attack, however, succeeded in allowing trapped command staff to escape and damage the Blakist forces.

TRACING STEPS

With the core of the Magistracy solidly in hand, the Forty-first pulled back to their base on Aspropirgos in the Free Worlds League, while the Thirty-fourth dispatched some troops to Detroit. Both found unexpected surprises. The defenders on Detroit were not easily lured into leaving their defensive positions, watching the Blakists ravage a city before Canopian and Capellan troops arrived to drive off the attackers. That was nothing compared to what the Forty-first would endure, however.

Safe, hidden on Aspropirgos, they rebuilt from the long campaign in the Magistracy. Unbeknownst to them, MIM was able to track the Shadow Division and informed Naomi Centrella of their whereabouts. A joint strike force consisting of the Second McCarron's Armored Cavalry, House Ijori, the First Canopian Light Horse, and Second Cuirassiers assembled and headed toward Aspropirgos. In the meantime, the Ebon Magistrate secretly infiltrated the world and gathered intelligence about the Blakist defenses and forces.

On July 11th, the allied forces dropped onto the planet. The attackers advanced on the Forty-first's base, where Uriel's combined arms force awaited them. The attackers stopped at long range and traded fire with the Blakists. Wanting to bring his superior infantry assets into play, Uriel advanced his forces. Just as his Manei Domini infantry was about to enter the fray, the Ebon Magistrate sprung from hidden positions and tangled with their foes, cybernetic soldier fighting cybernetic soldier. With the aid of Capellan catalytic munitions and at the cost of most of the Ebon Magistrate, nearly the entirety of the Forty-first's infantry assets was wiped out. Uriel retreated with his remaining forces and flattened his base with fuel air bombs, severely damaging House Ijori and the Cuirassiers. The Light Horse and Second McCarron's pursuing Uriel fared better but still needed to return to the Confederation for re-supply with the rest of the forces.

SHAKY GROUND

With their reinforcements cut off, Sun-Tzu assembled another task force in 3075 to end the Blakist threat in the Magistracy once and for all. Consisting primarily of all the Canopian troops in the Confederation supported by other Capellan units including the Red Lancers, they followed Naomi as she made her way through the Duchy of Andurien to Canopus. Meeting up with a native task force led by the Ebon Magistrate at Fanardir, they advanced on Canopus. The Thirty-fourth, having exhausted its food supplies and having trouble acquiring local sustenance that wasn't suspect, was hardly a match for the assembled forces. After a brief show of resistance, the Blakists retreated to join the rest of their unit on still-occupied Canopian planets.

The populace still supports their government, though many feel the pain of the losses they have suffered. Not an aggressive people, the Canopians just want to get things back to the way they were, possibly with a little more security. Without grand plans for conquest or large empires, the people of the Magistracy simply want to enjoy their lives. If there was one thing that they would like to change, it's the view that most have of them. They have a much more liberal view of personal freedoms and enjoyment, but most work 45 hours a week and prefer coming home to their families, rather than spending every night in a sex dungeon.

FRONC REACHES

The resulting product of a well-received and much-trumpeted notion, the Fronc Reaches struggled to life not with the defiant roar of a lion but with the plaintive whine of a late-term Canopian cow.

A unique development of the past century saw the formation of the New Colony Region in 3056 at the signing of the Treaty of Taurus between the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus. Envisioned as a way to found new colonies for less cost, it was a physical embodiment of the alliance between the two powerful Periphery nations. Though colonies were founded and policed by combined groups of the two parent nations, they were left to fend for themselves after their initial founding. Lacking an intrinsic military of their own for defense, those colonies closest to the parent nations were garrisoned by units from that parent, while the homegrown Colonial Marshals were tasked with the adjudication of laws on colony worlds.

As has happened repeatedly throughout human history, the residents of the New Colony Region hungered for independence from their parent nations. While this hunger initially had manifested itself as little more than growls from a thin belly, eventually those sounds grew louder and more insistent. Choosing to pass the point of no return, President Sherman Maltin of the New Colony Region undertook a dangerous path to gain independence by taking hostage both Magestrix Emma Centrella and Protector Jeffrey Calderon. When military action was taken to free the hostages, the bid for independence was killed along with Maltin and Calderon. All of the marshals who sided with Maltin in his bid were also killed. It would be five long but relatively peaceful years after Maltin's death before independence

MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

was realized in April 3066. The new nation christened itself the Fronc Reaches after an exhaustive diplomatic blitz by President Carver Trondel.

FRAIL FRONTIER

Since that time, there have been few major developments. First, the Magistracy invaded and permanently occupied Detroit, taking away from the Fronc Reaches their one true industrial world and their only factory for BattleMechs and other advanced technology. With no significant military force to stop them, pirates took to roaming freely throughout the Reaches. Facing total anarchy, Trondel was forced to seek military aid from the Magistracy in 3070, as the Marshals were unable to put down the pirates. Some reports even placed Marshals among the pirate forces, but those sightings were later demonstrated to show captured Marshal equipment in use by the pirates.

At Force Commander Dirk McEvans' urging, Trondel has officially established a true military force for the Fronc Reaches. Though truly existing only on paper at this time, the new Fronc Reaches Sentinels count but a single small BattleMech unit among its forces. The company of old and dilapidated 'Mechs is not much to speak of, but it's more than the small nation had previously. While under the authority of Force Commander McEvans for now, Captain Derek Hudsenn has already managed to stave off an attack by a small force of unidentified raiders. The Fronc Cuirassiers, as the unit has been christened, are eager to prove that the estate Hudsenn was granted was not given in vain. While Trondel and McEvans hope that the new military will allow their nation to assume control of its own defense, they both fear that the Magistracy might be unwilling to quit the Reaches peacefully upon request.

In a nation where survival, rather than comfort, is the order of the day, the Fronc Reaches is far from being a tourist destination. However, there is no lack of people flocking to the tiny nation. Most are looking for a chance to carve something new from the unblemished wilderness, while a large (and growing larger) portion are refugees fleeing the tumult of the Jihad. This has the benefit of delivering skilled individuals such as doctors and teachers, though the lack of hospitals and schools makes them somewhat superfluous.

Lacking only in infrastructure, the Fronc Reaches is a tempting apple awaiting the right hand to pluck it. So desperate is Trondel to increase the level of civilization on his frontier-level worlds that he is offering the most generous incentives to investors of any government in the Inner Sphere or Periphery. Tax-free operations, mining rights, protection (such as their meager forces can offer), and cheap labor are all offered to developers. The only cost is that they must construct equal amounts of facilities for public use as for their own use; for example, with every new mineshaft, a school must be built. If Trondel is not careful, he might reap a wonderfully sophisticated nation with no resources to speak of.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

NAOMI CENTRELLA-LIAO

NAOMI CENTRELLA-LIAO

Rank / Title: Magestrix, Magistracy of Canopus

Born: 3039 (37 in 3076)

Naomi is one of Sun-Tzu Liao's pawns, a piece to enhance his power. Or at least that is the popular refrain from those who haven't looked deep at Naomi. Much like Hanse Davion, Naomi did not expect to be the heir to her realm and focused on a military career to help the Magistracy. Acting as overall commander of Canopian armed forces in the Confederation, she interacted quite frequently with Sun-Tzu and admired him. At some point, they began a relationship, though whether the Canopians' more relaxed view of amorous relationships and Sun-Tzu's lack of empathy toward Isis Marik allowed their liaison to start before or after Sun-Tzu and Isis' formal break-up is not clear. With the death of her older sister Danai, Naomi suddenly became the focus of even greater political intrigue.

While her marriage to Sun-Tzu has pulled the two realms even closer, Naomi has not abandoned her people to become part of the Confederation or allow herself to be easily used. While Canopian forces defended, and even fought back, against Federated and Blakist attackers, they were not used as disposable units. Nor was

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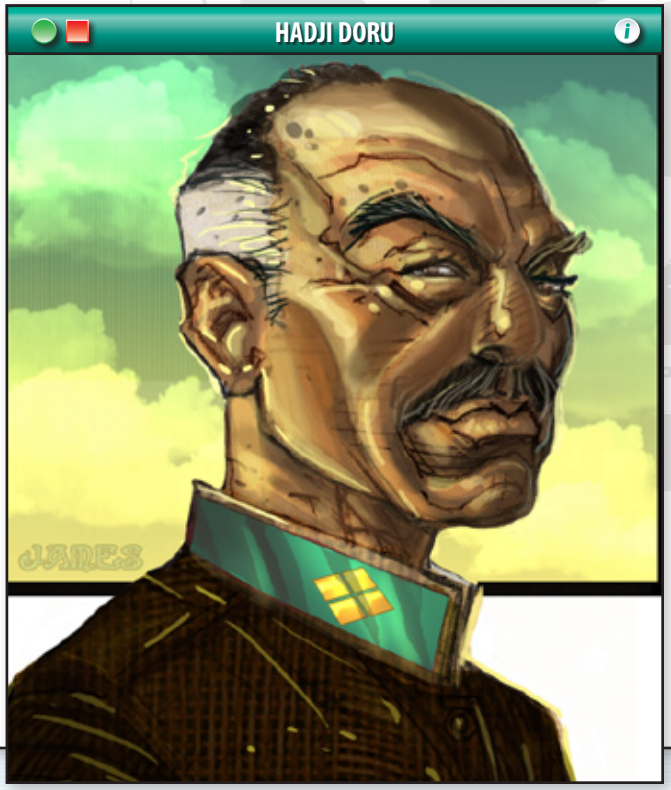
the Magistracy ignored when Naomi requested support for her embattled realm. She also has not shown herself to be afraid of incurring her husband's wrath when she feels that she can better her realm and its allies, as shown by her detour through Andurien space on her way back home.

Still a MechWarrior, she keeps in shape and regularly practices when she has the opportunity. While she'll never be a great 'Mech pilot, she's superior to her husband. Despite all the political games, she seems to be very committed to her family on a personal level, even if her professionalism forces her to put aside those feelings in deference to her realm. If the Magistracy can free itself of the Blakist presence, it will be interesting to see how much time she spends in her home realm.

HADJI DORU

Rank / Title: Senior General, Magistracy of Canopus Armed Forces
Born: 2996 (80 in 3076)

Hadji Doru is probably the most brilliant military mind that the Taurian Concordat ever created. However, Taurian politics forced his exile in 3055 after nearly forty years of service. Rising to command a battalion at 29, he was appointed Marshal of the Taurian Guard a little more than half a decade later. As Thomas Calderon's mind started to fail, Doru was one of the first to speak out against the injustices and poor policies that resulted from Calderon's rule. Doru was only saved from imprisonment by Thomas' paranoia, unsure whom he could trust with such a task. Eventually supporting Jeffrey Calderon's rise to power, Doru had Thomas arrested, his mental state precluding him from leading his realm. When offered the position of minister of defense, he resigned, unwilling to take such a position and feeling his loyalty would always be questioned.



After Doru drifted for a few years, war called to him again and he found himself in Operation Bulldog where he met Danai Centrella. She convinced him and her mother that they needed such a man to lead the nation's armed forces, though it was her death that was the eventual tipping point for him. The first Senior General in the history of the MAF, Doru quickly got started on updating the military. While the system of purchasing ranks still existed, he used his ability to reassign and demote poor leaders while arranging for grants to allow the capable to rise. Together with the Trinity Alliance's access to better technology, the MAF became the best in the Periphery. The best in the Periphery, however, was little match for the Blakists, and Doru was captured on Canopus. Held for years, he was finally freed when Ramilie's Raiders attempted to rescue the Magestrix. Doru is leading the counterattack against the Blakists, but at his age he knows that this will likely be his last great action.

ERDE CENTRELLA

Rank / Title: Force Major, MAF Medical Corps
Born: 3042 (34 in 3076)

Probably the first "Daddy's girl" in the history of the Centrella line, Erde no doubt picked up on the war-weariness of her father as his unit constantly kept bandits from stripping the realm bare while dodging the assassins (both real and figurative) of court intrigue. She did not inherit her sister's military aptitude or political acumen, but she is smart and has an amazing sense of empathy for her fellow human beings. Third in line for the throne, Erde decided to help her realm by attending medical school. Graduating at the young age of 18, she joined the Medical Corps and was assigned, as requested, to the New Colony Region. Only there for a brief time, she showed herself to be a good physician and an excellent organizer and leader. Following Danai's death, Erde's mother continued to let her serve the settlers who needed her help. When a pirate raid struck Portland, Erde was injured while protecting one of her patients from small arms fire. While Erde made a full recovery, the Magestrix recalled her back to Canopus to groom her as a replacement to Naomi should anything happen to her, including putting her husband's realm before her own.

Despite being restricted to Canopus, Erde worked her way up to major in the Medical Corps. When the Blakists struck the capital, Erde was able to escape, and she then headed up medical support amongst the guerrillas and volunteers. When Canopus was reclaimed, she was rewarded with a promotion to force major and has been placed in charge of MAF Medical personnel on Canopus until they have recovered from fighting the Blakists. Erde has two children, but their current whereabouts are unknown.

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YASMINE BELLANCA

Rank / Title: General, Director of MIM

Born: 3033 (43 in 3076)

Plenty of information is available about Yasmine Bellanca; the problem is deciding what is true and what is not. Born on Thraxa, she was the eighth of twelve children of a poor fur trapper. Three of her siblings died prior to adulthood, and Yasmine spent her youth in the family business; she was a crack shot, killing a few dozen squirrel tigers and even a devourer. Once she was old enough, she shipped off to the MAF and never looked back. After excelling at boot camp and her first tour of duty, she was promoted to the Magistracy Support Corps. Over the next decade she steadily worked her way up the ranks. While this might be unremarkable, none of the people she supposedly worked with in the MSC can remember ever meeting her. At that point her service record totally disappears, resurfacing five years later as the head of MIM's Active Response Corps.

Her success cannot be determined directly, as there are no available records, but the MIM's ability to sometimes outfox even the Word of Blake's ROM shows that they were improving. Her appointment to direct the MIM in 3071 was in part due to the deaths of General Jenni Elliot and Peder Smythe, head of the Domestic Operations Corps, in a firebombing of the MIM safehouse on Canopus. She has managed to keep the MIM operational without HPG communications or an established headquarters. Perhaps the best operation the MIM was able to perform recently was the extraction of Senior General Hadji Doru as Ramilie's Raiders hit Crimson. With the liberation of Canopus, Bellanca will have to rebuild not only the MIM's headquarters staff but also the physical headquarters, which was burned when Crimson was firebombed.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

CARVER TRONDEL

Rank/Position: President of the Fronc Reaches

Born: 3022 (54 in 3076)

Carver Trondel was but one of many mine foremen in the mineral-rich New Colony Region when Colony President Sherman Maltin unwisely attempted a military coup to achieve independence for the Region from its parent nations. Though Trondel's position of authority in the largely lawless region offered him power over his workers, he was renowned for placing their safety above the concerns of producing more ore for the company to fatten its coffers. It was this same concern for the welfare of others that led him to seek the office of Colony President in late 3061. Political pundits attribute Trondel's unlikely victory in that campaign to his ignorance of politics compared to his opponents and their polished public faces. Where they spoke eloquently, he spoke plainly. Where they were polite, he was gruff. Where they were tolerant and appeas-

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ing, he was hostile and defiant. Where his opponents were evasive and ignorant, he was direct and competent. His opponents never had a chance as far as the frontier folk of the New Colony Region were concerned.

Initially, Trondel was willing to trust the Region's parent nations to fulfill their obligations regarding the colonial region. As he repeatedly met with apathy and disregard from the governments of the Magistracy and the Concordat, Trondel began his quest for independence. When he was ignored repeatedly in his calls for talks regarding independence for the Region, Trondel took the unusual step of sending representatives to all the recognized nations in the Inner Sphere. When these representatives were successful in gaining recognition of their independence, he christened the new nation the Fronc Reaches. While the Magestrix followed suit in recognition, Protector Shraplen did not.

Proving himself to be a shrewd but unassuming President, Trondel has managed to keep the Reaches stable throughout the Jihad, though this required a concession in 3070 of awarding favored trade status to the Magistracy in exchange for military protection. This was due in no small part to the poor economic status of the Reaches, only made worse due to the Jihad. In the hopes of weening the Reaches once more from the Magistracy, and at the urging of Dirk McEvans, Trondel has initiated creation of a homegrown defense force separate from the Marshals.

DIRK MCEVANS

Rank/Position: Force Commander of the Colonial Marshals
Born: 3030 (46 in 3076)

Vastly different from those who supported the former Colonial President, Dirk McEvans is a master of working situations to his advantage. This was demonstrated to great effect when he managed, through guileful tactics, to outmaneuver and destroy an entire lance of raiding pirate 'Mechs from the command couch of his *Marshal*. Seeing himself as a simple enforcer of law and order, he gets along well with President Trondel, since both see themselves as men of the people.

Given free rein to run the Marshals, Force Commander McEvans has managed to instill a sense of power and responsibility in his troops. Since Marshals are no longer trained on Canopus, McEvans is able to vet new recruits' loyalties. While the MIM had been screening out those deemed disloyal to Canopian rule, McEvans is now able to screen out those whose loyalty is not to the Fronc Reaches. An excellent judge of character, he assigns those with conflicting loyalties to remote posts where their political leanings will earn them little favor, usually engendering a tight bond with the locals; this has created a fanatically loyal force in the Colonial Marshals.

Faced primarily with dealing with bandit raids, McEvans knows that the Reaches can expect greater incursions in the future from any of the nations they border. To this end, he appealed to President Trondel to establish a true Fronc Reaches military. An advocate of separation of military and judicial matters, McEvans has been adamant that the Marshals should remain a law-enforcement and peacekeeping body while the new Fronc Reaches Sentinels are tasked with fending off external threats like pirates and foreign militaries.

McEvans chafes at the distance his position has created between himself and the peoples of the Reaches. He leaves Fronc for another planet in the Reaches each month, not just to maintain contact with the scattered Marshals, but also to show the residents that the national leadership accords value to each and every one of them. His popularity with the citizenry of the Reaches is overwhelmingly obvious in the size of the crowds that greet each of these visits.

KAMALA ROY

Rank / Title: CEO, Mindstar Industries
Born: 3019 (57 in 3076)

Heiress to a small pleasure circus on Joyz, Kamala wasn't satisfied with mere wealth. Mortgaging her birthright, she felt that there was more money to be made from citizens of the realm than from tourists. She invested in the near bankrupt Mindstar trideo production and music studios. Tailored to the generally more liberal tastes of Canopians rather than tourists, her brands quickly soared to the top. Local competitors copied her style and reduced her market share, but Mindstar was still the top entertainment venue in the Magistracy. Exports were marketed as "exotic" Canopian creative works, and sales were good in the foreign markets targeted by Mindstar.

Rather than being a one-note wonder, Kamala diversified her company, expanding to personal cosmetics and small electronics. After succeeding there, she further expanded her consumer offerings. Having Mindstar become one of the largest companies in the Magistracy rewarded Kamala with both immense wealth and great power. No doubt due to the generous returns that she earned from her shares of Mindstar, the Magestrix rewarded Kamala with the title of Durachi Roy of Joyz.

The recent occupation by the Blakists hampered Mindstar to a degree, but Kamala is far more worried about the Magistracy's ally, the Capellan Confederation. With studios and factories throughout the Magistracy, the Blakist occupation didn't hamper Mindstar too much; the Blakists even let select goods be traded to reduce complaints from the populace, and the Trinity Alliance has opened trade routes between the Confederation and the Magistracy. Roy has accused the Confederation of interfering with that trade and dealing in protectionism while trying to cut into her profits at home. Kamala has started a war of commerce, with price drops and marketing campaigns designed to make Confederation predation too expensive. Some insiders believe that Roy has also initiated less-than-legal means to win her economic battle.

CORPORATIONS OF THE MAGISTRACY

Majesty Metals and Manufacturing

For over a century, Majesty Metals and Manufacturing was the only producer of weaponry outside of personal arms in the Magistracy. One of the oldest firms in the realm, it was formed in 2550 to take advantage of Canopus' impressive ore deposits. Expanding to Dunianshire twenty years later, the company dabbled in consumer vehicles until just before the Reunification War, where it was expanded to produce combat vehicles and 'Mechs. When the Star League took Majesty, they didn't damage either facility. In fact, Kerensky relied upon the facilities to rearm his troops for the push into the Rim Worlds Republic, even expanding the Dunianshire plant to produce DropShips.

As the Succession Wars progressed, Majesty was the only weapons manufacturer to survive to the 31st century. As the backbone of the defense industry, Majesty did well but had to pour much of that money back into their facilities, which were running as much as possible while suffering from deferred maintenance due to the general lack of technical knowledge in the realm. Majesty settled on producing primarily light 'Mechs, a fact that was reflected in the make up of the MAF. With the recovery of the Helm core, Majesty expected to expand and upgrade once the technology filtered down. While this eventually occurred, the process took time, and once Majesty was able to make the upgrades it found its future wasn't as bright as it had hoped.

The Trinity Alliance brought Detroit Consolidated MechWorks to the New Colony region. As the Confederation, Concordat, and Magistracy came up with new designs, none went to Majesty, going instead to Detroit. Officials have decried this process as endangering national security, but to no avail. Majesty finally found assistance from Earthwerks, which was getting no support from the Confederation for the *Koschei*. With Canopus under Blakist control, Majesty began producing the 'Mech at their Dunianshire facility. During the Blakist occupation, they upgraded the lines on Canopus, but Majesty will not be able continue to manufacture these models for long without access to imported technologies.

Detroit Consolidated MechWorks

The Trinity Alliance relied on all parties benefiting from the treaty so that war materiel could be provided to all nations involved. Geographically the Magistracy would be an ideal spot for manufacturing, but the New Colony was a better political choice as it was not officially part of any one nation. With the most advanced industrial base, Detroit was awarded the new 'Mech facility. The Confederation, Magistracy and Concordat provided the money, materials, and workers to construct the facility. Once complete, the facility began producing 'Mechs for all three realms. The agreement set a complex order for distribution of the 'Mechs where initial capital outlay, combat losses, and recent purchases determines who can purchase the output, frequently leaving the Taurians last in line. The death of Jeffery Calderon on Detroit has not endeared the planet to the hearts of the Taurians, either.

The quality of goods manufactured at Detroit has been the highest in the three realms, despite attempts of other firms to discredit what they consider to be an upstart. This level of quality has led to many new designs being sent to Detroit, expanding the facility to over a half dozen different lines, including newly designed vehicles such as the Tamarlane Strike Sled and Danai Artillery Support Vehicle.

Despite having some of the best forces guarding Detroit, a Blakist assault required the Confederation to dispatch additional forces. The citizens of Detroit suffered as the Blakists tried to pull the defenders away from the MechWorks, but to no avail. Upon landing, the relief force was able to use the Danais produced there to help push the Blakists off planet. As if there weren't enough controversies over the MechWorks, there is confusion over who owns it. The Concordat feels that each nation should share in the profits equally, the Confederation believes profits should be distributed on a per capita basis, while the Magistracy feels that since Detroit is now part of their realm that they should receive all of the profits.

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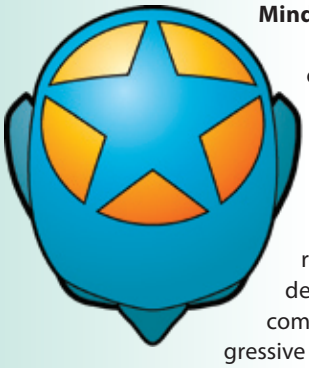
CORPORATIONS OF THE MAGISTRACY



Mindstar Enterprises

A conglomerate with facilities on over half a dozen worlds, Mindstar is a commercial giant that is able to exert political pressure both domestically and internationally. The company has a diverse array of products, from music to deodorant to toasters to portable communications. They are very aggressive when entering a new field, often pushing the boundaries of legal consumerism. While Mindstar doesn't produce weapons, they aren't completely separate from the armed forces. The MSC has more than one contract to supply personal supplies for MAF personnel, but Mindstar also provides the uniforms and jumpsuits. They used to provide dress uniforms until recently, when FuRrOr's redesign won over MSC command. Additionally the enormous amount of taxes that Mindstar pays from all their business supports the Magistracy budget.

Mindstar's exports bring with them more than just a product or service. The demands for Mindstar's high-quality products give the company an advantage in negotiating trade agreements. And while not an active participant, the MIM no doubt uses Mindstar's exports to send agents and collect data. While not retaining the obvious benefits of the pleasure circuses in advancing the intelligence agency's agenda, agents may find it easier to infiltrate areas that the circuses would not be able to.

With the Trinity Alliance encouraging trade between the three signatories, Mindstar found a welcome audience in the Taurian Concordat, but the going has been tougher in the Confederation. While tariffs are heavily restricted, the Confederation has used taxes and government hang-ups to hamper Mindstar sales while offering lower quality products with similar packaging to that of Mindstar in the Magistracy. Mindstar has used marketing and targeted sales to fight the unfair advantages, but it may take government intervention to level the playing field. While Mindstar has fierce competition with Earcandy in the Federated Suns and Free Worlds League, both use the quality of their product and advertising, not government interference, to fight for consumers.

KEY WORLDS OF THE MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

CANOPUS

Star Type (Recharge Time): F5IV (176 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 14.94 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Cybele, Inanna)
Surface Gravity: 1.1
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 25° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 60 percent
Highest Native Life: Fish
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 1,107,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-B-B-C

Looking for a better life, a group of Marik MechWarriors landed on Canopus in 2530. Led by Kossandra Centrella, she declared their world to be a new nation, one where women would right the wrongs that they had suffered for many centuries. This idealistic government might have lasted a mere few decades, but the Canopians got lucky—Canopus was rich in mineral wealth. Extracting the ore, Canopus quickly built an economic and industrial base that allowed them to expand their nation. While the Canopians have benefited from their planet's wealth, Canopus itself has not. Desperate to enrich themselves, the inhabitants liberally strip-mined, severely damaging the planet's ecosystem. The near doubling of the planet's population in less than half a century has also had a harmful effect. While attempts to reverse this were begun in the 3060s, the recent damage inflicted by the Blakist occupation has caused immense setbacks.

Canopus has two major continents, Alinia and Salonika. The continent of Alinia is the more populated of the two and contains most of the planet's industrial concerns. The capitol, Crimson, consists mainly of palaces, administrative offices and military facilities. Located 120 kilometers west on the coast, Centrellia is the main hub for transportation both on the planet and off. An established rail network connects the major cities on the west coast, which house almost a third of the planet's population between

MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

them. Part of this network was disrupted with the firebombing of Crimson and has yet to be fully repaired.

Salonika is dominated by the Canopian Sea in its center, with a narrow two hundred kilometers long leading north to the ocean. There is a large island in the middle, officially named Celeste but referred to by the natives as Bull's Eye for its resemblance to a target. The main port and largest city on Salonika is Astarte, located on the eastern side of the Salonika Strait where it meets the Bay of Atlay. On the other side of the strait is a large complex of smelting plants, purifying the ore for transport to Centrellia. Most of Canopus' livestock is raised on ranches on Salonika, though topsoil erosion is threatening many of these.

Canopus also has a few equatorial island chains. Relatively untouched by mining, these remain the most fertile places on the planet, growing exotic produce and serving as a vacation spot for Canopus locals who wish to get away from the constant stream of tourists. The great Canopian oceans also are home to Obio, a three-hundred-kilometer-square island that is twelve hundred kilometers from the nearest land. Used as a dumping place for criminals and political undesirables, little is known about the civilization (if there is one) on the island. Other than a few crudely built structures and the occasional human, little has been observed from a distance and no one wants to set foot on the island to investigate. The planet's navy patrols the region to keep vessels from landing on it and is responsible for dropping off new exiles on the desolate beaches.

Canopus has been successfully invaded twice, once by the Star League and most recently by the Word of Blake. The first invasion wasn't kind to Canopus, but neither was it terribly destructive; the Star League worked hard to rebuild Canopus to be better off than before they arrived. By the time the Blakists arrived in 3069, the planet had already been suffering under an HPG blackout. The Thirty-fourth Division defeated Raventhir's Iron Hand outside of Crimson. The Iron Hand fought hard but was outclassed and outmanned. Confining the Magestrix to house arrest, the Thirty-fourth established martial law in Crimson and Centrellia but was surprised by elements of the First Cuirassiers, who were on maneuvers on Salonika. While unable to dislodge the Blakists, they managed to occupy them with hit-and-run raids.

Upon discovering that the Magestrix and her command staff had somehow vanished into the main palace complex, the Forty-first Shadow Division was dispatched to resolve the situation. After setting fire to Crimson, the Forty-first hunted down the remainder of the Cuirassiers. After conducting a sweep of Salonika for more forces, the Forty-first left at some point, a shock to the liberators in 3075 who expected more resistance. The planet has spent the last year recovering, but it is far too early to tell how long the task will take. With the Canopian Institute of War destroyed, construction has begun for the Emma Centrella Martial Academy near Astarte. Despite the transitional state it is in, teaching has resumed in temporary buildings while taking advantage of war-torn zones for urban training.

DETROIT

Star Type (Recharge Time): G1V (182 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.75 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Livonia and Tecumseh)
Surface Gravity: 1.03
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 33°C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 78 percent
Highest Native Life: Amphibian
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 2,104,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-B-B-C

Survey scans determined that Detroit had some sizable ore veins deep under its surface, but the dearth of any terrestrial life made the effort to settle it too great for the modest rewards. A handful of families fleeing the United Hindu Collective arrived at Detroit in 2488. Setting up a small agricultural community, they spent the next century living with mainly pre-industrial technology as they seeded the surface of the planet with modest plant life. This in turn attracted companies willing to delve deep underground to get at the minerals. While hardly a windfall, the output of Detroit grew enough that the Taurian Concordat and Magistracy fought over it in the early 29th century.

Detroit's two major continents, simply named North and South, are separated by Pontiac Sea. Sheltered by the continents, the sea is calmer than the rest of the oceans on Detroit, making its coastline the home for almost half of the planet's inhabitants. The capital city of Ann Arbor is located on South and is home to the first settlement on the planet. A small university and a shipping hub have grown up around it, making it the cultural center with a modest industry. South is home to the planet's only native life form that can exit the water, the rainbow tree frog. The frog has taken well to the imported plant life and has prospered despite humanity encroaching on its territory. Recent laws have added additional protections for this potentially valuable creature.

North is home to more of the planet's industrial concerns, including the famed MechWorks located in the metropolis of Dearborn. The sprawling facility was built north of the city, but Dearborn has expanded to engulf it on all but the northern edge, allowing future growth. The aerospace facility was constructed in nearby Flint in order to somewhat disperse the industry. In between these two lies the Warren Fault, a deep chasm that allows

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cheap, if dangerous, access to expansive ore veins. To the west of both lies the Detroit Proving Grounds, where 'Mechs are tested and the local garrison can run live-fire exercises.

The islands of Detroit are home to the planet's fishermen, who help keep the planet fed. They are sparsely populated with potential for the future. The White Sands Archipelago is being considered by a number of firms as a potential vacation destination, though attracting tourists when there are many more-established Canopian locations nearby presents a challenge. Detroit has even expanded to one of its moons—Livonia is home to a small chemical R&D firm. The complex is all interconnected, as the thin atmosphere won't support human life for more than a few minutes.

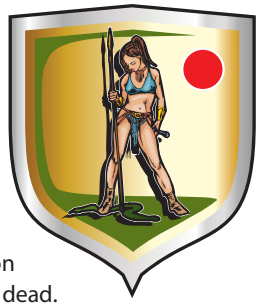
Detroit was absorbed into the New Colony region when the Concordat and Magistracy formed it. Tired of its small industries being raided by pirates and unable to afford to hire or develop a force capable of stopping the raids, they welcomed the protection offered by the two realms. When it pulled off the small coup of winning the bid to host the Consolidated Mechworks, the populace knew it would be a boost to their world, but none realized how big the facility would be. Working on more than just a line or two, the new jobs and immense foreign funds attracted tens of millions of new residents, quickly overwhelming Detroit's immigration department. While they have better control now, Detroit is still an easy place to go to get lost.

In 3071, Blakist forces attempted to capture or destroy the MechWorks. Landing near North's largest city, Michiana, they began attacking the city, hoping to draw out the defenders. Local militia attempt to defend against the intruders, but the Canopian Highlanders stationed near Dearborn held their positions. After nearly two weeks of Blakists rampaging through Michiana, relief forces landed. With nearly a battalion of newly built Danais providing artillery cover, the Highlanders, supported by some of the relief forces, quickly pushed the Blakist attackers off planet. Michiana was nearly reduced to rubble, with a third of its population killed.

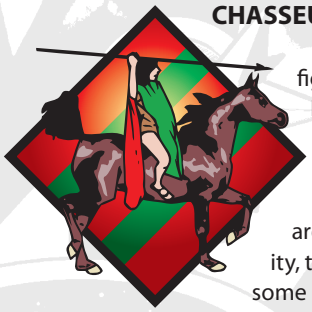
HER MAJESTY'S ARMS: KEY MILITARY COMMANDS

MAGISTRACY ROYAL GUARD

Of all the units in the Magistracy, none was hit harder than the Royal Guard. As a fighting force, the Iron Hand was destroyed while trying to protect Canopus from Blakist invaders. A battalion of the First Cuirassiers, also on planet, lasted longer but was eventually hunted down by the Forty-first Shadow Division. The rest of the First got chewed up on Fanardir, though about half of the remaining forces managed to survive the occupation. The Second Cuirassiers, though suffering damage while fighting in the Confederation, is at full strength following refit by their hosting nation. General Vernyce Alkobar will have a tough time rebuilding, especially since his top aide, Colonel Claire Duckworth, was killed assisting Hadji Doru's escape.



With many of the survivors of the Iron Hand retreating to Crimson, it may be some time before who survived and who did not is sorted out; Colonel Jason Raventhir is among the missing presumed dead. While the First has the core warriors of the Iron Hand to build around, if it is rebuilt at all it will have to be from the ground up. The First will be a priority to receive new material from Detroit and Dunianshire while the Second will team up with the other units formerly serving in the Confederation to form the core of a strike force that will root out the last remnants of Blakist occupation.



CHASSEURS À CHEVAL

The cream of the Canopian fighting forces did not survive the Blakist attacks unscathed. While the First Light Horse saw action in the Confederation, liberated Canopus and hit Astrokaszy, they are still above ninety percent capacity, thanks to both Capellan sources and some of the Blakist materiel left behind on Canopus. The Second Light Horse did not fare so well, being split between two systems while the Blakists hit both. Luckily Colonel Ardie Germaine was able to extract his troops from Megarez while under fire. He then retreated to Borgan's Rift to link up with the rest of his unit only to find Force Major Vernon Park trapped by the invaders. He landed behind the Blakists, who hadn't counted on reinforcements arriving in the midst of the blackout. Cutting right through the middle of the formation, Germaine linked up with the rest of his unit and then retreated off-planet to regroup, leaving the Blakists bloody but in control of both systems.

While the Second lost a quarter of their forces, the Third Light Horse lost almost half as they defended Adherlwin. After two months of fighting, they realized that they were caught in a lost cause as the Blakists swallowed up most of the planet. The Second and Third met up on Lockton, which was garrisoned by Caesar's Cohorts. Together the three units were able to repulse repeated Blakist assaults. The Chasseurs à Cheval will likely be second in line for new materiel, after the Royal Guard, a situation that will be protested as the Chasseurs feel they are the more combat ready of the two units. Perhaps the biggest question is who will replace acting Commander Finn Hardy, who was getting ready to retire when General Cynthia Evans was killed on Canopus. All three regimental commanders are good choices to fill the spot.

MAGISTRACY OF CANOPUS

CANOPIAN FUSILIERS

Feeling a mixture of shame and vengeance, the Fusiliers have managed to avoid combat other than quick raids, though through no fault of their own. The First and Second Fusiliers were posted closer to Astrokaszy and the Marian Hegemony, a much more likely spot for combat operations than the middle of the Magistracy. When the blackout struck and rumors of Blakist attacks filtered into their camps, many of the troops clamored to return and free their homelands. The commanders of both units were able to keep them in check, not wanting to abandon their charges to chase after rumor and supposition. Had they the clear hindsight of historians, they might have set off for Canopus, knowing that the Hegemony was struggling with their own fight against the Blakists.

The Third Fusiliers managed a good amount of combat, first in the Confederation, next lifting the siege of Detroit and finally liberating Canopus itself. With the damage the Chasseurs and Royal Guard took, it should be quite some time before the Fusiliers receive any new equipment. While the troops may understand now, in a short time they will be complaining that the other units are receiving better equipment. The commanders are working to forestall this jealousy, but if that is the worst the Fusiliers have to deal with, it would be a blessing. All three regiments should expect to see some combat as the Magistracy cleans the last of the Blakist defenders from its lands, but the Third will likely be the only unit to go chasing this new enemy.

COLONIAL MARSHALS

Formed in 3056 with the Treaty of Taurus, the Colonial Marshals were to be the law-enforcement and peacekeeping entity within the New Colony Region. When the New Colony Region obtained independence in 3066, this loosely bound group of independent lawmen had the defense of their new nation thrust upon it. For many, this presented an end to their former autonomy.

Trained at the Canopian Institute of War, the Marshals served four-year terms on a given world, after which they would receive further training as needed before reassignment to a new duty-planet. Their duties were primarily in maintaining local laws in accord with the governing body of that world. For these newly colonized worlds, this meant everything from arresting petty criminals and delivering them to whatever passed for a local magistrate, to mediating disputes over water rights between two neighboring ranchers. Their duties also included defense against any interplanetary raiders, as pirates were a persistent problem.

As the colonial body became a nation, the Marshals were the only military force that the Reaches could boast. With militarization came greater organization and cohesion, requiring the sacrifice of the independent decision-making for which the Marshals had become renowned. While this might have created friction between them and the new government, Force Commander McEvans' leadership eased the transition. New Marshals are now trained on Fronc, since the War Institute was lost on Canopus. To ease the Marshals' burdens, President Trondel recently enacted the Fronc Reaches Defense Act, establishing a military defense force distinct from the Marshals. The Marshals are tasked with enforcing local laws while the new Fronc Reaches Sentinels are entrusted with defending the realm from outside threats.

What has evolved is a military force with a unique set of loyalties. The Marshals have assimilated the same independent, frontier-living mentality as the citizens they oversee. When facing bandits or pirates of any kind, the Marshals are known to be fanatic and merciless. Of late, due to the loss of 'Mech supplies and replacements from their founding nations, the Marshals have developed strategies to capture the war-making materiel of any raiding forces to incorporate into their own forces as needed.

MAGISTRACY MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

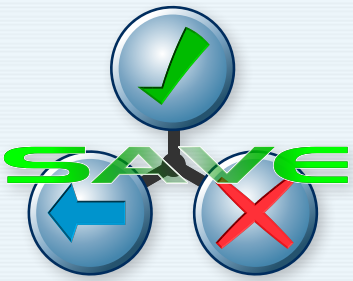
Mercenary employment in the Magistracy of Canopus has been one of that nation's major casualties of the Jihad. With the incineration of Crimson that has of late come to light, the leadership of the nation was decapitated. With the loss of their primary command structure, the authorities regulating and coordinating the various mercenary forces scattered throughout the nation were lost. Without guiding oversight, a number of the less-reputable mercenary units simply packed up and left, taking with them everything they were able to carry. Primarily, those units who stayed were those lacking JumpShips and who thus had no choice. Many of those who chose to stay and honor their contracts suffered greatly by opposing the Blakists. Others, like Harcourt's Destructors, found themselves deployed to the Fronc Reaches to defend against pirates, only to return to the Magistracy when the Word of Blake assaulted Canopus, where the Destructors suffered massive casualties.

In some cases, mercenary units loyal to their home nation return when that nation is under extreme duress. Consider Ramilie's Raiders, who had been employed by the Fronc Reaches. They went missing shortly after news broke about the loss of Crimson. Some weeks later, they turned up in Magistracy space at the controls of a commandeered JumpShip, linking up with the remnants of Harcourt's Destructors, another long-term Magistracy merc unit. While they abandoned their contract with the Fronc Reaches, the Raiders were only too happy to join in fighting against the Blakists controlling the central worlds of the Magistracy. They are, however, an exception. With no true head of state for some time, no new mercenary commands were contracted to replace those who had deserted. The resulting atmosphere is one in which mercenaries are regarded as untrustworthy as a rule.

FRONC REACHES MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

Mercenaries in the Fronc Reaches are often the only serious military force on the worlds to which they are assigned. While the Marshals are few and scattered, it will fall to mercenary units to perform actual defense of installations from raiders and pirates. The deficiency of funds available for employing mercenaries has led President Trondel to offer great incentives. These incentives include large land grants and estates, something unusual in the otherwise egalitarian and democratic Reaches. The main goal has been to lure units with no other true homeworld who might gain loyalty to the fledgling nation by becoming property owners. This tactic has so far netted them but one acceptor—Derek's Devils, who have become the founders of the Fronc Reaches Sentinels, taking on the new name of Fronc Cuirassiers. Before taking residence at his new home (which is under construction), their commander was instrumental in repelling a raid by unidentified forces that he believed to be Word of Blake Jihadists based in the Taurian Concordat. Given overall oversight of all mercenaries in the Reaches, and answering only to President Trondel and Force Commander McEvans, Capt. Derek Hudsenn has begun planning retributive strikes at these supposed Blakists should their base of operations come to light.

Unable to produce much in the way of replacement parts or supplies, the Reaches are lacking in anything other than land with which to pay prospective mercs. Should Trondel not be careful, he may give away too much land claimed by Reaches citizens and find himself on the wrong side of protest lines.



TAURIAN CONCORDAT

THE TAURIAN CONCORDAT

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Fleeing during the consolidation conflicts of the Inner Sphere, Samantha Calderon and a couple thousand loyal followers traveled rimward and settled the Hyades Cluster, a resource-rich group of planets. With millions of like-minded individuals following suit, the colonies swelled and expanded to the surrounding systems, and in 2260, the mutual defense force called the Taurian Defense Force was established. Less than a century after that, the Taurian Concordat proper was founded.

Like most other Periphery states, the Taurian Concordat resisted efforts to join the Star League. The Star League's annexation of the Concordat was the longest and bloodiest campaign of the Reunification War. No faction felt more pleased or gratified than the Concordat when the Star League dissolved and the Succession Wars broke out, allowing the Concordat a measure of safety as the more powerful Houses were too occupied with one another to pay attention to the Periphery

RECENT EVENTS

Recent decades have put the Concordat in the most turbulent and shaky times since the reunification war. The last three Protectors, Thomas, Jeffery, and the first non-Calderon Grover Shraplen, all had their reigns ended for them via violence rather than retirement or other peaceful means.

Thomas's reign, by far the longest, was characterized by rampant anti-Davion paranoia, leading him to draft most of the Concordat's population and industry into a massive military armament campaign that damaged the Concordat's economy and sparked massive dissent. The typically benign Far Lookers faction of the Concordat, feeling their backs were up against the wall, began colonizing systems covertly, which led to the imprisonment of many government officials by Thomas. This sort of behavior would continue until 3055 when Marshal Hadji Doru finally moved to unseat the Protector, installing the youngest Calderon, Jeffery, in the post before resigning his commission.

The short tenure of Jeffery Calderon was seen as the eye of the storm by many observers. The heavy weights of taxation and conscription taken off the backs of the citizens led the Concordat economy to flourish, and the Treaty of Taurus with the Magistracy of Canopus, along with the founding of the New Colony region, was Jeffery's crowning achievement. Not paranoid like his father, Jeffery was still wary of Inner Sphere involvement and hesitantly attended the Detroit conference to discuss an alliance with the Capellan Confederation. This trip led to his death at the hand of rebelling Colonial Marshals when commandos stormed the conference in an effort to rescue the hostages, though some dispute whose weapons were actually used to kill Jeffery.

With no apparent heir, Grover Shraplen, a supporter of Thomas' polices and a staunch critic of Jeffery, ascended and many believed a return to a constant state of alert was not far behind. Shraplen wedded the Concordat to the Magistracy and Capellan Confederation and, in exchange for advanced equipment and supplies, deployed several Taurian units in the Confederation's Xin Sheng campaign. But as time went on and the Confederation seemingly did not live up to its side of the bargain, Shraplen began feeling disillusioned with the alliance. He thus relied more and more on the Word of Blake for support and intelligence. As his rule (characterized by the secession of many of the newly colonized systems and the creation of the Calderon Protectorate by the Marshal Baron Cham Kithrong) became more unpopular, Shraplen desperately looked for a reason to put the attention elsewhere, hopefully against the Federated Suns.

The appearance of the Fighting Urukhai in the Taurus skies in 3067 was all the distraction Shraplen needed. This rogue mercenary unit, recently employed by the Federated Suns, raided Taurus and ignited a war. Many Taurian border regiments were swept up in the fever to reclaim their historic systems and launched an invasion of the Federated Suns, pushing all the way to the Pleiades Cluster. The Federated Suns quickly reclaimed many of the systems in a massive counterattack, with the exception of the Cluster, whose invaders went to ground to start a successful guerrilla campaign. The Federated Suns depended on the veteran mercenary unit Hansen's Roughriders for its defense, but the campaign's level of violence soared almost out of control. The Taurians killed the Roughrider's dependents on Bromhead. Increasing viciousness by the Roughriders gave Shraplen a distraction for the Taurian public from the continuous setbacks in the Pleiades Cluster.

Shraplen's reign ended on 1 May 3074, as a series of asteroids of various sizes struck Samantha, the capital city of Taurus. The surprise attack killed Shraplen alongside millions, including the Privy Council and ministers in the government. The surviving senior officials convened, unsure of the course of action to take in ruling the Concordat, but sure of one thing; punishing the Federated Suns for the heinous act, since investigations and Word of Blake intelligence pointed to them as the culprits of the attack. With a sympathetic Calderon Protectorate (despite the Concordat's unwillingness to cede power to the young Calderon and potentially power-hungry Kithrong) and pirate attacks at an all-time low, the ruling Junta mobilized their entire military to cut a swath of destruction against the Suns holdings until they secured the Pleiades Cluster once and for all.

As in years prior, their attack took the Davions by surprise and made swift progress, as many formations often resorted to nuclear weapons to destroy any defending formations before they made contact. But the Federated Suns in the last year has finally blunted the Taurian's progress, using the Roughriders as their sole coherent defenders. The Roughriders have brazenly cut a path of death and destruction deep into Concordat space, destroying vi-

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tal infrastructure and any military unit they can, much like General Sherman did in the ancient American Civil War. This brutal fighting has killed two members of the ruling council, allowing Boris Tharn to finally lay claim to the Protectorship, with no end in sight outside of a ceasefire due to sheer exhaustion on both sides.

ASSESSMENT

Despite the massive ups and downs since the turn of the millennium, the Taurian Concordat found itself in a particularly safe location up until three years ago. Though their attempt to secure and hold the Pleiades Cluster until they could gain interstellar recognition of ownership failed, the Federated Suns had so far also failed to fully eject the Taurian guerrillas, or even completely keep them from receiving sporadic re-supply shipments. Many inside the Concordat felt that if they could just hold on longer, the Federated Suns may tire and allow the return of the Cluster to its rightful holders. But all-out war against the Federated Suns has depleted the Concordat's stockpiles, and damage to infrastructure in both border systems and captured worlds has prevented the exploitation of resources. Further harm was done to the Concordat's manufacturing capabilities as Suns mercenaries operating behind the Concordat lines damaged many military factories. Very few replacement machines are being produced, but those that are completed go out to the TDF as quickly as they are made. Inflation is rising, as many commercial industries are being converted to military use to support the war effort, making luxury goods scarce.

The Concordat military is in even worse shape. Just before the Jihad, their military, including mercenaries, counted for approximately eleven regiments of operational BattleMechs. But Protector Shraplen took opportunities to push for further raids, slowly depleting their strength as they sent unit after unit into the Pleiades Cluster to hold onto it. As of now, only about six regiments of operational BattleMechs remain, most of which are within a single jump of the Pleiades Cluster or New Syrtis.

What puts the Concordat in a particularly bad position is that with the exception of a few units the Taurian Guard left behind to help rebuild their homeworld, no active military force remains garrisoned on their systems within their pre-Pleiades crusade borders, as all were mobilized and sent to punish the Federated Suns. While some units were returning from the Capellan Confederation or were used to defend against the Calderon Protectorate border, all of these units were caught up in the new crusade and are in dire need of replacement material.

But true to their form, the Concordat citizens refuse to bow down and admit defeat. IndustrialMech production lines are being converted to produce more potent "RetroTech" BattleMechs, and the first brand-new retro *Toro* rolled off an assembly line at Illiushin in late 3076, followed shortly by a much heavier retro *Xanthos* within weeks at the same facility.

The shattered industry of the Concordat has left us with the opportunity to open up a previously untouched market. While up-front costs in procuring and building industries may be significant, with few competitors now and a desperate need for military equipment of all types, we might be able to negotiate favorable terms and procure low-interest loans for our expenses. We can also use the Concordat as a test market for several of our prototype RetroTech designs. A delegation has already been dispatched to Taurus in hopes of opening up operations, though the influence of CEO Matthias Commager of Taurus Territorial Industries coupled with a rabid paranoia of outsiders may be our biggest hurdles.

CALDERON PROTECTORATE

After years of political tension and positioning, the-Marshal Cham Kithrong of the Taurian Defense Force Sixth Corps continuedto blunt then-Protector Shraplen's efforts to seize the supposed son of Jeffery Calderon and went into a borderline rebellion, refusing to relocate his troops. Constantly holding his Corps back from attempting a military coup, he instead used his various friends and contacts to get his way, intensifying his efforts once the heritage of Erik Martens-Calderon was proved. However, Protector Shraplen knew the bureaucratic system better than Kithrong, and he stymied every attempt to have him removed, even ignoring Kithrong's public and vocal insistence that Shraplen step aside for the rightful heir of the title of Protectorship.

So when Kithrong finally gave the go-ahead, the two regiments of Sixth Corps quickly seized their supply depots and transports, signaling friendly JumpShips to take them to the a group of relatively new colony worlds settled by the Far Lookers. Already bitter due to Shraplen's focus on the Federated Suns without further colonization, it was a welcome sight to have the son of Jeffery Calderon and an influential supporter living in their midst, along with two regiments of soldiers willing to protect them from the raids of various pirate groups.

While skirmishes occurred on a regular basis, many of these were fought on sparsely populated systems between the Protectorate's Prides and the Concordat mercenaries. Such engagements often damaged critical equipment like power plants and water filters and forced the systems, already on the edge of failure, to be abandoned. Support among the backwater worlds has remained strong, as many of those systems abandoned in recent years saw their settlers head to the Protectorate instead of the Concordat, "voting with their feet."

The Protectorate has been attempting to industrialize their systems to become more independent, often using smuggling to acquire critical industrial hardware and knowledge. From issu-

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ing letters of marques to working with black-market shipments of military equipment and supplies, the Baron has reacted to the constant state of emergency by doing whatever he could to keep the fledgling state viable.

ASSESSMENT

To use their small military effectively in any noteworthy operation, the Calderon Protectorate has to dedicate its entire military to the effort. This can, and has, backfired, as any of the Protectorate's series of supply raids into the Taurian Concordat using the Prides shows. Somehow word of the lack of defenses reached pirate groups, who began raiding and pillaging many of the Protectorate's undefended outposts and settlements. This increase in pirate activity did not repeat itself in the last two years when Kithrong tentatively authorized the two Pride regiments to return to Concordat space, this time as humanitarians acting as a rear guard as other units rushed to Taurus to render aid and participate in the rescue and recovery process. Even staunch Protectorate supporters felt the Concordat's need for retaliation initially, and some debated sending the Prides into FedSuns space to participate in the attacks as well. But as the atrocities mounted and casualty counts of FedSuns civilians increased into the tens of millions, Kithrong and his officers began voicing doubts about how far the Taurians were going for retribution. Eventually Erik Martens-Calderon ordered Kithrong to recall the forces when he received word of several atrocities by Concordat forces upon Suns settlements, stepping into his own as leader and president.

Like the Concordat, the Calderon Protectorate has recently forgone the traditional, advanced military equipment, instead relying more on the low-cost and easy-to-produce RetroTech designs while looking into ways to make the military industrial complex more self-sufficient. Kithrong attempted to open trade routes to the breakaway factions of the Filtvelt Coalition and Malagrotta, and while both have opened up small trade routes for much-needed rare elements and medicine, the takeover of the Malagrotta region by the Death's Consorts pirate band forced Kithrong to break off relations. He was left to once again rely on privateer smugglers, as he did in the nation's infancy.

While StarCorps can look into placing a full-blown military construction facility in the Protectorate (which would effectively give us a monopoly over Protectorate military sales), a significant obstacle to that would be the need for a steady supply of component parts. The Calderon Protectorate as a whole does not have significant advanced industry, with the exception of Kithrong's chosen capital of Erod's Escape. Overtures to resource-rich Hellespont have so far been rebuffed, but the system has played a vital role in supplying the Protectorate's needs in recent months.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

BORIS THARN

BORIS THARN

Rank/Title: Protector, Taurian Concordat
Born: 3010 (66 in 3076)

The Senior Marshal of the Taurian military, Boris Tharn has used his longstanding relationship with Protector Shraplen to help his Third Corps upgrade themselves with some of the first upgrade packages from the Capellan Confederation. Eagerly accepting the advanced weapons, they were put to good use as they fought the Federated Suns during the Xin Sheng campaign and the Pleiades Crusade.

Tharn and Shraplen were summoned to a strategizing session to regain control of the Pleiades Cluster. The plan they devised centered around offering a ceremonial gift of a refurbished *Quixote* class WarShip. In the end, though, Tharn had to travel as the head delegate, since Shraplen's health was starting to deteriorate and he needed to stay on Taurus for treatment. When Tharn reached the rendezvous point, the Word of Blake delegation informed him that Taurus's capital city had been destroyed via a vicious asteroid attack by the Federated Suns, killing Protector Shraplen and many senior government officials.

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As the most senior government official alive after the attacks, and with the Marshals busy gearing up to lead the Taurian military against the Federated Suns, Tharn became the public face of the conflict. The populace saw him frequently in press conferences and interviews, and he endeared himself to them by soothing their concerns and anxieties. This allowed him, with the backing of his aides Victor Sharpe and Matthias Commager, to wrestle the Protectorship from other would-be leaders in 3076. It has been hard to pinpoint Tharn's precise beliefs and agenda amid the turbulence of war, though Tharn's loyalty to Shraplen could mean that he has a very similar agenda as his predecessor.

VICTOR SHARPE

Rank/Title: Senior Marshal of the TDF

Born: 3013 (age 63 as of 3076)

Aide to Boris Tharn when both were part of the III Corps, Victor in effect ran the corps, working day and night to maintain the supply lines to forces stationed outside the Concordat, especially those inside the Pleiades Cluster. As the lines became strained due to continued blockade and Hansen's Roughriders arrived looking to eradicate the insurgents, Victor was suspected of (and later admitted to) authorizing the shipment of weapons of mass destruction to the Cluster. While most of these were nuclear weapons, some were also chemical and biological for use on the Federated Suns' food stockpiles. Sharpe overstepped his authority in this authorization, but he did it as a loyal soldier—if the use of the weapons backfired, Shraplen would have deniability, since his name was not on the requisitions. While Shraplen was reluctant to deploy the weapons and was angered about only learning of Sharpe's actions through Federated Suns press releases, in retrospect many deemed Victor's actions as appropriate, especially in the wake of the disastrous asteroid attacks on Taurus.

After the attack on Samantha, Sharpe was brought in by Tharn as part of the military Junta in a blatant attempt to shore up his own power base among the group. Most of the others felt that Sharpe would not be enough to create an effective power bloc, but the death of two members of the Junta in the last year has increased the prominence of both men. Sharpe was then raised up to control the entire Taurian Defense Force, with the primary goal of keeping the Concordat forces and militia in fighting condition, despite the bitter fighting and the destruction of much of their manufacturing capability.

CHAM KITHRONG

Rank/Title: Baron/Marshal of the Calderon Protectorate Forces

Born: 3015 (age 61 as of 3076)

Initially assigned to the Taurian Guard out of boot camp, Cham Kithrong used his relaxed personality and charm to make friends and connections in many of his assignments, most notably hitting it off with the children of then-Protector Thomas Calderon. Kithrong was eventually positioned to become the youngest

VICTOR SHARPE

CHAM KITHRONG

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Marshal in recent memory, assigned to the newly created VI Corps in 3038 to garrison systems secretly settled by the Far Lookers.

A supporter of Jeffery's policy of closer ties to the Magistracy of Canopus, Kithrong saw his influence grow until Jeffery's unfortunate death in 3061. At that point one of Jeffery's strongest critics, Grover Shraplen, became Protector, and Shraplen and Kithrong butted heads on virtually every issue. Two years later, Kithrong revealed the existence of an illegitimate son of Jeffery Calderon, which led to the creation of the Calderon Protectorate when Shraplen refused to recognize the child as the proper heir. Because of this, some theorists called Kithrong the Periphery's Amaris, cunningly arranging the situation to have sole influence over a young heir to a empire, despite his claimed desire to protect and raise the boy to be a "proper leader."

Our assets report that while publicly it was Kithrong who announced the pullback of Protectorate forces in the wake of over-the-top Taurian atrocities on historical Concordat worlds, it was in fact the young President Erik Martens-Calderon who ordered the recall. With Erik's increased activity and interest, Cham Kithrong is bringing him further into the fold and giving him more influence and information over the operations of the Calderon Protectorate.

ERIK MARTENS-CALDERON

Rank/Title: President, Calderon Protectorate

Born: 3055 (age 21 as of 3076)

The young, illegitimate son of Jeffery Calderon, Erik was kept secret from his people by Prey's Divisionals and Marshal Kithrong for several years as they feared for his life. His existence and heritage, rooted in an affair between Jeffery Calderon and Talia Martens, took the Concordat by surprise as Kithrong suddenly claimed regency over the "proper heir to the Taurian Concordat" and led a secession of forces and resources to the newer settlements of the Periphery state.

Only a handful of interviews and public appearances were allowed as Erik grew up, leading many to wonder about the boy's true place in the political scene, or even if he had any desire to follow in his father's footsteps at all. But in the last year Erik has been showing the initiative and motivation to lead the nation created in his name. He has been attending more briefings and strategy sessions, asking questions and raising options. While Erik's increased involvement has lengthened sessions, Baron Kithrong has patiently allowed it and even followed orders from the young president when he demanded the return of Protectorate forces to their bases in June of last year. A raid by Taurian soldiers on a Federated Suns farming settlement on

Hyalite followed by orbital bombardment of unimportant civilian industrial facilities in a heavily populated area reportedly severely disturbed and upset Erik, and he is unwilling to assist in the Concordat's thirst for revenge. Since then the young man has taken his position with a new air of seriousness and vigor. But while foregoing traditional MechWarrior training, Erik has surprisingly (or not surprisingly, considering his tall and athletic build) taken up training for armored infantry, using an Asterion smuggled in by one of their more trusted privateer groups.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

COLE LORIAN

Rank/Title: Minister of the Interior/Head of the TMI

Born: 3018 (age 58 as of 3076)

One of the few government officials to escape the destruction of Samantha, Cole became one of the five highest-ranking officials forming the ruling council to oversee and manage the shocked Taurian Concordat. In the wake of the asteroid at-

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tacks, Lorian has taken an enormous amount of criticism for not resigning for failing to detect the operation, but the lack of experienced leaders allowed him to keep his position, at least for a little while longer.

While Minister of the Interior, Lorian was one of the handful of officers who stymied Shraplen's efforts to attack the rebelling VI Corps. Overstating the ability of Kithrong's forces while understating the readiness of their own, Lorian was able to hold back and calm down an enraged Shraplen, at least until Kithrong's forces staged their brief raiding campaign in 3070. No longer able to justify inaction, Lorian hesitantly sent intelligence reports to the Word of Blake under Shraplen's orders, allowing them to deal with the Protectorate while the Concordat fought its low-level campaign with the Suns.

Lorian initially made his first priority the investigation into how the Federated Suns was able to compromise Taurian security and intelligence for the attack, but little concrete information has surfaced. The pullback of Calderon Protectorate forces and the counter-invasion by Federated Suns troops has forced Lorian to put off the investigation and data mining, focusing his assets instead on keeping a low-profile eye on the Concordat's borders while attempting to keep communication channels to Kithrong open. These actions have stretched assets so thin that Lorian has been forced to rely more and more on Word of Blake intelligence reports to complete the picture of the fighting going on in the Inner Sphere.

TALIA MARTENS

Rank/Title: Captain/CO of the "Second" Prey's Divisionals
Born: 3023 (age 53 as of 3076)

Like all of the members of Prey's Divisionals, Captain Talia Martens has a past shrouded in secrecy. Whatever her past, something about her caught the eye of a young Jeffery Calderon. Some thought it would be nothing more than a casual fling, and true to their expectations the affair seemed to end in the early 3050s. Jeffery, however, could not shake Martens so easily. Their romance flared anew a scant few years later, and the liaison produced a child in 3055.

Jeffery's death hit Martens hard, and she took several months leave to spend time with her young son Erik. While many in the mercenary unit knew who Erik's father was, none would bring it to light until Kithrong revealed the boy's heritage in 3063. As the tensions quickly rose, it become apparent that Erik's life was in jeopardy now that his secret was out. Marshal Kithrong and his VI Corps pledged to protect the boy with their lives, though they could not fully deliver on their pledge without openly rebelling against Shraplen and the forces loyal to him. This finally occurred in 3066, and Kithrong pleaded with the Divisionals to join him. While the CO of the unit could not make the leap, Martens refused to abandon her only child.

Taking her command lance to the Calderon Protectorate to protect her son, Martens found herself away from Erik more often than not, raising and training the militia forces in anti-pirate actions and assisting in the difficult task expanding the newly created Calderon Guard. While this has put her in a stressful situation, constant communication with her son has allowed her to watch him grow up, if only through holovids.

MATTHIAS COMMAGER

Rank/Title: CEO, Taurus Territorial Industries
Born: 3006 (age 70 as of 3076)

One of the noble families of the original settlers from Samantha Calderon's expedition, the Commager line has seen its influence wax and wane over the centuries depending on the ambition of the eldest living member. Seemingly aware of this fact, Matthias Commager is a man of great ambition, and some wonder if his plans extend as high as the Protectorship.

A direct descendant of one of the original founders of Taurus Territorial Industries, Matthias is more loyal to the company than to the Taurian Concordat. Not above using government or taxpayer funds instead of company assets to expand TTL, he used various contacts to inexpensively procure plans for advanced technology such as stealth armor and ferro-fibrous armor. His government contacts also helped Matthias force himself into the ruling Junta after the Samantha attack, as he cited the need for more "civilian oversight" since the Senior Marshals seemed more intent on revenge and retribution than ruling. Despite his claimed need for oversight, Commager has done little to assist in ruling and managing other than overseeing the reconstruction of his company and the planned rebuilding of Taurus's shattered capital.

Citing national security concerns, Commager skillfully procured a sizeable chunk of the recovery and reconstruction funds to rebuild the shattered factory complexes that were caught in the blast zones around Samantha. This left most of the company's private stockpile of cash untouched, which has given Commager enough funds to expand TTL by attempting to buy up Pinard Protectorates Ltd, a Taurian military manufacturing company that is on the verge of bankruptcy after having a good portion of their facilities razed by Federated Suns raiders.

CORPORATIONS OF THE CONCORDAT

Taurus Territorial Industries
Main Headquarters: Taurus
CEO: Matthias Commager

Taurus Territorial Industries (TTL) is the Concordat's largest weapons producer, created and enlarged with continuous influxes of government subsidies to produce a wide variety of military equipment, from small arms ammunition to orbital gun emplacements to DropShips. It lost its number-one status briefly when the Taurian factory on Detroit went online before the Fronc Reaches formed. TTL continued to expand, buying out the orbital Magna engine production facility in the wake of the Fighting Urukhai attack almost a decade ago.

A fair amount of TTL's facilities on Taurus were destroyed during the asteroid attack on the planet's capital, and it was only luck that spared its facilities during the Roughriders' rampage, as they decided to concentrate on the larger Sterope Defense Industries complex instead. CEO Matthias Commager has skillfully positioned the company to acquire a sizeable amount of the reconstruction funds to rebuild the facilities inside and around the impact craters that devastated Samantha, ensuring that the new capital will be built around its historically largest employer. More controversial is the use of private capital (freed by the reconstruction funds) to make serious bid to take over the now-failing Pinard Protectorates, Ltd. in the belief that a company spread out across several systems may be a more safe bet than one based in a single large complex.

Vandenburg Mechanized Industries
Main Headquarters: New Vandenburg
CEO: Elena Cein Broza

A bunch of small-time weapons manufacturers who banded together to secretly aid the Taurian resistance against the Star League Defense Force eventually merged into the Vandenburg Mechanized Industries after the occupation ended. This proud history continues to be remembered by its workers, drummed into their daily routine via various company events and announcements.

VMI, anticipating an approaching mercenary strike, had evacuated their main New Vandenburg facilities and removed much of their stored materials and parts to secure underground locations (the same ones used hundreds of years ago during the Star League Occupation), effectively shutting down the main plant for almost a month. When the raid never occurred (despite FedSuns news announcements, part of a misinformation campaign aiding the Roughriders' deep-strike task force), it took the New Vandenburg plant over a month to unpack and restart their facilities. While some finger-pointing occurred among the board, most quickly realized the importance of taking precautions before disaster hit. This turned out to have a beneficial impact as investors flooded the conglomerate with cash after the razing of the PPL facilities, believing VMI would take better care of their properties.

Currently the board is looking to put in a counter-offer on Pinard Protectorates, Ltd. to remain competitive with Taurus Territorial Industries.

Pinard Protectorates, Ltd.
Main Headquarters: Pinard, MacLeod's Land, Organo, Perdition
CEO: Linus MacLeod

One of the younger military manufacturing companies, Pinard Protectorates, Limited (PPL) was founded in 3020 and quickly became one of the "Big Three" of the Concordat. Using his family's wealth to buy up and shut down IndustrialMech factories on MacLeod Land, Pinard, Perdition, and Organo, Linus MacLeod became a influential figure as his company is one of the few independent and privately funded military manufacturing company operating in the Taurian Concordat.

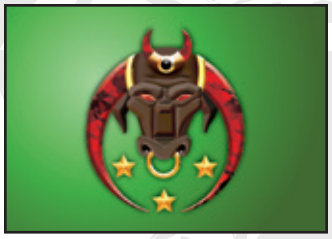
Of all the Concordat-based companies, PPL has suffered the worst in the last two years. Its second largest facility on MacLeod's Land was pillaged by Hansen's Roughriders for two days in 3074 before almost all of their precious manufacturing equipment was destroyed, forcing the company to gamble its future by diverting all its funds and loans to clear away the debris and salvaging what they could for a speedy rebuilding effort at the behest of the ruling Taurian Junta. This move backfired on the company less than a year later when its largest facility on Perdition was assaulted. While this was expected, the defection of Longwood's Bluecoats and the joint destruction of over two-thirds of their factories was not. A drop in the company's stock price, predicated by the noble investors who view PPL as a losing proposition, is expected in the near future, with bankruptcy to possibly follow.

TAURIAN CONCORDAT

KEY WORLDS OF THE TAURIAN CONCORDAT

TAURUS

Political Ruler: Protector Boris Tharn
Star Type (Recharge Time): G3V (184 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8.53 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Drusilla)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 30° C (Temperate)
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Surface Water Coverage: 65 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 3,997,068,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-A-B-B



The first planet settled by Samantha Calderon and her followers, Taurus eventually became the capital of the Taurian Concordat. In addition to fertile farmland, Taurus abounded in natural resources that made it an ideal center of industry. Part of the Hyades Cluster, a group of several hundred stars, the Taurus star system is a dusty system with several large asteroid belts in the ecliptic. While something of a navigation hazard (leading to the popular Taurian urban legend that only top secret routes exist through the asteroids when, in fact, they can be avoided by staying above the ecliptic until one reaches Taurus's clear gap), the real danger of the belts is the many hidden aerospace facilities they contain. The Special Asteroid Support Forces (SASF) and Taurian Guards have bases and supply caches scattered through the depths of the system, forcing invaders interested in aerospace superiority into the belts. Attempts to approach bases often reveal missile and gun emplacements on nearby asteroid moonlets.

Despite the Taurus system's natural defenses, fears of the Federated Suns prompted a tilt toward military manufacturing in the late twenty-fourth century, and Taurus swiftly took the lead. Its military industries remained a vital part of the planetary economy, despite significant damage done to several manufacturing facilities outside the capital city of Samantha by elements of the Fighting Urukhai during their assault in August 3066. Military-industrial profits took less of a hit than expected, thanks mainly to Capellan and Canopian aid in the wake of the mercenaries' attack. Lucrative trade with the Magistracy and the Capellan Confederation has buffered the economic fallout from the assault, and Samantha was poised to quickly rise again.

In 3074 the city of Samantha and its surrounding areas were effectively wiped out by the asteroid strikes, and evidence pointed to the disaster being a Federated Suns attack. Three craters approximately fifty meters deep (along with a half dozen smaller craters) now cover the former crown jewel city that was populated by eight million people at the time of attack. Five million people perished in an attack that lasted only hours but was followed by flash floods that filled up the three largest craters, effectively displacing the other three million. The only buildings left standing were a handful of underground bunkers on the outskirts of the city proper, buildings that had been secretly constructed during the nation's resistance against the Star League Defense Force.

New Chappelle has become the planet's new capital, though the handful of surviving government officials, including recently installed Protector Boris Tharn, insist this is only temporary and that a "New Samantha" will rise up in the place of the devastated original. Located on the Sicilian continent, New Chappelle had its spaceport expanded quickly to accept increasing cargo and passenger traffic in the wake of the Urukhai assault, making it a natural location from which to run the system. The continent is not as optimal as the Calderon continent was for Samantha, but extensive landscaping and excavation has made it much easier to navigate in the past few years, allowing for hasty reconstruction of smaller business and industries.

Outside the SASF, only a handful of militia troops remain on planet, with the rest of the forces off fighting Federated Suns troops. While this makes the planet a prime target for another ground assault, the SASF has been beefed up, setting up checkpoints to ensure that no invading force will make it to the vulnerable center. Protector Tharn has drafted most of the unemployed able-bodied population into clearing away the wreckage and debris around Samantha, and news reports have documented a high incidence of suicides and depression in these workers, especially in those assigned to rounding up, identifying, and clearing away the many bodies in the rubble.

TAURIAN CONCORDAT

EROD'S ESCAPE

Political Ruler: Baron Cham Kithrong, as president of the Regency Council for President Erik Martens-Calderon
Star Type (Recharge Time): GoV (181 hours)
Position in System: 5
Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days
Number of Satellites: 3 (Maui, Kauai and Molokai)
Surface Gravity: 1.1
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 43 C° (Tropical)
Surface Water Coverage: 68 percent
Highest Native Life: Birds
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 17,867,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: D-D-B-B-A

Erod's Escape was first discovered and colonized by the wealthy Taurian noble Jacob Erod at the onset of the Far Lookers' secretive colonization campaign. Running a popular company that put out water purification and other terraforming equipment, Erod secretly settled this relatively mild and temperate world with corporate employees and other Far Looker volunteers. Unfortunately, Erod would not enjoy the fruits of his labor, as he suffered a massive stroke while in transit to permanently live on his world, and he died right after the final jump. Erod left a will dictating that settlers should govern themselves in a democratic system as they see fit, which led to a brief and bitter civil war as various factions argued over different rules and methods.

Though Erod's Escape was colonized relatively early in the Far Looker's operation, the civil war prevented the exploitation and industrialization of the system and its satellites. One faction wanted to join an active resistance against Thomas Calderon by militarizing the industry still in its infancy, while the other wanted to stay out of any such entanglements. Both sides escalated the violence until the vital mining equipment was destroyed and technicians were driven out of the system. Eventually the pro-neutrality side won out by shutting down all of the planet's major industries and making them useless to the pro-resistance movement. Not wanting to make their planet a vulnerable target, the settlers kept it under-industrialized despite its vast resources. When Marshal Kithrong arrived with the young Protector-in-exile in tow and made a passionate plea to the natives to side with him, he noted that the current Protector was taking the Concordat on the path to a major war with the Federated Suns. By contrast, he said, he and the current generation of Calderons wanted the same peaceful existence that the Far Lookers sought.

Erod's Escape's main continent, Elysium, has its coasts ringed with bluffs and mountains, creating an area easy to defend and harvest resources from. Sporadic woods and rolling hills inside the thick mountain ridge seem to be more the exception than the rule, allowing the settlers to produce enough food for themselves and some extra for export—until supplies were stressed by the arrival of expatriates and refugees. Its single small spaceport outside the capital city of New Taurus is currently in the process of expanding.

The past few years have seen a massive growth in Erod's Escape's cities, using prefabricated and modular buildings for commercial, residential, or military purposes. While not aesthetically pleasing, this concept has smoothed over housing bumps made during the surge in population growth the planet experienced as Calderon loyalists started to leave the Concordat in droves. Many of these modular compartments were funneled in via Hellespont, which covertly acts as a middleman for the Protectorate, since the Calderons still preferred to buy from Concordat manufacturers. Though the "War of Vengeance" dried up that supply source, Canopian and other independent and neutral groups stepped up to supply the Protectorate with much-needed supplies. The largest group of these modular cities is the military cantonment located near the southern ridge of the continent. The extent and design of this base remains secret, but intelligence reports note that this base is looking to be rather extensive. Unoccupied land is still abundant, making it easy for the fledgling capital to expand, as called for by Baron Kithrong's plans. Proper investment and planning will yield huge dividends in the ignored ore deposits, but only if the right planners and equipment are brought in.

THE BULL'S HORNS: KEY TDF MILITARY COMMANDS

TAURIAN GUARD

The devastation of Taurus hit the Guard hardest, leading to calls for revenge against the Federated Suns. The First battalion and command staff of the Hell's Heart Regiment were completely wiped out by the asteroid attacks, leaving command of the survivors to Brigadier Janilee Towarr. The Concordat Commandos were all off world in other parts of the Hyades Cluster at the time of the attacks and escaped unscathed.

Acting as the point of the larger of the two thrusts, the Taurian Guard (along with I Corps in support) initially pushed forward

TAURIAN CONCORDAT

easily into Federated Suns space, using nuclear and chemical weapons on any initial resistance put up by the scattered defenders. Though no official military plan seemed to have been put into motion, the invasion force retained a coherency suggesting that the task force's eventual destination was the battered New Syrtis March capital, which might have seemed appropriate retribution for the devastation of their capital.

As the other thrust faltered, the TDF found its last significant concentration of troops needed everywhere at once. While the rest of I Corps was left holding the captured systems, the Hell's Heart and Concordat Commandos pulled back to pursue the rampaging Roughriders from system to system, eventually leading back to Federated Suns space on the spinward side of the Pleiades Cluster. The Guard's zeal in its operations the last two years has led to the unit once again being classified as fanatical, but casualties have forced the Guard to postpone any plans on resurrecting the Hyades Light Infantry.

TAURIAN LANCERS

The youngest, and now the largest, brigade of the Taurian Defense Force, the Taurian Lancers have borne the brunt of the fighting in the last two decades from Federated Suns troops and their affiliated mercenaries, both in their home territories and in the Capellan Confederation.

The First Lancers, the oldest regiment of the Brigade, has only recently arrived back in Concordat-held space as word of the attack on the capital took several months to finally reach the unit, which was on loan to the Capellan Confederation. After fighting Federated Suns troops in the brutal border war at the onset of the Jihad, the unit was eager to return to help their brethren, but it took longer than expected as the Confederation suddenly faced a shortage of JumpShips able to transport the unit back home. After extensive protests, the unit finally secured private transportation back, but instead of heading straight to the Concordat, the First made its way through uninhabited FedSuns systems to arrive in the Pleiades Cluster and settle into the Maia system, the first of a line of reinforcements attempting to regain control of the contested space.

Even though several attempts have been made to rebuild the Second Taurian Lancers since they lost two battalions at Midale, the results have been lackluster at best. The single battalion of the Second Lancers left behind remained on Amber Grove, lacking transportation assets. Finally dissolved and reformed into the fledgling Fourth Lancers with a slew of hastily trained recruits and Word of Blake equipment, the force would try and take on the Roughriders regiment on Brusett, eager to avenge the destruction of their former comrades. An unfortunate ambush and artillery barrage destroyed the unit, with only a handful of survivors taken prisoner.

The Third Lancers, rotated briefly to Micros III against Blakist advice to blunt any further advances by the Taurian Pride only to be recalled to launch the assault into FedSuns space, initially landed on Hyalite with Gordon's Armored Calvary. This left the mercenaries behind to push on to Lothair by themselves, resisting at least one attempt by the AFFS to retake it.

KEY CPF MILITARY COMMANDS

TAURIAN PRIDE

The First New Colony Lancers and the Protector's Pride VI Corps resisted personnel shuffles, name changes, equipment shortages, and everything else Shraplen threw at them and remained loyal to Marshal Kithrong and Erik Martens-Calderon. They joined together to form Taurian Pride and moved to protect the new Calderon Protectorate.

Lacking some of the more advanced equipment possessed by their Concordat brethren, the Taurian Pride units have instead emphasized unit coherency and constant training. Kithrong released the two regiments to raid border worlds in the Concordat, striking the systems of Mirfak and Carvajal, followed up by two more raids on Charleston and Celano. The attacks forced Protector Shraplen to hastily rotate the Third Taurian Lancers closer to the Protectorate border and trim back his push to secure the Pleiades Cluster.

This raiding would only last a few months, ending when pirate forces took the opportunity to raid the now undefended Calderon Protectorate systems, sacking the vital staging bases on Tyrrhenia and raiding food stocks on Lastpost and Oscar. Kithrong wisely pulled the Pride back from their offensive operations and spread them across the six Protectorate systems, putting them solely on the defensive until the newly announced Calderon Guard becomes sufficiently operational.

The Taurian Pride brigade later returned once more to Concordat space, but this time to assist in the relief effort on Taurus. After a pledge of non-aggression to attempt to build a lasting relationship with the surviving (and now ruling) military Junta, Kithrong stationed the Pride forces on Concordat systems bordering the Pirates Haven cluster. They would remain there for almost two years before pulling back, sickened after watching the Concordat forces unleash a torrent of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons on a variety of Federated Suns systems, even those that were historically Concordat, killing millions of innocent civilians.

TAURIAN CONCORDAT

CALDERON GUARD

In 3072, in response to a sudden increase in pirate activity, Kithrong authorized the creation of the "Calderon Guard." Proposed to eventually expand to three combined-arms regiments, the unit currently exists more on paper than in reality, with only a mixed reinforced company per each Guard unit. This has not stopped the CPF from advertising their rising strength in an apparent bluff to scare off both pirates and the Protector of the Concordat. Though pirate attacks dropped off in the wake of the destruction of Samantha, Baron Kithrong has diligently continued the expansion of the Calderon Guard.

Much of the military equipment being acquired for the build-up has been smuggled in from various locations, namely Federated Suns industries looking to counterbalance the Concordat push into their space, and even more interestingly enough, elements within the Magistracy of Canopus acting as a middleman between the Protectorate and unnamed Free Worlds League companies. Some suspect sympathetic executives within the Concordat also sent in war materiel by way of privateers until the asteroid attacks and the subsequent destruction of various military complexes by FedSuns mercenaries dried up that avenue.

The biggest hurdle to the Calderon Guard is not the equipment but the lack of skilled and vetted recruits. Much of the Calderon Protectorate is farmland settlements or mining outposts, with no military academy or boot camp to draw from. So far the military has had to rely of expatriates from the Concordat, which have only trickled in during the past few years. The Protectorate's first military academy, the New Hope Military University, is in the process of being constructed and is expected to have its first class in 3079.

CONCORDAT MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

The Concordat mercenary rolls have taken a particularly rough beating since the outbreak of the Jihad. Once making up almost a third of the entire Taurian Defense Force, less then a regiment of mercenary troops remain operational. Prey's Divisionals has officially been recognized as Word of Blake-contracted since 3072, though as a goodwill gesture they were left to guard the Concordat border. In the last few months, however, they have been observed breaking down their base in what may be a move to the Protectorate/Federated Suns border. Gordon's Armored Cavalry has only a 'Mech battalion to its name, while the Lone Star Regiment was shattered by Hansen's Roughriders. In addition, the sole battalion of Longwood Bluecoats surrendered and accepted Hansen's offer to merge into his own depleted rolls. Most notable however, is the effective destruction of the Clean Kill Battalion on Althea's Choice by a raiding force wearing generic Federated Suns colors. Taurian intelligence was unable to pinpoint which Suns unit undertook this action, and we may never know, as it became a moot point after the bombardment of Taurus.

Perhaps the largest still-active contingent is a reinforced battalion of Bannockburn's Bandits acting as ground support for the "Task Force *Vendetta*" WarShip group. Stranded on Brusett in late 3076 when the *Vendetta* had to withdraw due to battle damage, the Bandits have resorted scorched-earth tactics as they attempt to whittle their pursuers down enough so they can successfully get off world. Retaliatory Pocket WarShip strikes by the Suns orbital assets, however, make this a losing proposition.

MARIAN HEGEMONY

MARIAN HEGEMONY

THE MARIAN HEGEMONY

The Marian Hegemony grew out of an accidental discovery. The explorer Johann Sebastian O'Reilly scoured the periphery backwater Alphard in hopes of finding Star League technology left behind by the long-defunct Alphard Trading Corporation. Johann never found any lostech, but what he did find was a gargantuan deposit of germanium valued at over fifty billion C-Bills.

Realizing he could not protect the find on his own, Johann recruited several small mercenary units to provide for the planet's defense and invited war refugees to settle Alphard. A great admirer of Rome, Johann modeled his fledgling colony after the ancient republic, even naming it after the Roman Consul Gaius Marius.

For more than a century the Hegemony survived as a bandit kingdom, hoarding its germanium wealth and preying on neighboring worlds. Then, under Johann's grandson Marius, the Hegemony began to expand, colonizing nearby worlds. This pace of growth proved too slow for Marius's son, Sean. After his father's suspicious death, Sean O'Reilly declared himself Caesar, and like the original Caesar directed his will toward conquest.

In 3055, Sean conquered the seven worlds of the Lothian League. His brutal rule of these conquered planets led to a never-ending cycle of uprising and repression. In 3061, he made an alliance with Word of Blake, trading control of the Hegemony's HPGs for military assistance. He then attempted to use his upgraded armed forces to conquer Astrokaszy—and failed. Throughout it all, Sean's son Julius gained in popularity.

JULIUS O'REILLY

Julius graduated *cum laude* from the Collegium Bellorum Imperium and was assigned command of a century within the First Marian Legion. He quickly forged alliances with senators, members of the bureaucracy, and senior military officers. Realizing his son's growing popularity represented a grave threat, Sean transferred Julius to Lordinax to serve in the Second Marian Legion. It is thought that Sean intended to toughen his son up—or get him out of the way.

It turned out to be a fatal mistake.

Julius approached the Lothian problem differently than his father. He hunted down Elena Logan, the resistance movement's leader, but instead of executing her, he chose negotiation. He promised an end to reprisals against the Lothian people, representation in the Hegemony government, and, for Elena herself, a position on his staff. The uprisings stopped.

This success in hand, Julius took his army and conquered the Illyrian Palatinate. After the conclusion of the Illyrian campaign he turned his attention to his final target—his father.

Julius took the bulk of his forces and landed on Alphard, where he overthrew his father, and the Senate proclaimed him Caesar. Sean O'Reilly died on the point of Julius's sword.

Soon after taking office, Julius implemented much-needed reforms. He granted the people of the Illyrian and Lothian worlds citizenship, Senate representation, and a three-year exemption from conscription. He created a Plebeian Tribunate to give the plebs a voice in government. And he threw Word of Blake out the Hegemony.

At long last the Marian people had a Caesar ready to lead them into a new and better day.

WARNINGS OF THE WORD

Though more enlightened than his father, Julius wasn't above using warfare as a tool of statecraft. In January 3066, he invaded the Circinus Federation, where Federation citizens treated Hegemony soldiers as liberators. Blantleff and Maximillian fell in weeks.

Julius led the second wave of the invasion himself, targeting the world of Circinus. Somehow the Federation's President, Robert "Little Bob" McIntyre managed to hold on to his capital and launch reprisals against Marian worlds, including Alphard itself. No one could explain how the Federation had managed to place eight reinforced 'Mech battalions on the field, when the best Marian intelligence indicated they only had access to four. Eventually a cease-fire was reached, though not a peace accord. Julius got to keep Blantleff and Maximillian, but the seeds of enmity between the two nations had been planted. They would eventually blossom into something dark and unholy.

In February 3069 a wave of rebellions erupted in the Hegemony's Lothian and Illyrian districts. The Marian intelligence service—the Ordo Vigilis—speculated that the troubles were caused by foreign agent provocateurs—most likely from Word of Blake or House Marik—but they could provide no proof. The uprisings proved surprisingly difficult to put down.

That same month, Winfield's Regiment, acting on behalf of the Hegemony, attacked Circinus—and was almost completely wiped out. Badly mauled, the few survivors reached Marian territory in October. In March of 3070, a strike force attacked the mercenary command's headquarters on Blantleff. The force appeared to be composed of Word of Blake Manei Domini troops, although their markings didn't correspond to any known Shadow Division. Winfield's Regiment was obliterated.

In August, Marian troops launched retaliatory strikes on the Federation and the rapidly disintegrating Free Worlds League, believing that one of these states was responsible for the worsening unrest in the Lothian and Illyrian districts. The lightning raids—against Huntington and Hazeldean in the Free Worlds League and against Clayborne II and Zorn's Keep in the Federation—had no discernable effect on the Lothian and Illyrian uprisings.

In March of 3071, Hegemony troops massed in the Illyrian and Lothian districts with the obvious intent of putting down the local rebellions once and for all. In truth, Julius planned to attack the Circinus Federation, convinced that the Blakist puppet state was behind the rebellions. Though security was incredible tight, word somehow leaked out, and on 6 June 3071 Word of Blake headed off the invasion with a preemptive strike.

MARIAN HEGEMONY

On a day that would live in infamy, Blakist agents on Alphard exploded neutron bombs throughout the capital city of Nova Roma, killing every living thing within a fifty-kilometer radius. In an instant, almost all of the Hegemony's senators and generals were killed.

Along with Caesar Julius O'Reilly.

DEATH AND REBIRTH

Federation mercenaries took advantage of the decapitation strike, dropping on Alphard and several neighboring systems and urging the Caesar's "oppressed subjects" to rise up in rebellion. The Hegemony was plunged into chaos. But instead of falling apart, the MHAF rallied behind a group of senior officers led by General Ivy Ward. Somehow the military managed to fight the Federation to a standstill.

The assassination of Julius (who had no heir) ended the O'Reilly line and left the Hegemony without an obvious successor to the post of Caesar. Senator Quintus Pullo quickly stepped into the gap. Pullo had the good fortune of being away from Nova Roma during the attack and was the sole surviving senator. Pullo tried to position himself as a new Caesar, meaning he had to attack the only other source of authority in the Hegemony—the military.

For thirteen months there was friction between the nation's two power centers. The military effectively fought off the Federation raids, but beyond that there was little cooperation with Pullo or the remains of the civilian bureaucracy. Worse, there was little hope of a resolution. Pullo would never give way to what he called "a military junta" and the military had little respect for the corpulent, self-indulgent senator.

And then Prefect Michael Alexander unveiled a stunning surprise. Alexander stumbled across records of mysterious payments originating from the Caesar's office. He eventually traced the money to an unassuming plebeian woman named Marcy Tucker and discovered she had a son. DNA tests soon confirmed what Alexander suspected: Cassius Tucker was the illegitimate son of Julius O'Reilly.

On 6 July 3072, Alexander presented the new Caesar to the nation. In one bold stroke he undercut all competing claims to power and won for himself the role of regent.

Any suspicions that Alexander was trying to win power for himself disappeared after the boy struck the Federation troops still in Marian territory. Cassius chose to attack the Federation on the worlds of the Lothian and Illyrian districts, bringing war to the doorstep of those who had rebelled against the Hegemony. He also appointed Pullo his envoy and charged him with reporting on the status of the counteroffensive. The move was a brilliant political stroke—it separated the senator from his allies in Nova Roma and placed him in a setting where a high Hegemony official might very well be assassinated. Pullo refused the appointment, and so was made to look cowardly.

Cassius spent the next few years consolidating his rule, but the threat of Word of Blake and their Federation puppets was never far from his mind. In February 3075, cybernetically enhanced troops from the Federation struck Blantleff and Maximillian, using terror tactics to help force the Hegemony off these worlds. The most striking part of the Federation offensive was the use of suicide troopers—soldiers who would fight their way into the midst of the enemy and blow themselves up. There was good evidence that these soldiers hadn't volunteered for this duty, and that they were being controlled remotely.

By the beginning of 3077, Cassius O'Reilly had managed to consolidate his rule, which was fortunate. He would need every scintilla of support to counter the ruthless machinations of Word of Blake.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

CASSIUS O'REILLY

CASSIUS O'REILLY

Rank / Title: Caesar of the Marian Hegemony

Born: 3056 (20 in 3076)

Born 24 February 3056 on Pompey to a young, unmarried chambermaid named Marcy Tucker, Cassius Tucker's beginnings couldn't have been more humble. From his first moments, poverty's harsh imprimatur was stamped upon the boy. Cassius grew

MARIAN HEGEMONY

up with no knowledge of his father, save that he was a wealthy man who'd drifted in and out of his mother's life.

Someone knew about Cassius, however. When he was seven, mysteriously, a place was made for him at the Pompey School of Rhetoric, the world's finest private school, and his mother began receiving an annual stipend of 25,000 talents. None of this hid the fact that Cassius had no father. At first his peers tormented him, but they soon learned they could not match the cunning or cruelty of a child who'd spent his earliest years on the street.

The boy's life changed forever in 3071 when Word of Blake detonated a neutron bomb on Alphard, killing Julius O'Reilly. The Caesar left no heir, and for thirteen months the Marian state was rudderless, until Prefect Michael Alexander tracked down the illegitimate son that Julius had been supporting since he had become Caesar. On 6 July 3072, Alexander became regent and the boy, at the age of sixteen, became Caesar Cassius O'Reilly.

Cassius was widely regarded as Michael's puppet until the boy ordered a strike against Federation troops occupying the Hegemony. He chose as a battlefield the Lothian and Illyrian worlds—making those who had rebelled against him pay, even as he pushed the Federation out of Marian territory.

In the years that followed, the boy Caesar has managed to hold his realm together—despite continued pressure from the Circinus Federation and Word of Blake. At 21, he is the youngest ruler of a major periphery power, but those who look at him and see only a child are making a dangerous mistake.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Rank / Title: Prefect of the Alphard District

Born: 3018 (58 in 3076)

Born on Alphard, Michael Alexander was the son of a common fishmonger. He joined the army at seventeen to, as he would later say, "escape the stink of mackerel." Beginning as a simple *miles*, his courage and resourcefulness ensured he rose quickly through the ranks.

He worked his way up through the various warfare specialties as well. Alexander started his service as an infantry grunt, but his strategic thinking set him apart from his peers and after a few years he was moved to conventional armor. Eventually, as he rose in rank, the Marian state granted him his own BattleMech—an *Assassin*.

Alexander's common touch allows him to get the best out of his soldiers, but it sometimes has the opposite effect on his superiors. His detractors describe him as coarse and arrogant. His supporters, on the other hand, describe him as—coarse and arrogant. Alexander's quick rise to power and his plebeian background has led him to identify with another famous commoner, the seven-time Roman consul Gaius Marius. His image of himself as a man of destiny has done nothing to reduce the friction between him and the nobility.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER

Alexander was transferred to I Legio Martia Victrix by fellow pleb, Imperator David Gladding, largely, many think, to annoy the Senate—a job at which Alexander excelled.

Gladding chose better than he would ever know. When Gladding and much of the rest of the senior staff were killed in the Word of Blake's attack on Nova Roma, it was Alexander and Alexander alone who sought out Cassius O'Reilly. He forged a political solution that no one—not Ivy Ward, not Senator Quintus Pullo, not even Cassius himself—could have seen.

And so despite Michael Alexander's famous contempt for patricians, this plebeian saved the most noted noble house in all the Hegemony.

IVY WARD

Rank / Title: General of the Lothario District

Born: 3037 (39 in 3076)

Ivy Ward was born the daughter of a minor noble in the outlying districts of Alphard. Although she came from a family with a military tradition (her father was a MechWarrior who rose to the rank of *principes* in the MHAF), Ward had no plans to join the military. But when her older sister Rose was maimed in a car accident, the duty of piloting the family *Hunchback* fell to her.

She proved to be an unexceptional MechWarrior but a brilliant administrator. In 3060, she was assigned to garrison duty with the III Legio Limitanei in the former worlds of the Lothian League. Here Ward's political and management skills

IVY WARD

shone as she was able to keep her century well supplied and in good spirits, despite the difficult duty.

Throughout the Illyrian conflict and Julius O'Reilly's overthrow of his father, Ward saw heavy action. After the war, her superior organizational ability allowed her to breathe new life into the demoralized Third Legion. This success, combined with her battle record, won her the coveted position of General of the Lothario District.

On 6 June 3071, the Caesar and most of the general staff were killed in a flash of light and radiation. Ward quickly emerged as the military's leading general. Her political skills allowed her to work with a hostile Senate, and her battle record lent her credibility with the troops. She deserves much of the credit for holding the MHAF together and fighting off the Federation invasion.

When Cassius O'Reilly appeared on the scene she was more careful than some in the Senate, neither opposing nor supporting him. She eventually rallied to the boy Caesar's banner—but only after it was clear he would prevail.

General Ivy Ward is smart and tough, but above all else, she's careful.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

QUINTUS PULLO

Rank / Title: Senator, Marius' Tears

Born: 3020 (56 in 3076)

Born 7 August 3020 on the world then named Herculaneum, Quintus Pullo comes from a family nearly as storied within the Hegemony as the O'Reilly's. He was given the name Quintus to signify that he would be the fifth generation of Pullos to serve in the Senate. Even as an infant, Quintus Pullo's future was assured.

As a young child he split his time between worlds, taking up residence on Alphard when the Senate was in session and then returning to Herculaneum when it was not. It was a pampered existence filled with private schools and high society functions. Quintus stood out even among the children of senators, magnates, and generals. As early as the age of fourteen he was known for three things: brilliance, ambition, and hedonism.

After graduating from the Imperial School of High Arts, Quintus remained on Alphard, serving as an aide to his father and building his political connections. Quintus was never much inclined toward athleticism and since he was of the opinion that no vice should be practiced unless it were practiced fully, he grew to be a corpulent connoisseur of food, drink, and women.

When the elder Senator Pullo died in 3056, Quintus was appointed to serve the remainder of his term. For fifteen years he competently represented Marius' Tears in the Senate, funneling millions of talents homeward, but never sponsoring any major legislation.

On 6 June 3071, that all changed.

On the fourth of June, Quintus retired to his villa in the White Hills, nursing a bad case of gout caused by his rich diet and heavy drinking. This time Quintus's excesses saved his life. Two days after the Senator took ill, Word of Blake terrorists struck Nova Roma, killing every living soul in the city.

Pullo woke to a universe where he was the last surviving senator and there was no Caesar. Naturally, he assumed it would fall to him to lead the Hegemony into the future. The next thirteen months were filled with antagonism towards the military as the senator contended with General Ivy Ward for the levers of power.

And then Michael Alexander dropped his bombshell, presenting the young bastard Cassius O'Reilly to the people of the Hegemony. Pullo suddenly found himself outflanked, unable to counter the charm offensive of the young orphan and the distinguished military hero.

Since then, Quintus has watched Cassius grow into a man and consolidate his rule. Senator Quintus Pullo has consoled himself with this bit of historical truth—events often turn against the Hegemony's Caesars.

There may be a moment yet when history closes the door on the O'Reillys and opens the door for the Pullos.

LIVIA O'REILLY

Rank / Title: CEO, Alphard Trading Corporation

Born: 3002 (74 in 3076)

Livia was born in Nova Roma; the daughter of an Imperator and the sister to his heir, she was raised to run the family business, the Alphard Trading Corporation. Her training was half-business and half-technical. She's an adept engineer as well as a ruthless player in the Periphery's commodities markets.

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Livia has run the company well, bringing in record profits quarter after quarter. Her judicious exploitation of the family's germanium reserves ensures a steady income without flooding the market and causing a price collapse. She has diversified into uranium, coltan, gems, and marble—and has even added a defense sector. All these moves are made against the day when the germanium finally runs out.

ATC is Livia's realm and she guards it as jealously as any monarch ever guarded a throne. It is said that even when Sean was alive, he was reluctant to interfere with the company's operations.

Livia has managed to stay strictly neutral in family politics, taking no side between Sean and Julius—as long as she and her company were left alone. She proved able to work with Julius even after he was forced to kill her brother, but she has no particular love for Cassius, who she once referred to as "that common-born usurper."

AURELIA MARCUS

Rank / Title: Senator Emeritus, Lothario
Born: 3016 (60 in 3076)

Born on Lothario, Aurelia Somosa's membership in one of the leading families of the Lothian League ensured that her early life was comfortable—until Sean O'Reilly invaded her nation in 3054. Her oldest son was killed in the war, her husband during the political crackdown that followed. Like all Somosas, Aurelia learned to hate the Marian Hegemony and its Caesars.

When Julius O'Reilly arrived on Lordinax, Aurelia began to see signs that the young Marian was not the same as his father. More pragmatic than much of her family, Aurelia eventually encouraged Elena Logan to negotiate with Julius and thus midwifed the uneasy peace she judged was the best that could be done for her people. In recognition for her efforts, Julius appointed her Lothario's first senator in 3063.

Aurelia settled comfortably into her new role, becoming a powerful voice for the Lothian worlds in the Senate and seeing to the needs of Lothario. In 3068, she remarried, taking Gaius Marcus for her husband. Gaius was a fourth-generation citizen of the Hegemony and the CEO of Pontifex Petrochemicals, Ltd.

Aurelia seems to have found a way to reconcile her loyalty to the Lothian worlds with her role as a leading citizen of the Hegemony. The recent "Lothian Troubles" threaten to disturb this careful balance, however. Aurelia has gone on record opposing violence and foreign interference, but she has stopped short of supporting a full-scale military crackdown.

Will the people of the Lothian district choose to remain loyal Marian citizens, or do they see the Jihad as an opportunity to finally regain the independence they lost to Sean O'Reilly twenty years before? No one knows how Aurelia Marcus will come down on this question, but there's little doubt, whatever she decides, much of the Lothian district will follow her.

CORPORATIONS OF THE HEGEMONY

Alphard Trading Corporation
Main Headquarters: Alphard
CEO: Livia O'Reilly

Johann Sebastian O'Reilly came to Alphard looking for lostech left behind by the Alphard Trading Corporation and found a tremendous cache of germanium instead. He had to build a company to exploit the massive find and he had to keep it quiet, lest someone more powerful take away his newly found prize. In 2923, he recycled the name of the older company, reasoning that pirates and bandits would assume he was doing nothing more than scavenging the assets of the defunct ATC and leave him alone.

ATC eventually developed into the largest supplier of germanium in the anti-spinward Periphery. The O'Reilly family plowed their profits right back into the company, expanding into other commodities. The company's mining division now extracts commercial quantities of uranium and coltan, refining the latter into metallic tantalum—a heat-resistant powder with unique properties for storing electrical charges. In 3050, the company began quarrying Alphard marble from the White Hills surrounding Nova Roma. Known for its luminous white color, Alphard marble is eagerly sought by sculptors and architects across human space. Because the marble is a luxury item, this segment has much higher margins than the rest of mining division.

In the early 3050s, ATC moved into defense work, a tactic designed to serve the expanding Marian legions and keep critical technologies within O'Reilly control. They began by building J. Edgar hovercraft. In the late 3060s, ATC engaged in a joint venture with its Taurian namesake and Kali-Yama Industries of Kendall to produce the Fulcrum hovertank.

It is Cassius's hope that ATC will one day build BattleMechs—but his great aunt Livia has so far resisted this impulse, fearing that such a move would suck up all the company's working capital and drag it under.

CORPORATIONS OF THE HEGEMONY

Marian Arms, Inc.
Main Headquarters: Alphard
CEO: Monty McNair

Marian Arms, Inc. is the largest armaments manufacturer within the Hegemony and therefore one of its most important firms. The company produces tanks, hovercraft, and various weapons, from large-scale systems to sidearms. It also boasts impressive political connections, with a dozen close allies in the Senate. Lucius Gaius Davidson, the long-serving Senator Emeritus for Suetonius, is a major shareholder, and several other senators also hold healthy interests. The current CEO is rumored to be an illegitimate scion of the Humphreys family on Islington, but so far this story hasn't been substantiated.

Taurian Protector Grover Shraplen authorized the licensing of the Maultier design to Marian Arms shortly after Julius O'Reilly took power. In 3066 Shraplen lifted the previous Protector's ban on importing the Gladius Pontiac 50 AC/10. Cassius's government has encouraged this relationship with the Concordat and is even exploring the possibility of exporting arms to the Magistracy of Canopus. Cassius is looking for sources of hard currency to buy the BattleMechs his defense industry cannot build.

Marian Arms has benefited from the growing relationship with other Periphery states. Still, its principal customer is the MHAF—and here sales have been extremely robust, a sign of the threats the Hegemony faces. The company has shown remarkable growth over the last decade and with the ongoing conflict with Word of Blake and the Circinus Federation, shareholders can expect rosy earnings forecasts as far as the eye can see.

Hadrian Mechanized Industries
Main Headquarters: Pompey
CEO: Luboslaw Zaleski

Hadrian Mechanized Industries is smaller and more specialized than Marian Arms, its principal competitor. Historically, its primary focus was vehicles—simple APCs being the backbone of its product offering. In the last ten years however, Marian Arms and ATC have begun to shove HMI out of the vehicle market. In 3069, shareholders revolted, throwing management out and appointing a young Luboslaw Zaleski as CEO.

Zaleski acted fast to bring HMI back. Leveraging the company's ability to manufacture the Harasser Missile Platform, the executive brought a proposal to build SRM Carriers to the general in charge of military procurement. Zaleski's enthusiasm and planning won over the MHAF brass and the military ordered a trial run of six SRM Carriers from HMI.

The program was a success, and five years later Zaleski was back with another proposal: licensing the technology needed to build *Shilones* from the Outworlds Alliance. Zaleski recognized the MHAF's growing interest in aerospace warfare and managed to work his company into a niche market. The project has so far been fabulously expensive and heavily subsidized by the Marian treasury. HMI has produced a score of these aerospace fighters for use by the legions. There are rumors of maintenance problems with the *Shilones*, problems that Zaleski maintains are greatly exaggerated.

Whatever happens next, it's clear the Luboslaw Zaleski has managed to make his company so big and valuable that the Marian government cannot possibly allow it to fail.

KEY WORLDS OF THE MARIAN HEGEMONY

ALPHARD

Noble Ruler: Caesar Cassius O'Reilly
Star Type (Recharge Time): G3IV (184 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 8.53 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Romulus)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 33° C (Temperate)
Surface Water Coverage: 55 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 3,110,192,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-B-B-C-C

Capital of the Marian Hegemony, Alphard is a dry and desolate world. Its landscape is littered with box canyons, rocky arroyos, and arid mountain ranges that still contain considerable mineral wealth in their depths. Though much of the planet is hot and dry, Alphard boasts enough arable land (principally on the two northern continents of Alba and Gaul) to make it barely self-sufficient in food production.

Industrialization has grown steadily in the last forty years, and the addition of Lothian mineral resources have helped, but manufacturing growth took a massive hit in 3071 when Word of Blake launched a devastating terrorist attack against Nova Roma, the planet's capital and largest city. Not only were factories destroyed, but the lethal radiation from the multiple neutron bomb detonations killed the people that worked in the manufacturing plants and the consumers

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who bought the goods they produced. Destroyed in the strike were financial records, contracts, and tax rolls. Alphard's entire university and trade school system was wiped out, eliminating the infrastructure for training new workers. Economists estimate that it will take half a century for the planetary economy to fully recover from the blow.

Because the Blakists used kiloton-yield neutron bombs in their attack rather than conventional nuclear weapons, much of Nova Roma still stands. The enhanced radiation of the attack killed the city's inhabitants, but the graceful buildings remain. Nova Roma's principal architectural style is Classical—gold sandstone buildings faced with gleaming white Alphard marble. It is a gloriously beautiful city. But it's also very dead.

Today Nova Roma serves as a monument, a focal point for Alphard's grief and hatred. The city is protected by an elite honor guard from the Prima Auxilia Alphardensis and attended by a corps of civilian workers who bury the dead, sweep away the rubble, and monitor radiation and environmental effects. Due to radiation concerns (though the radiation faded in weeks), the civilian corps positions are all voluntary, and workers are not allowed to serve more than a month in the city. Despite these difficult requirements, none of these positions has ever gone unfilled.

Even six years after the attack, people still flock to what has come to be known as the Silent City. They come by the hundreds of thousands, dressed in yellow plastic suits and black rubber respirators. They come to visit the graves of their loved ones, to leave flowers on street corners, to view childhood homes too hot to enter. To avoid defiling the memory of the dead, no keepsakes may be taken. This rule is rigorously enforced. All visitors are thoroughly searched, and those of lower rank face stiff penalties for what is considered grave robbing. No one who enters the Silent City comes out with anything but their memories.

After the attack, the planetary and Hegemony capital was shifted to Lugdunum, located on the continent of Gaul. Lugdunum was a sleepy continental capital ill suited to the job of governing an interstellar polity. Sometimes called the Pantry of the North because its principal business is the sale, trade, and processing of agricultural products, Lugdunum is making an uneasy transition to power center.

Cassius O'Reilly has promised the transition will be a temporary one. The Hegemony government is building a new capital in the shadow of the first. The new city will also be called Nova Roma. The skeleton of the new Senate will be constructed using decontaminated steel from the mangled wreckage of the original Senate building. As Cassius said at the consecration of the ground for the new city: "Upon death, we bury our parents, but we do not forget them. So it is with Nova Roma. The Blakist terrorists struck a terrible blow against our beloved city, but they could do nothing to tarnish its grandeur. Terror can wound us. But it can never force us to flee our home."

LOTHARIO

Noble Ruler: Senator Emeritus Aurelia Marcus
Star Type (Recharge Time): M3III (204 hours)
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 2.67 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Logan)
Surface Gravity: 1.1
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 20° C (Boreal)
Surface Water Coverage: 70 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: None
Population (3076): 2,622,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-C-C-C-D

This small world, like the other six Lothian planets, has a thin atmosphere and is almost perpetually covered in ice and snow, with marginally habitable zones centered on the world's equator. Lothario is known for the stark beauty of its wintry landscapes, especially the spectacular aurora created by the frequently intense solar winds of its primary. Most local inhabitants live in subterranean enclaves, though a few hardy souls scrape out a living on the surface, mainly by farming the narrow equatorial zone. Lothario's primary resources are iron and copper ores, and its fur-trapping industry continues to benefit the local economy as well as adding a bit to Hegemony coffers.

Lothario was once the capital of the Lothian League, but after the League's conquest by Sean O'Reilly in 3055, it became the capital of the Marian Hegemony's Lothian District. For nearly seven years after the League's "surrender," the Lothian people practiced asymmetrical warfare against the occupiers. Restaurants and markets frequented by Marian soldiers were bombed. Food destined for the Hegemony commissaries was poisoned.

In one spectacular incident, the subterranean town of Anselmo was appropriated by the MHAF as a command post. After most of the town's population fled, the rebels sealed the six access tunnels servicing Anselmo with reinforced concrete. Before sealing the final tunnel, the rebels lighted an immense bonfire that rapidly consumed the community's oxygen. A maniple of soldiers asphyxiated before anyone even knew they were in trouble. When the town was dug out, the bodies of soldiers and a few remaining townsfolk were found at the mouths of the blocked tunnels, their fingers bloody from trying to claw their way through the concrete.

The Hegemony met terrorism with brutality. Any Lothian citizen acting suspiciously was immediately shot. Occupying sol-

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diers retreated to heavily fortified green zones where they were relatively safe. Rebellious communities were cut off from all commerce. They were starved into submission—or if they were too stubborn to submit, they just starved. In one particularly brutal case, a Marian centurion interned the students of an elementary school, holding the children against the good behavior of their parents. Repression led to more terrorist attacks, which led to still more repression.

The cycle of violence was broken by Julius O'Reilly and Elena Logan, who managed to broker an uneasy peace. Afterwards, Lothario slowly began to accept its new status as a provincial capital. The world's people gradually began to employ the rights granted them by Julius, and the economy benefited from integration into the broader Hegemony marketplace.

Then in 3069, the second round of the Lothian Troubles began. No one was quite sure how it all started—but suddenly small grievances were magnified into demonstrations, demonstrations became riots, and riots grew into attacks. In a few bloody months everything that the people of the Lothian District and the Marian Hegemony had worked for had been lost.

And Lothario was once again a world of barbed wire and bombs.

CAESAR'S LEGIONS: KEY MHAF MILITARY COMMANDS

The Marian Hegemony Armed Forces are divided into six combined arms legions, generally composed of three to five cohorts. The total strength of a Marian legion is a mix of 90 to 150 BattleMechs and vehicles, making the legion roughly twenty percent smaller than an Inner Sphere regiment.

ALPHARD DISTRICT FORCES

I LEGIO MARTIA VICTRIX

Three of the First Legion's cohorts and its air wing are assigned to garrison the planet Alphard, meaning this unit was particularly hard hit by the Blakist surprise attack in 3071. Most of its leadership was killed along with the rest of Nova Roma's population. First Legion failed in their duty to protect the Caesar, but they fought valiantly to protect the Hegemony, finally prevailing in the brutal battle for Alphard. Elements of the First also saw battle on Stafford and Pompey. Already filled with disciplined troops, this unit is now blooded and fanatically loyal. Cassius and Prefect Michael Alexander have made rebuilding First Legion Alphard District's first priority. The equipment has been replaced, but even six years later it's difficult to find experienced leaders to plug the holes.

III LEGIO LIMITANEI

Assigned to the core worlds of the original Hegemony not guarded by First Legion, Third Legion can be found on Ballalaba, Baccalieu, Islington, and Suetonius. They have seen relatively little action compared to the First Legion. In 3071, Third Legion was largely massed in the Illyrian District for the invasion of the Federation, so ironically they missed most of the war's action. By the time Cassius struck at the Federation troops occupying Illyrian and Lothian worlds, the Third had already been withdrawn, so it again missed battle. The legion has begun to feel like a hard-luck unit and new Prefect Severine Xavier has a challenge on his hands to whip it back into shape.

COHORS MORITURI

Commanded by Legatus Winston Sorfleet, this unit of military prisoners, deserters, and politically disgraced soldiers has proved itself more than once in combat. Cassius threw them at Federation troops on Lordinax, knowing the Morituri would tear into the Blakist allies without regards to the normal rules of war—or civilian casualties. Sorfleet pushed the Feds off-planet and delivered the message to Lordinax's people that there was a price for opposing the Hegemony.

LOTHARIO DISTRICT FORCES

V LEGIO RIPARIENSIS

Stationed on Lothario, Valerius, and Lordinax, the Fifth Legion has been at ground zero of the Lothian Troubles. They have been worn down by repeated terrorist attacks, and saw heavy action during the Circinian invasion of 3071. Prefect Josef Vasicek and General Ivy Bell are working hard to rebuild this unit since they are stationed on the Circinus border, on the frontlines in the conflict with Word of Blake.

II LEGIO CATAPHRACTI

Julius's former unit is assigned to the balance of the Lothian worlds: Logan Prime, Paulinus, and Lindassa. Stationed away from the heart of Lothian nationalism, Second Legion hasn't suffered as much from the Troubles as Fifth Legion. Still, because of the Lothian District's proximity to the Circinus Federation, Second was involved in several battles in 3071 and again during the Federation's 3075 invasion of Blantleff and

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Maximillian. Because of Second Legion's frontline status and its fanatical loyalty, its air wing has been assigned a company of the new Hegemony-built *Shilone*s.

ILLYRIA DISTRICT FORCES

IV LEGIO COMITATENSIS

Stationed on the core Illyrian worlds (Illyria, Trondheimal, and Reykavis), Fourth Legion is also on the frontlines. It fields more vehicles than any other Marian BattleMech legion. Prima Cohors and the command maniple of Second Cohors are the lone 'Mech-only units in the legion, with every other unit deploying a mix of combined arms forces. As a result, Fourth Legion displays the greatest level of coordination among the legions. It is a hard-hitting, mobile unit. Prefect Chakra Sunkehl's unit has received a lance of the Hegemony's new Fulcrum hover tanks, ensuring the Fourth will stay that way.

VI LEGIO RIPARIENSIS

Sixth Legion was stationed on Maximillian and Blantleff—until 3075 when the Federation pushed them right off the planet using cybernetically enhanced troops and suicide bombers. Since the 3075 war, Sixth Legion retreated off-world, falling back to Illyria.

Sixth Legion originated as the mercenary Cavanaugh's Cavalry. When Julius cornered them during the Illyrian invasion they accepted a place in the MHAF rather than destruction. Sixth Legion is a veteran unit, but their loyalty is Questionable. Julius's death and their defeat on the former Federation worlds have done much to lower their morale. Of all the frontline units arrayed against the Federation, Sixth Legion is the least reliable. General Victor Humphreys is keeping a close eye on Prefect Albert DeVereaux and the Sixth Legion to make sure they stand firm.

HEGEMONY MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

The Marian Hegemony is a small realm that has chosen to focus its discretionary military expenditures on domestic weapons production rather than mercenary contracts. Still, the conflict with the Circinus Federation and its cybernetically enhanced warriors has increased the Hegemony's defense needs beyond what it can provide itself.

The Hegemony continues to employ the Dragonslayers, a Kurita-hating unit with a powerful aerospace wing. Originally there was talk of moving the Dragonslayers to the Lothian worlds, but because the Second and Fifth Legions both have air wings and are both stationed in the Lothian District, the Marian high command felt the aerospace-heavy mercenaries would best be employed in the Illyrian District. The Dragonslayers remain on Valerius as a deterrent to Federation aggression.

In 3069, Winfield's Regiment, a Lyran unit working for the Hegemony, was hunting for the Circinian Black Warriors when they stumbled across information suggesting Word of Blake had several secret bases within the Federation. Acting without orders, they attacked one of these bases only to be badly hurt. The Blakist puppets nearly finished the job in early 3070 when they attacked the Regiment on Blantleff, leaving the mercenaries beaten and demoralized. Rumors suggest that Julius O'Reilly was considering holding the merc unit in breach of contract.

Then Word of Blake attacked Alphard.

Since that terrible blow, Cassius has reconsidered his realm's relationship with Winfield's Regiment. In lieu of payment, he granted the Regiment the right to recruit Hegemony citizens and provided them with enough equipment to field a solid battalion of vehicles (with a few scattered 'Mechs and aerospace fighters from their original order of battle). In return, the Hegemony gained a small support force to augment the Prima Cohors of IV Legio on Trondheimal.

Another mercenary unit with a troubled relationship with the Hegemony is the Head Hunters. The source of the falling out was the Head Hunters' inability to lock down the uprisings on Lummatii. But like two sulking children without any other friends, the Hegemony and the Head Hunters have shook hands and made up. The Hegemony is desperate for additional firepower to protect its border, and the Head Hunters' F-rating made it nearly impossible to find work elsewhere. It also didn't hurt that the Head Hunters have a long-standing grudge against the Black Warriors.

The Hegemony stationed the Head Hunters on Lordinax, moving them away from Lummatii where there are still bad feelings toward the mercenaries. This adds a battalion of fast medium 'Mechs to Fifth Legion's Quarta Cohors and Prima Auxilia Legio—bulking up the defenses of a world that will almost certainly see action if Word of Blake and their Circinian puppets come calling again.

COMSTAR

COMSTAR

For a star-spanning organization that held the fate of humanity in its hands for over two centuries, ComStar's origins were humble enough. Jerome Blake, an employee of Starlight Broadcasting Ltd. was on permanent assignment with the Star League Department of Communications when Stefan Amaris executed First Lord Richard Cameron and seized control of the Terran Hegemony in 2766. The brilliant young man and other technicians kept the channels of interstellar communication open, and following the Usurper's defeat Blake was placed in charge of the effort to fully restore the communications network. When the Star League Council convened to discuss the future of the Star League, they managed to agree on only two things. First, they elected Jerome Blake to the position of Minister of Communications. Secondly, they stripped General Aleksandr Kerensky of his title as Protector of the Realm.

NETWORK ONLINE

Just days after General Kerensky and the bulk of the SLDF departed known space, Blake oversaw the reactivation of the HPG network's Prime or First Circuit. Declaring the organization's neutrality, Blake assured the House Lords that the Department of Communication (the name change to ComStar came over a year later, in 2785) would continue to operate and maintain the vital HPG network. With the Star League's collapse Blake knew it would be only a matter of time before the House Lords descended on the rotting carcass of the Terran Hegemony, so he secretly sought the aide of SLDF troops who had elected to remain in the Inner Sphere. But before his plan to secure at least some of the Hegemony worlds could be put into motion, the First Succession War erupted as each House Lord claimed the title of First Lord of the Star League. Events moved quickly, forcing Blake to scale back his plans and seize control of Terra in mid-2788. Preoccupied with grabbing the rest of the Terran Hegemony, the House Lords grudgingly accepted ComStar's control of the birthplace of humanity.

ComStar continued to operate as a completely neutral organization for another thirty-one years. Jerome Blake's successor as Prime Administrator (or Primus) was Conrad Toyama. Reportedly the most fanatical of Blake's followers, Toyama seized Blake's personal journals on his death. Claiming to be following the near-divine "Word of Blake," Toyama reshaped ComStar into a nightmare image of Blake's concept for the organization. Drawing on a journal entry in which Blake speculated that the incessant fighting would ultimately destroy civilization and that only then could ComStar emerge to guide the reconstruction, Toyama outlined a new role for ComStar. Rather than maintain a stance of strict neutrality, ComStar would actively work to bring about the prophesied collapse and emerge to lead mankind from the ashes.

THE STEEL VEIL

Those who questioned this new direction were eliminated ruthlessly. ComStar activities became secretive and shrouded in mysticism to guard technical information from "unbelievers." As the Succession Wars dragged on, ComStar's power increased. The ability to cut off vital communications to any Great House that should displease it (leaving it deaf, blind, and vulnerable to its enemies) was demonstrated on several occasions. Such great power fueled great ambition, and very few of those destined to hold the post of Primus would die of natural causes. Occasionally ComStar intervened covertly to combat the specter of peace and keep the chaos of the Succession Wars rolling along. Millions died, industries were destroyed, and much knowledge was extinguished (except from ComStar's endless memory banks on Terra). Occasionally ComStar operatives were dispatched to eliminate some scientist or engineer who was on the verge of rediscovering lost knowledge, or to stir up a civil war to devalue a local currency that was performing too well against ComStar's own C-bill. The fall of civilization looked like it was proceeding right on schedule.

Then Hanse Davion ascended to the throne of the Federated Suns and all bets were off. The First Prince's creation of the New Avalon Institute of Science threatened to halt (or even reverse) the loss of knowledge in the Inner Sphere. Worse, his alliance with the Lyran Commonwealth critically upset the balance of power that ComStar had nurtured for two centuries. As Federated Suns troops romped through the Capellan Confederation during the brief Fourth Succession War, ComStar's best covert efforts failed to slow them. A plot to destroy the NAIS was a dismal failure. Even placing the Federated Suns under communications interdict did little to slow the Davion war machine. Little wonder that ComStar considered Hanse Davion to be the devil incarnate.

At the end of the Fourth Succession War Myndo Waterly replaced Julian Tiepolo as Primus (Tiepolo is notable as being one of the few people to die of natural causes while Primus), and under her leadership ComStar began to take active steps against the Davion-Steiner alliance. Brokering a deal with the Draconis Combine, ComStar provided desperately needed BattleMechs and vehicles (stripped of advanced technology of course) in return for House Kurita's recognition of the Free Rasalhague Republic. In a stroke Waterly strengthened the DCMS and reduced the length of the frontier they had to defend when Hanse Davion launched what should have been a knockout blow against the Combine in 3039. Engineering several incidents, Primus Waterly pressured the Inner Sphere's leaders into permitting ComStar to post troops to defend HPG stations across their realms. Thus the Com Guards—ComStar's secret army—came out of the shadows at last.

COMSTAR

IN FULL VIEW

In 3050 the Inner Sphere was shaken by the arrival of the Clans. Descended from the people who blindly followed General Aleksandr Kerensky into to Periphery when the Star League collapsed, the Clan Warriors had literally been bred for war. While the rest of the Inner Sphere viewed the coming of the Clan juggernaut as the end of the universe, Precentor Waterly saw it as an opportunity. Thinking she could direct the Clans against targets of her own choosing, Waterly entered into a covert alliance with the Clans. She learned her folly almost too late when ilKhan Ulric Kerensky disclosed the Clan's ultimate goal—Terra itself.

Directing Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht to use the Com Guards to halt the Clans, Waterly hatched her own plot to bring the Inner Sphere under ComStar's direct control. While the fateful battle on Tukayyid succeeded (at great cost) in halting the Clans for a precious fifteen years, Waterly's Operation Scorpion was a spectacular failure. Not only did it destroy ComStar's public image of neutrality, but it gave the leaders of the Inner Sphere an excuse to seize control of the HPG stations. Sharilar Mori and Anastasius Focht "retired" Waterly and moved to secularize ComStar. Installed as Primus, Mori negotiated with the Inner Sphere powers to allow ComStar to continue to operate and maintain the HPG network. Unfortunately these radical changes created a schism within ComStar, with the most fanatical splitting away to form the Word of Blake. Under the guidance of Mori and Focht, ComStar began to rebuild its relationship with the Inner Sphere. Pledging to defend against the continuing Clan threat, ComStar was instrumental in the formation of a new Star League and was in the forefront of the campaigns that culminated in the Great Refusal—a Trial by combat that repudiated the Clan's original vote to invade the Inner Sphere.

Unfortunately this myopic focus on the Clans allowed the Word of Blake to grow and flourish. With the bulk of the Com Guards positioned to face the Clans, the Word of Blake overcame the garrison of Terra easily. But despite the loss of Terra, ComStar continued to concentrate on the Clans as the greater threat, believing that there would be plenty of time for a final reckoning with their estranged brothers and sisters later.

VIRAL BREAKOUT

"Later" turned out to be the fateful meeting of the Star League Council in 3067. With the threat of the Clans abated, the Second Star League began to unravel. This event triggered a violent response by the Word of Blake, plunging the Inner Sphere into chaos. Moving quickly, ComStar dusted off the plans for Case White—a contingency plan for the liberation of Terra. Word of Blake agents had, however, compromised ComStar security, and Terra proved to be far better defended than anyone had expected. ComStar forces were repulsed with very heavy casualties. Then Word of Blake agents crashed the HPG network using a combination of sabotage and computer viruses, but not before announcing to the Inner Sphere that Primus Sharilar Mori was a Kurita agent. This was devastating for ComStar. Firstly, the loss of communications capability destroyed its primary source of revenue, leaving its technicians with the time-consuming and costly task of repairing all the damage. Secondly, the revelation that the highest office of the supposedly neutral ComStar had been held by an enemy agent destroyed what trust it had rebuilt in the Inner Sphere since Operation Scorpion.

Sharilar Mori's assassination opened the way for Gavin Dow, formally First Precentor, to assume the mantle of Primus. Struggling to rebuild ComStar's tarnished image, Dow declared that the organization's primary goals are reestablishing and maintaining the communications network, and finally eliminating the Word of Blake. To that end he has pledged ComStar's support to the coalition of forces now taking the fight into the Word of Blake's Protectorate.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

GAVIN DOW

Rank / Title: Primus of ComStar
Born: 3007 (69 in 3076)

An accomplished politician, Gavin Dow's administrative skills and ambition propelled him through the ranks of ComStar to the posting as Precentor of the Tharkad HPG and membership of the First Curcuit. His ability to navigate the order's convoluted power structures and ruthlessly exploit any weakness in his political opponents made him a rallying figure for those who remained loyal to ComStar but opposed to the factions aligned with Mori. Essentially the de facto leader of the loyal opposition, he used his rudimentary military experience (gained during a stint with the Com Guards in the early 3050s) to pressure Primus Mori into naming him Precentor Martial Pro-Tem when Precentor Martial Victor Steiner-Davion stepped down temporarily to fight in the FedCom Civil War. Later Dow was elevated to the new title of First Precentor—a position of authority second only to the Primus.

Dow was to reprise his role as a military commander following the Word of Blake attack on Tharkad in 3067. With Precentor Martial Davion incommunicado, Dow pushed for a rapid response to the Blakist attack. Dusting off Case White—a contingency plan formulated by former Precentor Martial Anastasius Focht in 3059—Dow authorized the operation. Based on intelligence and assumptions hopelessly out of date, Case White was a disaster, but Dow's political skills allowed him to deflect much of the blame of the debacle towards Victor Steiner-Davion and Focht. Following the assassination of Primus Sharilar Mori in 3068, Dow was the obvious choice (indeed, with Mori's supporters discredited by the revelation that she was a Kurita agent, the only choice) to become Primus.

While Dow can count on the support of ComStar's rank and file, his relationship with the surviving Com Guards in the wake of the mishandling of Case White is understandably strained.

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GAVIN DOW

VICTOR STEINER-DAVION

VICTOR STEINER-DAVION

Rank/Title: Precentor Martial
Born: 3030 (46 in 3076)

Even Victor Steiner-Davion's enemies would admit (grudgingly) that he is one of the finest military leaders the Inner Sphere has ever seen—standing alongside the likes of Aleksandr Kerensky and Hanse Davion. As the man who defeated the Clans, Victor's place in history is already secured. But it is in the political arena that Victor has fared less well. Bad luck and bad judgment cost Victor first the Lyran half of the Federated Commonwealth, and then the throne of the Federated Suns due to the Machiavellian scheming of his sister, Katherine.

A man without a home, Victor was persuaded to join ComStar in 3061 and replaced an aging Anastasius Focht as Precentor Martial. It appeared that he was content to remain there until his brother, Arthur, was killed in a bomb attack in late 3062. Certain that the attack was the work of Katherine and unable to ignore his sister's excesses any longer, Victor quit ComStar and rallied troops to unseat her. Then he surprised the universe by renouncing the throne and returning to ComStar. But Victor's actions were not without cost. The office of Precentor Martial was placed under the direct supervision of First Precentor Gavin Dow, and the relationship between the two has been strained (at best) ever since. Upon assuming the role of Primus, Dow would undoubtedly have dismissed him were it not for the loyalty of the Com Guards to Precentor Martial (or as Victor prefers, just Martial) Steiner-Davion, and the fact that the surviving Com Guards (rightly) place much of the blame for the Case White debacle at Dow's feet.

As ruler of the Federated Commonwealth, Victor was romantically linked with everyone from Omi Kurita to Kali Liao by the media. He secretly married Isis Marik in 3067, and the couple has been blessed with a daughter, Jade, and two boys, Burton and Lee.

ELISE MACTAGGART

Rank/Title: Precentor ROM
Born: 3033 (43 in 3076)

Inspired to join ComStar by the Com Guard's heroic stand against the Clans in 3052, MacTaggart was disappointed to not be assigned to the Com Guards. Her quick wits and keen analytical mind, however, brought her to the attention of Victoria Parrdeau, head of ROM. Working as an intelligence analyst, Elise took some solace in the fact that if she were not to fight as a member of the Com Guards she could at least help them do their job.

Elise narrowly escaped capture by enemy operatives as she carried important intelligence archives away from Terra when the Word of Blake seized the world. She later worked closely with Precentor Martial Focht and with Victor Steiner-Davion during the planning phases of Operation Bulldog and Serpent.

ELISE MACTAGGART

Elise MacTaggart has been given the unenviable job of picking up the pieces of ComStar's shattered intelligence agency. ROM suffered badly following the schism. Comprising some of the most fanatical followers of Blake in ComStar, the organization was the part of ComStar most hit by defections to the Word of Blake. Worse, many Word of Blake sympathizers remained in place and worked against ComStar. The most notorious of these was Michelle Ellingham, head of counter-intelligence. It was Ellingham who let the Shadow Lancers infiltrate Terra, allowing the Blakists to capture the world. Worse, Ellinham's treachery masked the fact that Victoria Parrdeau, Precentor ROM herself, was also a Blakist sympathizer. Bad intelligence planted by Parrdeau doubtless contributed to the Com Guards disastrous losses during Case White.

MacTaggart was horrified when the truth about her superior was revealed, and she carries with her the gnawing doubt that Parrdeau singled her out not for her talents, but in order to hinder ComStar's effectiveness. But MacTaggart also brings to her job an iron will and a hatred of all things Blakist.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

ALAIN BERESICK

Rank/Title: Precentor Naval
Born: 3011 (65 in 3076)

Born in the Draconis Combine, Alain developed a love for space and enlisted in ComStar in order to pursue a naval career. He rose rapidly through the ranks, becoming captain of the JumpShip *Direct Communication* in 3047. During the Clan Invasion

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Alain tirelessly pushed his crew and his ship to get the ground forces to Tukayyid in time, and his efforts attracted the attention of Anastasius Focht. In 3053 Beresick was transfered to ComStar's secret Luyten 68-28 base, where he oversaw the cannibalization of the *StarSword* to keep the *Invisible Truth* operational with his customary efficiency.

Named commander of the rejuvenated *Cameron*-class battlecruiser, Beresick and his crew were tested once more in 3058, when the Word of Blake dispatched the WoBS *Deliverance*, an *Essex*-class destroyer, to keep the ComStar Warships busy during the Word of Blake assault on Terra. Alain and his crew repulsed the attack, becoming one of the few Inner Sphere crews in two hundred years to win a naval battle.

Alain's name was at the top of the list when the reformed Star League organized Task Force Serpent's naval assets, and his selection was fortuitous. For all their technological sophistication, the Clan's actual combat experience with WarShips proved woefully inadequate for facing the fleet under Beresick's direction. When Allan Beresick returned from the Clan Homeworlds he was undisputedly the Inner Sphere's greatest naval commander - and was inevitably elevated to the post of Precentor-Naval.

Escaping Tharkad aboard the *Invisible Truth* in 3067, Beresick and the Precentor-Martial were dogged by Blakist pursuit, and thus was unable to reach Terra in time to participate in Case White. Deprived of their best leadership, the Com Guard fleet fared badly in the ensuing battle.

GALEN COX

Rank/Title: Special Adjutant to Victor Steiner-Davion
Born: 3020 (56 in 3076)

Born on the border world of Alexandria into a farming family, Galen appeared content to work on the family quillar farm until his parents were killed in a Kurita raid in 3039. Driven by the need to avenge his family, Galen enlisted. A natural aptitude for piloting BattleMechs secured a place in the MechWarrior training program in at the War College of Tamar—from which Galen graduated in 3042 to enter the newly created Armed Forces of the Federated Commonwealth as one of the many replacements for the casualties suffered during the 3039 campaign against the Draconis Combine.

Galen was assigned to the Twelfth Donegal Guards and stationed on Ryde, where he had the chance to face Kurita troops and was soon promoted to company command. When the Twelfth was informed that Victor Steiner-Davion had been assigned straight out of the Nagelring to command a battalion, Galen volunteered to "nursemaid" the heir to the Federated Commonwealth throne through his first assignment. Since then Galen has served as Victor's aid, and a genuine friendship developed between the two men.

Narrowly avoiding death in a bomb attack on Solaris VII in 3056, Galen assumed a fake identity. Cunningly disguised, he posed as Jerrard Cranston and served on Victor's staff as his intelligence

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advisor and as ComStar's liaison with Star League Defense Force Intelligence. After the FedCom Civil War Galen abandoned the Cranston persona and following the fall of the Second Star League he formally joined ComStar where serves as Precentor-Martial Steiner-Davion's Adjutant.

Of medium build with fair hair, Galen has abandoned the beard behind which he hid in his Jerrard Cranston persona.

CHRISTINE HARWELL

Rank/Title: Precentor New Avalon

Born: 3028 (48 in 3076)

A native of Galisteo in the Free Worlds League, Christine Harwell and her sister, Erin, are both fourth-generation members of ComStar. While Erin joined the Com Guards (eventually rising to command of the 182nd Division), Christine had seen enough of fighting and pursued a career in the communications branch.

Still only a lowly acolyte when the schism split ComStar in two, Christine chose the secular ComStar over the mystical Word of Blake. Demonstrating exceptional administrative skills, she was placed in charge of the Class B HPG station at Ban Na San in the Draconis Combine, and then later the Class A HPG on Robinson. In both postings she had to battle against the distrust the citizens of those worlds held for ComStar. The diplomatic way in which Christine engaged with the locals and overcame their distrust attracted the attention of First Precentor Gavin Dow. When failing health forced the aged Precentor New Avalon Huthrin Vandel into retirement at the end of the FedCom Civil War, Dow nominated Christine to fill this important position.

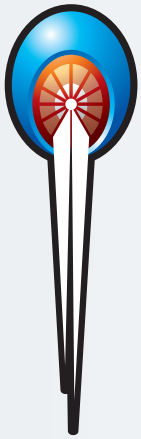
The newly appointed member of the First Circuit had hardly set foot on New Avalon when the Word of Blake attacked. As fighting raged in the streets of Avalon City, Christine organized the ComStar personnel who had evacuated the HPG station before Blakist troops hit the facility. Calling on childhood skills learned on distant Galisteo, she organized her acolytes, local citizens, and displaced soldiers into resistance cells. During the protracted battles for New Avalon these guerrilla fighters caused the Blakists a great deal of trouble.

Pulled off New Avalon in 3068, Christine relocated to Robinson, from where she continued to coordinate ComStar's activities in the Federated Suns until the Word of Blake was finally driven from New Avalon.

CORPORATIONS OF COMSTAR

By definition ComStar is itself a major corporation. Rebuilt from the ravages of the Amaris Coup and spared the destruction of the Succession Wars, Terra has restarted a military industry to rival a Great House. With the fall of Terra to the Word of Blake and ComStar's eviction from the Free Rasalhague Republic, ComStar now has limited production capabilities—primarily through partnerships with Arc-Royal MechWorks, Defiance industries, and Clan Wolf-in-Exile.

Of ComStar's various branches, there are several of particular interest.



Communications Branch

The Communications Branch continues to carry out ComStar's original mission: the maintenance and operation of the majority of the Inner Sphere's hyperpulse generator network. While the Inner Sphere Houses now own the HPGs within their territory, virtually all the parts and servicing for the network in the Federated Suns, Lyran Alliance, Draconis Combine, and much of the Periphery comes from ComStar's Communications Branch.

The Branch's technicians faced the difficult task of repairing acts of sabotage and eradicating the virus that the Word of Blake used to bring the HPG crashing down in what became known as the Whiteout. Even now the network has not yet been fully restored. The Capellan Confederation rebuked all of ComStar's offers of aid, and the Free Worlds League remains very much of a no-go area for Communications Branch technicians.

No longer in control of the entire HPG network, ComStar reluctantly raised its service charges to make up the shortfall in revenue. Though the increase was unpopular, Inner Sphere governments were quick to pass it on to their citizens, so that the increase in the base rate of sending messages also increased their tax revenues.

COMSTAR NEWS BUREAU

ComStar News Bureau

Founded in 2825 on the suggestion of Precentor Judy Cheny, the ComStar News Bureau was created as ComStar's own news gathering and dissemination service. Intended not only as a new revenue stream to supplement that of interstellar communications, the Bureau was also intended as a medium through which ComStar could use information to sway public opinion. In the past the Bureau has slanted or even ignored news to fit the needs of ComStar; however the Order no longer indulges in such blatant self-serving manipulation. During the FedCom Civil War, then-Precentor Gavin Dow kept the bureau on a tight leash—quashing a number of stories that would have cast Katherine Steiner-Davion in a bad light.

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CORPORATIONS OF COMSTAR

Interstellar News Network

In its ongoing campaign to rectify its blackened image since the debacle of Operation Scorpion and to further distance themselves from their fanatical brethren, ComStar has founded the Interstellar News Network (INN). Slowly spreading its influence through the worlds linked by the HPG network, INN is a free news service. Depending heavily on local freelance reporters, the network is independent of the ComStar News Bureau (which some consider little better than Gavin Dow's mouthpiece) and is funded solely through advertising. Most importantly, the venture shows all the promise of blossoming into a full-fledged Inner Sphere-spanning network.

KEY WORLDS OF COMSTAR

Following the loss of Terra, ComStar based itself on Tukayyid, a world that already had a substantial ComStar presence with the Com Guards standing vigil over the Clan frontier to guard the fifteen-year truce. Only two other star systems had a significant ComStar presence; Luyten 68-28 and Ross 248. Both were officially uninhabited star systems near Terra that had served as hiding places to secret away ComStar's fleet of WarShips.

Forced off of Tukayyid and out of the Free Rasalhague Republic following the conclusion of the alliance between the Ghost Bears and the Republic, ComStar has temporarily moved its administrative headquarters to Arc-Royal. Badly beaten in Case White, the WarShip fleet lacked the strength to hold Luyten 68-28 and Ross 248, and Word of Blake forces have overrun both valuable systems. Several other systems currently serve ComStar as regional administrative centers and staging points for operations against the Word of Blake, but the organization is essentially now homeless and dependent on the good will of other nations.

ComStar continues to maintain a sizable presence on Donegal in addition to the base on Arc-Royal in the Lyran Alliance, and Donegal has been the center of ongoing efforts to fully restore the HPG network. On Arcturus the Com Guards have established the main training camps for recruits destined to serve in the First and Fourth Army. In the Draconis Combine the Com Guards Third Army has established staging areas and training camps on Hachiman and Camlann. Meanwhile the Third and Fifth Armies are working out of Markesan and Bryceland, with training camps located on Robinson. The Sixth Army has no fixed location, but its administrative headquarters are currently located on Arc-Royal.

THE COM GUARD: KEY MILITARY COMMANDS

The seizure of Terra netted ComStar a huge cache of equipment abandoned by the Star League Defense Force. Eager to maintain a pacifistic front in the Inner Sphere, ComStar kept these weapons hidden. Following a tense confrontation with Hugai Kurita, Coordinator of the Draconis Combine, Primus Hollings York unveiled his plan to create a standing army. Consisting of eight divisions in 2933, the ComStar Guards and Militia (or Com Guards as they would become known) continued to expand over the next century. At its height before the historic confrontation with the Clans on Tukayyid in 3052, the Com Guards could field twelve full armies of six divisions each—a force somewhat in excess of forty combined arms regiments. Following the Fourth Succession War the Com Guards came out of the shadows, but as their forces were dispersed across the Inner Sphere to guard ComStar HPG stations their true strength remained a secret until the Clan Invasion.

Although untried in large-scale operations, the Guards emerged victorious in the invasion (thanks to the extensive training they have received under the command of Anastasius Focht), though at a terrible cost. Casualties ran to forty percent, and efforts to recover were hindered by defections to the newly formed Word of Blake. The six divisions of each army were reduced to only four. The loss of Terra in 3058 cost the Com Guards access to the industrial might of the cradle of humanity, hindering attempts to rebuild the Guards to their former strength. The Case White debacle and clashes with Blakist forces in and around the Chaos March region further eroded the Guards strength—as did a new wave of defections following the revelation that Primus Sharilar Mori was actually a Draconis Combine agent.

With the Com Guard ranks in tatters, Precentor Martial Davion reorganized his troops into a more compact force. The twelve old armies were disbanded and reformed into six armies of six divisions. Each army is notionally assigned to the territory controlled by one of the major powers—with the sixth covering the Periphery and minor powers. Political realities mean that the Capellan and Free Worlds League armies (the Fourth and Fifth) are deployed in the Lyran and Federated Suns theaters for the time being.

With the restructuring of the Guards has come a shift in their makeup. Partly this was in response to the force composition of the Blakist forces that are the Guards' primary adversary, but the primary drive behind this change has been ComStar's lack of an industrial base from which to supply its troops. The emphasis remains on the combined-arms tactics introduced by Focht, which played a key role in the Guards' victory on Tukayyid. However, the use of conventional infantry has been

COMSTAR

scaled back in favor of battle armor. Relatively cheap and fast to produce, battle armor allows Precentor Martial Davion to stretch his diminished pool of personnel further and improve their survivability. Conventional armor—especially self-propelled artillery—retains a prominent place in the Guards' revised TO&E. Again, cost and availability have played a significant part in this decision.

The disaster of Case White was a devastating blow for the Com Guards WarShip fleet. Once possessing the largest naval force in the Inner Sphere, the Guards have been reduced to just five vessels. The flagships *Invisible Truth* and *Bordeaux* represent the Guards' remaining naval combat force. Meanwhile the three surviving *Faslane*-class yardships (*Galamorgan*, *Dover*, and *Plymouth*) are essential in the task of keeping ComStar's large JumpShip fleet operational.

Logistics have become a major headache for the Com Guards, though not because of a lack of funds. ComStar's continuing domination of interstellar communications in the Federated Suns, Lyran Alliance, and Draconis Combine could bankroll an army three times the Guards' current size. The Word of Blake has devastated the Inner Sphere's military/industrial complex, and each nation jealously guards the output of their remaining factories. Even the nations with which ComStar remains allied are hesitant to sell equipment (especially BattleMechs) to ComStar. The Diamond Sharks (ever quick to smell a deal) have taken up some of the slack, but the Com Guards are heavily dependent on battlefield salvage. Consequently their BattleMech contingent is dominated by a mishmash of classic Star League designs, captured Clan second-line designs, and salvaged Word of Blake equipment.

COMSTAR MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

Over the years ComStar has had an on-again/off-again affair with mercenaries. Lacking any significant troop strength its own, ComStar hired the Bandersnatches to put pressure on the Draconis Combine, and the mercenaries were subsequently absorbed into what became the Com Guards. By contrast, Primus Julian Tiepolo had an irrational hatred of mercenaries, and he sponsored a number of covert operations that greatly harmed several notable commands, including Wolf's Dragoons and the Gray Death Legion. Following the Fourth Succession War, ComStar employed mercenaries to guard its HPG stations as a blind to distract Inner Sphere intelligence services while the Com Guards were gradually deployed to replace them. After the Clan Invasion, ComStar made increasing use of mercenaries to support the operations of its Explorer Corps in the search for the Clan Homeworlds.

Without access to its own manufacturing centers and with the supply of equipment from other sources seriously curtailed, ComStar has fallen back on the one resource it still has an abundant supply of—money. With the bulk of its troops mobilized for the assault on the Word of Blake Protectorate, ComStar is hiring small mercenary commands to provide protection for their scattered HPG stations. Pay is good, somewhat compensating for the danger that a mercenary will be called upon to face a fanatical Manei Domini strike team. Due to ComStar's logistical problems, salvage rights are somewhat miserly. Larger commands have been contracted to fight alongside the coalition forces facing the Word of Blake.

Given the Word of Blake's past use of mercenaries as stalking horses or blinds, ComStar (understandably) gives any command they intend to hire a thorough vetting (called a "Broadsword Enema" by many commands). Mercenaries should keep this in mind when accepting an offer of employment if they have any skeletons to hide.

Of course ComStar has always kept its secrets, so there is no way of knowing whether the organization has some secret bases or research facilities tucked away in some unlikely corner of Inner Sphere—or even out in the Periphery.

SAVE

WORD OF BLAKE

WORD OF BLAKE

WHEELS WITHIN WHEELS

At one time, it was easy to assume the Word of Blake was one entity full of zealots and technoreligious idealists concerned only with the latest technology and hating the secular ComStar. After December of 3067, that mindset changed, and the Inner Sphere has suffered for its oversight.

It would be a disservice to gloss over the Word at this juncture, assuming it is a cohesive whole. More so now than when the Jihad began, it is not. As one looks back with hindsight at the Word's actions since 3067, patterns can be seen showing that the Word has never really operated on a united front. And now, as the Blakists throw up walls around their new Protectorate, fault lines have apparently ruptured along two key lines: Precentor Manei Domini Apollyon on one side, and Precentor Martial Cameron St. Jamais on the other.

Miles:

Everything we have here on the Word of Blake is a mix of analysis and conjecture. The problem we've been having is accounting for the several different "splinters" of the Order; each seemingly has their own agenda, goals, ideals, attitudes, and in some cases their own armies. Many times, what two factions share in ideals don't translate to their goals, and so on—creating a chaotic mix that makes the Word as a whole look more like a psychological case study of misfits, rather than a cohesive fighting force that has terrorized the core of the Inner Sphere for the last decade.

But I digress.

Sadly, this file seems to be the most incomplete of our work. We had managed to gain quite a bit of intelligence data from Rochelle and Dieron consisting of in-depth bios of several prominent Manei Domini commanders—including Precentors Berith, Avitue, Naamah, and Sabnock—as well as some critical data points on two of the purported five "hidden worlds." However, somehow the late Director Fitzhugh managed to either corrupt the data or lose it altogether, as we cannot find it anywhere within our network and its triple backup systems. I suppose the facility fire may have had something to do with it, but it's quite possible Fitzhugh was playing both sides of the fence. As you know, we found evidence that he was dabbling in the black market with information and drugs on the side; such information may have found its way into other hands.

So take what we've pieced together here with some grains of salt. I suggest you organize some fact-finding missions and see what else we can dig up. Anything at all would be beneficial; the board is meeting with Lear and Murikami in July and it would be good to have some sort of bargaining chip.

By the way, any more news on the mysterious "Inspector Jackson"?

—Julie

WORD OF BLAKE PROTECTORATE

Formed partially from independent worlds in the former Chaos March that struck lucrative deals with the Word of Blake before the Jihad and from worlds captured during the first three years of the Jihad, the Protectorate has become a tangled mess of loyalties, rebellion, and fanaticism. While the Word doesn't broadcast their internal issues, the fact remains that on many worlds, not all the citizenry are happy with the new flag flying over their buildings. Fed in part with propaganda by several resistance movements—Alys Rousset-Marik's group being the largest and most organized—these worlds simmer underneath the surface even as the Blakists fight to protect them.

In the last few years, the Protectorate's military doctrine has been decidedly defensively minded. Few attacks of conquest have originated under the Precentor Martial's orders. Agents have submitted many comments on massive installations being constructed and defensive works being built near key industry locations. It is as if St. Jamais is expecting major assaults in the near future; considering that the House leaders are finally showing some semblance of alliances and joint operations, it is a safe bet these worlds will need to be taken one by one, hill by bloody hill.

What has been interesting is that several of the more rabid commanders of the Word's divisions and militia units have been removed from command. Such commanders were doing nothing but encouraging the underground resistance with their publicized acts of violence and unnecessary destruction—consider Precentor Fellers' threat and subsequent action of nuking Wasat Prime, killing hundreds of thousands of innocents over a few hundred mercenaries, or Precentor Latronis' actions on Sheratan, where he was forcibly removed from power after the horrible mistreatment of workers, killing thousands to break a simple labor strike. Such removals were direct orders from the Precentor Martial himself. Of further interest, St. Jamais has not bothered to spare those of his Toyama faction the knife. In fact, the Word's former factionalism has seemingly disappeared under the widening rift between St. Jamais and Apollyon.

It's very plausible that such a rift has formed due to ideological differences; what doesn't make sense is that both men still swear allegiance and take orders from the mysterious Master, who is rumored to be the real Thomas Marik, bent on exacting total revenge on his countrymen and those who stand in his way. But do either one—or both—of these Precentors stand in his way as well? Or is the Master letting his two prize pit bulls tear each other apart in a test of dominance?

Regardless of motive, the fact remains that Precentor Apollyon and his Shadow Divisions of Manei Domini remain outside the Protectorate, except for the times they're attacking Protectorate forces. While there is scant evidence to prove such actions are indeed taking place, several Shadow Divisions have been very quiet of late, or outright missing, and many have shown they are capa-

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ble of false flag operations. ComStar ROM has indicated that there is increased intensity in HPG chatter between Terra and Gibson as well, and the Opacus Venatori has been positively identified in one location taking down a Protectorate Level II.

Whatever battles the Blakists are fighting against each other, the net result—which they have to be aware of—is that the Protectorate's defenses are being torn down from within, paving the way for Stone's Coalition. However, acute observers will note that the Word has never hesitated in using other forms of unconventional warfare in order to win. The savage defense against Clan Ghost Bear's recent assaults could be chalked up to the Word's hatred for the Clans but may also show just how desperate the Word is to save their nascent nation.

Whatever the case may be, caution should be the watchword in every engagement with the Protectorate.

Miles:

I had one of our former "retirees" pull together a quick look at the Manei Domini. The bulk of our file here was wiped out, along with major players of this terrifying new subculture. I suggest adding a few more layers of data security at our other facilities, just in case.

—Julie

MANEI DOMINI

Cyborgs; bloodhounds from hell; soulless machine people—there are many names for the most disturbing and fearsome thing that the Inner Sphere has seen since their first encounter with the Clans. They call themselves "Manei Domini"—Hands of the Master—and they are the most elite group of soldiers the Word of Blake has to offer. Trained in hand-to-hand combat, 'Mech and battle armor tactics, infiltration, and espionage, the Manei Domini excel in whatever they do. Even though the idea of cybernetically enhanced operatives is not new to the Inner Sphere, the Word of Blake has taken the idea to the extreme. The Manei Domini are heavily modified; many have all their limbs replaced or they are wired with neural implants that help in piloting 'Mechs and other machines of war.

First reports about those new super-soldiers reached the agencies of the Inner Sphere in the last two years before the Jihad. Most of those reports were full of rumors and hearsay out of the Chaos March, and most intelligence analysts discarded them. The first bit of more reliable data—and as far as we can tell it was still heavily flawed—came by an operative identified as "Damocles" in a series of tabloid-esque reports that seemed full of lies, exaggerations, and half-truths. But it turned out that many of the basic ideas presented by Damocles were correct. Once the Jihad was in full swing, full Divisions consisting solely of Manei Domini started appearing all over the Sphere, striking planets and then disappearing in a heartbeat, shredding through battle-hardened troops in no time.

For years now various groups have studied the Hands of the Master. Over the last few years, numerous incidents have occurred where a force of Manei Domini either simply ignored allied military outfits or just outright destroyed them for no apparent reason. The troops have been heard to call all non-enhanced people "frails," and they don't hesitate to kill when the situation calls for it.

Some analysts have postulated that the Manei Domini were created to fight the Clans, while others go as far to say that the Word of Blake planned a gigantic war against the Clans once they became full members of the Star League. In the light of those ideas, the creation of cybernetically enhanced soldiers to counter the genetically enhanced Clan warriors makes a lot of sense. One has to wonder, though, how such a war would have been fought. If true, it would explain observed behavior when the Manei Domini encounter Clan units—they fight like demons possessed. Seeing them fight units of the Inner Sphere is disturbing—they are focused warriors and operate with machine-like efficiency. But when facing the Clans, the Domini kill each and every fallen warrior, no matter what the price.

One thing that has confused intelligence agents across the Sphere when analyzing battleROMs of MD encounters has been the speech in their open communications. They do not speak English or any other modern language when in battle, but something called "High Domini"—a very basic mixture of Latin and Ancient Greek. It is unknown why the Manei Domini use this language, and if they always speak it or just employ it in battle. This may be related to the way the higher ranks of the Domini refer to themselves. From what we can gather, when a MD reaches a certain rank—mostly when being granted the command of a Shadow Division or something similar—the MD gain a second name that replaces their birth name, such as Vapula, Ipos, Dantalion, or Sabnock. These names stand for demons or ghost-like creatures from a crosscut of religions. Interestingly, none have been called Satan, though a "Lucifer" has recently surfaced on Terra.

Another thing that is yet not clear is how these soldiers become Manei Domini. At first it was believed that they were elite soldiers that either volunteered to become an MD or that were so severely wounded in battle that it became necessary. Later a more popular theory floated by SAFE was that the Manei Domini hailed from the Word of Blake's hidden worlds. But lately, the militaries of the Inner Sphere have encountered less elite Manei Domini, even MD that were forced to become MDs against their will. Not much is known about this newest generation of Domini, and we will only be able to report on this after more reports have come in.

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KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

"THE MASTER"

Rank/Title: Rumored Leader of the Word of Blake

Born: unknown

No one knows much about this shadowy figure, rumored to be the true leader of the Word of Blake. As of late, many rumors suggest that this "Master" is none other than Thomas Marik, though despite an enormous amount of circumstantial evidence—the biggest being the revelation that the former Captain-General Thomas Marik was actually a double—there is no conclusive proof of this claim. No one outside a select few of the Order has ever seen the man; it is quite possible this Master is actually not even a real person but a shadow puppet invented by the Word on which they could pin the horrors of the Jihad.

Nonetheless, most intelligence agencies of late have been running with the supposition that this Master is indeed the true Thomas Marik. However, such assumptions only go so far, as no one knows the man's history, his motivations, his mental capacity—nothing. He is, even with a name, a ghost. No one knows where this ghost resides, though many assume Terra is his base.

What is known for sure is that the prattling of the Word regarding "Transfers" comes from the Master. References to a First, Second, and Third Transfer has been made repeatedly, though no one really knows what those actually mean aside from being some sort of Blakist prophecy. Common assumption has been that the Transfers actually referred to transfers of power in the Second Star League; the "failure" of the Third Transfer—when the Star League broke apart in December of 3067—is what triggered the Jihad, quite possibly out of spite from the Master.

Yet, this common assumption doesn't fly with recent intel from Protectorate worlds. Many Blakists, mostly those among the Shadow Divisions, still refer to the Third Transfer as an upcoming event. What, exactly, these Transfers are remain a mystery. One that, if solved, could point to the solution to—and meaning of—the Jihad.

CAMERON ST. JAMAIS

Rank/Title: Precentor Martial

Born: 3027 (49 in 3076)

Despite extensive investigation, practically no information exists about St. Jamais before the Word of Blake's Schism in 3051. Somehow, he ascended to the head of the Word's ultra-radical Sixth of June movement, known for its brutal terror tactics and assassinations against ComStar officials. He was a key policymaker in the Word since 3058—after the death of Precentor Demona Aziz (whom many considered to be a victim of the Sixth). The assassination of Trent Arian a few years later paved the way for St. Jamais to take over as Precentor Martial; one of his first major programs was the strengthening and inflation of the Word of Blake Militia. It

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is suspected that he is the primary figure responsible for the shell-game programs that helped the Word build its forces in secrecy.

A gifted speaker and diplomat, St. Jamais' uglier side came to the fore after the dissolution of the Second Star League, as he threw threats and ultimatums at the delegations departing Tharkad. It was under his order that the *Invincible* fired its "warning shot" that laid radioactive waste across much of Tharkad City's industrial sector, but the reasons behind the act are still unknown. Only by questioning the man directly will such answers be uncovered.

After the initial shock of the Jihad's eruption, St. Jamais returned to Terra. He has not left the system since his arrival in early 3068 except for three forays to Highspire in the Confederation, and he appears to be entrusting his field commanders to carry out their duties. St. Jamais and those commanders have been kept quite busy, as the Protectorate has suffered assault after assault—not just from Stone's Coalition or House armies, but apparently by troops under Precentor Apollyon's command as well.

When the data regarding St. Jamais' orders—those that are decoded, at least—are examined, it appears that in the last few years, the Precentor Martial has been waging a shadow war against Precentor Apollyon. Considering the Manei Domini's devotion to the Master, it may be that St. Jamais has lost confidence in the Word's ability to win, or at the very least, the Master's ability to lead. Nonetheless, the Precentor Martial still commands a formidable force within the Terran system and continues to inspire loyalty and utter devotion from those under his command.

Lately, reports have confirmed that the personages known as Lucifer and Eve have been in the Precentor Martial's constant presence. What exactly these three are planning is unknown, but considering the utter depravity of the Sixth of June and those under St. Jamais' sway, it can be nothing good.

APOLLYON

Rank/Title: Precentor Manei Domini / CO of the 52nd Shadow Division

Born: unknown (estimated 45 in 3076?)

Little is really known about the Word of Blake's Precentor Manei Domini, a position that was not known to exist until after the Jihad was well underway. He is often referred to as the "chosen of the Master," implying that he is closer to the shadowy Master than even Precentor Martial St. Jamais. The reverent awe accorded him by all of the other Domini soldiers suggest he either speaks as the Master's voice or possibly shares in the creation of MD soldiers.

Whatever the case, rumors whisper that Apollyon holds the keys to life and death for all of the Manei Domini, and that he alone has sole authority to elevate and name the so-called "Ascended," special Manei Domini commanders who lead the Word's elite Shadow Divisions. The names he accords them are all spirit names from various Terran religions, ancient and modern.

Where Apollyon came from is still a mystery; many analysts posit that he is actually a native of the now-dead planet Jardine, one of

the Word's rumored "Five Worlds" hidden among the systems of the Free Worlds League. Recent evidence indicates that the Precentor himself led the hunt for and execution of Doctor Brooklyn Stevens, an ex-IE mercenary who supposedly found Jardine before the Jihad erupted. In the brief conversations of Apollyon that have been recorded of late, he refers to the world in the past tense, indicating that the planet no longer exists as a viable world.

Indeed, the Precentor has made Gibson his headquarters, taking over and improving fortifications there to create a massive command and control complex. Orders to the Shadow Divisions—and only to them—emanate from Gibson, so it is reasonable to assume that Apollyon has been ensconced there since early 3068. Unlike the Precentor Martial, however, the Precentor Manei Domini has made several forays into battle, leading his Fifty-second Shadow Division from the cockpit of his unusually modified *Shootist*. His direct attacks seem to have specific purposes in mind; invariably, whatever unit Apollyon targets with his cybernetic warriors, they die shortly thereafter with only a handful of survivors specifically left to tell the tale and spread the fear.

Though the Precentor seems to be insane, his actions do not appear to be motivated by greed or lust. In fact, according to the scant reports smuggled off Gibson, Apollyon lives a life almost as austere as a monk and has said on several occasions that "evil lies within the flesh." He—and his Domini—live by a devout code.

They refer to normal humanity as "frails" in varying degrees of disgust or indifference.

Apollyon seems to be ceding more and more command to his second-in-command, Precentor Berith, while remaining on Gibson. Apparently preoccupied with other matters, he has not left the system in several months as the Fifty-second has been noted in battle without Apollyon's notorious *Shootist*. Whether there is an imminent change of command structure or other pending plans is unknown; considering Apollyon's cruelly devious streak, expect anything and everything when the Manei Domini are involved.

ALEXANDER KERNOFF

Rank/Title: Precentor ROM

Born: 3012 (64 in 3076)

The enigmatic spymaster of the Word's deadly ROM organization, Kernoff still presents a very real and credible threat to Stone's Coalition and other intel agencies. Despite the recent setbacks in the Protectorate and the apparent infighting between Word forces, ROM has remained steadfast in its mission to hamper and eliminate intelligence threats to the Word of Blake.

First believed missing during the opening salvos of the Jihad, it was later learned through Damocles' reports that Kernoff was actually present during the initial siege of New Avalon. Grievously injured during the initial naval attack, he returned to the Terran system near death and spent over two years in recovery. During that time, Kernoff ran ROM from his hospital bed; despite his injuries, he never lost touch with the greater intelligence picture as the Jihad rolled forward.

Apparently his time on Terra kept Precentor ROM in closer contact with his political rival, Cameron St. Jamais. Despite their ideological differences, the two men coordinated much of the initial stages of the Jihad's attacks on the Word's new targets. By merging ROM's vast resources and the Word of Blake Militia's power, a healthy respect and admiration has apparently grown between them.

As of late, ROM activities have been shifting to assist Militia and Protectorate forces in facing down the increasingly frequent attacks by suspected Shadow Divisions under Apollyon's command. Such a shift of paradigm—a small one, to be sure, detected only by skilled analysts—could mean that ROM may be standing against Apollyon and the Master. While this is pure conjecture, it currently is the best theory that fits available evidence.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

DAVID ALSACE

Rank/Title: Precentor TerraSec

Born: 3042 (34 in 3076)

A member of the Word of Blake for several years, Precentor Alsace was installed as Precentor TerraSec in 3064. Tasked with rebuilding and increasing the size of Terran Security forces, Alsace stayed well out of the politics of the Word, concentrating solely on the protection of his beloved homeworld. He settled happily into his role as protector of the Terran system, working closely with Precentor Naval Zwick and through the offices of the First Circuit.

Little is known about the Terran system after ComStar's ill-advised Case White. What data does exist comes from ComStar's agent Damocles and his supposed connections with the ComStar resistance movement on Terra. Consisting of data dumps from public network nodes, such data is light on actual detail but a few things can be inferred, based on some Terran media reports.

During the mop-up of those Case White units that managed to make planetfall, a particularly brutal firefight near Carentan killed Precentor Alsace's pregnant wife and child. Most likely this event caused a major personality shift, as soon after the Precentor was vocal in the media in his condemnation of the Resistance and apparently attended as many of the subsequent executions as possible. Bounties were placed on known insurgents, countersigned by the TerraSec office, and in at least two cases Alsace was present for public executions of reactionaries.

The Precentor has been prominent in Voice of Terra broadcasts to the Protectorate as well, his voice a reassurance to many within the Blakist realm under siege that the cradle of humanity would not fall. Clearly, the once soft-spoken Precentor has become an ardent defender of Terra; it can be surmised that many of his TerraSec forces share his zeal.

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GREGORY ZWICK

Rank/Title: Precentor Naval
Born: 3005 (71 in 3076)

Identified as the Word of Blake's Precentor Naval, Gregory Zwick was a close friend of Alain Beresick, having been introduced to the younger man's cousin Melissa during their early service together; Alain even stood as his second during the ceremony in 3033. Later, Zwick served under Beresick as a signals officer during the latter's command of the *Direct Communication*. The two then parted ways in 3049 on amiable terms, Zwick having been reassigned to a ROM vessel patrolling the Deep Periphery where he discovered the wreck of the *Naga*-class RWN *Dystopia* in a ruined Rim Worlds system in 3051.

When Zwick returned to the Inner Sphere, he was enraged by Focht's "betrayal" and absconded from ComStar with a small fleet into the waiting arms of the Word of Blake, leaving his wife stranded on Terra. He got his chance at retribution (and reunification) in 3058, commanding the Word's invasion fleet as they retook Terra in Operation Odysseus. His brilliant success in protecting the Word's invasion fleet and supply operations earned him the newly-created title of Precentor Naval from the Word's First Circuit.

Little is known about Zwick after the Word closed Terra. ComStar documentation, at least that which survived the destruction of the Orestes and Tukkayid data centers, indicate that Zwick is a quiet, reserved officer who helped Precentor Beresick rewrite the book of black naval warfare during their time in service together through constant simulations and studies. It is presumed that Zwick has grown as a strategic commander; the sabotage of several vessels notwithstanding, the savaging of the Case White fleet showed signs of a commander who understands the complicated dimensional aspect of space warfare.

If Zwick is even only half as competent as Beresick in his command of a naval fleet, the inevitable assault on Terra will exact a terrible price indeed.

LUCIFER

Rank/Title: Unknown
Born: Unknown (estimated in late 20s in 3076)

Before all contact was lost with the last ComStar resistance movement on Terra, much was made of a newcomer to Hilton Head. Called "Lucifer" by the Precentor Martial, this new Precentor is obviously a Manei Domini with extensive modifications along the left side of his body and face. However, Precentor Lucifer seems to answer only to the Precentor Martial and has none of the calm, mechanical reserve present in so many other Word of Blake cybersoldiers. He is ruthless, having executed by his own hand at least two of Precentor Alsace's TerraSec guards for "suspicion of espionage" and challenging Alsace on several incidents, all involving planetary security.

His attitude is odd in light of the fact that he seems to have a more self-serving directive, rather than "serving the Master's will." He is also constantly attended to by his female aide, known only as "Eve." The two are rarely apart and exude the air of an intense relationship, though it is likely not romantic in nature.

What Precentor Lucifer's function is on Terra remains a mystery; he has not had any contact with Precentor Azrael and in fact goes out of his way to avoid the Manei Domini commander. Lucifer seems to spend much of his time touring the various Castles Brian across the continent and appears to answer to no one except the Precentor Martial.

Some speculation among analysts has surmised that Lucifer may in fact be Precentor Ravana, the former commander of Warrior House Rakshasa who was presumed dead during the fighting on Sian. Obviously if this is the case, Ravana would have undergone major cybernetic remodification, as Lucifer shows none of the same mods as Ravana—most noticeably the wings and claws. However, at least seventy percent of the face is a match, as is the body height and build, but neither of these are proof enough that the two individuals are one and the same.

CORPORATIONS OF THE WORD OF BLAKE

Skobel MechWorks
Corporate HQ: Terra
Key Facilities: Terra, Caph, Mars

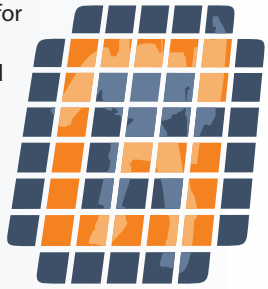
With roots dating back deep into the Terran Hegemony, Skobel came into its own as a premier 'Mech corporation through its myriad of WorkMech designs. The corporation exploded into the interstellar war market during the height of the Star League, developing designs for the SLDF and, later, the Amaris regime. The fires of the Succession Wars hit the corporation hard with the losses of its biggest complexes on New Earth, Caph, Thorin, and Outreach. Reduced to the Terran system, Skobel quietly continued manufacturing components for various BattleMechs and other vehicles until the Clan Invasion.

With mothballed facilities reopened by order of the Precentor Martial (and warehousing and distribution facilities activated abroad), Skobel once again began its rise to prominence as a war corporation, represented in both the Terran and Irian stock exchanges. While profits remain low due to large facility updating and refurbishment projects, the company continues to survive and even expand. The massive decontamination and refurbishment of the Caph MechWorks facility is proof that the Word has heavy investment within the company.

Gibson Federated BattleMechs
Corporate HQ: Gibson
Key Facilities: Gibson, Terra, Mars

One of the original corporate members of the Free Worlds Defense Industries, Gibson Federated has expanded into a conglomerate of its own making. Dominating Gibson with its civilian subsidiaries, the company also has relatively extensive lines in BattleMechs, aerospace, and armored infantry platforms, pro-

CORPORATIONS OF THE WORD OF BLAKE

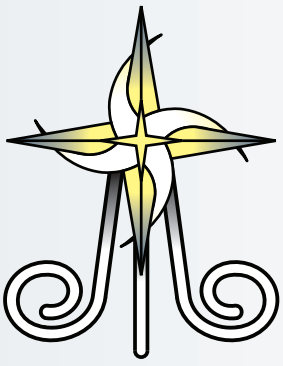


ducing a large amount of war materiel for the Word and the FWLM.

In 3063, Gibson Federated formed Sekkaris Mekwerks as a separate entity to design and develop prototypes from Clan equipment and other technologies acquired by the Word. Sekkaris became the sole playground of Devon Cortland, the division's chief researcher, and through his work the Celestial OmniMech series evolved. The designs were tested through Sekkaris and then produced in full by Gibson Federated at their facilities on Gibson, Mars, and Terra. However, Sekkaris also produces a highly specialized version of the Celestials, which are rumored to be the custom-made machines designed strictly for direct interfacing with Manei Domini commanders and other high-ranking soldiers such as the Opacus Venatori.

Gibson Federated went off the public trade markets back in 3066, the same time that four new battle armor facilities went online on Gibson. These facilities were assumed to be making the company's new G-Lifter WorkMech series, revealed at the last Industrialist Stellar Expo on Stewart in 3065. The new series was recalled shortly after production with no further developments announced before the Jihad struck; only with the relatively recent news of a new line of battle armor suits being sported by Word forces does the deception now become clear.

All of the corporation's assets are equally located between Gibson, Terra, and Mars, making Gibson one of the few large corporations not widely diversified across varied regions of space.



O'Neil Yards
Corporate HQ: Terra
Key Facilities: Titan, Mars, New Earth, Victoria

Considered the premier manufacturer of K-F drives since the dawn of human space colonization, O'Neil Yards has branched into nearly every aspect of aerospace development and manufacturing. Owning a majority stake in the massive Titan Yards complex, the Phobos Materials Complex, NETC's Orbital Facility and other large-scale orbital projects throughout the Federated Suns and Lyran Alliance, O'Neil can be considered one of the biggest power brokers in the aerospace industry. Its far-reaching financial empire has greater clout in the industry than Federated-Boeing's sheer output of gross tonnage, though O'Neil tends to let the industry drive itself, rather than attempting to exert control over it.

Owing no affiliation to any faction—one of the rare Terran corporations that can back up such a claim—O'Neil tends to remain out of political power plays during times of war. Unlike the Irian conglomerate, O'Neil prides itself on being "factionally neutral." It is not uncommon for an entire department to find itself laid off if divisional managers break corporate policies. Such was the case in 3059, when the entire Panpour divisional staff found itself out of work after an internal investigation discovered kickbacks and "tax incentives" being provided to management by local governmental leaders in exchange for secondary DropShip parts and services outside the O'Neil structured contracts. O'Neil Internal Investigations are not known for their leniency and are extremely devoted to the company line.

O'Neil's leadership is a "closed circuit" setup, with promotions only coming from within the corporation. An extensive vetting process is necessary—often lasting upwards of two to three years—and it is not uncommon for a binding lifetime contract to be negotiated, including generational servitude.

New Earth Trading Company
Corporate HQ: New Earth
Key Facilities: New Earth, Zavijava, Bharat

One of the oldest interstellar corporations, NETC lost most of its advanced military facilities in the Succession Wars and is today a shell of its former self. Considered the chief supplier of support vehicles and light armor, NETC has vast holdings that are diversified across the entire manufacturing spectrum. It owns and operates a wide array of facilities, from raw materials processing to bulk manufacturing to a large commercial shipping fleet.

The majority of NETC's facilities supplies and serves consortiums and systems near Terra. While their war materiel, such as Vedette tanks, engineering platforms, and Karnov transports, can be found in the planetary militias and support services of nearly every military arm in the Inner Sphere, NETC prefers to keep business localized to a 200 LY radius around New Earth, with trade partnerships being fairly cordial among the various Houses. The sole exception is House Kurita; certain events during the War of 3039 have put relations with the DCMS and Kuritan corporations on an extremely frosty footing for the last thirty-odd years.

Donald Witherspoon is the president of NETC on New Earth, elected to the position in 3048. During the last ten years, Witherspoon has opened up two new warehousing and transportation facilities on Bharat to handle the system's underutilized logging and mining industries. Rumors of secret facilities on Bharat's northern continent of Veerta are unsubstantiated, though this story would hardly be surprising if true, considering the sheer volume of interstellar transportation that has flooded the system since 3070.

KEY WORLDS OF THE WORD OF BLAKE PROTECTORATE

TERRA

Noble Ruler: President of the Terran Congress Chris Windsor-Cameron
Star Type (Recharge Time): G2V (183 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.12 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Luna)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 22°C (Arid)
Surface Water Coverage: 71 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith and Nadir
HPG Class: A (Multiple)
Population (3076): 6,350,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A (Advanced)-A-A-A-A

ComStar's long administration turned the "Cradle of Humanity" into a toothless idol. Under ComStar, Terra was relegated to a quiet cul-de-sac in the turbulent Inner Sphere. So preserved from the violence of the Succession Wars, Terra was a wonderland of Star League-era technology where everyone received good education, technology was widely understood, and every car was fusion-powered in eras when the rest of the Inner Sphere could scarcely conceive of fusion power in anything but military vehicles. And though ComStar might have made Terra its capital, it was well understood that ComStar's power lay in its HPGs, neutrality, and economic might—not Terra. Even the unveiling of the Com Guards did not change the image of Terra—though it altered the perception of ComStar, since the Com Guard drew equipment from caches, not Terran factories.

So, to modern understanding Terra itself was not a credible power. Terra was certainly a world worthy of deep respect, but it was only powerful for the ideas it embodied. The Inner Sphere's ignorance of history has been costly these past few years.

Terra has ruled over three interstellar empires (or two, if you do not separate the Terran Hegemony from the old Star League). While fortune, the occasional talented leader, and diplomacy have played their parts in establishing and holding those empires, Terrans have never forgotten the importance of muscle in maintaining political power. Learning from the mistakes of the "accidental empire" that was the Terran Alliance, Terrans later took pains to concentrate critical industries—especially military industries—on the world they trusted most to rule an empire. Similarly, key military units were primarily Terran in composition. Even when it was much less expensive to establish a 'Mech factory or shipyard on another Alliance or Hegemony world (for Terrans did not accept colonial pay rates or sell precious Terran real estate for anything less than a fortune), Terra still got first choice of contracts.

During the bloody liberation of Terra, many of these factories—running full-time to arm the forces of Amaris—were prime targets of the SLDF. The factories that survived to be mothballed by ComStar were the factories whose workers had attacks of conscience (or at least feared the SLDF more than their Amaris paymasters). While nearly forgotten by the Inner Sphere, those factories weren't gone, and neither was the skilled, educated labor force. ComStar and the Word of Blake needed a decade to reawaken the Terran military-industrial complex after its 250-year slumber, but it is now giving the Word of Blake more staying power than anyone (outside of ComStar) could have anticipated, even if it is a shadow of its 2750 self.

However, Terra is not a grim world of robed Blake-worshipping minions and continents of industrial complexes. ComStar and the Word of Blake used the intermediary of the secular "Branch of Terran Affairs" to govern Terra. BoTA is a professional civil service, a descendent of the Hegemony government, which runs Terra with a relatively light hand, though it is not a democracy and receives the general outlines of its policies directly from the First Circuit. Thus left largely alone and seeking some means of lifting themselves from the devastation Amaris had wrought, Terrans turned inward to celebrate their native cultures and world. Languages and cultures were revived and embraced. Many of these cultures (and BoTA administrative districts) follow the lines of the old Hegemony's regional districts, in turn roughly mimicking the outlines of the Terran Alliance member-states. Though all Terrans are taught Galactic Standard English, more languages are spoken on Terra than in the rest of the Inner Sphere combined (discounting dialects). Terrans have also worked to undo the damage of centuries of urbanization and industrial development; more of the planet is in its pristine, natural state now than at any time in fifteen hundred years. Certainly there are metropolises on this planet of six billion, almost all older than any off world colony, but these ancient cities lack the endless suburban sprawl of past centuries even

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as they preserve their historical cores. And those thundering military factories are, owing to Terra's advanced technology, usually compact, underground facilities in remote areas of the planet—or are off-planet entirely. The Terran system has more interplanetary industrial development than any other known system, from the Hermes Industrial Complex on Mercury to the Titan Shipyards orbiting Saturn.

This Terran interest in history and their world is suspected to be behind their support for the Word of Blake, perhaps more than their centuries of ComStar conditioning. Notably, in recent years Terran diplomats and businessmen swung many worlds of the Chaos March to WoB's banner not with Blake's Teachings, but with retellings of their glory under the banner of Terra, as compared to their "squalor and abuse" under the flags of the Houses. It is hoped that this means that Terra's aid to the Word of Blake is only an alliance of convenience; thus the Word's recent setbacks may well convince Terra that it is time to part ways.

If not, the battle for Terra might be a grim one. ComStar has stated that before the Schism it had actively staffed over two hundred of Terra's five hundred SDS fortifications. The losses of the mighty Wolf's Dragoons and Com Guards in the Terran system suggest the defenses there are very potent.

MARS

Noble Ruler: Precentor Martial Cameron St. Jamais
Star Type (Recharge Time): G2V (183 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 9.15 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Phobos, Deimos)
Surface Gravity: 0.38
Atmosphere Pressure: Thin (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 12°C (Arid)
Surface Water Coverage: 39 percent
Highest Native Life: None
Recharging Station: Both
HPG Class: A (Multiple)
Population (3076): 1,250,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: A (Advanced)-B-A-C-B

As the Space Age dawned at the end of the Second Millennium, mankind looked into Terra's skies and saw two sister planets, Venus and Mars, and imagined them habitable. The first interplanetary space probes seemingly crushed those hopes. But in an era when mankind was breaking free of the bonds of Terra but the stars seemed unimaginably distant, humans would not take "no" for answer, and people began to dream of transforming those worlds into new, man-made Terras.

By the middle of the 21st Century, those dreams seemed more like viable terraforming engineering projects. The necessary studies of Mars and Venus began in the late 21st Century. And in 2110 (with Project Lowell, on Mars) the Terran Alliance began unleashing engineered microbes, mosses, fungi, and hard technology to begin taming Terra's sisters. In a mere century, it was possible for humans to breathe unaided and unsheltered on the surface of Mars. No terraforming project was as extensive as those of Mars and Venus because most other projects were on marginally habitable planets. And while many worlds, including Venus, would depend on continuous technological support such as atmosphere processors or weather control satellites, Mars' new environment will, according to forecasts, survive unaided for millions of years. (Indeed, Venus recently succumbed to ComStar's neglect of its atmospheric processors. The last of its once-vast oceans have evaporated, greatly thickening and heating its atmosphere.)

To the frustration of the visionaries who pushed for Mars' terraforming, few settled the world. The low gravity—the lowest of any habitable world in human space—was unhealthy. The terraformed ecology was still developing and remained centuries away from the foretold picturesque garden. As a result, Mars came to be inhabited primarily by two groups: miners, who could work easily in the habitable environment and found many ore deposits untouched by the weathering of a Terran-like oxygen-rich atmosphere; and the ultra-wealthy, who sought the exotic, low-gravity vistas of Mars. At the peak of the Star League, merely seventy million people inhabited the world next door to Terra, which was crowded with twelve billion.

Because many of the Terran Hegemony's rich and powerful sided with Stephen Amaris against the incompetence of Richard Cameron, Mars was sharply depopulated within a few years of being "freed." The rich and their retainers departed (or were arrested, or ended up in unmarked mass graves) in the vengeful years after Liberation. The miners continued their work, feeding ComStar's Terra with the ores the system needed to survive.

Mars has changed little since 2800. It is primarily inhabited by miners, their families, and a small population of "Martians," people who have embraced and settled the world. Even the Word of Blake's armament programs on Terra and elsewhere in the Terran system have hardly altered Mars' output or population, as the

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needs of the Word of Blake Militia pale against the demands of Terran consumers.

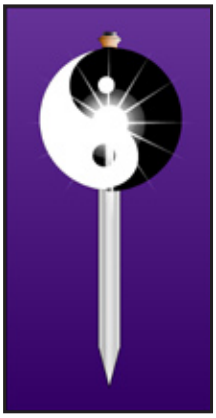
Where Mars has changed recently is in the first significant terraforming "touch-ups" performed in centuries, conducted by the Word of Blake. The dry crust of Mars had been steadily draining the Hellas Sea and Northern Ocean since they were first filled, and the southern icecap had been growing significantly. These changes were burdening mining operations with higher operating costs (even forcing the use of domed cities), so the Word of Blake executed a number of low-cost terraforming programs. The Phobos Skyhook, a key element of Hegemony ecosystem fine-tuning, was revived to deliver countless gigatons of cometary water onto Mars without shattering impacts, while vast beds of terraforming microbes and plants were sown again. Slight increases in atmospheric density (to 720 millibars) and moisture have warmed Mars by a few degrees, arresting the growth and albedo-based cooling effect of the southern icecap.

These low-cost terraforming projects had a number of bonuses. First, they secured the loyalty of the miners and other inhabitants (even if they did not "start wearing robes and worshipping technology"), who were thrilled to see an end to ComStar's neglect. Second, the side effects of so much new water and air being released on the planet stirred up great storms in the late 3060s, one of which is thought to be responsible for crippling the few Wolf's Dragoons troops that landed on the planet. The frigid, savage storm that blew off the southern icecap quickly killed any MechWarrior whose cockpit was torn open in battle.

Mars supports the Word of Blake war effort in other ways. In recent years, it seems apparent that Mars is some sort of regional administrative center for WoB and large numbers of bureaucrats have been brought in to run the Word's Protectorate. Also, the Star League-era War Academy of Mars was revived and is now thought to be turning out classes of loyal Blakist soldiers.

GIBSON

Noble Ruler: Precentor Apollyon
Star Type (Recharge Time): G2V (183 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.12 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Unity, Understanding)
Surface Gravity: 1.0
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 38°C (Arid)
Surface Water Coverage: 59 Percent
Highest Native Life: Mammal
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 4,250,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-C-B-C-C



One of the most extensively terraformed worlds beyond the Terran system, Gibson was engineered to be as human-friendly as possible. From a world that was originally eighty percent dry land, the controlled delivery of pre-purified cometary water almost tripled water coverage on the world and was one of the finest engineering projects ever accomplished by the Ryan Ice Cartel.

The advertising campaign touting Gibson's newly arable land drew many cultural groups from Terra and beyond. The process accelerated when Gibson became known as a culturally tolerant world of freethinkers. Even today, Gibson's many demographics cling to their Terran cultural roots. It is normal to hear half a dozen languages spoken in Gibson's major cities and to witness all manner of cultural attire.

More than a cultural melting pot, Gibson has long served as a fulcrum for Free Worlds politics. Until the dawn of the 28th Century, Gibson was entirely subject to the rule of the Regulan merchant-princes, but used the *Camlann v. Free Worlds* decision to win its freedom from the Principality of Regulus. Gibson subsequently formed the Principality of Gibson, a three-world voting bloc (with Molokai and Clipperton) led by the non-hereditary Principal of Gibson (a quaint corporate title representing Gibson's mercantile leanings).

It was thought that Gibson's famous tolerance for all cultures initially drew the Word of Blake refugees from the ComStar Schism in 3052, when Captain-General Thomas Marik offered them sanctuary. One must now wonder, however, if the Word of Blake was more interested in Gibson's sizable armaments industry, which was a lynchpin of the FWLM throughout the Succession Wars. Whatever the case, the Word of Blake were poor guests to the most generous of hosts, seeking to impose Blake's teachings on people whose byword was "live and let live." This culminated in an insurrection (inspired by the Principality of Regulus) and the use of a tactical nuclear weapon, and the conflict was only quelled by the intervention of the Thomas Marik's Knights of the Inner Sphere.

Since the Jihad has broken over the Inner Sphere, the Word's hold on Gibson has only increased, to the consternation of most of the population. Since the last Principal of Gibson, Ballala Patekar, resigned at the end of his seven-year term, the Word has suppressed efforts to select a replacement. This is enforced by a number of Shadow Divisions that rotate through the planet regularly. These elite units seem to have Gibson's population cowed since their brutal 3073 victory over a Regulan invasion, which did not anticipate the surprise presence of the 52nd Shadow Division.

THE ARMIES OF LIGHT: KEY WOB MILITARY COMMANDS

WORD OF BLAKE MILITIA

The Militia is the regular arm of the Word of Blake military and unlike the Shadow Divisions, they report to the Precentor Martial himself. They fight steadily to keep the advancing coalition forces away from Terra, but this effort resembles the outnumbered Spartans at the Battle of Thermopylae.

The early years were very successful for the WoBM. They were part of the juggernaut that consumed much of the Inner Sphere, Periphery, and the Clan's principle worlds. But lately the tide has turned. Since the onset of 3076, the WoBM has primarily been on the defensive, fighting defensive campaigns against Stone and his coalition on selected worlds. Devlin Stone and his coalition managed to push the Eleventh Division off Galatea at the beginning of 3076, and the unit did not have a single full Level III when they departed.

The Twentieth Division was obliterated on Campbelton in nuclear fire when an unknown force disguised as a ComStar unit irradiated many of the major planetary population centers in which the Twentieth had been entrenched. Still unknown is the origin of the attackers, but reports link them to Regulus.

New Hessen was attacked by elements of the Thirty-third Division, but the unit remains trapped on the planet, their transports destroyed. Still, they fight a daring guerilla campaign, and it remains unclear how long it might take the local defenders to get rid of them.

On Dyev, the Ghost Bears recently wiped out the remains of the Twenty-eighth and Thirty-second Division to the last men, after these units tried an unsuccessful counter-assault on this coalition-held Protectorate world. This is another sign of the Bears' determination to kill anything that hails from the Word of Blake. What exactly woke the sleeping Bear and caused this merciless offensive still remains a secret.

The rift between Apollyon and Cameron seems to have opened even farther, with reports coming in at a steady pace telling of Shadow Divisions raiding worlds of the Protectorate, slaughtering WoBM units in the process. If these reports can be trusted, it appears the Word is on the brink of breaking apart.

PROTECTORATE MILITIA

The Protectorate Militia is the final line of defense before Terra. Cameron St. Jamais built these units using mostly local volunteers in an effort to free his regular divisions for campaigns all over the Sphere. Militia divisions consist mostly of armor and infantry with only a few BattleMechs in their ranks, but since they fight for their homes, they put up quite a fight when called upon.

The rift in the Word of Blake started to show at first amongst these units. In late 3074, many of the Protectorate Militia rose up against Terra—what seemed at first as a general uprising against the Word of Blake now has been confirmed to be orchestrated by the Master himself. Recently surfaced material suggests that he ordered the rebellions in an effort to make the "Third Transfer" possible. It still is unclear what exactly this is meant to be and why the Master deems it necessary to weaken his own defense.

To make matters worse, Stone, his coalition, and the Capellans are constantly continuing their advance on the Protectorate. The Capellan Armed Forces especially have made it a habit to "nuke first and ask questions later." They left a bloody trail of irradiated and wasted planets in their wake, showing no remorse for anything or anyone. Wei, Menkar, and Pleione were only the first of many victims to this ruthless approach.

The Protectorate has become a graveyard for thousands of Protectorate Militia soldiers. The Ghost Bears, Snow Ravens, Capellans, and their "comrades" in the Shadow Divisions have shown no mercy and slaughter any Militia unit they encounter; Stone's troops are not very forgiving but at least stay their hand from execution. A long war eradicates the last bits of humanity from soldiers in the field, and many of the former Protectorate worlds will be left almost uninhabitable when the fighting finally stops. The Sphere hasn't seen such brutal warfare since the first two Succession Wars.

SHADOW DIVISIONS

If there is one symbol that stands unique among any other of the Jihad, it is that of the thirteen Shadow Divisions. Composed only of the new cyber-soldiers of the Word of Blake, the Manei Domini, these units were never heard of until the Jihad was in full swing. It did not take them long to be feared by the most well-trained and elite units across the Inner Sphere. Even the

WORD OF BLAKE

Clans have learned to deal with them with caution. They seem to follow exclusively their own Precentor Manei Domini, Apollyon, who claims to be the "right hand" of the shadowy Master. The Shadow Divisions are the shock troops of the Word. They are mostly used to raid planets, smash defenses, and then carry on to other objectives.

The Fifty-second Shadow Division, Apollyon's Chosen, demonstrates the extreme end of the Shadow Divisions' actions, as they seemed to be on a long trip to bring chaos and destruction to worlds all over the Inner Sphere in 3073 and 3074. At an unbelievable speed, this unit struck world after world, from Hall to Bolan, eliminating enemy units wherever they showed up with a ruthlessness that lacks comparison.

The Forty-sixth Shadow hit the Odessa system in 3075 and managed to re-conquer the Ruins of Gabriel but were forced to retreat when the Ghost Bears showed up and managed to remove all their naval assets in the process. Their current whereabouts are unknown.

Few Shadow Divisions have been spotted on the frontlines as of late. The Fifty-first is most likely still protecting Terra, the Forty-eighth and Fiftieth Shadow Divisions seem to be busy raiding Protectorate Worlds, and many others are pale outlines of their former selves and most likely have retreated to Gibson or other WoB strongholds to regroup and fill their lines. Rumors hint that new Shadow Divisions are being trained on Circinus, but hard confirmation has yet to be found.

WORD OF BLAKE MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT

Ever since the conquest of Terra, the Word of Blake has been busy hiring mercenary outfits. Soon enough, hundreds of units were employed by the Word, either knowingly or through deception. When the Jihad erupted, mercenaries fought on all fronts: guarding Protectorate worlds, raiding targets, assisting WoB Militia units and Shadow Divisions in conquering planets.

Some of the most infamous units still work for the Word. Burr's Black Cobras took part in the Battle for Odessa and later resurfaced on Dyev with elements of at least two WoBM Divisions. According to unconfirmed reports, they were eradicated by the Bears.

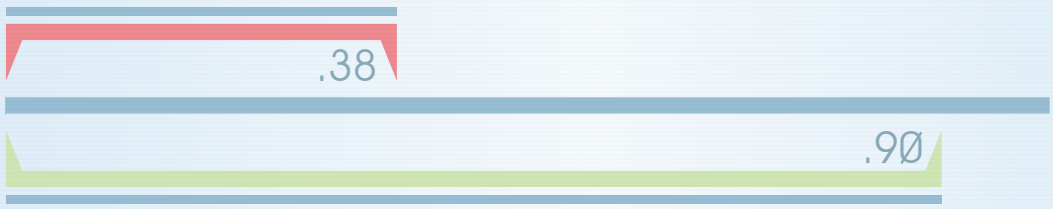
During the recent liberation of Galatea, Bullard's Armored Cavalry and Gray's Ghosts were destroyed to the last man. Bronson's Horde was one of the last commands to die on New Avalon before the Word withdrew from the planet.

Wannamaker's Widowmakers held Outreach for the Word of Blake until Devlin Stone liberated the world in July 3077. The Widowmakers, when facing superior forces, surrendered, and they now await trial for their war crimes.

Just a couple of weeks ago, the DCMS "liberated" Northwind. It seems—if the first reports indeed are to be trusted—that no Word of Blake forces were there and the Highlanders were fully intact, though they had no aerospace assets left. The question is just how convenient this story is—everybody remembers the disguise under which the Word managed to hit Galatea. Maybe the Highlanders were working for the Blakists all along and are now trying to play innocent.

In the Protectorate, hundreds of smaller outfits have either changed sides in the last year, disappeared into thin air—most likely fled into the Periphery—or have been shattered between the Capellans, Clans or elements of Stone's Coalition. The tide of battle has turned, and the rats are leaving the sinking ship.

NATAR SHIELD SYSTEM SCANNER (VERSION 2.7.14)



SECURITY LEVEL: AMBER

OTHER REALMS AND POWERS

While the core Inner Sphere is our primary source of business, it never does to neglect that of the minor Periphery nations and other 'unaffiliated' systems; while less than a quarter of a percent of the corporate bottom line is affected by these areas, oftentimes new innovations, ideas and resources can be winnowed out from the recesses of this fringe area. A smart executive just needs to learn to pay attention.

—Vanessa Foley, Business Analysis Department, Periphery Branch

MINOR PERIPHERY STATES

When people in the Inner Sphere think about the Periphery—something they do not do very often—what comes to their mind might be the major Periphery nations. States like the Magistracy of Canopus or the Taurian Concordat, maybe the Outworlds Alliance or the Marian Hegemony. What people tend to forget, though, is the broad variety that the Periphery stands for. The Periphery always has been a place for free-minded people, so it should come as no surprise that many smaller states have emerged over the centuries. When people left the Inner Sphere behind, reached a Periphery nation, and were unsatisfied with what they found, they often simply went that much farther to found their own small nation. Many of these nations consist of a single world or a single star system.

One thing all the nations have in common: they like their independence and don't want to be disturbed, be it by their neighbors or the Great Houses in the Inner Sphere. Many face pirates on a regular basis, others have to fight for survival every day, but they all are strong-minded people with a sense of adventure. For centuries, these states have come and gone, fought and lost, but today a lot of them are still a haven for all those unhappy with the politics in the Inner Sphere or those disillusioned with the way their own Periphery nations are run lately. Ever since the Jihad began and the major Periphery nations involved themselves in battle after battle, people have flooded the smaller states in hope for more peaceful lives. This has caused a fair amount of trouble, as a survey of these powers shows.

NIOPS ASSOCIATION

The Niops Association is a three-world state that sits on the anti-spinward border of the Free Worlds League that was founded as a long-duration astrophysics research output during the old Star League. The 31st Century was largely promising for the Niops Association, but flood of wealthy, politically influential Free Worlds League refugees from the Jihad created an enormous amount of unrest in Niops.

The 3075 elections for the Niops Association's Governing Council became one of the most bitterly contested elections in Niops' history. Rayanne Nellis was eventually elected, but the situation degenerated further. In November of 3075, a bomb was detonated during a Council meeting that killed Director Nellis. Brigadier L. Jamison Fallon, head of Niopsian military, responded by enacting martial law. The Black Heart Roses, a mercenary command working for Niops, were blamed and destroyed in the wake of the event. Niops has agreed since to host a permanent "Free Worlds League" delegation (which Free Worlds League faction is uncertain at the time of publication), and it is uncertain where the state is heading.

CIRCINUS FEDERATION

The Federation lately has become a major subject of interest for the Inner Sphere. Rumors that the Federation had been taken over by the Word of Blake are as old as the Jihad itself, but recently surfaced material seems to suggest that the Word trains their elite Manei Domini there and plans to create new Shadow Divisions in the territory of the Federation. It came as a surprise when in 3075, Khon Kaen and Poulsbo were attacked by forces hailing from the Circinus Federation. The intelligence agencies believe that the Word has helped the Federation since the onset of the Jihad or even longer in their battle against the Marian Hegemony. But in the last years, the Federation heavily profited from the Piranha Principle—the Great Houses were too busy with other things than to pay a lot of attention to the machinations in the Federation. But that has changed and it is very likely that sooner or later the Lyran Commonwealth will investigate further the connections between the Word and the Federation.

OTHERS

The other minor states in the Periphery, like the Fiefdom of Randis or the Rim Collection and the worlds of Herotitus and Astrokaszy, have been spared the horrors of the Jihad, and they tend to keep to themselves as much as possible. No word has been heard from the Elysian Fields for five years, and nobody knows what is happening there.

DEEP PERIPHERY STATES

Where the Periphery in itself is full of wonders to the people of the Inner Sphere, the Deep Periphery nations represent the same fascination to the people living in the Periphery states. Most of the people in the Inner Sphere don't know that there are proto-nations beyond the Periphery states, like the Hanseatic League, Nueva Castile, or the Chainelane Isles. And even if they had heard the names, they wouldn't have a lot to say about those states. The Deep Periphery is not empty of life, though. There are a number of thriving nations in the region. There are persistent rumors that the Word of Blake is busy in the region as well, possibly looking for new recruits or raw materials.

HANSEATIC LEAGUE

The Hanseatic League was founded in the 29th Century on the world of Bremen by Lyran merchants and is more a mer-

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cantile alliance than an actual state. A monopoly in interstellar trade and some advanced technology (by the standards of the region) has allowed the League to become a de facto government over the many colonies in its trade zone. This includes communications by JumpShip couriers, because ComStar and the Word of Blake did not stretch their HPG net anywhere near the Hanseatic League.

The merchants of the League have been sighted on worlds across the Deep Periphery, willing to travel many jumps to reach a unique resource that can better the Hanseatic League, and have traded off and on with the Clans. The Hansa's trade with Castile has suffered since it came to light that they were the driving force behind the unrest in Nueva Castile. The Ice Hellion incursion in 3073 was another problem for the Hansa. They were able to defend the trade world of Antwerp against the Hellions, but it came at a high price—losses of the defending units were horrible

NUEVA CASTILE

Nueva Castile has become relatively peaceful lately after being busy for centuries with battles between the Umayyads and the Castilian Principality. Nueva Castile was settled in the 24th Century by people from the Iberian Peninsula on Terra, and due to their isolation from the Inner Sphere they never knew about the Star League or the invention of BattleMechs. It came as a shock for the people in Nueva Castile when two hundred years ago invaders from the outside attacked them with giant walking machines, and the Umayyads—the name the Castilians gave their new nemesis based on some ancient stories—were quite effective in conquering the worlds of the Principality. The tide of war only changed when the Castilians managed to reverse engineer BattleMechs. Today, something that resembles peace has come to Nueva Castile after more than two hundred years of constant warfare, though the revelation that the Hanseatic League has been manipulating them has shifted their focus to a new front. The Umayyad Caliphate has recently begun raiding worlds of the League, and Nueva Castile remains wary of new attacks from the Caliphate. Many citizens worry that the newfound peace could just be a hoax to lure them into a false sense of security so that the Caliphate can end what they began two centuries ago.

DEEPER SECRETS

For quite some time now there have been rumors about a secret power in the Deep Periphery. Interstellar Expeditions has encountered this force quite often and reports about both Umayyad and Hanseatic Forces running into unknowns have surfaced over the last four years. Direct contact with these forces has never been made, and hard facts about them are rare. Some believe they are remnants of the so-called "Minnesota Tribe," while others think they could be the remains of Stephan Amaris' secret training facilities.

KEY PERSONALITIES OF 3076

DEVLIN STONE

Rank/Title: Leader of the Allied Coalition

Born: 3043 (33 in 3076)

When Stone first appeared on the scene, he was a complete unknown, and rumors about him outnumbered established truth by a wide margin. His sudden ascension into the spotlight was a shock to many, considering he claims no noble birth, is not a former war hero, and to everyone but the small circle of advisors he maintains he is a complete mystery.

While the man was subjected to severe scrutiny after his introduction to Victor Davion and other Inner Sphere leaders, much was made of the fact that little information surfaced in the wake of these investigations. His credibility was heavily supported by David Lear, son of Solaris Champion Kai Allard-Liao, and he has the unwavering support of the governors of the worlds within the Kittery Prefecture and of Commanding General Belle Lee, a respected former AFFS militia commander and mercenary.

Since his initial appearance at the head of a small army in 3073, there has been a flurry of activity along corporate and military

OTHER REALMS AND POWERS

intelligence commands to dig out more information on the man behind the recent successes against the Word's stalwart defense of the Terran core.

While the main core of RBMU 105's database was destroyed during Stone's liberation, a sizeable portion of the site's personnel rosters were recovered. There are at least four men that roughly match Stone's vital statistics: James Pervu, a construction foreman from Gei-Fu; Christopher Sheldon, a lance commander in the Kittery Planetary Militia; Saul Miller, an AFFS administrative assistant stationed on Tikonov; and Jahn Prowell, a shipping captain from Sian. It is possible Stone is one of these four prisoners or, more frustratingly, yet another unknown. The re-education camp was one of the first in that area of space and appeared to be a dumping ground for many of the Word's less desirable POWs early in the Jihad.

RBMU 105's records do not indicate that there was a "Devlin Stone" incarcerated there, which only proves that Stone's name is, in all likelihood, a pseudonym—unless further documentation of RBMU's full manifest is ever found. Stone has refused to answer any questions regarding his past, making it impossible to discover anything further regarding his background. He staunchly contends that he is a "citizen of the Inner Sphere" and not beholden to any particular House, faction, army, or creed. Such a stance is indeed frustrating to many, especially those who wish to know just who this man really is; politicians often require assumptions to be made based on a personage's background and prior history rather than their current words and actions. That a charismatic man such as Stone has, for all intent and purpose, a blank background has made him a major political target for many rank-and-file politicos.

Whatever Stone's past and identity may be, he has proven himself an able tactical and strategic commander. Despite the now-obvious PTSD symptoms he exhibits from time to time, he has been able to force allies and former enemies alike to work in symphony, trusting area commanders to iron out wrinkles and inevitable prejudices.

If Stone was leading this coalition by himself, no doubt his cult of personality would not endure beyond the last shell fired. But since he has surrounded himself with his "young guns" (including the likes of Theodore Redburn, Leslie Brahe, Lin Murikami, and the ever-present David Lear), who are bent on civilian and corporate reform even in the midst of the war, it is quite possible he may well pose a threat to the old order within the Inner Sphere after the Word lies defeated. Such a threat will not be taken lightly, and much of Stone's decisions will continue to be analyzed in detail as potential rivals for power explore every possible reason for putting no trust in him.

BELLE LEE

Rank/Title: Commanding General, Allied Coalition

Born: 3041 (35 in 3076)

An only child, born and raised by modest parents on Fortymile, Lee scored high in academy testing and won a planetary scholarship to attend the prestigious NAIS on New Avalon. Her temper got the better of her several times, earning her a reputation as a brilliant strategist but a chronic troublemaker. She graduated near the bottom of her class and was reassigned as an officer in the New Syrtis planetary militia.

Her term of service expired during the FedCom Civil War and she mustered out, apparently disgusted with the political divisions that threatened to fracture the Suns. She signed on with a local mercenary band in the area to keep her skills sharp, sending whatever she made home to her small family on Fortymile.

At some point during her short merc career, Lee was captured during one of the Word's many deeper raids within the Suns in the vicinity of her home system. Whatever happened—and Lee refuses to speak much about her past, possibly under orders from Stone—she ended up at RBMU 105 on Kittery. There, she joined a small prison resistance band led by Devlin Stone and helped overthrow the Word's presence. The core of the survivors formed Stone's Lament, a unit personally loyal to Stone and led by the firebrand Lee.

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Lee's ferocious temper led to numerous erroneous reports during Stone's initial rise to prominence. She has no tolerance for media types and less for political wrangling. As a result, several vindictive recipients of her hard left cross embellished their reports sufficiently to muddy the waters around her, creating an atmosphere of mistrust that has permeated through several of the multi-national commands assigned to Stone for the assault on the Protectorate. Rather than letting it frustrate her, however, Lee has redirected her energy into making the lives of those who oppose her a nightmare.

Whatever the scuttlebutt says about her, Lee is a tactical genius. Her dedication to the success of Stone's Coalition rivals that of Stone himself at times. She is adept at using the strengths of those units assigned to her to overlap the weaknesses of others, building a military force that hits the enemy like a relentless hammer. Those who serve under the General's command also know that Belle is exceptionally compassionate to her people and to the citizenry she continues to free from the Word's grip.

REINER WOODEN

Rank/Title: CEO Interstellar Expeditions

Born: 3002 (74 in 3076)

Born to a middle-class family on Crellacor during the waning years of the Third Succession War, Reiner Wooden always held a deep fascination for history. He spent many of his formative years at a variety of privately and publicly funded digs, eventually gaining an internship with the Star Group that paid his way through school at the premier Archeological Foundation Universidad on Butler. In the mid 3030s, Wooden was tapped to take over as COO of Intersteller Expeditions after a decade of several successful multi-world dig operations and tight budgetary control. It was hoped that Wooden would rein in the rampant spending that was occurring among many of the top-level executives of IE and its ancillary partners.

Wooden proved to be a very able corporate head. By 3043, IE's budgetary streams had been purged of bloated projects and "no-go" wish lists; several groups under the IE umbrella saw their contracts dissolved for "inappropriate contractual behavior" and "blatant misuse of land-grant licenses." Wooden refocused IE on their core objective—the long-lost Minnesota Tribe—and saw immediate gains with a few key discoveries in the late '40s.

During his reign as COO, Wooden kept the IE ship firmly fixed on its core values, which mirrored his own. It wasn't uncommon during the late '50s and early '60s for Wooden to join various digs, usually along the Lyran and League border worlds. Despite an assassination attempt by a former disgruntled contractor, a hijacking by Federation pirates, and an unfortunate stellar accident that destroyed Wooden's personal *Star Lord*-class JumpShip *Farnsworth* (along with the zenith recharge station at Howick), Wooden has remained active in various IE operations while amassing a sizeable

portfolio, making him one of the five richest private persons in Steiner space.

Around 3059, Wooden crossed paths with Lord Chandrasekhar Kurita. IE was in a lean period, having discontinued several high-profile contractors due to continuing project and site abuses—a situation that continues today, though IE does an excellent job covering up these excesses—and losing two major long-term donors to natural causes. The results of their meeting became obvious very quickly; IE had a new long-term donor and the extra C-bill flow opened up a wide variety of new contracts, filling IE with fresh faces and a wider net. Wooden became CEO shortly afterward.

As the Jihad opened up around the Inner Sphere, Wooden steadfastly kept IE out of the line of fire by declaring the conglomerate neutral. Only after steady and persuasive discussions with Lord Kurita did Wooden acquiesce to help. While Wooden has remained CEO of the conglomerate, his silent approval of Kurita's bolder actions under the IE umbrella has shown which side he favors. Wooden has remained committed to Stone and his coalition after Kurita's untimely death, using a large amount of his own personal fortune to subsidize various mercenary commands and placing them under Stone's command.

OTHER REALMS AND POWERS

CALVIN MCINTYRE

Rank/Title: President, Circinus Federation

Born: 3038 (38 in 3076)

Assuming the mantle of President after his father's fatal heart attack in 3067, the tall and imposing Calvin McIntyre has ushered a new age of enlightenment into the rough-and-tumble lives of the average Circinian citizen. Taking full advantage of his continuing relationship with the Word of Blake [*Editor's Note: President McIntyre is better known to the Blakists as Precentor IV Mu-Iota McIntyre.*], McIntyre has injected significant capital into developing the basic municipal amenities, shoring up his supporter base amongst the cynical populace.

This outpouring of growth has been accompanied by the more insidious aspects of the Blakists. While not formally stating so, the Word of Blake has become the state religion, with many citizens encouraged through both vidcasts and Blakist missionaries to adopt it into their lives. This has had a further noticeable effect on the military of the Federation, with Blakist units using the Federation as a staging ground for raids into the nearby Successor States and Marian Hegemony.

Less talked about are the rumors about Calvin's orders for any outspoken critics of his rule. While the population of Circinus is accustomed to totalitarian rule, the reported fates of any dissidents are the subject of debate among the increasingly educated populace. Rumors of illegal experimentation run rife, while the expanded McIntyre Guard has been seen assaulting and wiping out entire towns that have raised their voice in protest.

At the very least, President McIntyre has made it clear that he views the Blakists as vital to the security of the Federation, and it seems unlikely that they will reduce their presence in the region in the near future.

ALBERT SNOW

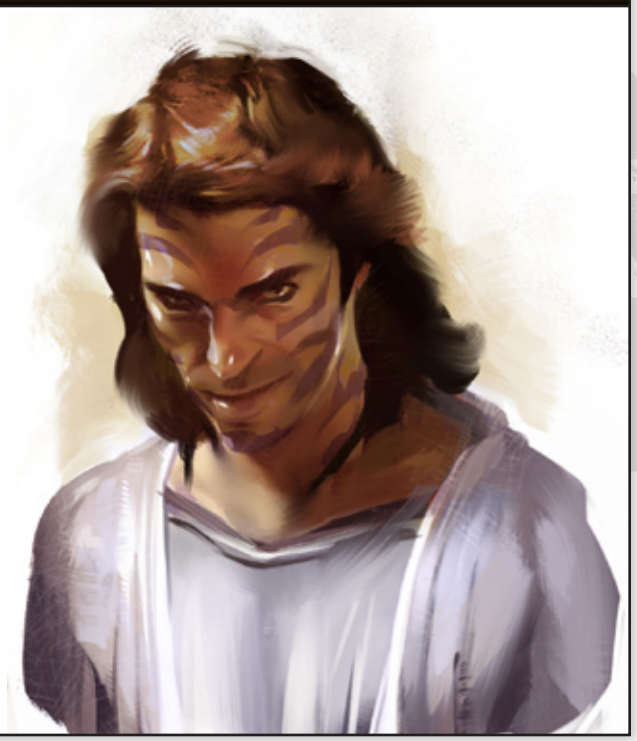
Rank/Title: Captain-General, Hanseatic Security Force

Born: 3028 (48 in 3076)

Younger cousin of the current head of the Council of Merchants, Liam Snow, Albert Snow is a big, brusque figure who seems ill-suited to command on first meeting. But under his leadership the HSF has gone from being a simple convoy protection force to a relatively well-trained military command. So much so that the HSF's RDF2 met and defeated a Clan Ice Hellion raid on the planet of Antwerp in 3073. Since then, Captain-General Snow has appeared in front of the Council of Merchants to ask for increased military resources to stave off further Clan incursions.

Captain-General Snow has also been the driving force (though it is suggested his cousin is also supportive of the move) to disengage Hanseatic activities in the Nueva Castile worlds. After the discovery of the Hansa manipulations, Snow has had to increasingly contend with punitive raids carried out by the Umayyad forces. While Snow sees the Umayyad attacks as good training,

CALVIN MCINTYRE



ALBERT SNOW

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the constant drain on his forces is beginning to show. Wanting to concentrate on the increased Clan threat, he has advocated withdrawing entirely from the area.

Snow has recently become romantically involved with the Blakist Precentor on Bremen. While Jessika Crossland, a member of the Expatriate sect, is on the outskirts of Blakist politics, and the Blakist presence in the League is minimal now at best, several members of the Council of Merchants have expressed their concerns at this development. Snow has answered their concerns with his typical bluntness, endearing him to his troops further.

Snow has also carried out a sweep through the HSF units, removing any former Clanners on the rolls. The most visible of these was Major Aimee of RDF5. The event has significantly damaged the reputation of the Were family, which sponsored her promotion.

ELIAN WHITNEY

Rank/Title: President, Rim Collection

Born: 3030 (46 in 3076)

The unexpected death of President William Roberts in 3069 nearly derailed the Rim Collection's rebuilding program. For nearly a decade the small nation had been making steady progress toward not prosperity, but at least economic stability and a standard of living rare in the Periphery. Unfortunately Roberts, a shrewd politician and leader in many ways, did not make adequate preparation for an orderly succession following his death. Planetary leaders and Collection Council representatives from all six worlds vied for the position, their political maneuverings quickly degenerating into confrontations that stopped just short of combat.

Elian Whitney stepped into the center of this political maelstrom not as a contender but as a mediator. More an academic than a politician, he had no agenda beyond holding the tiny nation together. He worked tirelessly, shuttling from world to world and making the case for cooperation and consensus in public forums and behind closed doors. His fair mindedness, clear thinking, and obvious commitment to the greater good of the people quickly made him the most trusted voice in the Collection. Whitney said in later interviews that he saw his role as midwifing the birth of a new generation of leaders and that he had not expected his transformation from arbiter of succession to Roberts' successor until it was thrust upon him. Whether this is true or not is subject to conjecture. The fact remains that he is currently the only person with the full support of all factions within the Rim Collection. Whitney has used his authority and popularity wisely, consolidating the loose confederation of the Rim Collection into a more centralized structure.

Pirates along the Lyran / Collection border provided unintentional support for the unification movement by taking advantage of the political upheaval following Roberts' death. The lack of cohesiveness within the Collection enabled pirate bands to step up the frequency and savagery of their raids without fear of organized defense or reprisals. Whitney's short-term response has been a continuation of the Collection's long-standing practice of hiring mercenaries to defend the planets. However, his long game is revealed in the nature of the new contracts: Cadre duty—training planetary militias and special purpose teams—is now a standard service. It is clear that along with forming a centralized government, Whitney intends to build a national military. What the Rim Collection will do with its new military power is ripe for speculation.

LISE BURRILL

Rank/Title: Caliph, Umayyad Caliphate

Born: 3026 (50 in 3076)

Caliph for the last nineteen years, the tall and athletic Burrill has not been treated kindly by time. Her flaxen hair is now streaked with gray, and her formerly lithe build is now almost gaunt in appearance. Still ruling the Umayyad Caliphate with an iron fist, Burrill's position is assured by the way she has handled the not-so-delicate matter of Hanseatic interference in Nueva Castile's affairs.

The loss of her daughter Nicole in late 3069 proved the catalyst that moved Caliph Burrill to action, but her fervor kept her from seeing the real culprit for a time. Nicole was part of an Umayyad force making the long journey to strike at the Lyran world of Engadine in 3069. Burrill's Word of Blake contacts informed her

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LISE BURRILL

JOSEPH NOYE

that the Lyrans were agitating the continued fighting between the Castilians and her forces to keep them off balance, so she sent the mission to deliver a strong message. A Lyran response to the attack never developed, and the relative power vacuum that arose after the Blakists left the Nueva Castile worlds (no Blakist forces have been seen there since mid-3072) resulted in Caliph Burrill learning of the continued involvement of the Hansa in manipulating the region and their role in sending Nicole to her death.

Since then, she has ordered almost incessant raids on the Hansa worlds. Interestingly her missives with the Castilian King regarding joining forces to punish the Hansa have gone unanswered. This has resulted in Caliph Burrill increasing her standing garrison forces in case of Castilian aggression, despite the fact the two regimes have existed in uneasy peace since the start of the Jihad.

JOSEPH NOYE

Rank/Title: King, Castilian Principalities

Born: 3004 (72 in 3076)

King of the Castilian Principalities for over thirty years now, Joseph Noye is haunted by the assassination attempt that cost him his family. A barrel-chested fireplug of a man, Noye has not aged gracefully. Despite this, he has maintained his position as King of the Castilian Principalities, even after Irwin Seale, Principe of the Third Brigada, led a mutiny in response to Noye's brutal suppression of the people of Leon in the wake of the revelations of Hanseatic manipulations.

Noye has kept the tenuous peace that exists between his realm and that of the Umayyad intact, treating Caliph Burrill with a measure of respect. But Noye has recently become less tolerant of dissension and what he sees as "Umayyad plotting." With the withdrawal of most Word of Blake forces from the Principalities, Noye also lost his sounding board in Precentor Irene Gillick.

The Blakist withdrawal has also forced Noye to rely more on the Hansa for communication, a move that is sure to further tensions with the Umayyads. Noye's continued dealings with the Hansa are based more on need than desire, with all military purchases from the League ceasing. Instead Noye has ordered several factories to begin constructing RetroTech designs to bolster the Castilian forces.

OTHER NOTABLE PERSONALITIES OF 3076

BERTRAM HABEAS

Rank/Title: INN Special Correspondent

Born: 3038 (38 in 3076)

If not for the Jihad, Bertram would have remained happily ensconced in some musty research library somewhere in the Lyran Alliance, absorbing history and literature and regurgitating it to students in a shy and dispassionate manner. Never one for the spotlight, the young graduate student never thought his life

OTHER REALMS AND POWERS

would reach beyond Donegal and his studies—and he was quite content with that future.

With the Word's all-consuming war, however, the young researcher's life changed in the most remarkable manner.

Off-campus when the Word hit, Habeas returned to find nearly half of the Chekswa School of Literature an undignified ash heap. The school burned after it suffered from residual fires that ignited during the Word's sudden attack. With much of the faculty missing or dead, the young researcher found himself assigned as the acting editor-in-chief of the school's large publishing line, scrambling to fulfill the backlog of orders. During that time, he was asked by Elroy McNair—the voice of ComStar's Inner Sphere-wide news agency on Donegal—to step in and represent Lyran interests in a special broadcast of INN's "Stellar Pulse Today." His unusually calm manner in the face of the antics by other representatives impressed many at INN, including news-star Michael Bosworth.

Because of his exceptional memory retention and his humble demeanor, he became an often-used resource for many Lyran-based INN reports; the demands for his expertise became such that he stepped down from his position at Chekswa (after receiving his second doctorate) and was hired by INN on a retainer basis. By many accounts, he became Bosworth's de facto resource for Lyran analysis when it came to the immensely popular Jihad Hot Spots series. When the correspondent was killed by the Donner bomb, INN practically ran to Habeas to fill in Bosworth's shoes.

Despite his public reluctance to take the role, he has fit into it seamlessly. He took over production and analysis of the series; when it resumed in early 3077, it became ComStar's hottest downloaded program from over 40% of its HPG network. In an age where the average interstellar show garners a 22% rating, the success of Bertram's relaunch speaks well of INN's success in recovering from the loss of their star.

Scandalvids have pegged Habeas in a behind-the-scenes relationship with Rebecca Molly, one of the secondary stars of *The Royals of Donegal*.

THE BOUNTY HUNTER

Rank/Title: Independent Mercenary

Born: Unknown

Common understanding among intelligence agencies is that the Bounty Hunter is not a particular person, but a persona. Attempts to discover the Hunter's identity inevitably end in failure; most intel services now see penetrating the Hunter's security as a game, rather than a serious attempt at espionage.

The Hunter seemed to be working for several years under a long-term contract to Chandrasekhar Kurita—an unusual move for the normally neutral mercenary. Several times the mercenary was spotted on the Kuritan lord's premises on Arcturus and Isesaki and rumors passed by Irian corporate security workers and several SAFE agents say he was also responsible for acquiring the fugitive Victoria Parrdeau, who ended up in Stone's hands through Chandy's pipeline.

Despite his years of work for Chandrasekhar, the Bounty Hunter has been implicated in Chandy's demise by several high-profile intelligence assets. Though no conclusive proof exists, circumstantial evidence can be twisted enough to suggest that the Hunter may have been playing both sides of the Jihad. These days, the Hunter is truly alone, as attrition has killed off all of his known team members.

Some analyses by agents who style themselves Hunter experts suggest that the Hunter has passed his suit to another person. Subtle differences in body language, fighting skill, and other minor details seem to indicate that the Hunter is a new person. Most obvious is the fact that since Kurita's death, the Bounty Hunter has not been noted to speak at all in public or combat; previously, he was known for spouting off short quips and witticisms. Whether that indicates a new personage or simply a throat injury or change in operational procedure, no one truly knows.

The Hunter still commands exorbitant rates, and the majority of his contracts lately have been high-profile assassinations and snatches against the Word of Blake along the Protectorate worlds. Who his employer is remains in question, though rumors suggest anyone from rebel Irian Corporate types to Earthwerks to Archon Steiner to Devlin Stone himself. The Bounty Hunter, of course, isn't talking.

"DAMOCLES"

Rank/Title: ComStar ROM Deep Agent in WOB ROM

Born: Unknown (possibly mid-40s)

The mysterious "Damocles" has been a source of information inside the Word Protectorate since before the Jihad even began. He has been credited by Precentor Martial Davion as a key asset who uncovered early indications of the Word's Manei Domini program (even if some of the information was incorrect and based on false conjecture) as well as discovering the hidden pipeline between Vicore and the Word. These two crucial pieces of information—summarily dismissed as fiction by former Precentor ROM Victoria Parrdeau—could have been the critical links indicating the Word's secretive preparation work. Instead, the now-outed Parrdeau waged a discrediting campaign against Damocles, effectively neutralizing any discovery of the Word's true threat until after the Jihad kicked off.

Despite the issues surrounding Damocles' authenticity, he (and his assumed black-ops team) continued pulling information and forwarding it to various intel sources among the fragmented ComStar ROM and even to Chandy's coalition before his assault on Odessa. Rumors suggest that Damocles has since joined Stone's secretive covert operations command, profiling selected Protectorate targets and keeping tabs on various Precentors of interest.

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His intel briefs speak of an arrogant and intelligent agent with a high dislike of the Word's Domini arm. Whether this means Damocles is on the edge of sanity remains to be seen; so far, all indications are that his information is solid, despite the rhetoric and bias.

WOLFGANG HANSEN

Rank/Title: Colonel / CO of the Hansen's Roughriders
Born: 3013 (63 in 3076)

After losing most of his family along with the rest of his unit's dependents in 3067 at the hands of Taurian invaders, Colonel Wolfgang "Wolf" Hansen is a changed man. Hansen has become a dark, brooding officer leading his force of like-minded individuals, and many outside their close-knit group have come to question his sanity. Many ponder if the Roughriders have become more of a liability then an asset to potential employers.

Hansen has constantly trained to both lead and fight since his coming-of-age decades ago, and he has led his mercenary regiment on a relatively successful campaign of brutal retribution and desperation against the much larger and better-supplied Taurian Concordat. Splitting his unit into multiple task forces to lead pursuers away from the Suns borders and back into the heart of the Concordat while holding the line at the border, Hansen has been responsible for razing multiple factories and destroying any infrastructure or personnel that assisted the Taurian military. From various systems such as MacLeod's Land and Pinard to the otherwise unimportant system of Grossbach, Hansen has had his force burn everything Taurian to the ground while his other forces on Brusett and Hyalite ambushed and destroyed the Taurian Invaders.

Though insulated from many conventional methods of replenishing his diminishing manpower, Hansen has nonetheless kept his unit operating by using corporate "Operation Parade" troops lent by FedSuns corporations and courting soldiers feeling abandoned by both the Suns and the Concordat, most notably the former Longwood Bluecoats mercenary unit on Pinard.

Now transferred to fight against the hardened Protectorate, Hansen and his forces are starting to realize just how far down the abyss they have gone with their blood oath.

LUCAS BECKETT

Rank/Title: Grand Knight, Brotherhood of Randis
Born: 3034 (42 in 3076)

One of the rare adherents to a Cloister outside of Clan Cloud Cobra, Lucas endured a harsh upbringing in the Smoke Jaguars. Either because of or in spite of this, he excelled as a Warrior, earning his Bloodname mere months before Operation Bulldog began. Cut off from the rest of his unit, Beckett fought a guerilla campaign on Albiero for months before finally hearing word of his Clan's demise, along with the failure of the rest of the Clans to defeat the Inner Sphere invaders. Disgusted with all of the combatants, he bartered his way off world with his subordinate, Carson.

Arriving on Randis, the two were quickly ushered into the Brotherhood once their loyalties were determined. Beckett and Carson have never publicly revealed where they learned of the Brotherhood or why they chose it, but Beckett's Josian upbringing must have played some role in their decision. Advanced 'Mechs and their superior training showcased what the Brotherhood could become to then-Grand Knight Frews. At this point, Beckett began to advance his political acumen to match his martial prowess. Within a few years he supplanted Frews, and he has become an astute student of his environment. Under his guidance, the Brotherhood has thwarted the Word's attempt at influencing the region and reduced pirate activity around Randis. Despite the lack of morality, under Beckett the Brotherhood has not had to stoop to the level of his opponents.

This restraint has helped advance the image of the Brotherhood in the Periphery. Trade has increased, and Randis has become an important hub. By having Frews focus on Randis, Beckett has allowed his rival to focus his energies elsewhere and improve the standard of living on their homeworld. Beckett prefers long planning sessions and lots of intelligence followed by quick execution, a hallmark of his Jaguar upbringing. In recent years Beckett has stepped up his recruitment of former Clan warriors. The most well known of these is Brother Nyleith, a former Coyote. While a large number of former Smoke Jaguars have arrived on Randis, their names have not appeared on the rolls of the Brotherhood. There are rumors of a third battalion being raised and trained on restricted areas of the planet, but nothing has been confirmed.

EGAN TELOSA

Rank/Title: High Visionary, One Star Faith
Born: 3009 (67 in 3076)

Growing up surrounded by the scions of Tharkad, Egan Telosa did not seem likely to be the inspiration for a religious cult that most viewed as somewhere between eccentric and dangerous. While working as an assistant in the palace with his father, Egan awoke one night from an intense and prophetic dream. Unable to stop thinking about it for a week, he took a leave of absence and went to visit the Grand Council of the One Star Faith. Upon sharing his dream, the High Elders agreed that not only was Telosa's vision true, he should be the one to lead the Faith forward. With assistants to free him from the burdens of the bureaucracy, he led the Faith well until the appearance of the Clans brought it all crashing down.

Philosophers may argue whether the Clans proved or refuted Telosa's vision, but in the eyes of many terrified members it was wrong. The church endured through the troubled times under Telosa's leadership and started to rebound. Telosa has never strayed from his beliefs though he has admitted that he is only human, capable of erring while trying to convey divine messages. In the last few years, membership has increased as the Jihad has gone on. A new marketing campaign has been started, go-

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ing along with Telosa's newest prophecy. He has seen Devlin Stone leading the Children of Kerensky to the One Star, where they will guard it while the One Star Faith prospers on the inviting blue world. Telosa is still active in the everyday activities of the Faith, though an accident in his speeder car in 3073 has slowed him down somewhat and forced him to give up recreational racing. The council has been pressing him for a successor given his advanced age, but he has repeatedly claimed that much like his ascension, he cannot select someone to follow him unless he receives a vision regarding it.

GIOVANNI ESTRELLA DE LA SANGRE

Rank/Title: CEO, Vicore Industries

Born: 3001 (75 in 3076)

Not much is known about the magnate of the upstart Vicore Industries. His sudden appearance at the head of a new BattleMech manufacturer caught many at the major exchanges by surprise. Striking new deals for several older and out-of-date licenses and specifications, his 'redesigned' versions of several platforms have met with mixed results by competitors, buyers and even pilots.

What information that does exist shows a typical rags-to-riches story. Born Giovanni Sanger on a backwater Marik world to a space mining family, he supposedly ran off to become a mercenary on Solaris VII, got lucky scoring a fortune when Justin Allard became Champion, and then returned to buy out the company from under his parents' control. From there, Giovanni changed his name and built his manufacturing empire.

Vicore, on every public level, seems to be a typical neutral interstellar manufacturer. Called "shrewd" by many pre-Jihad corporate analysts for its gamble on doing refurbished machines, its extensive client list came under fire as the Word exploded into action. Nearly two-thirds of the buyers for Vicore's machines were Word of Blake entities and allies, putting it under immediate suspicion. Even as the war raged, Sangre kept his business neutral, offering no favors to either side. A true "Lord of War" in the weapons market, Sangre hoped to propel Vicore into the Top Twenty list of interstellar conglomerates.

That dream may be off-track, however. Within the last two years, evidence has been brought to light—by the notorious "Damocles," no less—that many of Vicore's secondary auxiliary corporations have been fronts for Word of Blake purchasing agents. The complex shell games, when finally untangled, may indeed point to Vicore being a large resupplier for the Word of Blake Protectorate forces. Such business dealings may be legal in the strictest sense, but the court of public opinion may well weigh against Vicore for its secrecy, lies and manipulation. At this time, Vicore has been removed from several prominent exchanges and is under official investigation by the Donegal Stock Exchequer for "practices and procedures that violate Lyran economic law."

UNAFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Interstellar Expeditions (IE)
Corporate HQ: Aur
Current Projects: Odessa, Barlow's Folly, Mica V, Oscar, Islington, Cajamarca

The premier archeological consortium in the Inner Sphere, Interstellar Expeditions usually isn't a name associated with current events. However, IE's discovery of the lost world Jardine, an apparent "Hidden World" of the Word of Blake, put them on the fringes of the news, and CEO Reiner Wooden's continued support of Devlin Stone has kept them there.

Much of IE's support network has been active across the Sphere, doing additional shipping runs and passenger hauling. Speculation among several university and corporate security firms has been rampant that IE has been doing clandestine activity on the side; rumors of silent, gruff security types, secret off-manifest cargo containers, and mysterious drop-offs have added fuel to local network forums and conspiracy nuts that IE is acting as a front for Stone's covert operations.

Despite the odd shipping rumors, IE's project list has not been lacking. Actually, the consortium saw its biggest number of active projects in 3073, with several digs occurring on Lyran worlds near the Protectorate and along the anti-spinward border. While IE digs still see high security due to the Green Ghost threat, there has not been an attack on IE sites since the massacre of an entire Neerabup University camp on Issaba in 3071.

IE's fortunes have been on the upswing ever since it received a hefty donation from Chandrasekhar Kurita's will. The donation allowed Wooden to purchase three new JumpShips to replace those lost during a routine recharge at Dieron. Its recent presence alongside Clan Ghost Bear support personnel also indicates that the Dominion may soon be a new area of operations for archeological projects, further boosting IE's corporate prestige and public stock.

Vengeance Incorporated
Corporate HQ: Tortuga Prime

To call Vengeance Incorporated a company would be to call the Clans pacifistic. This hodge-podge behemoth of junkyards, workshops, and industrial waste dumps clustered around what passes for a spaceport on Tortuga Prime does not even remotely resemble an organized BattleMech factory.

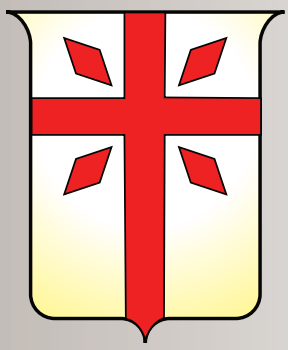
UNAFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Still, somehow this fuming monster churns out a standardized hull called the *Brigand* in enough quantities to be called mass production. And they put it on the open market.

Whatever has pushed the pirates to work together long enough to assemble more than one standardized 'Mech is beyond the imagination of an average citizen. The notorious Lady Death Trevaline was most likely the initial motivating force behind the semblance of organized work on Tortuga Prime (the name Vengeance Incorporated was decided on in a lottery), but what keeps it running remains a mystery. Some Word of Blake support is assumed to exist, although the robed menace will have lost interest by now, with their master plan foiled and under pressure on all fronts.

Most likely, Vengeance Incorporated is currently using up their warehouse stocks from better times. Soon they may be left to return to doing what they do best: patching together incompatible systems, welding hunks of junk, and slapping names on them.

The nagging question remains, though: What if they do it again? Now that the pirates have had their hands on some modern tech for years—what more are they capable of? In light of heightened pirate activity along Periphery borders, it would be prudent to keep an eye on Vengeance's activities, whether to be on the alert for attacks—or for a good deal (no warranty included).



The Coterie

Starting as a charitable organization focused on providing disaster relief on several planets across the Inner Sphere, more recently the Coterie has been expanding their scope to include defending planets from pirate attacks.

This defense is largely executed by mercenaries recruited individually or as a unit up to a lance in size. The Coterie's focus appears to be on units that are down on their luck or subject to company store-style management by their employers. They will occasionally buy out the existing contracts, but more often they will simply facilitate the unit's premature departure. Filing with the MRBC for breach of contract offers no relief, as the unit is disbanded prior to being rolled into the Coterie's organization.

The majority of this poaching occurs from corporations, including StarCorps. As we can no longer rely on any of the traditional methods and organizations to enforce proper financial recourse from deserting mercenary units, there has been some debate about negotiating with the Coterie to exclude StarCorps and its primary subsidiaries from their poaching operations.

Of note is the fact that the Coterie's offensive operations are largely focused on pirate hunting. This has placed them at odds with the Word of Blake on a number of occasions, most notably in the Rim Commonality area. It seems that neutralizing the Coterie has not yet been a priority for the Word.

While the Coterie's religious policies repel the moderate and secular, it has been successful in creating a religious zeal among their ranks that improves morale and obedience while reducing dissension. Given the state of formal education in the Inner Sphere, their practices will continue to attract large quantities of candidates who are prone to the more superstitious elements.

The Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission

A broken shell of a once-powerful organization, the MRBC has lost its place as the head arbiter of all things mercenary. From the time of their founding in 3052 by Wolf's Dragoons, this independent body became the dominant organization regarding mercenary contracts. For nearly two decades, neither an employer nor a mercenary could expect to obtain a fair contract for services to be rendered without MRBC involvement—and with a small percentage of the contract value going to the MRBC for administrative purposes to keep the organization running.

While lesser hiring halls were always in existence, they were the home of the dregs of the mercenary community compared to Outreach. It was the independent quality rankings that the MRBC determined for all extant merc commands that motivated mercs to work harder and complete their contracts successfully, since a higher ranking meant greater pay and more contracts. Those days, it seems, have passed. When the Word of Blake turned Outreach into a cinder, the MRBC was destroyed. While they had recently established a satellite office on Galatea, that planet also fared poorly.

What remains of the MRBC no longer can boast unending rolls of mercenaries subscribing to their oversight. The fluidity of the Jihad in the mercenary market has left the monolithic MRBC behind. Without a true home base, they lack the venue to conduct negotiations on a neutral site. The vast losses of entire merc units and the birth of new commands has taken place at such a rate that any Dragoons Ratings or unit analyses even a few months old must be considered outdated at best, despite the unimpressive Supplemental Updates the organization has published. On the whole, the fall of the MRBC is a boon to employers, as there is no longer a check against abuse of contracts. Unless ComStar is accorded the ability to serve as an enforcer of contracts as in the days before the MRBC, the good times that mercs enjoyed for the last two decades are surely over, and employers both national and corporate will reap the benefits.

KEY WORLDS OF NOTE

KITTERY

Noble Ruler: None
Star Type (Recharge Time): G4III (185 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 7.96 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Ming, Tai-Shan)
Surface Gravity: 0.88
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 40° C (Tropical)
Surface Water Coverage: 67 percent
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Recharging Station: Nadir
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 987,240,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: D-D-B-C-A

Considered "plain" on most accounts, up until the Jihad, Kittery had little to be known for. A typical mix of terrain and weather, it could easily be compared to most standard Inner Sphere worlds. There was nothing special about it, until Devlin Stone broke out of RBMU 105.

Kittery's takeover was a quiet one. The system was already on the verge of a class war before the Word invaded; the governor spent more time at New Syrtis flirting with House Hasek's power and the increasingly wealthier Senate members were fast turning the system over to industrial and corporate concerns. Eminent domain became a swear word among many blue-collar civilians, and with good reason.

Though the Word abolished the Senate and took over corporate concerns with its ruling body, it did nothing to address other concerns and instead focused much of its attention on processing prisoners of war that were shipped to the system from other war zones. Stone's facility was noted as an especially secured one, holding many of the Word's worst hard cases for either re-education or penal colonies. Regardless, the planetary population quietly simmered in inequality, bribed with higher salaries and proposed improvements.

Today, Kittery stands as Stone's "practice slate" of economic and governmental development. Many of the Word's proposals were both re-examined, re-negotiated or axed altogether after Stone and his cabal declared themselves the ruling junta until proper government could be put into place. David Lear and Lin Murikami took credit for setting up the Kittery's new Prefecture system. Having studied many government models, the pair took the best qualities and molded it into a form that met the approval of Kittery's Interim Government Council. It has been quite successful, defusing for good the class imbalance and tightening economic control while giving the people a majority say in the system's future direction.

Upon the initial successes of the new system, Lear and Murikami then translated their improving model to other worlds that Stone liberated, and then eventually into what was labeled the "Kittery Prefecture" by interstellar media. Even now, the system seems to be working. The key component, however, has been the abolition of the nobility—something that many hard-liners across the Sphere will no doubt resist.

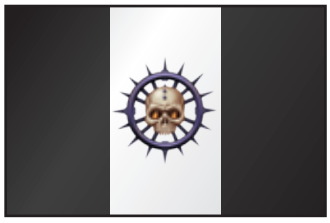
Chief exports of the world are high-quality grains and woods, coming from the vast savannahs and forests that dominate the world's three main continents. Large fish and ribbed whales swim the seas in packs, fueling a fishing industry that is highlighted by the Kittery Sport Fishing Cast-Off every year. Thousands of entrants ply the freshwater Migrant Sea, vying for the planetary title and the free year's vacation to New Avalon.

With the advent of Stone's new government and relaxed economic restrictions, many manufacturers have been clamoring to plant annexes and facilities on the surface. While the restrictions are looser, the Kittery Council has recently drafted new Laws of Incorporation, defining over 300 specifications that each off-world business must conform to before receiving a five-year license to set up operations. An "open book" policy keeps these corporations accountable and a three-judge panel will review all licenses at renewal.

Despite the restrictions, nearly 50 new corporations have successfully begun operations on Kittery, which will most likely spawn an economic resurgence within the next decade.

CIRCINUS

Noble Ruler: President Calvin McIntyre
Star Type (Recharge Time): G5IV (186 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 7.48 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Bronco, Raxx)
Surface Gravity: 0.98
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 45° C (Savannah)
Surface Water Coverage: 50 percent
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: A
Population (3076): 23,070,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: D-C-B-C-B



A dry world rich in crystals, gemstones and radioactives, Circinus is the capital of the Circinus Federation. Founded by a mix of former Free Worlds mercenaries and Lyran farmers escaping the Succession

OTHER REALMS AND POWERS

Wars, Circinus never had the industry to develop into a modern Periphery world. Relying for the most part on piracy and subsistence farming for survival, there was no option of developing a heavy manufacturing base on the world. Instead, the various presidents of the Federation expanded the secret training facilities used by the infamous Black Warriors on the planet's northern continent.

When Calvin McIntyre assumed the presidency after the sudden death of his father in 3067, Circinus' fortunes changed. Using substantial Word of Blake backing, McIntyre engaged on a crash program of rapid infrastructure development, centering on education and light industry. One of the first utilities upgraded was the Word of Blake HPG station in the newly rechristened planetary capital, Zachariah (formerly named Clayborne Remembered). Though small by Inner Sphere standards, the city has seen tremendous growth in the last few years, tripling in population. The majority of these new arrivals are current or former members of the Word of Blake and are largely responsible for the technological renaissance the planet is undergoing.

While the capital is no stranger to combat (Marian Hegemony forces assaulted the world in the mid-3060s), McIntyre, with Word of Blake support, has expanded the facilities of the growing McIntyre Guard. The added fortifications are centered mainly on the Federation Central Council building in the center of Zachariah, but additional fortifications are under construction to be completed by mid-3077. Also, given their continued involvement on-world, the Blakists have set up numerous recruitment centers, with training undertaken at the Black Warriors' secret facilities in the north.

Precentor Sariana Pryor of the Twenty-fifth Division is the Blakists' current poster child for Circinian recruitment. A native of the Federation world of Andiron, Pryor took a small cadre of Circinians from the sands of Circinus to the training fields of Terra. Pryor's division became known throughout the Federation because it was solely composed of Circinian natives and was the Blakist unit responsible for taking Solaris VII, earning significant renown throughout the Federation in the process.

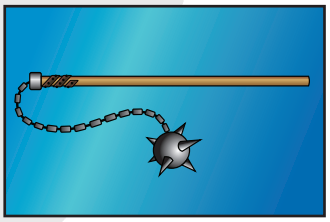
The influx of Blakist forces has had the added effect of forcing out a lot of the criminal syndicates who used to operate freely in and around Zachariah. One thing that the Blakists and McIntyre's education campaigns have not stamped out is the Circinian love for bloodsport. Either as a sop to the populace, or simply because he, too, enjoys them, President McIntyre has ordered the construction of the C.J. McIntyre Arena, a forty thousand-seat stadium that can be configured to showcase nearly whatever sport the fans want to see.

Recently, all contact has been lost with the small settlements bordering the northern desert, but eyewitness reports received before communications failed detail the arrivals of large numbers of military forces. With the average Circinian not having seen the Black Warriors since Calvin took his father's place, the general assumption is the Warriors have returned. Other rumors suggest the forces are mercenary, and President McIntyre is building to retake the worlds of Blantleff and Maximillian from the Marian Hegemony. More likely the forces are those that McIntyre used to take the Lyran worlds of Khon Kaen and Poulsbo; forces that were ejected by the Tamarind-Buena Archonettte joint operation in 3076.

It also should be noted that the Word of Blake has started installing a refurbished recharge station at Circinus' nadir jump point in a move that benefits them and increases Circinus' standing amongst its Periphery rivals.

RANDIS

Noble Ruler: Grand Knight Lucas Beckett
Star Type (Recharge Time): K4V (195 hours)
Position in System: 2
Time to Jump Point: 4.34 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Eminence)
Surface Gravity: 1.01
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 39° C (Temperate-Tropical)
Surface Water Coverage: 75 percent
Highest Native Life: Fish
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 12,154,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-C-B-B-B



A lush, tropical world, the system would have attracted many times its current population if it was near … well, anything. Given the somewhat appropriate name of Hope when it was first surveyed, the system held little of note. In the late 30th century, Erdelmaine Randis gathered some settlers and emigrated to the system, renaming it after himself. The only thing of note that he found there was a monastery in a remote valley. The settlers built a small town nearby, and Erdelmaine began to train and recruit for his order of knights. At some point he made an agreement with the monks and the impressive monastery became the fortress home for the knights. Erdelmaine wanted warriors who were smart, skilled, and most of all tough. His tests reflected this, and more than a few aspiring knights died trying to earn their position.

While Randis' knights were tough, they weren't terribly good warriors, lacking a warrior's discipline as well as the ability to effectively coordinate attacks. This changed when Galen Frews arrived and won the position of Grand Knight away from Jacob

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Ben Volcroth, Randis' successor in 3037. Taking charge of the Brotherhood, he instituted changes, mostly to the training program. The knights were still expected to be able to pilot their 'Mechs, but Frews brought tactical knowledge from his time with the Kilbourne Military Academy. As Frews changed the Brotherhood from a collection of well-intentioned thugs to an effective fighting force, Randis was being changed as well. More people came to Randis and the economy grew bigger and more powerful, no longer just the families of the knights. Where there were once only dirt roads connecting small towns, modern rail lines connected cities; where there were scaffolds now there were 'Mech repair bays, and there were munitions plants where there had been fields of green plants.

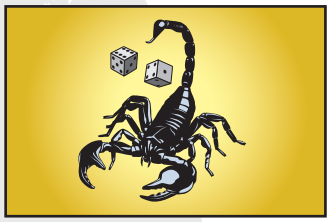
Randis has outpaced the Brotherhood in changing. While Frews was forced to step down in favor of Lucas Beckett, the unit did not largely change. Meanwhile Randis has attracted millions of immigrants. Some came because of the Brotherhood while others simply saw an opportunity to make a better life, bringing a considerable level of knowledge and resource in with them. For example, Taurians fleeing the chaos in their home state have helped increase the general level of education for the planet. With the fighting and uncertainty in the Federated Suns, Randis has become an increasingly important hub between the Outworlds Alliance, the Taurian Concordat, and the brave souls that trade in the Tortuga Dominion. Randis has also seen itself become a new gateway. Many colonists wishing to leave the Inner Sphere behind have stopped on Randis to take on final supplies before heading out into the uncharted space beyond the system.

New technology is not just limited to the quality of life on Randis, either. The Brotherhood has built a small facility to produce BattleMech designs from the Age of War, the so-called RetroTech 'Mechs. So far only primitive *Dervish*es and *Firebee*s have been seen, but the Brotherhood has arranged for sales once their needs are met and their presentations included a heavy design as well. While not the next Hesperus II, Randis IV could become even more self-sufficient and prosper from these limited but still usable weapons.

Randis has a single continent and islands of varying size scattered around the planet. Most of the islands are sparsely inhabited or uninhabited. A few of the larger islands have been reserved for training by the Brotherhood. The populace relies heavily on the fishing industry for food, as the unrelenting rain forests provide little room for herds or grains. While recent advances have modernized Randis, they have maintained a balance with ecology, keeping pollution to a minimum. A few glaciers still remain in the polar regions, but their work from millennia ago can be seen in the deep valleys and sheer cliffs that surround Hope City. Half of the planet's population lives in this sprawling metropolis under the watchful eye of the Brotherhood's complex sitting atop a steep cliff face.

TORTUGA PRIME

Noble Ruler: Precentor William Derer
Star Type (Recharge Time):G2V (183 hours)
Position in System: 3
Time to Jump Point: 9.12 days
Number of Satellites: 5 (Barbarossa, Kidd, Wendigo, Lafleur, Pandora)
Surface Gravity: 0.85
Atmosphere Pressure: Standard
Equatorial Temperature: 30°C (Temperate)
Highest Native Life: Plant
Surface Water Coverage: 40%
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class: B
Population (3076): 1,372,300
Socio-Industrial Levels: D-C-D-D-C



Capital of the Tortuga Dominion for as long as pirate bands have colonized the area, Tortuga Prime has only recently elevated itself beyond a subsistence-level economy. Its primary import for decades was whatever its pirate lords captured, stole, or killed for, providing an economy of scale similar to that of Astrokaszy or Rezak's Hole. The world actually became stable under the reign of Paula "Lady Death" Trevaline, with a crude caste economy centered on slaves taken from the Federated Suns, Taurian Concordat, and nearby minor worlds.

When Trevaline was incarcerated, the Dominion fell to predation by smaller pirate bands that were once united under the infamous female pirate. The arrival of Fuchida's Fusiliers in 3042 changed the Dominion's death spiral, and after a year of housecleaning and other measures, the Dominion emerged from closed borders as a stable minor power in the Periphery.

Many of the Fusilier's attacks in the years since their re-emergence have been primarily against the industries and infrastructure of their target worlds. As a result, Tortuga Prime received a crash-course in industrialization, with two BattleMech "factories" springing up in the late 3050s, followed by a boom in the planetary economy that opened trade among the other Dominion systems and the Mica Majority.

The system's rebirth attracted the attention of the Word of Blake. The Blakists installed a new B-class HPG on Tortuga Prime and the other Tortugan worlds. Financial loans and other trade agreements were brokered, culminating in a fully functional magrail line connecting the seven main cities scattered across Tortuga Prime's largest continent.

Tortuga Prime has one dominant continent, broken in half with a severe mountain range filled with coal and copper. The Cook Sea—the planet's largest body of water—contains over three

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thousand rocky islands, all uninhabited due to the heavy alkaline content of the water. Nearly all of the planet's water supply comes from a large underground reserve. Even so, water filtration equipment remains the system's number one import.

Most of the planetary population surrounds the capital city of Raider's Roost, where seventy percent of the planet's industry is located. Due to the poor resources on the other Dominion worlds, mining has become a main industry in order to supply its neighbors with various industrial metals.

Unlike many worlds in the various pirate kingdoms around the Inner Sphere, Tortuga Prime is largely left alone to govern itself. Even after a returning Lady Death destroyed the Fusiliers, Trevaline recognized the value of a strong core industrial base and, aside from a few random executions due to disobedience, she has left the Dominions to rule themselves. As long as the systems pay their levies on time and do not deny the pirates anything—including war materiel from the Word of Blake-connected Vengeance Incorporated—Tortuga Prime is left to its own devices. This newfound autonomy has helped the planet become a new center of mercenary hiring in the spinward area of the Periphery.

Even though the Consorts have since left and relocated to the richer Malagrotta region of the Federated Suns, the Dominions retain their ties to their pirate foundations. The current leader of the Consorts, Gary Tiqualme, has left the local Word of Blake Precentor in nominal charge of the system. Precentor Derer has taken it upon himself to fortify the Dominion against Filtvelt retaliation, forming a formidable planetary garrison force on each world. When Filtvelt attacked Tortuga Prime in 3076, they were soundly defeated by a large army of conventional vehicles and infantry—along with a small dose of chemicals that hammered the Coalition's DropShips after their troops had disembarked.

LOOSE CANNONS: KEY FRINGE MILITARY COMMANDS

HANSEATIC SECURITY FORCE

Since Captain-General Snow's appointment as head of the HSF, the force has undergone a vast improvement in overall quality and training. While its central mission is protecting the trader convoys plying their trade, the HSF has had to contend with increased Umayyad raids and even Clan incursions.

With the revelation of Hansa involvement in the Nueva Castile region, RDFs 4 and 6 have had to contend with almost incessant raids by small Umayyad detachments. While not causing significant damage, the constant raiding is wearing down the soldiers of both RDFs, to the point that Captain-General Snow is considering rotating them out of the combat zone.

The watershed moment for the HSF came in 3073 when a battalion-sized Clan Ice Hellion detachment attempted to raid the Hansa world of Antwerp for supplies. Despite being unable to match their enemy's technological sophistication, Captain-General Ilsa Heidke's RDF2 not only met the Clan invaders but drove them away from the world. (Note: RDF2 suffered significant casualties in the process, but that fact is not mentioned in Hansa sales pitches.) Since this time, Captain-General Snow has become more vocal in his efforts to gain Council support for raids against known Clan territories.

This further Clan aggression has led to the RDFs purging themselves of former Clan warriors. The most noticeable of these was Major Aimee, a former Smoke Jaguar who served as Captain-General Eloise Grady's deputy in RDF5. Aimee is believed to be leading one of the Clan groups that have started regular raids on Hansa worlds.

Addendum 030277: Snow has ordered RDF1 and RDF3 to assault and remove the Clan Diamond Shark presence in the Chainelane Isles. The outcome of this raid is yet to be determined.

CIRCINUS FEDERATION

Forever a military based on raiding and outright piracy, the expanded McIntyre Guard has only increased that role in the face of the supposed desertion of the Black Warriors. With nothing heard from the Warriors since Calvin McIntyre assumed the presidency, the McIntyre Guards have been forced to adopt their methods in order to keep the supplies coming to the Federation capital. The Guard also assumed control of the Warriors' training facilities, hosting several mercenary and Blakist units deployed to the world in a series of wargames designed to increase their coordination and combat skills.

The Guard has had mixed fortunes during the Jihad. Their numbers initially swelled dramatically with the influx of new material and 'Mechs provided by the Word of Blake, and then they were substantially reduced in number when Sariana Pryor of Andiron led the call for Circinian natives to join the Word of Blake Militia proper. Since that time, the Guard has been slowly building its numbers. Currently, the expanded Guard is suspected to have approximately three 'Mech regiments and a full two brigades of conventional forces.

The Guards' first offensive operations had them occupying the Lyran worlds of Poulsbo and Khon Kaen. Whilst the Guardsmen carried out their orders efficiently, they were unable to defend their acquisitions when Marshal Photon Brett-Marik led a joint Tamarind-Steiner task force to retake the worlds. Reports of the fighting suggest that Blakist units also fought in the campaign but were unable to prevent the Guards' rout.

OTHER REALMS AND POWERS

Most recently, the Guard has split into two arms—the home defense force with garrisons stationed on each of the Federation's major worlds, and an offensive force that has based itself at the Black Warriors' former facilities on northern Circinus. The similarities with the pre-Jihad Federation military have not been lost on observers.

UMAYYAD CALIPHATE

With the revelation of the Hansa as the force behind their continued misery and conflict with the Castilians, the Umayyad corps has dramatically swelled in size. While most of the *atabegs* have been involved in the raids on the Hansa worlds, the First Corps has by far been the busiest and has suffered significant losses in the process. While *Atabeg* Faulkner has no shortage of recruits, the average experience level of his units is gradually being eroded.

The Umayyad's Second Corps was the force Caliph Burrill detailed to assault the Lyran world of Engadine. While the task force was successful with what by Jihad standards was a fairly minor raid, the fact that the Lyrans were ultimately revealed to be blameless has tarnished what little acclaim *Atabeg* Frey's force garnered with the operation. This has colored their further exploits against the Hansa, though Frey has been reluctant to hand over what little salvage his forces have gathered.

The Third Corps, or more specifically *Atabeg* Palmer, has shown a distinct lack of interest in reprisals against the Hansa, preferring to ensure the security of the Umayyad lands against further Castilian incursions. *Atabeg* Palmer was removed from his position and replaced by Vanessa Highland in early 3068, but Highland's involvement in the kidnapping of Caliph Burrill's daughter forced the Caliph to reinstate Palmer. The *Atabeg* has taken to the role with his usual gusto, although Burrill is concerned that he may provoke a conflict with the Castilian forces.

CASTILIAN PRINCIPALITY

Unlike their Umayyad counterparts, the Castilian military has not engaged the Hansa forces, nor have they shown any likelihood of doing so. The force in its entirety is still adapting to the disbandment of the Third Brigada after Principe Seale's abortive coup. While the overall strength of the Castilians has not been reduced, with the various elements of the Third being incorporated into the remaining Brigadas, King Noye's development of RetroTech facilities has boosted their nominal BattleMech levels.

The First Brigada was the force King Noye used to lead the brutal suppression of the population of Leon in 3069. When the population learned of the Hansa manipulation of their lives, they demanded a response, leading to a small-scale riot. Noye ordered the First Brigada to subdue the so-called "uprising," while Principe Buck emulated his king in using excessive brutality to end the disturbance. Unable to stand by and watch, Principe Seale led the Third Brigada against the First and Principe Buck's command company. Seale's forces, already riven with internal dissension, disintegrated in the maelstrom of battle, with Buck stompingonto the cockpit of Seal's *Archer* thus ending the nascent mutiny.

Since then, the First has concentrated on rebuilding. The Second has expanded with the loss of the Third, and their mandate still includes protecting against what they see as inevitable Umayyad raids. The Fourth was the greatest benefactor of Seale's mutiny, claiming nearly three-quarters of the Third's BattleMech assets, much to the consternation of Principe Buck.

STONE'S COALITION

Originally formed from the remnants and survivors of RBMU 105 on Kittery and expanded to encompass battle-hardened veterans of shattered commands found scattered across the newly formed Kittery Prefecture, Devlin Stone's army now stands at roughly two battalions at its core. While several media outlets have mistakenly encompassed all of the various line units that have been assigned to General Lee under the misnomer "Stone's Army," it is far from the case. The motley assortment of troops from across the Sphere must now work (in many cases, reluctantly) with this new leader in order to drive back the Blakist forces protecting the heart of the Protectorate.

The first battalion, Stone's Lament, consists of a core of hardened pilots and crews specifically selected by General Lee for their various strengths and weaknesses. The Lament tends to be at the crux of any battle it enters; turnover can be high, but no one can say that Lee and her command do not pull their weight in combat.

Because of her successes and the Lament's quiet humility in their acts of liberation, the unit has gained some notoriety within the units assigned to Stone, and many officers and MechWarriors have petitioned their commanders to be given the chance to apply for the open slots within Stone's Lament.

The second battalion consists of a larger portion of support units. Few 'Mechs exist in this unit, nicknamed "Stone's Stalwart," and it consists mostly of fast-moving vehicles for scouting purposes, along with an artillery company, half of an aerospace wing (specifically trained for ground-support roles), a salvage team, and a company of battle-armored infantry, rumored to be the remains of the Star Seeds mercenary unit. The Stalwart is a mix of specializations, and Lee wields each component like a surgeon's scalpel.

Rumors of another battalion have made the scuttlebutt rounds, but no concrete proof of this unit has been seen. Hints of a shadowy fleet on the fringe of some operational theaters, mysterious "black soldiers" who pop up in the rear of the enemy at certain locations and other bizarre battlefield tales have been found in many quarters, but to this point they've mostly proven to be imaginary tales of battle-weary soldiers.

MERCENARY EMPLOYMENT BEYOND THE MAJOR POWERS

The mercenary industry has become a morass of destruction. This Word of Blake Jihad has seen the mauling or outright destruction of dozens of top-tier mercenary units. The massive scale of the warfare, unseen since the First Succession War, has not, however, seen the smallest decrease in demand for merc services. The high demand for mercs has seen the Great Houses throw away money with abandon, agreeing to any terms mercs might seek so that they might obtain more meat for the grinder. With the decimation of their House forces, the leaders of these nations are doing their all to get any warm bodies, preferable encased in large metal 'Mechs, between themselves and their many enemies.

Consider, though, the plight of the small realms in such an environment. The funneling away from the Periphery of merc commands has stripped bare many of the worlds in that region. From the small merc units hired by local governments to provide defense against bandits to the larger commands tasked with defending swathes of space against aggression, a vacuum has been left into which emboldened pirates have flowed. Ever a haven for pirates despite the valiant efforts of the undermanned and underfunded Marshals, the Fronc Reaches are no longer the most visible realm in which pirates abound. The Malagrotta region of the Federated Suns has essentially been annexed wholesale by a pirate band due to an absence of defenders. The people of the Filtvelt Coalition have essentially taken to hiring pirates in order to save themselves from depredation, issuing letters of marques and encouraging the pirates to attack their neighbors and former countrymen.

Corporations, once able to obtain merc services at will, have also fallen on hard times. From the destruction of the mercs defending the factories on Hesperus II to the disbandment of the coalition of mercs employed by Chandrasekhar Kurita, it is clear that such mercs are no longer tasked with simple raid repulsion. They, like their brethren, are seeing combat of a nature never before experienced by their industry. In the short term, this means that corporations and small-scale employers, like the Fronc Reaches and Filtvelt Coalition, will be able to hire merc commands of lesser quality, questionable ethics, poor talent, or insufficient materiel. Even such lowly commands as these, however, are able to demand far more for their services than they are worth. Due to the desperate times, they are able to strong-arm their potential employers for concessions unheard of even five years ago. In at least one instance, the Fronc Reaches, comparatively peaceful in the present times, has doled out a fiefdom to the leader of the small merc command Derek's Devils for a guaranty of their services. While such steps as absorbing mercenaries into a national military are extreme, all those involved in such negotiations realize that the rules of supply and demand will eventually tip back in favor of those with the money.

Note, however, that there are a number of exceptions to these general conditions. While many of their number are showing their true colors by abandoning their employers and seeking greater rewards elsewhere, more than a few mercenary commands have kept to their words. Consider the One-Eyed Jacks, employed by the late Caesar Steiner, who kept to their posts and rebuffed several offers of greater money and benefits until after his death. Others, including members of the Allied Mercenary Command, have been targeted especially by Blakist forces, resulting in obliteration of many commands. The Wild Geese, the de facto leaders of the AMC, did not escape the debacle on Gibson at the hands of the Manei Domini. While dedication to duty can be an asset to an employer, sometimes it is also an unfortunate demonstration of stupidity.

The downfall of the MRBC has led to a deregulated mercenary industry, meaning that the Jihad has empowered mercenaries. Given the environment in which all combat units, House or mercenary, are experiencing destruction on an unimaginable scale, the demand for mercenaries has never been higher. Thus, mercenaries are able to sell their services quite dearly. Despite the existence of honor among some of their lot, the merc community at large is abandoning small employers, both in terms of nations and corporations, for the draw of larger purses. What is required among negotiators trying to obtain services, however, is to point out the obvious: those engaged in higher-profile combat with the Great Houses are far more likely to lose their equipment and their lives. Proper negotiating will show these hired guns that they stand a much greater chance of surviving the conflagration by serving masters lower in profile than the mammoths involved in the Jihad.

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SCAN COMPLETED

RULES ANNEX

RULES ANNEX

The following rules cover roleplaying as well as *BattleTech* board game, allowing all types of players to place the notable personalities of this book into their games.

USING NOTABLE PERSONALITIES IN AN RPG CAMPAIGN

Famous (and especially infamous) named NPCs can add a touch of flavor, excitement, and drama to any role-playing experience. However, it is important for any gamemaster to recognize that these characters are not just random NPCs that can be thrown into the mix in a careless fashion. With the character comes a set of expectations and a responsibility for the gamemaster to get the character right. While the addition of these NPCs can lead to a variety of exciting role-play experiences, using such a character improperly can distract the players and make the universe feel less authentic.

INTRODUCING NOTABLE PLAYER NPCS

One of the most important decisions a gamemaster will make about the use of canon NPCs in a campaign is the depth of their involvement. A campaign based in the halls of the Celestial Palace on Sian will undoubtedly encounter a myriad of canon NPCs. Another campaign might simply briefly cross paths with a notable player for a one-time adventure. Whatever the level of involvement is, a few key basics remain the same.

HAVE A PURPOSE

In a universe as broad and deep as *BattleTech*, there are literally billions of people that your players might encounter during their adventures. Any type of NPC you require could simply be created from your own imagination. If you plan to select one of the handfuls of people with a name and an already-established history, it should be with an eye towards utilizing that name and history in your own campaign. There is published material that you can review in order to understand the basic status, importance, and personality of these unique NPCs. Try to work those details into your campaign as much as possible. These subtle touches will make your world come alive for your players and lend an air of familiarity to your campaign as well as the jolt of adrenaline from the recognition factor.

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

One of the trickiest parts of utilizing a notable Player in your role-playing campaign is bringing that character to life in a manner consistent with how they have been described. A famous face can create a lot of energy and excitement provided that they match the players' perceptions and memories. If the notable Player is played in a wildly different tone, or with a different history, players will often scratch their heads or feel like the campaign is off track somehow.

The amount of interaction your players will have with the notable NPC plays a major factor in how credible their appearance is. Repeated and/or deeply personal interactions require the gamemaster to have an intricate knowledge of the NPC's history, personality, and mannerisms. Chance encounters require only a cursory, semi-formal tone. For example, in a World War II campaign setting, meeting "an Allied general with a mission for you" is vastly different than meeting George S. Patton. The players have pre-conceived notions of Patton that the GM must meet or the encounter will fail to meet its potential. By the same token, players in a *BattleTech* RPG campaign will have vastly different expectations and reactions when meeting Akira Brahe of the Kell Hounds as opposed to meeting "a mercenary commander."

While the demands of breathing the correct personality into a notable Player are a touch daunting, the potential rewards are also vast. A storyline intricately threaded and wound through existing *BattleTech* fiction gives your players an incredible sense of being immersed in that world. The world is familiar, and yet now it is affecting them. They are interacting with history to a degree. The amazing and dramatic moments that excite the imagination can be experienced firsthand.

Even more exciting for a gamemaster is the chance to add depth and personal touches to events that everyone is already aware of. This is a chance to put your own unique spin on a familiar timeline. While the results of actions are often well documented, the circumstances that forced those actions are often up for interpretation. Even though the presentation of the NPC is a shared expectation, their motivations and inner thoughts are up to you and you alone. Ultimately, any role-playing campaign is a shared storytelling experience. If your story can be served with a notable Player NPC, then you should feel free to change details as you see fit. The only caveat is that in doing so, you may alter portions of the NPC with which players identify.

MESH THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN

One of the most successful ways to incorporate notable personalities into your role-playing campaign is to combine commonly known events with ones you have fabricated for your own campaign. Witnessing events that the players already know lends a lot of credence to your portrayal of any NPC. For example, if players see holovids or even attend one of Kai Allard-Liao's Solaris VII duels, he seems more imposing and genuine when he later asks the players to take part in a mission he is organizing behind the scenes. Players who have been detained or worse by Lucifer of the Word of Blake will more intensely want to achieve payback against the Blakists when given a chance.

One of the most effective gamemastering tactics is to arrange your adventures to help the players anonymously achieve a publicly known fact. This allows for the canon timeline of the *BattleTech* universe to continue unaltered, while at the same time allowing your players to put their own special stamp on history. Often

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an event is detailed where a notable Player is given a message or made aware of some fact. These moments are just nebulous enough to allow for your players to step into the fray. An entire adventure could be built around delivering a communication to an imprisoned noble or proving to an influential person that their trusted advisor is stabbing them in the back. They key is to find an event where the outcome is well known, but the path that led to that outcome has enough holes that you can fill in yourself.

AVOID RADICAL CHANGES

While you should always feel free to change your campaign to suit your own vision of story and theme, radically changing well-known NPCs causes more problems than it solves. For example, changing history so that Victor Ian Steiner-Davion was secretly captured by the Clans on Alyina and then brainwashed into helping them conquer the Inner Sphere may sound fun, but the resulting changes to the campaign universe will leave your players feeling as if they've entered the twilight zone of *BattleTech*. Even if you intend to radically alter the way events come to pass, it is more effective to do so with your own creations. In fact, detailing how one of your own NPCs dealt with established personalities makes your new timeline more believable. Players expect certain reactions and events when dealing with the published timeline. When you bring in your own ideas, it is far easier to adjust those ideas than to ask the players to believe that everything they read in sourcebooks was simply untrue at every level.

This is the most delicate aspect of notable Player NPCs to understand. Players, in general, feel a strong sense of connectivity to every published work. Whether it is a sourcebook, scenario book, piece of fiction, or simple online biography, players take published words to heart. They accept published works as the "reality" of *BattleTech*. This is where their expectations come from, and why taking actions counter to those expectations creates such friction. Often, if you intend to make radical changes to the timeline, you are best doing so with NPCs and locations completely of your own invention. If you change existing published materials, you will often be met with "That's now how it really is" or something similar. In a world of your own creation, no such complaint is possible.

On the other end of the spectrum, if you manage to hit the balance of role-playing these NPCs consistently and meshing them within your own ideas and adventures, you will have a player base bordering on rabid in their excitement and enthusiasm for your gaming sessions. The use of notable personalities NPCs is a bold decision, but it also yields the highest of gamemastering rewards.

MOVING FORWARD

Invariably the campaign moves forward. You, as the gamemaster, must decide whether to incorporate new source material into your campaign or to break from the timeline and move in your own direction. The *BattleTech* universe is a dynamic setting that constantly progresses and evolves. Characters that you have built in as pillars of your campaign may suddenly find themselves in intense new circumstances. They may change allegiances, marry, bear children, or even die. As gamemaster, you will have to decide what materials to utilize or how to shape new events to fit your campaign.

Just as care was used in the decision to include published NPCs into your campaign setting, you have to take some time to plan where you want that storyline to go. Remember, you ultimately decide what does and does not happen in your *BattleTech* campaign. If you want to follow the official materials verbatim, perhaps a bit of behind-the-scenes alterations can keep your campaign on track. Perhaps the new source materials spawn and spark new ideas for your campaign and can be easily incorporated into your gaming sessions. Perhaps you have to set aside some turn of plot or personality in order to keep your own game more consistent and playable. That decision is in your hands. However, always be aware that your players may read the new materials as well. The inherent desire to be in the published universe will always be something you have to account for.

MORE THAN A FACE AND A NAME

When we think of notable personalities, we think of famous stories, moments, quotes, and anecdotes. We consider their personality and their origin. Certainly, this personality profile is the most obvious connection these characters have with the universe at large and the fans and players of *BattleTech*. However these characters wield considerably more power than a character sheet and a name. They have positions of power and influence. They command resources and people. They have a legacy to call on, and often wealth.

In other words, there are far more ways to interact with notable personalities than to directly confront or serve them. They often put far-reaching plots in motion, utilizing assets on a hundred worlds or more. It is quite possible to run afoul of someone without ever meeting them in person. Additionally, the entire sphere that a published NPC commands is a rich and fertile ground for creating some of your own NPCs, adventures, and plotlines. Detailing these peripheral, yet important, components of a notable Player's sphere of control is an excellent way to inject your players into the *BattleTech* universe without impacting the published timeline.

It is also an excellent way to build up the suspense around an eventual direct conflict. Some of the first published *BattleTech* novels featured the mercenary Gray Death Legion. Over and over again, these scrappy mercenaries wound up enmeshed in battling the plans of House Kurita's Duke Hassid Ricol. Eventually this spiraled into a direct confrontation and an uneasy alliance. The same kind of plot could be enacted by any gamemaster simply by altering some of the details and some of the encounters. A famous NPC lingering on the distant horizon becomes increasingly fearsome as the inevitable conflict slowly draws toward your players. Without ever directly role-playing the NPC, you can create an aura of menace, fear, or even dread. When the conflict comes, the players will have already imagined infinite details in their own minds.

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IN THE END

The people you choose to include and the manner you choose to utilize them is up to you entirely. Just be aware that published characters bring with them a set of expectations, influences, opportunities, and an ongoing timeline. While the potential rewards for threading your campaign around the *BattleTech* universe are great, so are the pitfalls of executing an inconsistent or radically different version of things. Players love good storytelling, and brushes with greatness and/or malice promote exciting stories. As long as you're using these notable personalities to enhance your story, your games should be exciting and fun. If you try to substitute these characters for actual campaign planning, you'll find yourself at the mercy of their history and fan base. Whatever you decide, keep the story first and foremost in your mind and the rest of the details will fall into place.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES IN NON-RPG CAMPAIGN PLAY—CAMPAIGN TRAITS

In the *BattleTech* universe, not only can one man make a difference, but in many key situations one particular person is the only individual who has a chance of making a difference. Be it the battle-turning 'Mech skills of Morgan Kell, the fanatical never-retreat devotion shown by Takashi Kurita's Dragon Claws, or the strategic vision of Anastasius Focht at Tukayyid, the wars of *BattleTech* have often been won or lost because of the skills of these notable personalities.

Just as certain combat units bring their own unique skills and experiences to a campaign or a BattleMech's individual quirks can change a battle, so too can notable personalities have far-reaching influence that can shift the fortunes or course of a battle and beyond. The following rules provide a guideline for assigning special abilities and strategic campaign modifiers to NPCs in your game. Known as Campaign Traits, these rules can be used to add depth to any game, providing unit commanders with a greater depth of personality and uniqueness. Following the guidelines is a list of the personalities of notable personalities and suggested abilities.

The following rules are intended to supplement the existing rules of the *BattleTech Total Warfare* system. They are designed to add variety and a unique flavor that can enhance game play, not to give an unfair advantage to players, so gamemasters and players should all agree on any supplemental rules before using it in play. Similarly feel free to modify any rule that seems inappropriate for your campaign. Many of these rules are designed to work with *Creating Scenario* rules (see p. 256, *TW*). All of the following rules are considered Advanced supplemental rules and are inappropriate for use in Introductory or Standard rules games.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Notable personalities are most often a cut above the already exceptional nature of warriors in the *BattleTech* universe. As a result, they may often possess skills and abilities well out of balance to standard game play. Some guidelines are useful when crafting new major NPCs or assigning traits to existing NPCs or Players that do not possess documented Campaign Traits. Similar to Vehicle Quirks, the suggested starting point is always to balance the positive traits with negative traits. The table below provides a guideline for how the notable Player/NPCs status in the universe adds to this recommended balance point.

MODIFIERS TO EXISTING RULES

The *BattleTech* core rulebooks [*Total Warfare* (*TW*), *TechManual* (*TM*), *Tactical Operations* (*TO*), and *Strategic Operations* (*SO*)] already possesses rules for force commanders, leadership effects, and vehicle quirks. Additionally there are several rules that can affect a force or campaign that major NPCs can heavily influence (e.g., Morgan Hasek-Davion's command of the Kathil Uhlans virtually ensured they always had supplies on hand for repairs).

COMMANDER SPECIAL ABILITIES TABLE

Commander is a...	Number of Abilities
Key Personality*	+2
Minor Personality**	+1
Commands/Influences a Nation-State (e.g, Lyran Alliance)	+3
Commands/Influences a Major sub-realm (e.g., Duchy of Andurien)	+2
Commands/Influences a Nation-State army or large portion of army†	+2
Commands/Influences a Major Military Unit	+1
Commands/Influences a "Famous" Unit††	+1
Commands/Influences a Multi-National Corporation	+2‡
Commands/Influences a Major Defense Corporation	+2‡
Commands/Influences a Major Single-Nation Corporation	+1‡

* Listed as such in a book, or any commander listed in a Starter Book

** Listed as such in a book, or any non-commander in a Starter Book

† Galaxy Commander, Davion Brigade of Guards, Theatre Commander

†† "Famous" units are non-regiment sized units of great fame or infamy, e.g., Opacus Venatori, Black Widows, Battle Magic.

‡ Only applicable to non-combat skills, such as influence over supplies and unit composition.

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All of these rules are only guidelines and are designed so that playing groups will need to fill in the blanks, tailoring the specifics of a given rule to their own campaigns. For example, many rules will include an "X", which is a value to be determined by the gamemaster or the gaming group as a whole.

Total Warfare—Creating a Scenario

Forced Withdrawal (see p. 258, TW): Commanders may possess a force of personality that inspires (or frightens) their troops to greater fortitude, allowing them to ignore their own self-preservation. Naturally many commanders themselves are made of much sterner stuff than their troops and can often wholly ignore these needs. Sometimes, though, the opposite is true, and a commander may be a detriment to his unit in the field.

- Commander/NPC may personally ignore Forced Withdrawal rules.
- Commander/NPC may personally ignore Forced Withdrawal rules until his force has taken X percent damage.
- So long as the Commander/NPC is in the field (and conscious), all units reporting to him may ignore Forced Withdrawal rules.
- So long as the Commander/NPC is in the field (and conscious), all units reporting to him may ignore Forced Withdrawal rules until the force has taken X percent damage.
- So long as the Commander/NPC is in the field (and conscious), all units reporting to him may ignore the first Crippling Damage that would make that force withdraw.
- Commander/NPC will withdraw if he loses all armor in one location and/or more than 25 percent of total armor
- If the Commander/NPC begins Withdrawal, the entire force must make an immediate Morale Check (see p. 38, *SO*). Failing the roll will mean the unit must engage in a Forced Withdrawal.
- If more than X percent of the force is destroyed or under Forced Withdrawal, the Commander/NPC must order a retreat unless he rolls X on a 2D6. He must make this roll every turn after the first, with any failure resulting in an immediate retreat.

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Force Composition (see p. 264, TW): Notable Leaders may be able to call on resources beyond what their position may normally allow, giving them the ability to fill out their force with equipment not normally allowed by their faction/force. Additionally some NPCs may be known for a particular type or class of unit, which affects their rolls (e.g., Colonel Dan Allard continued to pilot his *Wolfhound* after being promoted to command of the regiment, so as a result his command lance would probably be made up of mostly light or fast units).

- May roll X percent of units one or more columns higher/lower than force rating allows. For example, Commander/NPC is a company commander in a D-rated regiment; he may roll 100 percent of his units on the C column for that faction instead of the D column.
- May roll X percent of units on the X column of X faction. For example, Commander/NPC is Word of Blake serving in the Federated Suns and may choose to roll on the B column of the Federated Suns for 25 percent of his units.
- Add +/– X to rolls on the Random Weight/Composition Tables for X percent of units. For example, Commander/NPC is part of Wolf's Dragoons, Zeta Battalion and adds +2 to her Random Binary/Trinary Type roll.
- X percent of the units in the Commander/NPCs force must have a Walk/Cruise of X MP greater/lesser than a certain base. For example, Commander/NPC commands a cavalry armor unit in the Twenty-fifth Arcturan Guard; all tanks must have a minimum cruise of 8 or more. Reroll any unit that does not meet this minimum requirement.
- X percent of the force must be jump capable.

Experience Ratings and Skills (see p. 271, TW): The skill of a force is often reflective of the commander or may be picked from the cream of the crop to defend an extremely important NPC. Conversely, even the proudest NPCs may be unable to field a proper fighting force, for whatever reason. For example, at the end of the Smoke Jaguar's existence, pre-Trial of Position sibkids were thrown into battle under the command of a more senior leader.

- Add/Subtract X from the Random Experience Rating Table.
- Add/Subtract X from the Random Skills Table.

Tactical Operations

Movement Modes (see p. 18, TO): Some Commanders/NPCs can regularly push their machines beyond the limits of its ability, extracting from them that extra push, extra kilometer, or causing them to maneuver in ways most pilots would think impossible.

- When the Commander/NPC uses the Standing Still rule, attackers do not apply a –1 to-hit modifier against the Commander/NPC for physical/weapon/all attacks.
- When using the Sprinting rule, the Commander applies a +/– X modifier instead of the normal +2 modifier. For example, Sun-Tzu's skills with a BattleMech are limited, and he applies a +4 piloting modifier when Sprinting.
- When using the Sprinting rule, the Commander may make a single weapon attack but must apply a +4 to-hit modifier.
- When using the Evading rule (including Skilled Evading), the Commander receives an additional +1 to-hit modifier.
- Commander/NPC generates an additional +1 modifier when using the Shielding Movement Mode rule.
- Commander/NPC may use Running MP instead of Walking MP when using the Physical Defense Mode rule.
- When using the Hurried Movement rule, apply only a +1 modifier per MP ignored, instead of the normal +2.
- When Climbing, the Commander/NPC applies only a +1 modifier instead of the normal +2.

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Planetary Conditions (see p. 28, TO) / Weather Conditions (see p. 57, TO): If you spend your life on an arctic world, you are bound to learn a few tricks about getting around in waist-high snow. Skilled Commanders/NPCs can often ignore the adverse effects of planetary or weather conditions.

- Commander/NPC is skilled in operating in X conditions, reducing all modifiers (MP requirements, Piloting Skill Rolls) by 1.
- Commander/NPC is inexperienced in operating in X conditions, increasing all modifiers (MP requirements, Piloting Skill Rolls) by 1.
- Commander/NPC's force is skilled in operating in X conditions, reducing all modifiers (MP requirements, Piloting Skills) by 1.
- Commander/NPC's force is inexperienced in operating in X conditions, increasing all modifiers (MP requirements, Piloting Skills) by 1.

Called Shots (see p. 78, TO): When you have piloted a BattleMech as much as Kai Allard-Liao, aiming becomes instinct and choosing your targets almost second nature. Where some rely on a targeting computer, others rely on raw skill.

- Commander/NPC is highly skilled and only applies a +2 to-hit modifier, instead of the normal +3, when using the Called Shots rule.
- Commander/NPC lacks finesse and applies a +4 to-hit modifier, instead of the normal +3, when using the Called Shots rule.

Advanced Firing (see p. 84, TO): Combining the skills of piloting with those of shooting is the sign of an accomplished warrior. On the other hand, some pilots are lucky to just be able to walk and chew gum at the same time.

- If the Commander/NPCs 'Mech has an arm with a working hand actuator and no damage to any actuators in that arm, they may use that arm to brace the other arm of their 'Mech instead of needing to brace against a terrain feature when using the Bracing rule.
- Commander/NPC may accumulate up to a –4 to-hit modifier, instead of the normally allowed –3 modifier when using the Bracing rule.
- Commander/NPC lacks finesse and may accumulate up to a –2 to-hit modifier, instead of the normally allowed –3 modifier when using the Bracing rule.
- Commander/NPC is very skilled in long-range combat and only applies a +5 to-hit modifier for attacks at Extreme Range.
- Commander/NPC relies heavily on his targeting computer; all Extreme Range attacks apply +7 to-hit modifier or are impossible.

- Commander/NPC is very skilled in long-range combat and only applies a +7 to-hit modifier for attacks at LOS Range.
- Commander/NPC relies heavily on his targeting computer; all LOS Range attacks are at +9 to-hit modifier or are impossible (this trait is automatically assigned if the Commander/NPC has the negative Trait for extreme-range attacks).

Grabbing and Grappling (see p. 90, TO): Battle armor manipulators, let alone the controls of 'Mechs, are usually considered cumbersome and unyielding. Being able to do more than wave or point in a general direction can be a challenge for some pilots. And then there are the ones who make the limbs of their machines extensions of their very being.

- Commander/NPC is able to ignore the +1 Piloting Skill Roll modifier for grabbing objects and reduces her modifier for grabbing turrets by –1.
- Commander/NPC reduces all grappling Pilot Skill Rolls by a –1 or –2 modifier.
- Commander/NPC increases all grappling Pilot Skill Rolls by a +1 or +2 modifier.
- Commander/NPC's force has been trained in hand-to-hand combat; adjust all grappling rolls by a –1 modifier

Picking Up and Throwing Objects (see p. 92, TO): Picking up and throwing objects is often the refuge of the desperate, or the raging berserker.

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- Commander/NPC is able to pick up +/– 1 to 5 percent more/less mass than his BattleMech/Proto/battle armor is normally capable. For example, General Marguerite McCaffee of the Third Davion Guards has learned to push her *Atlas* beyond its normal limits and can lift 2.5 percent more than normal, or 12.5 tons (25 tons if the TSM is activated).
- Commander/NPC is able to throw up +/– 1 to 5 percent more/less mass. For example, Thomas Marik has primarily used handless 'Mechs and must reduce the maximum weight he can throw by 5 percent.
- Commander/NPC adds/subjects 1 hex from the Throwing Distance Table, to a minimum of 1 hex.
- Commander/NPC adds/subtracts 1 from their to-hit modifier when throwing inanimate objects.
- Commander/NPC adds/subtracts 1 from their Pilot Skill Roll when attempting to throw a 'Mech, ProtoMech or vehicle.

Ghost Targets (see p. 101, TO): Mastering the intricacies of a combat vehicle's sensors and computer systems can often be the deciding difference between a skilled pilot and a master tactician. When it comes to warfare it's not all about the shooting.

- Commander/NPC adds +1 to +4 modifier to their final Piloting Skill Roll when attempting to generate Ghost Targets with their ECM system. Opposite Effect: Apply a –1 to –4 modifier when attempting to create Ghost Targets.
- Commander/NPC's units mounting ECMs apply a +1 modifier to their final Piloting Skills Roll when attempting to generate Ghost Targets with their ECM system. Opposite Effect: All pilots apply a –1 modifier when attempting to create Ghost Targets.
- Commander/NPC may generate Ghost Targets even if their unit is not equipped with an ECM suite or 7 or more tons of Communication Equipment. Apply a +4 modifier to their Piloting Skill Roll instead of the normal +2. Opposite Effect: Commander/NPC may not generate Ghost Targets, even if equipped with an ECM suite or Communications Equipment.
- Commander/NPC with an Active Probe or Targeting Computer applies an additional +1 to +2 modifier to their Piloting Skill Roll when trying to penetrate a Ghost Target. Opposite Effect: Active Probe or Targeting Computer does not help Commander/NPC penetrate Ghost Targets.

Disengaging Inhibitor (see p.103, TO): Mastering the intricacies of your weapons can often make the difference between elite and legendary.

- Commander/NPC applies a –1 to –3 modifier to the die roll result when rolling on the PPC Feedback table.

Retractable Blade (see p.104, TO): Sometimes bringing a knife to a gunfight is actually an advantage.

- Commander/NPC may add a +1 to +3 modifier to their die roll result when determining if a critical hit is made during the blade attack.

Artillery (see p. 179, TO): A good commander knows when to call in reinforcements; the smart commander knows how to call them in quickly and accurately.

- Commander/NPC is adept at Artillery Spotting; apply a –1 to-hit modifier for every 1 point of Gunnery Skill below 4 that they possess, instead of the usual –1 per 2 points of Gunnery Skill below 4.
- Commander/NPC is a master planner; he may pre-plot up to 6 hexes per four mapsheets, instead of the usual 5 hexes.
- Commander/NPC applies a –1 to-hit modifier spotting bonus to all counter-battery fire on enemy artillery. He must be in LOS of the hex the enemy artillery strikes for this bonus to apply.

Commander Rules (see p. 191, TO): Commanders/NPCs may be either Force Commanders or Sub-Commanders, and they follow all the normal Commander rules. All notable personalities mentioned in this book are generally considered Force Commanders when in the field.

Fatigue Rules (see p. 198, TO) / Morale Rules (see p. 211, TO): Able to push beyond their own endurance, Commanders/NPCs are known for their resilience and inexhaustible stamina. Some commanders are such a force of will that they drive their men to ever-greater heights. There are some commanders, however, that are well past their prime, no matter their skill with a PPC, and others who would not even be able to inspire the First Sword of Light to defend Luthien from the Smoke Jaguars.

- Commander/NPC applies a –1 to –2 modifier to their Piloting Skill for determining when Fatigue effects begin. If their modified Piloting Skill is less than 0, they may ignore Fatigue effects until the start of Turn 25. Opposite Effect: The Commander/NPC applies +1 to +2 modifier to their Piloting Skill. No additional effects if their modified skill is over 7.
- Commander/NPC inspires her troops to greater stamina. Apply –1 modifier to the Piloting Skill of her troops, for determining when Fatigues affects begin. Opposite Effect: Apply a +1 modifier to the Piloting Skill of her troops. No additional affects for a modified skill of more than 7 or less than 0.
- Commander/NPC is immune to all Morale Checks and need not roll under any circumstances.
- Commander/NPC considered an Elite pilot/crew for all Morale Checks.
- Commander/NPC applies a +1 to +3 modifier to all their Morale Checks (including Recovering Nerve). Opposite Effect: Apply a –1 to –3 to all Morale Checks (including Recovering Nerve).
- Commander/NPC is a stabilizing influence. All units under their command apply a +1 to +2 modifier to all Morale Checks

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(including Recovering Nerve). Opposite Effect: All units under their command apply a –1 to –2 modifier to all Morale Checks (including Recovering Nerve).

- Commander/NPC inspires his troops to greater fervor. All units under his command are considered to be one experience level higher, to a maximum of Elite. Opposite Effect: All units under his command are considered one experience level lower, to a minimum of Green.

Double-Blind Rules (see p. 220, TO): Knowing how to kill your enemy is only effective when you can find your enemy. A commander who knows his battlefield and how to use the tools available to her has an advantage over those who do not.

- Commander/NPC has improved vision, add +1 to +3 hexes to their maximum visual range, using the Visual Range Table.
- Commander/NPC may scan using one additional sensor system over what he is normally allowed. Doing so applies a +1 Piloting and to-hit modifiers for the remainder of the turn in which he performed the extra scan. Opposite Effect: Reduce the number of scans the Commander/NPC can perform in a turn, to a minimum of one.
- Commander/NPC is extremely skilled with sensor operations, and she may add the numerical values above and below the original dice roll.

Strategic Operations

The war is very often won or lost off the battlefield. The ability of a leader to outthink, outwit, and outplan their opponent can often mean a battle is won before the first shot is ever fired. Leaders do not have to lift a gun—and some may be wholly unqualified to do so—to be effective and inspirational.

Morale and Fatigue (Outside of Game Play) (see p. 38, SO): The hearts and minds of a leader's men is never so important as when they are not in battle. Be it a hot meal, letters from home, or a good night's rest, the little things that soldiers possess can determine if the war is ultimately won or lost. A good leader knows this, and he also knows tricks to cut these corners while still maintaining the esprit de corps of his men. A poor leader is often so detached from their troops that they cannot hear their cries of anguish over the sound of popping champagne corks.

- Commander/NPC brings out the best/worst in his men. Apply a +1/–1 to the average Piloting/Gunnery Skill Rating for the force.
- Commander/NPC inspires greater/lesser loyalty from her force. Increase/decrease the Loyalty Rating by 1 or 2.
- Commander/NPC is a shining beacon of morale. Apply a +1 or +2 modifier to the Desertion Check. Opposite Effect: Commander/NPC is a drag on morale; apply a –1 or –2 modifier to all Desertion Checks.
- Commander/NPC applies a +1/–1 modifier to all 1D6 rolls made under Changing Morale. For example, Jackson Davion's force loses control of the field of battle and must roll 1D6 to determine a possible loss of morale. Being a great inspiration to his troops, he is able to subtract 1 from the D6 roll, better ensuring no drop in morale at the loss. Lady Death, however, has a tenuous hold on her people, and after a lance of tanks deserts she must make a Morale Check and add 1 to the roll, meaning on a 5 or a six her force will lose morale, instead of the normal 6.
- If the Commander/NPC is killed, morale drops by 2 instead of the normal 1.

Moving Cargo (see p. 41, SO): Having the right supplies at the right time, or being able to unload those combat reserves just a little faster, can often be the difference between success and death.

- Commander/NPC is an organizational genius and may reduce total cargo load/unload times by 10 to 25 percent.

Maintenance, Repair, Salvage and Customization: *"He who dies with the most toys, wins"*—an ancient saying, but still very true in the modern battlefield. The quality of equipment and the skill of those who keep it and their users functioning is perhaps one of the most important aspects of warfare. After all, three *Atlas*es will beat a pair of *Whitworth*s any day. Unless of course the *Atlases* have no ammunition and have more baling wire than armor.

Unit Quality (see p. 167, SO*)*

- Commander/NPC has access to higher/lower quality equipment then is typical for their faction. Add/subtract one quality level for X percent (10-100) of their force.

Maintenance (see p. 169, SO*)*

- Commander/NPC has access to highly efficient Technical Teams. Reduce all maintenance times by X percent (10-20).
- Commander/NPC has access to Technical Teams trained to work in adverse conditions. Technical team may reduce negative modifiers associated with location and planetary conditions by 1.

Repair and Replacement (see p. 175, SO*)*

- Commander/NPC has excellent access to Replacement Parts. Apply a +1 to +3 modifier to all Availability Checks. Opposite Effect: Commander/NPC has poor access to replacements; apply a –1 to –3 modifier to all Availability Checks.

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- Commander/NPC may increase their starting Stockpile allowance by X percent (5-25).
- Commander/NPC applies a +/– 1 to 3 modifier to their Negotiation Checks. For example, known for killing you if you say no, Redjack Ryan applies a +3 modifier to all his Negotiation Checks.
- Commander/NPC may apply a +1/–1 modifier when rolling on the New Personnel Availability Table to determine what replacements are available.

Customization (see p. 188, SO*)*
- Commander/NPC's unit may be customized to a maximum of 1 to 8 points, with a single Class A refit costing 1 point, a single Class B costing 2 points, a single Class C costing 3 points, and a single Class E costing 4 points. Class F refits are not available for use.

Salvage (see p. 191, SO)
- Commander/NPC's Technical Team is skilled in salvage operations. Reduce all salvage times by X percent (5 to 25 percent).

Design Quirks (p. 193, SO)
- Commander/NPC gets X (1-4) points of free positive quirks for their unit.

BattleForce Advanced Rules: Command Phase (see p. 265, SO*)*
- An expert in large-unit combat, the Commander/NPC pays only half the normal cost to execute the Detaching Unit, Splitting Unit, Re-Forming Unit, Creating Ad-Hoc Unit, Plot Artillery Strike, or Detonate a Mine Field commands.

BattleForce Advanced Rules: Morale (p. 295, *SO*)
- As long as the Commander/NPC is on the battlefield all Morale Checks apply a +1/–1 modifier, reflecting their effect on troop morale.

Additional Rules

Initiative Modifiers
- As long as the Commander/NPC is on the field of battle and conscious, his force gains a +1 or +2 Initiative bonus. Opposite Effect: The Commander/NPC's micromanagement imposes a –1 or –2 Initiative modifier.
- In turn 1 of a scenario the Commander/NPC gains +/–X (4 to 6) Initiative modifier. This modifier goes up/down by one every turn until it reaches zero.

Advanced Pilot Traits: A host of advanced pilot special abilities are detailed in the *A Time of War: The BattleTech RPG*. The abilities are suitable for any combat-oriented notable Commander/NPC.

A TIME OF WAR: THE BATTLETECH RPG AND THE STARCORPS DOSSIERS

Guidelines for using notable personalities in a campaign setting can be found below. Rules for building notable personalities using the RPG game system are outside the scope of this book.

Interstellar Campaigns: Rules covering the impact of major NPC personalities at the interstellar scale of warfare are outside the scope of these rules; these rules are detailed in *Interstellar Operations*.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES SKILLS AND SPECIAL ABILITIES

The following rules allow players to take the notable personalities from this book and plug them into their campaign play. The rules cover a very wide gamut of options, reflecting the disparate nature of the characters in this sourcebook. Some may have rules exclusive to a *BattleTech* boardgame, some may have rules only appropriate for roleplying using *A Time of War*, while others may have a mix. Players are encouraged to use which rules are the most applicable for the type of game they're playing, adjudicating as necessary if a given character rule does not explicitly state every situation that might be covered.

House Kurita

Hohiro Kurita: Though still weak in body, the Coordinator's mind grows stronger every day after his time in a Blakist prison camp. He is an excellent BattleMech pilot despite his long-term injuries, and when taking the field of battle all Combine units ignore all Forced Withdrawal rules until Hohiro leaves the field. Note that

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while Combine units may ignore Forced Withdrawal, Hohiro will abide by these rules regardless of the situation.

Kiyomori Minamoto: The *Kanrei* is a strict believer in the traditions of the old Combine; anyone approaching Minamoto without using proper protocols receives a +4 modifier to all target numbers outside of combat. Conversely, someone well versed in the Dictum Honorarium will stand out to the *Kanrei*, who will do what he can to help—provided it is in the best interest of the Dragon.

Shakir Jerrar: The Director of the ISF is an accomplished Special Forces agent and a superb MechWarrior. Jerrar applies a +3 modifier to all Martial Arts Skill Checks; any operation planned personally by Jerrar applies a +2 modifier to all Checks involving intelligence and planetary data.

Mara Selencia: A highly successful field operative, Abbess Selencia is skilled in many non-combative skills involving espionage (such as negotiation, seduction, persuasion, etc). When dealing with the ISF, she applies a –2 modifier to all Checks due to the continued interdepartmental rivalry. Because she has the whole of the Order at her disposal, she has access to many high-profile corporate dossiers as well as many military leaders.

Sahalli Odessa: While patient with many Combine officials, Odessa has no time for those who do not respect the Azami way of life. Any who happen to offend the Caliph find their efforts hampered with piles of bureaucratic tape and political dead-ends. Those who are of proven Azami blood are treated as near-royalty on Azami worlds and lack nothing with regards to locally obtained materials and services.

Santin West: Aware that anything he says these days can be examined for multiple meanings, Khan West tends to respond cryptically, if at all, to those outside of Clan leadership. A ferocious fighter, the Khan is always surrounded with the best of the Clan's elite. Warriors in the Khan's Star will give their lives willingly for the Khan; use the *Shielding* rules (see p. 19, *TO*).

Minoru Kurita: Highly adept at most martial disciplines, Minoru applies a +4 modifier to all Checks involving Martial Arts skills. His dedication to the Clan ideals has made him extremely wise in Clan traditions and honor and can be an indispensable resource regarding Clan protocol and history to those who can gain an audience with him.

Akira Tormark: An accomplished DEST agent, Tormark has a lot of favor within the ISF and can readily access most of the department's information, as long as it preserves and strengthens the Dragon. Within his DEST skillsets, he is an elite sniper and tactician.

Albert Benton: Aside from being an elite Mechwarrior and able commander, Benton has garnered much respect among Clan warriors, especially those from the Dominion. When Benton is dealing with a Clan, he applies a +1 modifier to any non-combat Skill Checks; the modifier is a +3 if it is with Clan Ghost Bear.

Evette Sorenson: The *Chu-i*'s white-hot hatred for all things Word-related (or "tainted," according to her) gives her a +1 modifier to all combat-related Skill Checks when her target is a Blakist.

Gretchen Noda: Since the Ronin have no real supply network, Noda has had to rely on her former experience as the unit's quartermaster to barter and scrounge for repair parts and supplies. If assisting those who have been open and honest with her in their dealings, she will do what she can to assist in order to set up favors that may be called in later. Any hint of betrayal—real or imagined—turns her into a bitter enemy, and her temper knows no bounds.

Connor DeLon: DeLon is considered a shark among the top stable owners on Solaris, and there isn't anything on the planet he cannot get his hands on. However, being the shrewd businessman, DeLon never does anything for free. Those who ask for favors or do business with DeLon should expect similar favors to be called in at a later time. Refusal to cooperate in such arrangements never end well for the refusing party.

House Davion

Yvonne Steiner-Davion: A poor fighter, Yvonne applies a –2 modifier on those rare occasions when she engages in personal combat. The exception is her skill in fencing (taught to her by her husband), which negates the modifier. Her authority and the dignity of her office as Princess Regent, however, positively affects the morale of troops fighting in any system where she is known to be present and drives them to greater performance.

Tancred Sandoval: Once an Olympic-level fencer and even an instructor at NAIS for several years, Tancred is the Duke of the Draconis March as well as the husband to the Princess Regent. Any March force up to an RCT in size that is directly commanded by Tancred is not subject to Forced Withdrawal (see p. 258, *TW*) as long as he remains on the field. If Tancred is injured in battle, his force applies a –1 Initiative modifier until he is removed from the playing area.

Jon Davion: Before he entered active duty in the AFFS, Jon Davion was an instructor in military history at Sakhara, and he has used his knowledge to enhance the performance of the units he commands. Any unit under his direct command applies a +2 Initiative modifier and, if not using Hidden or Off-board Movement (see p. 259, *TW* and p. 192, *TO*, respectively), may place its units on the map after an opponent's units have been placed.

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Cole Williams: As head of MIIO, Williams has extensive intelligence knowledge of the Federated Suns and its immediate neighbors. When present for any battle against Capellan, Taurian, or Combine forces, Federated Suns units apply a +2 Initiative modifier. Against Word of Blake forces, however, they apply a –1 Initiative modifier.

Nathaniel Hasek: In his older years, Nathaniel has begun to revert to the Capellan March patriotism he displayed in his youth. When engaged in a fight that contradicts what he believes to be in the best interest of the March, all units under his command operate under Forced Withdrawal rules (see p. 258, *TW*).

Angela Hasek: Duchess Hasek's military career has been spent mostly in administrative work, first with the Department of the Quartermaster and later under her brother's reign as his chief advisor. She gained an appreciation for and skill in navigating the intricacies of bureaucracy and political maneuvering; add a +3 modifier to all Checks involving results from Federated Suns bureaucracy and political issues.

Helen Trempeleau: As a young woman, Helen Trempeleau founded and managed several grassroots campaigns for the betterment of the Outback. Her skills in organizing people and popular movements are unmatched. She remains extremely popular in the Filtvelt worlds for what many see as a principled stand against the apathy of New Avalon. Trempeleau refuses to use state-provided security and has standing contracts with many private corporate security firms to provide protection during her travels.

Thelos Redburn: Thelos has high-ranking family connections in both the Federated Suns and the Lyran Alliance. He also has a long friendship with the Allard-Liaos due to his father's friendship with Justin Allard and being posted to the court of St. Ives as a junior diplomat. Through his son and Thelos' multi-year acquaintance with David Lear, he has growing connections within Devlin Stone's movement.

Ross McKinnon: Captain McKinnon has extensive experience with fast, devastating hit-and-run type warfare from his years in command of the Fox's Teeth. He is also skilled at scavenging supplies and parts for his people, which comes in handy operating behind Blakist lines.

Raymond-Roger Marsin: In addition to being a fair military commander, Major General Marsin is a compelling orator and uses his abilities to influence public support for his causes. Marsin comes from a family that grew wealthy during the later Succession Wars from several industrial concerns, and though he has inherited a significant fortune, he has always been reluctant to exploit it.

Elric Von Steffelbus V: Extremely wealthy, von Steffelbus chooses to remain reclusive and mysterious rather than flaunting his wealth and title. His fingers stretch into many corporate pies, and it's no secret the Word of Blake doesn't like him.

Garman Doucette Having lost his parents and siblings to a pirate raid, Doucette has an abiding hatred for pirates and malcontents. For a brief period before the Clan invasion, he was a media darling for his outspoken defense of the Outback against prejudice from the more developed worlds of the FedCom; many in the region still remember this. After fleeing Malagrotta, Doucette had a price put on his head by the new regime.

House Liao

Sun-Tzu Liao: The Chancellor is one of the Inner Sphere's most persuasive personalities; he can take any situation and turn it into an inspirational watershed with an amazing display of logic, emotion, and nationalism. In any scenario where the Chancellor is present, Capellan troops automatically win Morale checks and ignore all Forced Withdrawal rules until Sun-Tzu leaves the field. In addition, the Chancellor can be very lavish to those whose actions serve the Confederation first, to the exclusion of all else. Those who act in their own self-interest, however, will find a stalwart opponent and obstacle to future dealings with the Confederation.

Kali Liao: Despite her small stature, Kali is a deadly combatant in both mind and body. She applies a +3 modifier to all close-combat actions. Because of her self-delusion of being the avatar of the Goddess of Death, she is extremely knowledgeable in anatomy, physiology, poisons, and medications. Regardless of any deals made with her, she takes advantage of the most expedient loopholes to serve her own self-interest, and she believes the Chancellor will protect her.

Kai Allard-Liao: Despite being the most elite MechWarrior known in the universe, Kai is reluctant to fight in yet another war. Those seeking him for his help in war or to further the fires thereof will not find any assistance from the Duke. However, those who need assistance to rebuild or help others do the same usually find the Duke sympathetic to their cause. If the project is on St. Ives, Kai goes to any length necessary to see it succeed, as long as the cause is just and not against the will of the Chancellor or the Confederation.

Talon Zahn: Zahn is strategically and tactically adept, and any time a force he commands is on the field, they may use any one

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of the following in addition to the force's regular special abilities: Off-board Movement, Banking Initiative, or Overrun Combat (see pp. 192-193, *TO*). Additionally, the force will ignore all Forced Withdrawal orders (see p. 258, *TW*) until Zahn has left the field.

Ion Rush: Still a consummate warrior, House Master Rush tempers much of his fellow warriors' enthusiasm with the hard hand of wisdom. Engagements that involve the House Master and his fellow Imarra warriors gain the Confederation force a +2 Initiative modifier. Personal acquaintances of the House Master know they can speak frankly with regard to the Confederation and its Chancellor, without fear of reprisal. However, Ion evaluates such information and determines if it can be used for his own benefit at a later date, as long as it does not cross paths with the Chancellor's plans.

Nancy Bao Lee: Director Lee uses any and every tool at her disposal to find the information required by the Chancellor, often before he even knows he needs it. Dealing with Magistracy and Concordat information can be slow at times, due to the Director's reluctant reliance on Naomi Centrella. Regardless, her analytical mind can come to proper conclusions faster than most, especially considering the scant information available.

Marcus Baxter: With a dedicated focus on the rebuilding of the MAC, Baxter does not involve himself in situations outside Menke and Mitchel. Because of his extensive mercenary connections within and without the MRBC, any contract negotiations that involve Baxter apply a +2 modifier for results that will favor Baxter and the MAC's goals.

Ty Wu Non: An elite MechWarrior, the *Shiao-zhang* is also a physical fitness fanatic and martial arts devotee. In close combat situations—both in a 'Mech and in personal combat—apply a +2 modifier to all combat Checks. In addition, the *Shiao-zhang* is skilled in Running, Swimming, Climbing, and Aerobics and applies a +1 modifier to Checks involving those skills.

Ling Wa: Since Wa spent immeasurable hours training his new warriors in House Ijori, any pilots of Green experience under his direct command operate as though they are of Regular skill, but only if the situation is a defensive one. However, in order to preserve his House's equipment and personnel, any units under his command automatically follow the Forced Withdrawal rules, regardless of the scenario's rules.

Mandarin Aiguo Yang: The Mandarin Yang has several deep corporate contacts within the Confederation and will use them if it benefits the Chancellor and the defense of Sian. Because many see the Mandarin as more of a suck-up, anyone affiliated with him will find it harder to deal with other high-ranking members of the Capellan nobility.

Mistress Hu-Tu: A very persuasive woman, Hu-Tu applies a +4 modifier to all Checks in negotiation and persuasion; her followers receive medical care at half the usual recovery time if they are treated at the clinic facilities she founded on Sian.

Xavier Bannson: Technically adept, Xavier Bannson sometimes takes a hands-on approach with his own pet projects. Equipment that is developed or repaired by Bannson and his personal technician team is well made and applies a +2 modifier to all Repair Checks (see p. 181, *SO*). Because Bannson outsources his security needs to small-time merc commands, he has several connections to Capellan-based mercenary units. If he is personally assisting, he applies a +2 modifier in all contract Negotiation Checks.

House Marik

Corinne Marik: As Captain-General of the entire Free Worlds League, Corinne has access to resources that most commanders can only dream of. To reflect this, when playing a *Battleforce* game, any force commanded by Corinne Marik applies +2 Initiative modifiers for the entirety of the scenario. Additionally, when creating Command Lists, ignore the 25 point cap; the player may choose up to 30 points worth of commands per List instead.

"Thomas Marik": The Imposter has little influence these days within House Marik; ignored by many provincial nobles and outright despised by others. This "taint" extends to those who freely and openly associate with him, causing a –2 modifier to any political Checks within the FWL.

Therese Brett-Marik: As one of Janos Marik's surviving children, Therese commands enormous respect throughout the entire Free Worlds League. To reflect this, any RPG character that has the attribute Contact: Therese Brett-Marik automatically passes all Diplomacy Checks when operating within the former League. Note this applies even on worlds within the Word of Blake Protectorate.

Titus Cameron-Jones: Despite his reputation as a fop, Titus showed considerable grasp of logistics and interaction with mercenary forces in the planning before the Regulans' ill-fated Operation: Vijay. Any force that is personally commanded by Titus Cameron-Jones and contains a mix of Regulan and Mercenary forces gains a +1 Initiative modifier for the entirety of the scenario. Furthermore, due to his planning skills, any Maintenance, Repair, and Salvage Checks (see pp. 169, 181, 191, *SO*, respectively) made while Titus is present are treated as being one level lower in quality, i.e., an F Quality 'Mech would be apply a +2 modifier for all checks rather than a +3 modifier. All Quality modifiers remain unchanged.

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Kirc Cameron-Jones: Kirc Cameron-Jones will stop at nothing to get his revenge on the Blakist forces that devastated his world. To this end he has created and used a considerable stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. Any force containing Kirc in an aerospace scenario may choose to assign up to four units as carrying Nuclear Weapons with no additional modifiers. Once the ordnance has been expended, the Regulan force must withdraw, regardless of their or their enemy's condition.

Alys Rousset-Marik: Duchess Alys' Resistance has made an art form of mobile repairs and using DropShips and other non-static facilities to expand her burgeoning force. As such, any force containing Alys Rousset-Marik may treat any Maintenance, Repair, and Salvage checks as happening in a Maintenance Facility, regardless of actual location.

Dame Dalma Humphreys: Dame Dalma's rescue of Naomi Centrella-Liao has greatly increased her standing within both the Capellan Confederation and the Magistracy of Canopus. As a result, any Espionage attempts by forces from or in the employ of those nations applies a +3 modifier when operating within in the Duchy of Andurien. Furthermore, because of the Dame's close relationship with companies like Grumman Amalgamated, any *BattleForce* force commanded by Dame Dalma may add a lance of Ontos Heavy Tanks for no additional cost.

Christopher Halas: Duke Halas is an old hand at the political intrigue that the Free Worlds Parliament ran on before the Jihad. However, his continued support for the false Thomas Marik has considerably eroded his supporter base. Any Diplomacy Checks performed in the presence of Duke Halas applies a +2 modifier if the target is anti-Thomas, and a –2 modifier if the target is pro-Thomas.

Charles Cunin II: Charles Cunin II's favorite pastime is the sport of branthing, and he loves nothing more than whiling away the hours engaged in discussion about the sport. Any RPG character with the attribute Scholar: Branthing applies a –4 modifier for any check required when in the presence of Secretary-General Cunin.

Morten Chandler: Chandler is the consummate "spy for hire" and his prices reflect this. Any force that contains Morten Chandler in a *Battleforce* scenario applies an additional +2 modifier to any Espionage Checks made.

Photon Brett-Marik: Marshal Brett-Marik has shown a flair for combined operations since assuming the position his father held at the head of the Tamarind military. As such, any force commanded by Photon Brett-Marik that contains elements from two or more states gains the Overrun Combat ability and may ignore Forced Withdrawal rules (see p. 258, *TW*).

Ardal Thomasson: Thomasson's great strength is his ability to mediate two opposing groups. It was for this reason he was appointed the Commonality's Chairman. As such, any Diplomacy checks performed in the presence of Thomasson applies a –2 modifier.

House Steiner

Adam Steiner If Adam is leading a command personally, he may choose any two of the following abilities, to be used once per scenario: Forcing the Initiative, Off-Map Movement, Overrun (see pp. 192-193, TO), Forced Withdrawal, or Hidden Units (see pp. 258-259, *TW*); useable only at the start of the scenario. He is also a crack shot with small-arms and should have at least a Skill of 7 or higher when using pistols.

Robert Kelswa-Steiner: Having ties to Free Skye, Robert has knowledge of all of its plans and intelligence. He also has immense power in the Isle of Skye and can appropriate any military unit that doesn't have express instructions otherwise. Not a trained warrior, he is useless in a combat setting. He is, however, an excellent fencer and will generally defeat anyone short of Olympic level in a sword fight.

Erich Sheriden: As Archonette of Kaumberg, Sheriden can reallocate resources within his Archonette as he sees fit. Sheriden can apply a +1 modifier to any force under his command for procuring supplies or personnel between missions. This modifier rises to +2 on Kaumberg itself.

Tamari LaRue: With her powerful connections, Duchess LaRue grants a +2 modifier to any unit under her command attempting to procure 'Mechs or parts from Blackstone Industries. She is a skilled debater and orator, and her NPC skills should reflect this.

Heather Steiner(-Fyhne): Possessing a keen eye, the wife of the Archon can apply a +3 modifier when preparing any celebration or getting ready to appear in public. She is a good conversationalist, relaxing people she meets in person, even those who dislike her. In a combat situation, she will seek to flee or hide, preferably under the direction of her bodyguards.

Morgan Kell The Grand Duke is respected among many mercenary commands, due to his longevity and successes leading the Kell Hounds. He can negotiate contracts with favorable

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terms, but often with riders that benefit the Hounds through commission rates and other bonuses; such terms allow units to repair and purchase standard equipment on Arc-Royal for 15% less than current market rates, however, so most don't complain.

Phelan Kell: Both an elite warrior and commander, Phelan can take advantage of nearly any combat or political situation. Any force up to a Cluster under his direct command gains a +1 initiative modifier and can choose any special ability (covered in *Interstellar Operations*) before the start of the scenario. Phelan may also ignore any adverse effects from interacting with someone with a hatred of the Clans in the Arc-Royal Theater.

Daniel Brewer: The Duke suffered grievous injuries during the liberation of Hesperus II; the healing of his cracked hip and broken femur is taking longer than normal due to a nasty infection. As a result, he cannot pilot a BattleMech and has little personal mobility. The Duke is quite a mathematical wiz; when calculating business matters or engaging in negotiations, apply a +3 modifier to those Checks.

Akira Brahe: Unfortunately, a side-effect of the disease that Colonel Brahe has contracted is deteriorating vision; as such, the Colonel finds it difficult to pilot a 'Mech these days; he applies a –2 modifier to all Piloting and Gunnery Skill Rolls and does not benefit from Careful Aim or Bracing actions (see p. 84, *TO*). He retains his sharp tactical mind, however, and if present in the system, gives the Hounds the Off-Map Movement ability (see p. 192, *TO*) once a scenario.

Hermione Aten (Kelswa-Steiner): The Duchess is a master manipulator of Skye media and captains of industry. While she is more than willing to assist those who have the best interest of Skye at heart, such action on her part will require future favors of equal value. Those who cross her will find their names sullied in the press and their reputations destroyed to the point that they would no longer be welcome in the Skye region of space.

Trent Hasseldorf Because of his adventurous past, the Baron retains many contacts in the corporate, security and exploration fields, able to call in political and the occasional corporate favors in order to help his Archonette. He has lately begun using these contacts as political leverage points against Archonette Sheridan, much to the older man's annoyance.

Thomas Hogarth: Despite media coverage to the contrary, the Lt. General is, to put simply, a moronic leader under fire. Forces that have Hogarth present—not necessarily in command—suffer a –5 Initiative modifier, due to his own "free thinking" style of combat that inevitably gets everyone killed but himself. In addition, the General has two extra Edge points that can be used during the course of a scenario, due to his preternatural luck of escaping certain death situations.

Ghost Bear Dominion

Aletha Kabrinski: The Khan, even in her advanced age, can still be hotheaded and rash, especially with Warriors who don't know their place in the Clan. Impatient in battle, Aletha tends to be an aggressive light 'Mech pilot in a Clan dominated by heavier war machines.

Ragnar Magnusson: Very popular among Rasalhagians and Ghost Bears alike, Ragnar is the perfect balancing point for Khan Kabrinski. When Ragnar commands a force where at least half of the troops are native Rasalhagians, the unit gains a +2 Initiative modifier and ignores Forced Withdrawal rules (see p. 258, *TW*) until the saKhan calls for withdrawal.

Laurie Tseng: The oldest active Warrior in the Touman, Loremaster Tseng has good grasp of slow, steady assaults that take strategic concerns into account. She has excellent relations with the other Inner Sphere Clans and can call upon the resources of Mimir for any intelligence analysis, getting results in half the time normally required.

Christian Månsdottir: Respected by nearly all Rasalhagians and well-liked by many across the Inner Sphere, the former First Lord has extensive knowledge of asymmetrical warfare from his days fighting the Combine and Clan Wolf. The poisoning attempt on his life in 3067 has left him in a frail and weakened state, and he is constantly attended to by a competent medical staff.

Margrethe Minuit: A logistical genius, Minuit enjoys much respect among Rasalhague troops, despite her political views. She is very adept at cutting through military bureaucracy when necessary.

Winfrid: Factor Winfrid is a creative thinker and risk-taker, who gets along well with Inner Sphere merchants and corporate executives. His bargaining skills rival those of the best Shark merchants and he usually gets what he wants, reflected with a +3 modifier to all Checks involving negotiation, bargaining, and deal making.

Cilla Amdahl: A prolific and charismatic speaker, Cilla has extensive connections with Rasalhague resistance to Ghost Bear rule. Her status as a demagogue has made her and those who associate with her a target for the Dominion Watch.

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Lars Borjon: A natural light 'Mech pilot and a skilled scout, Lars applies a +2 modifier to all Piloting Skill Rolls when at the controls of a light BattleMech. In addition, he has an increased chance of detecting hidden units; when using a Beagle Active Probe, he automatically discovers all Hidden Units (see p. 259, *TW*) on the current mapsheet.

Clan Wolf

Vladimir Ward: A political genius and brilliant warrior, any force directly under Khan Ward's command apply a +2 Initiative modifier. Vladimir is a radical Crusader, meaning he rarely gets the best out of Wolf Wardens. Warden troops fighting under his command can be regarded as no better than Reliable, no matter their base loyalty to Clan Wolf. Because of his reputation as a brutal victor, opposing forces will rarely surrender to Khan Ward if there is any alternative.

Ivan Kerensky: An outstanding strategic planner and flexible strategist, Ivan eschews any tactics that conflict with his Crusader scruples. He is more effective at working with Wardens than Khan Ward. Wardens serving under his direct command can be regarded as no better than Loyal, no matter their base loyalty to Clan Wolf.

Katya Kerensky: Since Katya is head of the Wolf Watch, any unit serving under her command benefits from excellent intelligence. The highest-ranking Warden in Clan Wolf, she commands fanatical loyalty from Warden troops, but no better than reliable loyalty from Crusaders. Fanatical Crusaders serving under her command should be treated as having Questionable loyalty.

Dirk Radick: Fiercely loyal to Loremaster Kerensky, he will do everything he can to prove her right. His hatred of the Word of Blake translates into his elite combat skill, where he applies a +1 to-hit modifier when his target is a Word of Blake operative.

Katherine Wolf: Katherine Wolf can find a way to get whatever it is she wants. She still has several key contacts within the Lyran Alliance, but the price she requires of anyone asking for her help can be higher than the asker can imagine.

Carlos: Factor Carlos has an eidetic memory, remembering facts and details and then using such data to assist him in cutting deals that benefit the Wolves in some way. When gathering supplies or equipment, he can usually get common and uncommon items in half the usual time.

Indira Mehta: An efficient and intelligent technician, Factor Mehta applies a +2 modifier to all Repair and Salvage Checks (see pp. 181, 191, *SO*, respectively) on projects she handles directly. Whenever she is present within a given system, Wolf equipment is repaired 25 percent faster than normal.

Clan Jade Falcon

Samantha Clees: An excellent warrior, though losing the battle against age, Clees has focused her leadership skills, allowing subordinate commanders under her direct command a +2 modifier when using the Leadership skill. Any unit under her command will follow strict zellbrigen rules until the enemy has broken them.

Uvin Buhallin: The saKhan of the Falcons gives the ability of Banking Initiative (see p. 192, *TO*) to any unit under his direct command, up to a Cluster in size. He also can grant a +2 modifier to any subordinate dealing with Jade Falcon bureaucracy or lower castes.

Brian Pryde: Brian knows all that the Falcon Watch knows; if the data isn't readily known he can quickly access it. He is not only skilled in the arts of combat but also subterfuge—in combat he should be considered a Veteran pilot, and he also applies a +4 modifier to any games of chance.

Diane Anu: If needed to perform maintenance, Diane is considered a regular Technician. In combat, she grants any force under her command a +2 Initiative modifier. Units under her command do not adhere to zellbrigen (see p. 273, *TW*) and gain the Overrun Combat ability (see p. 193, *TO*) and may also ignore the first point of pilot damage they receive.

Quinn Kerensky: With the belief that the best defense is a good offense, any Falcon unit under Quinn's command may cancel out a combat special ability of an opposing force or commander if they are the attacker in a scenario. She also provides a +3 Initiative modifier to any force under her command, but decreasing by one for each size greater than Star (thus a Cluster under her command would apply a +1 Initiative modifier). Any forces under her com-

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mand (including herself) may use physical attacks at any time and apply a –1 to-hit modifier to such attacks. As an NPC in an RPG setting, Quinn has a maximum BOD score of 4.

Daniel: Head of the merchant caste, Daniel can obtain anything he needs shy of a WarShip. Those operating under his orders apply a +2 modifier to any negotiations checks within the Jade Falcon OZ and +1 outside of it. Raised under Jade Falcon rule, Daniel has learned to endure the physical reactions of the warriors and is considered to have the Toughness Trait.

Krys: While not excelling in any one field, Krys' management and facilitation skills allow those working under her direct supervision to apply +1 modifier for both leadership and any science skills. In a combat situation, she has no applicable combat skills but will help out where needed, such as providing first aid or transporting ammunition.

Clan Hell's Horses

James Cobb: Khan Cobb is a fierce and elite Elemental warrior, with all stats to the maximum for such a soldier. His intelligence is near-genius level, and the Khan applies a +2 modifier to all Checks involving tactics, negotiation, mathematics and organization.

Tanya DeLaurel: The saKhan is an experienced bidder; when conducting a batchall or bidding forces (see p. 273, *TW*), she applies a +3 modifier to rolls that affect the outcome. When behind the controls of her *Vulture*, she only applies a +1 to-hit modifier for Aimed Shots, rather than the standard modifier.

Temuchin Amirault: Loremaster Amirault is highly adept at Clan traditions and culture to the point that he can manipulate them to suit the purposes of the Clan. He is truly politically neutral and refuses to take sides between the Clan's Crusader and Warden factions.

Jake Kabrinski: An Elemental warrior, Kabrinski has had major reconstructive surgery and possesses a large amount of cybernetics, though none resemble the function or mode of Inner Sphere technology. He is highly respected in the Dominion and retains many Warrior Caste contacts within his former Clan. Kabrinski is adept in space-borne operations and applies a +1 modifier to zero-G maneuvers and combat rolls (see pp. 24 and 119, *SO*, respectively).

Hollonna: Her hulking size serves her well in negotiations with Inner Sphere merchants; Hollonna applies a +1 modifier for intimidation and high-pressure situations. She has extensive corporate contacts in all of the Inner Sphere Clans as well as the Lyran Alliance and Draconis Combine.

Mohammed (Kepler): Extremely intelligent, Mohammed tends to be a loner and does not deal well with anyone outside the Scientist or Warrior castes, unless it involves genetics—in which case, he will go to any length to find success.

Clan Diamond Shark

Barbara Sennet: Khan Sennet is an exemplary long-term thinker and excels at strategic planning. For many decades, she has enjoyed a good working relationship with the Shark Merchant Caste, including them in many of her plans. All obtaining parts and repair Checks (see pp. 178 and 181, *SO*, respectively) for units under direct command of the Khan apply a +4 bonus modifier.

Alan Hawker: In his younger days, Hawker was something of a hothead. Though he mostly has his temper under control these days, it can still occasionally come out. He has a particular hate for Clan Wolf and will take every opportunity to hurt or inconvenience them. When facing Clan Wolf on the field of battle, he and any force he commands apply a –2 Initiative modifier.

Lorenzo: Merchant Factor Lorenzo has led his caste for several decades and is considered one of the best dealmakers the Sharks have seen this century. He maintains friendly relations among several Inner Sphere powers, including a close friendship with the late Chandrasekhar Kurita. Lorenzo is used to working closely with his Khans and was a frequent collaborator with former saKhan Labov. There is nothing in the Inner Sphere that Lorenzo cannot get.

Semi Kalasa: Kalasa's specialty is gathering information from unusual sources, which has helped the Shark Watch accumulate a large amount of intel on Clan and Spheroid activities alike. She highly distrusts the Inner Sphere and its inhabitants and will not work with anyone who is not Clan.

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Naomi Nagasawa: While only a fair aerospace pilot, Nagasawa possesses an unexpected grasp of tactics that has helped advance her career. She is viewed with some suspicion by older, more conservative warriors who distrust her new-fangled ideas. When leading Veteran and Elite troops into battle, forces under her command apply a –1 Initiative modifer.

Xoc: Uncharacteristically friendly and charming for a Clanner, he has begun to attract a following of young Shark warriors and some lower caste members. All such warriors, including Xoc, have excellent marksman skills inside the cockpit and outside; apply +1 to-hit modifier both when using a Gunnery Skill inside a vehicle and Small Arms combat when outside a vehicle.

Clan Snow Raven / Outworlds Alliance

Lynn McKenna: Because of her advanced age, Khan McKenna always uses a chosen champion to stand in her stead in any Trials that directly involve her. She tends to rotate through a core of warriors within her Keshik, matching their skill to her opponent's perceived threat level. Khan McKenna is also incredibly politically sharp and applies a +5 modifier to all negotiation and persuasion Checks involving political matters.

Alberto Crow: As brutal in person as the Khan is in politics, saKhan Crow tends to see things from a military point of view, which doesn't mesh well with Alliance politicians. When he or his agents are dealing with Alliance officials, add up to a +5 modifier to the target roll; the more important the task or request, the higher the modifier.

Mitchell Avellar: A devout pacifist, Mitchell applies a –2 modifier to all combat-oriented rolls (anything that uses the Gunnery Skill). Recognizing the need for security—but decidedly not happy about it—he usually acquiesces to his advisors and has up to three bodyguards nearby at all times.

Maurice Avellar: The Senior Chairman still spends time training with his troops and is in the best physical shape of his life. He is a battlefield strategist, always preparing for the unexpected, and as such may augment a force under his command with an additional company of mechanized infantry to use for flanking security.

Klaus Harper: The Loremaster has been making in-roads into the Alliance's infrastructure and political arena, though he often faces several obstacles due to his being Clan. As such, the Loremaster tends to utilize others as props and fronts, and those who are successful find themselves in Klaus's favor.

Barnabas Huard: Seeing opportunity once again, Huard has been reactivating his old political network in his renewed push to dissolve the Alliance. Those in the Baronet's company lack for nothing as long as Huard can obtain it—but those on the opposition find the Baronet a stubborn and tenacious foe who uses whatever clout he can to foil their plans.

Maya Avellar: An idealist, Maya has taken great pains to distance herself from her family and the government until it returns to its foundational roots. As such, anyone who has connections to her family or the Alliance government will find themselves shut out of her circle and possibly removed. She has some connections within the criminal community, mainly to provide her with false identities and data scrubbing to help maintain her invisibility.

Magistracy of Canopus

Naomi Centrella-Liao: As a leader and tactician, Naomi applies a +1 Initiative modifier to any force she commands. Additionally any casualties suffered count half as much for determining commander abilities (see p. 191, TO) and morale (see p. 211, *TO* and p. 38, *SO*). The Magestrix is an excellent negotiator and diplomat with the ability to make every person she speaks with feel as if they are the only one in the room with her.

Hadji Doru: A strategic genius, Doru applies a +3 Initiative modifier when commanding a force larger than a company. His unit can also use Forcing the Initiative (see p. 192, *TO*), though this cannot be used in conjunction with Naomi Centrella-Liao's abilities. His current physical condition makes him a Green-rated warrior if he encounters fighting, and he has a BOD of 3 or less in an RPG setting.

Erde Centrella: Her ability to manipulate medical personnel and supplies allows any unit that she is overseeing to immediately recover twenty percent of its injuries. If forced into action by herself, she is an excellent medic (Elite medical technician) and has basic combat training.

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Yasmine Bellanca: As head of the MIM, Yasmine has access to all Magistracy intelligence information. While this focuses on the Magistracy and neighboring realms, the MIM has collected substantial information from the entire Inner Sphere, either through agents of their own or by bartering information. Yasmine is a sniper-level shot with most firearms and is experienced in hand-to-hand fighting.

Carver Trondel: A skilled negotiator known for using unexpected tactics to accomplish his desired ends, Carver has acquired allies in distant nations. Foreign representatives visiting him have a reasonably good chance of being operatives sent to protect their distant friend. Roll 2D6 for any such visitor—on a result of 9+, the visitor is a member of that nation's special forces (such as Loki) or secret police (such as the ISF) entrusted by their leader to help defend Trondel against any assailant.

Dirk McEvans: McEvans trained on every world in the Fronc Reaches and has a special affinity for the terrain on each planet. Therefore, whenever McEvans is involved in 'Mech combat on any Fronc Reaches world, the player controlling him automatically gets to deploy six minefields, regardless of whether he is the attacker or defender. Additionally, McEvans is able to lure the enemy to his chosen field of battle. As such, McEvans can alter any urban map rolled by the opposing player to any other non-urban map.

Kamala Roy: Roy has a superior ability to catch trends before they blossom. Any subordinates working under her apply a +2 modifier for any advertising or creative effort. Additionally, she has access to extensive information on Magistracy and Capellan consumer data—some public, some corporate secrets. Roy is a non-combatant and is rarely out of range of her bodyguards.

Taurian Concordat

Boris Tharn: Protector Tharn is easily recognizable; whenever out in public, he is constantly thronged with well-wishers and admirers, despite the best efforts of his security detail. His charisma is quite high and that aura extends to those within his circle of confidence. Those who wind up on his bad side find their way blocked not by Tharn, but by his many aides and advisors.

Victor Sharpe: Possessing extensive contacts within the TDF, Sharpe can move nearly anything through the supply chain with little question. He secretly harbors an addiction to alcohol, one that he will go through great political lengths to keep hidden.

Cham Kithrong: Kithrong has a knack for working public opinion when necessary. His extensive media contacts give him a +1 modifier to any Checks that involve public speaking and deal making.

Erik Martens-Calderon: The young Calderon has begun showing an aptitude for infantry and armor combat. Whenever he is leading a force that consists of 51 percent or more of infantry and/or vehicle units, he may execute the Overrun combat ability up to twice a scenario.

Cole Lorian: Dependant on others for intelligence reports, Lorian applies a +2 modifier when using the Word of Blake to conduct searches and other data retrieval tasks. However, if he uses any other intel network, those Checks apply a –1 modifier.

Talia Martens: When facing pirates, a force led by Talia may add up to 2 hexes of mines for every eight units fielded by her opponent. These mines are pre-placed before her force enters and are considered hidden; the mines may be of any variety as long as they fit the scenario's parameters.

Matthias Commager: With an extensive personal fortune behind him, Commager can get most corporate and planetary governmental information needed as long as it furthers the aim of TTL. He is boorish in person, however, as he finds ways to offend guests in order to see their "true mettle."

Marian Hegemony

Cassius O'Reilly: A brilliant and ruthless politician, Cassius tends to be underestimated because of his youth. As Caesar of the Hegemony, he is able to get the best equipment for any unit he chooses. Forces benefiting from Cassius's support apply a +1 modifier when procuring supplies between missions (see p. 178, *SO*).

Michael Alexander: A commoner and an iconoclast, Michael Alexander has the unmatched ability to irritate patricians. Troops

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serving under his direct command suffer delays when forced to go through normal Hegemony channels to gain material or support. However, because of Michael's close connection with the Caesar, he is able to cut through all red tape—if Cassius O'Reilly is available to help.

Ivy Ward: Ivy is a brilliant administrator known for her consummate political skill, and any unit serving under her direct command gains the benefit of excellent political and material support. Units serving under her command gain a +1 modifier when procuring supplies between missions.

ComStar

Gavin Dow: Those within Dow's inner circle of advisors and confidants who are outside the Order can send and receive messages at will through ComStar-operated HPGs without charge. When dealing with Com Guard personnel, Dow tends to rely on others to run interference for him, refusing to communicate directly unless absolutely necessary.

Victor Steiner-Davion: Victor is a superior tactician and strategist, and forces under his direct command apply a +5 Initiative modifier and may perform up to two of the following abilities during a scenario: Banking the Initiative, Off-Map Movement, or Overrun (see pp. 192-193, *TO*). Additionally, such forces may ignore Forced Withdrawal (see p. 258, *TW*) until Victor withdraws from the battlefield, and they receive a +2 modifier to all Morale Checks (see p. 211, *TO* and p. 38, *SO*).

Elise MacTaggart: Single-minded in her focus to fix ROM, MacTaggart ignores anyone who shows any wavering devotion to ComStar. Those who manage to gain her trust receive nearly limitless access to ROM's intelligence database, but they must keep in mind that Elise could call in favors at any time—and they are expected to comply unconditionally.

Alain Beresick: Beresick trained relentlessly for years to master the art of black naval warfare; a vessel under Beresick's direct command applies a –1 to-hit modifier. Additionally, any naval force under his overall command may opt to move half its force after all enemy combatants have moved; this ability can only be used once per scenario.

Galen Cox: Cox has a sharp analytical mind and can assess most intelligence reports to determine other possible outcomes and results. He is an exceptional MechWarrior and if piloting a medium BattleMech, apply a +2 modifier to all Piloting Skill Rolls.

Christine Harwell: Due to her years organizing and leading an underground resistance network on New Avalon, Harwell has made several deep contacts within the Federated Suns mafia. While reluctant to use them, she will if she believes it necessary. Such contacts come at a price, however, and periodically the mob feeds her sunstim addiction with "anonymous" deliveries.

Word of Blake

"The Master": Searching for information on the Master has become a cliché for inviting a death sentence. Regardless of the method, the person or the circumstances, anyone who has delved too deeply into the mystery of the Master has found themselves dead shortly after, usually at the hands of a ROM assassin or as the target of a Shadow Division. Information on the Master is wide-ranging and knotted with red herrings and other misdirections; all attempts to discover such data apply a +5 modifier to the target number.

Cameron St. Jamais: An experienced *Awesome* pilot, the Precentor Martial enjoys commanding from the front lines. He inspires his troops; when St. Jamais is present on the battlefield, apply a +3 modifier to all Morale Checks (see p. 211, *TO* and p. 38, *SO*); he may also Bank the Initiative (see p. 192, *TO*) once each scenario.

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Apollyon: Leader of the Manei Domini, Precentor Apollyon is considered to be an Omicron-level Specter, for purposes of skills and implants, as covered in *Jihad Hot Spots: 3072*, page 124. His command of the Dominus order is absolute and all Manei Domini will listen and obey him unquestioningly. Whenever anyone searches for data on him—regardless of where or how—he will eventually find out and determine for himself if the interloper needs to be eliminated, ignored or simply "taught a lesson." When piloting his *Shootist* or operating Demon-class battle armor, Apollyon applies a +4 modifier to all appropriate Piloting and Gunnery Skill Rolls.

Alexander Kernoff: An intelligent man in the extreme, Precentor ROM Kernoff is dedicated to eradicating his fellow intelligence peers in the Inner Sphere. He has a vast array of technology, manpower and fanaticism at his disposal and unabashedly uses it. Highly intuitive, Kernoff applies a +3 modifier to all Checks involving analysis, knowledge, intimidation, interrogation and perception. Those who serve him successfully will find a faithful contact; those who cross him will find a relentless enemy.

David Alsace: Intimately knowledgeable of his TerraSec forces and the terrain they defend, Alsace allows forces under his command to place up to half of their forces as Hidden Units (see p. 259, *TW*) if they are the Defender in a scenario. If Alsace's forces are the Attacker, no defending forces may field Hidden Units; these units are revealed at the end of the first Movement phase.

Gregory Zwick: Any naval force under Zwick's command may move all its fighters after all other unit movement is completed; this may occur only once a scenario. In addition, drones under his command are automatically deployed at the beginning of the game with a starting velocity no less than 8.

Lucifer: Ruthless to the extreme, Lucifer and those under his command ignore all Forced Withdrawal (see p. 258, *TW*) rules. When at least half of the opposing force has been crippled or destroyed, all of Lucifer's units apply a +1 to-hit modifier to all weapon attacks.

Others

Devlin Stone: Stone is extremely charismatic in public and many find it hard to resist the Coalition leader's requests. Stone's extreme reluctance to discuss his past means that those who press the issue find themselves on the outside within short order, often at the head of a difficult mission. Forces under Stone's direct command receive a +4 Initiative modifier and may use the Overrun combat ability (see p. 193, *TO*) up to three times in a scenario. Additionally, such forces are required to operate under Forced Withdrawal rules, even if their unit (or leader's) ability overrides it.

Belle Lee: An Elite MechWarrior, Lee inspires such confidence in her troops that they receive a +2 bonus to all Morale Checks (see p. 211, *TO* and p. 38, *SO*). When Lee commands Stone's Lament or Stalwart, the unit(s) use the *Shielding* rules (see p. 19, *TO*) to protect her. Anyone with media connections will often find themselves on the short end of her temper and "volunteering" for difficult assignments.

Reiner Wooden: A financial wiz, Wooden can squeeze additional monies out of negotiated mercenary contracts, either for or against the unit, as long as it benefits IE. As such, he applies a +3 modifier to all Checks involving negotiations, bargaining, persuasion, and financial issues involved in mercenary contracts (regardless of MRBC sanction). His extensive corporate networks can help him acquire anything needed for his close associates in half the time.

Calvin McIntyre: As President of the Circinus Federation, McIntyre commands the direct loyalty of the McIntyre Guards. Due to their status, any force commanded by Calvin McIntyre may choose to replace up to two light units with two Assault units, and up to two Medium-weight with two Heavy units. Furthermore, due to McIntyre's close relationship with the Word of Blake, any force he commands may choose up to 50 percent of its units from the Word of Blake "B" Column on their Random Unit Assignment Table (see p. 139, *Jihad Secrets: The Blake Documents*).

Albert Snow: Since his forces successfully repelled a Clan raid in 3073, Snow has drilled his units incessantly in anti-Clan tactics. As such, any HSF force that contains Snow may ignore Forced Withdrawal (see p. 258, *TW*). Furthermore, any force containing Snow may choose to abide by zellbrigen (see 273, *TW*) against a Clan foe. If at any time the force breaches the established honor level, the Hansa player applies +2 Initiative modifier for the next three turns to reflect the Clansmen's confusion.

Lise Burrill: The Umayyads are experts at scrounging parts and materials to keep their rag-tag bunch of 'Mechs operating, and no one does this better than Caliph Burrill. Any Umayyad force that contains Burrill applies a +2 modifier to all Technician Checks for repair and salvage purposes (see pp. 181, 191, *SO*, respectively).

Joseph Noye: Noye is a cruel and capricious leader and rules with an iron fist. Several mutinies have made him suspicious of his own forces; as a result, only the trustworthiest troops serve in his personal retinue. Unfortunately, such dogmatic loyalty also results in fairly unimaginative forces. Any Castilian force that contains

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Joseph Noye receives a –2 Initiative modifier for the length of the scenario but may ignore Forced Withdrawal results (see p. 258, *TW*). The force also gains the Overrun Combat ability (see p. 193, *TO*).

Bertram Habeas: Despite his apparent comfort in the public eye, Habeas is actually extremely shy and stressed when serving as a public figure. As such, Checks that involve anything outside of his current project apply a –2 modifier for as long as he is in public. Privately, he is loyal to a fault and will do whatever he can to assist those he deems worthy of respect and trust, including using his media and academic resources to the fullest.

The Bounty Hunter: The Bounty Hunter is a hyper-elite mercenary adept at all kinds of combat; his skills as an NPC should reflect this. Due to his extensive contacts that spiderweb across all of the Inner Sphere, the Hunter applies a +5 modifier to all Checks involving data mining, analysis, and planetary reconnaissance.

"Damocles": A highly successful agent, Damocles applies a +2 modifier to all covert operational Checks and any Checks involving intelligence analysis about worlds within the Word of Blake Protectorate. If he is part of a force that opposes a Blakist force with Manei Domini, Damocles goes into a blind rage; he applies a +1 to-hit modifier to all weapon attacks against Domini targets, and a –2 to-hit modifier for weapon attacks against all other targets.

Wolfgang Hansen: Due to his protracted blood war against all things Taurian, Hansen and any unit under his command apply a +1 to-hit modifier for any weapon attacks against Taurian targets. However, because of this single-minded focus, Hansen and all under his command apply a –1 to-hit modifier for weapon attacks against all other targets.

Elian Whitney: An adept mediator, Whitney applies a +2 modifier to all diplomatic-related Checks. When negotiating mercenary contracts for cadre, garrison, or training duty, he applies a +1 bonus modifier to all Negotiation Checks.

Lucas Beckett: Any force under Beckett's command applies a +2 Initiative modifier if it is regiment-sized or smaller. In addition, any opposing force that is Green or of Questionable Loyalty (see p. 39, *SO*) applies a –1 Initiative modifier when facing a force led by Beckett. Also, with the growth on Randis, anyone negotiating on his behalf to bring people or trade to Randis applies a +1 modifier to relevant Skill Checks.

Egan Telosa: Telosa is an excellent orator and philosopher, allowing his subordinates to apply +1 modifier on diplomacy checks. He also possesses a natural aptitude for piloting speeder cars, but suffers from too many injuries to take advantage of this outside of an emergency. His advanced age prevents him from being of much use in any combat situation.

Giovanni Estrella de la Sangre: Though the head of a major weapons manufacturer, Giovanni has little to no skills in military matters, from tactics to combat. His extreme luck has saved him more than once on the corporate battlefield, often by digging up dirt on his opponents. Giovanni applies a +3 modifier to Checks that involve games of chance and risk, including analysis and deception; conversely, he applies a –2 modifier to Checks where his business expertise is put to the test. He is not above selling out his compatriots and those who count on him to come through may find themselves waiting a long time.

RUNNING CAMPAIGNS USING COVERT OPERATIONS

In the complex universe of *BattleTech*, there is no nation, Clan, private agency, corporation or notable personage that isn't up to something dirty that their faction's laws and directives officially cannot condone. For whatever reason, be it a corrupt noble's lust for power or a genuine sense of corporate urgency at the highest levels of management, covert operations conducted by every faction—from simple spying to sabotage to assassination—are a shady, and necessary, fact of life.

While *Masters & Minions* contains a number of persons, corporations, entities, and power brokers that utilize new game mechanics as described elsewhere in this Rules section, gamemasters and players should take care not to let the mechanics of the game interfere with game play itself. Campaigns involving covert operations or covert-operative characters should be an exercise in roleplaying, not accounting or "roll-playing." These rules are merely suggestions designed to help run fun adventures and games. If they interfere with the flow of your game, then feel free to modify or ignore them as needed.

Characters within the *BattleTech* universe—whether player characters or NPCs—should be more than mere strings of statistics. All characters in any campaign should have their own motivations and habits that help shape their actions. A technician spy, for example, may have grown attached to his assigned targets, to the point where he fails to perform an act of sabotage demanded of him by his superiors. A DEST sniper, steeped in the Combine's samurai code, might tip off his prey to his presence with a warning shot, giving his mark one last chance to flee or fight for his life before firing the next bullet. Such character details, whether physical or social, can enhance a roleplaying experience.

When running covert operations, gamemasters should emphasize the difference between appearance and reality, a sense of misdirection that adds tension and can foster paranoia. Though not always violent, the business of covert operations is dangerous, with potential enemies on all sides seeking any opportunity to eliminate, capture or discredit, all without giving themselves away. Here, more than anywhere else in the universe, nothing is what it seems.

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CLAN VS. INNER SPHERE ADVENTURES

Ever since the Clan invasion began—one could argue ever since the appearance of Wolf's Dragoons—covert operations have played a role in the interaction between the Inner Sphere and Kerensky's descendants. The Clans, with their rigid codes of honor and their ritualized form of warfare, have embraced a more "honest" mindset and are often outclassed by Inner Sphere agents. However, just because there is some disparity between agencies, Clan leaders—especially those of the Inner Sphere Clans—have proven quick to adapt their use of covert intelligence. While there remain vast differences between the Inner Sphere and Clan cultures that have made infiltration more difficult, the Clans continue to learn and grow in gathering and acting on covertly gained intel.

The main thing to bear in mind when running covert operations that pit Clan or Inner Sphere factions against one another is the relative sophistication of each agency's operations and how well they work against each other. By and large, for example, Clan agencies are easy to get around and, with the exception of a few competent operatives, are largely staffed by the dregs of Clan society. They focus primarily on counter-intelligence and scouting, and their lack of sophistication in other areas of covert operations makes a lot of these agents over-specialized and easy to bypass. In addition, Clan characters must deal with the problem of Clan honor, which is largely incompatible with the actions of a covert operative. Gamemasters running a Clan-based covert operations campaign will find the clash of honor with the inherent underhandedness of completing a mission a compelling plot device and an interesting adventure hook.

By comparison, Inner Sphere intelligence agencies are monolithic shadows, invisible—or visible and feared—extensions of their respective governments and leaders. Long on experience and well-equipped, field agents from many Inner Sphere and Periphery government spy agencies are masters at what they do; consequently, they tend to be more challenging opponents than a typical Clan operative. Inner Sphere agents are widespread across multiple backgrounds and environments, including "sleepers" and turncoats among other agencies. Gamemasters can find a wealth of opportunity for adventures in Inner-Sphere campaigns, especially if the characters are connected with notable personages such as those described in this book.

"Free agent" characters—those in business for themselves, like specialized mercenaries—may get involved in Inner Sphere or Clan-based covert operations simply by being hired for a job. Such missions are usually so trivial as to be unworthy of dedicated agents, or so dangerous or criminal that using a mercenary provides a level of protection against retaliation. As the Clans never hire agents in such a fashion, free agent characters will likely encounter the Clan Watch only by acting against it.

Characters working for a government agency or leader—regardless of faction—may find that failure brings with it instant denial of their existence. How far such denial can go can be the grounds for ongoing adventure. Players or NPCs could be star field agents of their House one day and outlaws the next, hunted by their former comrades or pursued by rival agencies looking to milk their knowledge.

NATION-STATES VS. PRIVATE AGENCIES

The nation-states of the Inner Sphere and Clans aren't the only ones engaged in the dirty business of covert operations. Corporations, underground organizations, and even wealthy individuals often have their own agents to pursue private agendas. Though these agents are often private investigators and bounty hunters—little more than semi-legalized spies and mercenaries—others can be as deadly as any Inner Sphere operative and may even be renegades with training and equipment paid for by their former employers.

Compared to covert operations conducted by a government, private agencies' efforts must have a special emphasis on stealth. With fewer resources than a government, private citizens and corporations—even those with an interstellar reach—often shy away from military affairs. Among corporations, the need for stealth arises from the very real fear of getting caught in an unethical act, soiling the company's reputation and costing it sales, not to mention possible retaliatory action from an offended government. Private citizens, who may act out of any number of reasons, likewise prefer to keep their activities secret, though their fears usually center on police involvement rather than military retaliation. Underground organizations, from organized crime to rebels and terrorists, may not act as covertly, but they also fear the wrath of a dedicated government intelligence agency.

Player characters may become involved in the realm of covert operations in a number of ways. If they are agents for a House government or Clan, they can be brought in to investigate suspicious activities and uncover a conspiracy that they must then thwart or expose. As free agents, they may be hired by a corporate employer, underworld leader, or private citizen with similar goals, and the price of failure can be more than just the loss of promised fees. The same rules apply if the characters are members of the organization they are working for, though being officially on the payroll removes their employer's ability to deny any connection with them. As a result, failure in this kind of mission may result in a more permanent solution to protect the employer or person of interest from any backlash. No matter whom the employer or what the circumstance, failing a mission can provide an excellent hook for further adventures.

Even within a single agency—government or private—characters may find themselves mired in layers of intrigue. Many state and private agencies are subdivided and entrusted with a tremendous amount of sensitive information. Within these intel-

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ligence machines are agents seeking promotion, departments engaged in "turf wars," turncoats bought out by rival agencies, and moles slipped in by the same. As a result, paranoia permeates all levels, with internal watchers keeping an eye on the rank and file. This element of internal distrust may provide a seed for more adventure hooks, regardless of who is currently employing the characters.

TYPES OF GAMES

There are as many different types of covert operations campaigns as there are characters. Missions may focus on a single aspect or involve several, one building on another—such as after-operational analysis—or they may involve legitimate activities serving as a smokescreen for less-official activity, such as a diplomatic cover. The following sections present the various campaign types in broad strokes, together with examples of each and their interactions with other mission profiles.

Espionage and Intelligence Gathering

The gathering of information is the most fundamental of covert operations and one of the least understood. The popular image of espionage is the agent who infiltrates an enemy installation, either sneaking in to steal particular secrets or undertaking a long-term undercover mission where they appear to work for one employer while providing intel to another. These are both genuine and valid missions, but they represent only one aspect of intelligence gathering—namely "humint," or human intelligence. Other aspects of intelligence gathering include communications and signal intelligence ("comint" and "sigint," respectively) and even simply monitoring the media.

Humint

Human intelligence falls into two broad categories: agents operating in "enemy" territory (the classic spy) and operatives recruited (or coerced) from within the target population. The former are often attachés serving on diplomatic missions, gathering intelligence in addition to their cover jobs. Such operatives can also serve as coordinators for local intelligence assets, in effect acting as a local overseer commonly referred to as the "station chief" or "resident." Local operatives can assist in intel gathering for a variety of reasons. The most common are ideological, such as aiding the expansion of a government or the elimination of a disliked local authority, and financial, such as bribery and greed. Less scrupulous operatives can ensure cooperation through blackmail and coercion, using the target's own foibles and vulnerabilities against him or her. Either type of operative brings the ever-present danger of the targeted nation determining the spy's presence and either unmasking him or, more insidiously, using the agent to feed false information to the spying power.

Humint is most powerful when it provides direct access to the target information or items. Provided the spy can be trusted, the

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information is first-hand, definitive, and less likely to be subject to interpretation than other sources of intelligence.

Sigint

Signals intelligence is the most pervasive—and in many regards, the easiest—form of espionage. At its simplest, it involves intercepting communications, decrypting, and then analyzing the content. Sigint is an important part of battlefield intelligence gathering, where considerable effort is made to divine the orders and reports of opposing forces. It is also equally valid when attempting to eavesdrop on diplomatic, industrial, financial, and criminal communications.

Local sigint on a city or world is relatively straightforward. The espionage team merely needs to tap into the information flow, which can be accomplished by listening to broadcast signals or hardwiring intercepts into the communications equipment of the sender or receiver. The latter provides more focused intelligence but usually requires some form of covert operation to install the listening devices. The former, while usually involving little more than appropriate receiving equipment, often nets a lot of superfluous information and thus requires considerably more analysis.

Interstellar sigint is a much trickier proposition because of the de facto monopoly on such communications equipment held by ComStar and the Word of Blake, requiring the compromising of their proprietary technologies (and official neutrality) to accomplish. In practice, this is not as difficult as it seems, in particular since the ComStar schism resulted in the dissemination of the HPG technology. Also, domestic links to and from planetary HPG stations are vulnerable to standard interception methods and to monitoring by the broadcasting organization—a boon when the intelligence-gathering agency is allied with a nation-state, such as the Word of Blake and the FWL. Some nations have found it worthwhile (on occasion) to use large radio and x-ray telescopes to monitor the communications and shipping of nearby hostile systems, usually within a few light-years. Subject to light-speed, such sigint does not provide prompt intelligence but does offer an understanding of enemy radio traffic and shipping patterns.

As a consequence of the damage to ComStar's and the Word of Blake's image caused by the schism, many users of HPG services use private encryption before sending messages. The development of alternative interstellar communications devices, such as the "black box" faxes of the Federated Suns, offers no guarantee against enemy interception. Such devices or their technical schematics might fall into enemy hands, compromising a supposedly secure system (as the AFFC discovered during the Clan invasion). Breaking encryption and sifting the wheat from the chaff is often an analyst's job rather than a signint function.

Media Monitoring

While much intelligence gathering concentrates on divining secrets, being able to place information in an appropriate context is of vital importance. As such, monitoring planetary media, scientific journals, financial reports, scandal sheets, and the like is a key factor in intelligence gathering. Knowing where a company is performing well allows a rival to focus its intelligence efforts, whereas reports of an individual's activities may expose weaknesses that can be exploited in other ways. In many cases, however, media monitoring simply provides contextual information: the direction of public opinion, social trends, concerns and the like, information a government or personage needs to know about its people and a rival state needs to know about its enemies. Most governments employ agents on each world in their realm and others whose task is gathering such information. Many such operatives perform this task in addition to an everyday job and don't regard themselves as spies, particularly when such information-gathering efforts are concealed behind a media-monitoring or marketing façade.

Analysis

While in some cases the importance of information is clear, in many cases it is not. Sifting through gathered information, placing it in context and then assessing its importance usually falls to dedicated analysts. In most cases, a team of analysts works together, often bound by a common area of responsibility—extensive knowledge of a particular nation, technology, or science—but each with their own areas of expertise. These teams fall into two distinct groups: those involved in parsing the intelligence and making it understandable, and those who interpret the data and make recommendations to their superiors. The former group often includes cryptographers, image analysts, linguists, audio engineers, and statisticians, who transform the data into intelligible formats, while the latter group is most often political, cultural, financial, or technological experts. The boundary between the two groups is a soft one, with some analysts also being expert linguists and cryptographers who prefer working with "raw" data, while some of the technical teams play a key role in shaping the subsequent analysis.

Analysis can be as simple as translating and recording conversations or may be as complex as pattern-matching data over time and geography. Most intelligence agencies maintain numerous analysis teams, and intelligence frequently goes to several such groups; data that is not immediately of value may later be important in analysis, and information significant to one team may have different meaning for political or military analysts. Member of these teams are often the most educated and technology-savvy employees of an intelligence agency but rarely have experience in field operations.

Sabotage, Kidnapping and Assassination

In addition to gathering information (and in some cases acquiring items) from rival groups, one of the key tasks of covert

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operations is denying the same resources to the enemy. The most obvious applications of this type of operation lie in the industrial and military fields, where saboteurs may seek to destroy a production line or a supply cache to deny its use to the enemy. Such attacks were prevalent in the early Succession Wars and played a major role in destroying the Inner Sphere's industrial capacity; the resulting social backlash forced the covert operations to become extremely specific in the resources targeted. During the First Succession War, commandos didn't think twice about destroying a JumpShip to prevent other opponents from using it, but in the present era operatives assigned the same task generally seek to incapacitate rather than destroy the valuable vessel.

Covert operatives can also sabotage other parts of an enemy's infrastructure—communications, sanitation, transportation, power generation—as befits a mission's requirements. For example, tampering with a city's water supply is a relatively easy way to undermine its resolve, while targeting a power plant may cripple a factory's production without risking valuable manufacturing technology.

Sabotage may also mask other activities. Destroying an industrial complex may serve to conceal the theft of something it contained, providing the thieves with a screen of deniability. For example, stealing a hardware encryption device is of minimal value if the enemy knows it is gone, because as soon as they realize the cipher is compromised, they will change it. However, if they have no reason to suspect the theft, then the thieves may be able to use the device to eavesdrop on their rivals.

Such devious methods apply equally to people as to technology and buildings. A covert ops team may be ordered to abduct (or "rescue") someone in an enemy's employ. If the disappearance is apparent, political and diplomatic repercussions may result, but concealing the operation can vastly reduce the fallout. Many covert agencies have teams whose role is to fabricate evidence to explain disappearances, while others specialize in providing bodies that can be substituted for the targeted individuals and in circumventing efforts to identify the remains.

Kidnapping enemy personnel or aiding in defections is one of the trickier tasks facing covert operations teams. Here, they must not only move themselves and their equipment through potentially hostile territory, but they must also have plans to get their target—possibly unwillingly—past security. The desire to minimize the chances of alerting rival security agencies then takes significant importance. Such efforts may involve guns and drugs to subdue the target or may involve some form of compulsion such as blackmail or extortion. Operations such as these may also occur with the target's complicity, though their dependants may be less willing to cooperate.

Much easier than kidnapping is the simple assassination of a target individual. A wide range of methods exists—firearms, explosives, and poisons, for example—tailored to the target's security precautions and the desire for secrecy. An assassination may be made to look like death by natural causes, such as a traffic accident or a heart attack, in order to conceal enemy involvement, or it may be deliberately overt to serve as an object lesson. The assassination of a low-ranking target is usually easier than the slaying of a senior politician or head of state, but planning and patience can defeat even the most determined security. Famous examples include the slaying of Coordinator Yoguchi Kurita by the Lyran agent Snow Fire and the murder of Archon Melissa Steiner by an assassin rumored to be in the employ of the Archon's daughter. Rumors abound that the great Hanse Davion was killed by an assassin, though official reports cite natural causes.

Security/Spy Hunters

Countering the actions of foreign powers is an important role in any intelligence, usually forming a distinct department or directorate charged with counterintelligence and security. Such agencies operate on multiple levels, from identifying and neutralizing enemy agents to providing security for people and locales.

Counter-spies operate in various ways. Some may investigate anyone appointed to a sensitive position, vetting their background and habits to weed out any security risks, or at least to remain aware of potential problems in cases where personnel are irreplaceable. Others may work with their information-gathering colleagues to determine what the enemy knows and then attempt to trace said knowledge back to its source. Nations, corporations, and organizations frequently take care not to reveal what they know so as to protect any sources from deliberate or accidental exposure. Controlling such information likewise falls under the purview of counter-intelligence agencies, though doing so is more than just chasing down spies and rumors.

Upon identifying an enemy agent, counter-intelligence agents have a number of options. They can unmask the spy, charging him with espionage, deporting or "vanishing" the agent dependant on the circumstances. However, eliminating a known operative gives no guarantee that another unidentified agent won't be substituted. In most cases, it is vastly more effective to suborn and turn the enemy agent and use the asset for information flow—including disinformation—to the spy's employers. Such management may be covert, the unmasked spy remaining unaware of the manipulation, but it may also involve blackmail (with the added threat of prosecution) in turning the agent into a double agent. Disinformation may also take place on a larger scale, including manipulation of the media, which often involves the work of a propaganda department.

Protection Details

Providing security for key sites and bodyguards for key personnel is the last major task of security services. The latter involves

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some of the most talented and single-minded operatives, who must constantly remain alert to their surroundings and their principals' actions, as well as being expert marksmen, martial artists, and drivers. The cream of the crop serves in the protection details of senior government officials, persons of note, corporate executives, and even media personalities.

Site protection troops differ greatly from bodyguards, often of a more military mindset and training than other security-service personnel. Nonetheless, their ties to intelligence agencies shape the skills of these troopers, who are adept at close-quarters combat, particularly inside buildings and spacecraft.

COVERT OPS CHARACTERS

Gamemasters may find using characters with covert operations skills a challenge for many games, especially during long-running campaigns. As a general rule, covert operatives possess a wider range of skills and abilities and are generally trained to think outside the box. Many are also accustomed to working on their own and will put their wealth of knowledge and advanced equipment to use in ways that can often unbalance or disrupt an otherwise well-crafted adventure. Depending on the nature of the campaign, characters with covert backgrounds or training can pose a unique challenge for finding adventure hooks and keeping the game interesting, but not an insurmountable one.

Conversely, not all characters in a covert operations campaign need to be covert operatives. In fact, a vast majority of the manpower in any intelligence agency often plays a support role rather than doing fieldwork. Intelligence agencies are not dominated by spies and other field agents but by analysts, technicians, and administrators. These people make sense of the data gathered in the field or by remote devices and observation, then determine the relevance of such information and make appropriate decisions. Though assassins, commandos, and saboteurs are often called upon to carry out these actions, their presence represents the hands, not the heart, of the covert agency.

Described below are three main types of covert characters a gamemaster may have to contend with and suggestions for what kinds of campaigns can be run with different proportions of regular and specially trained characters. Though broken into three categories, any and all of the suggestions below may apply to any character group, even if the adventure has nothing at all to do with covert operations.

COVERT OPERATIONS-ONLY CAMPAIGNS

In a campaign centered on covert operations, character types may run the gamut from the desk-jockey administrator to the hardened field agent. If the gamemaster has enough expertise with the collection of characters, it may be possible to organize them as a single unit of the broader agency, tasked with a single mission together. Smaller groups may excel as operatives with a NPC support staff, complete with a team director who oversees all their work.

The size and traits of a covert operations group may go a long way toward influencing its venue of operation. If all the characters hail from one affiliation, for example, they can easily be a part of that affiliation's intelligence network, or a team of infiltrators or rebels acting against the excesses of the same. If they hail from different backgrounds, they could be mercenaries, rebels, or terrorists, working for their employers' agenda or for their own. They could even be a team of "mole hunters" tracking down security leaks within their organization, policing the secret police.

Whatever their nature, characters in a campaign centered on covert operations may find they have access to all sorts of cool weapons and gear, but their exploits will be largely unknown. Foreign agents are ever on the lookout for their kind, and the chances are great that they will earn a very long list of enemies and perhaps even have bounties placed on their heads. All is fair in this dangerous business, and a sniper can lie wait on the next rooftop.

Mixed-Character Campaigns

In a campaign of mixed character types, where a significant percentage of the characters do not have backgrounds of training in covert operations, adventures can become a bit more complex and diverse. In fact, adventures where some characters may be in the limelight, such as a Solaris MechWarrior or a member of nobility, offer a wealth of potential for adventures, particularly if the non-covert characters are unaware of their comrades' clandestine activities.

While few mixed-character campaigns can be truly based around all characters being part of an intelligence group, mercenaries, revolutionaries, criminal organizations, and even the stables of Solaris VII can often provide excellent venues for such parties. Moreover, if the characters are keeping secrets from each other, one or more of the covert ops characters may actually be a spy from some rival group. Such campaigns tend to get a bit more complex than others, as the specially trained characters may find solutions or undertake actions that can surprise their comrades and even appear counterproductive.

Gamemasters running these types of campaigns should consult with each player in turn first, to determine the motivations and actions of each character before starting an adventure. They should also be prepared for numerous sidebar discussions through the adventure, as characters may often split up to pursue their own agendas. If the characters in a mixed campaign are aware of each other's abilities, such a "double blind" style of play is not always necessary, but can be used when group members become separated.

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Non-Covert Campaigns

In non-covert campaigns, specially trained characters are in the minority, and adventures should be tailored mostly for the bulk of the group, whatever it is they may do for a living. However this is not to say the training and skills of the covert operative in the group's midst—known or unknown—are wasted. Indeed, these characters may find uses for their abilities on regular occasions, and may require the same "double blind" method of game play as a mixed-character campaign. Character groups without a covert operative among them may find themselves drawn into this shadowy realm of adventure by circumstances beyond their control and may encounter covert-operative NPCs along the way who can work to help or hinder their efforts.

PLAYER CHARACTER DOUBLE- AND TRIPLE-AGENTS

In the course of any campaign, particularly one involving covert ops, the potential exists for an operative to switch sides, either willingly or under duress. In an adventure campaign already underway, the causes of such actions can vary widely, running from a healthy bribe, to blackmail, to a hostage situation or other circumstances. Sinister organizations with access to advanced psychological techniques may even manage to "reprogram" an individual into becoming an unwitting agent for their side.

In the case of a double agent, the character continues to superficially work with the original team but may report to an enemy agent or could even actively work against former comrades behind the scenes. A triple agent—a character who allows the enemy to think they have turned—may in fact be setting the enemy up into a trap laid by the employer or even working for a third party whose agenda is completely different and counter to both sides.

To effectively manage such a switch in allegiance becomes a challenge not only of creativity but also of knowing what motivates one's player characters, both as a gamemaster and as a player. Thus, attempting to sway group members to switch sides is not a plot device gamemasters should employ lightly. The following guidelines may help gamemasters better manage double- and triple-agent scenarios in their campaigns.

Double-Blind Play

It almost goes without saying that roleplaying a double agent requires the player who has been turned not to reveal his activities in front of the other players. To conceal his activities from his fellows, therefore, the player and the gamemaster may engage in sidebar discussions on the character's activities, or exchange notes during routine play. The same method may be used whenever the gamemaster feels the other player characters might pick up on some of the double agent's unusual activities, with the gamemaster revealing information to everyone *but* the turned agent.

Either or both methods of double-blind play will help keep the players in the dark, but gamemasters should take care to avoid excessive note-passing and sidebar discussion, as doing so may immediately clue the other players into the double's activities—as well as bogging down gameplay. The same techniques can apply if the character is a triple agent working *for* his fellow player-characters, and will help to foster the sense of uncertainty that permeates all manner of covert operations.

Moles and Turncoats

The trickiest element of the double/triple agent is the fact that they are working against their own employer and may even be forced to kill or injure several characters. Not surprisingly, such a development within a gaming group has the potential for disrupting game balance and may even cause a group to self-destruct. Gamemasters are therefore strongly advised to seriously think about the ramifications of this aspect of covert operations before using it in any campaign.

When dealing with a turncoat, gamemasters should consider every action the character is taking as though they are a NPC and give the potential victims of the agent's schemes every opportunity to discover that something is amiss. Though this may seem as though the gamemaster is being forced to slant the game against such moles, the fact is that in turning against the other player-characters, such an individual effectively becomes a wolf in sheep's clothing and must move all the more carefully to avoid detection. Furthermore, creating an environment that favors the group above the individual helps retain a semblance of unity should the agent ever be exposed.

If a turncoat is successfully exposed, the gamemaster should permit all characters the opportunity to act on this information and permit actions up to and including killing the traitor. If the turncoat can escape, that event should also be allowed. Whether killed or escaped, however, the turncoat player character is no longer considered a viable member of the group. The turncoat's player should be ready to return to character creation if they wish to be a part of the campaign. An escaped double agent can become a recurring enemy NPC for the others to face from time to time; gamemasters may then modify the NPC with additional skills as appropriate.

At every stage of play, characters on all sides of a double/triple agent adventure should be reminded—whenever the actions of one affect the other—that it is still just a game. The point is to have fun and tell an engaging story; if it becomes an exercise in diplomacy or debate, then it may behoove everyone to suspend play until a later time or even start a new and different campaign.

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