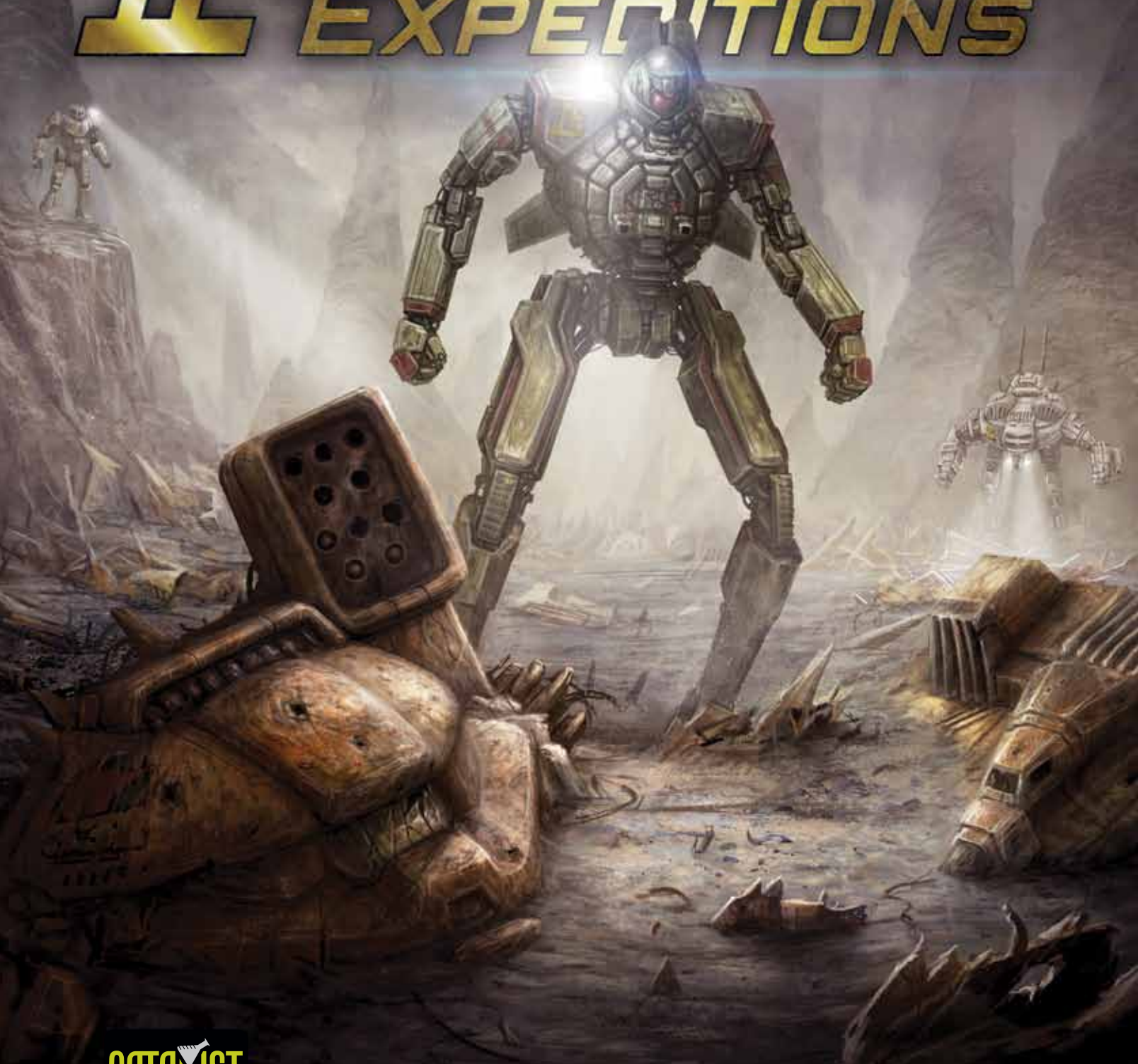


BATTLETECH



II INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS



WHAT LIES BEYOND...

Nearly fifteen years have passed since the end of the Word of Blake Jihad and the rise of the Republic of the Sphere. Yet even as the Inner Sphere adjusts to a new sense of normalcy, questions remain about whether the Blakist threat is gone for good or merely hibernating.

Once a disorganized collective of hobbyists and academics backed by the idle wealthy, *Interstellar Expeditions* has emerged from the fires of war to take up the mission once claimed by ComStar's Explorer Corps: to search for the elusive hiding places where humanity's enemies might have gone. From the dead worlds within the borders of the Inner Sphere itself, to the distant, uncharted reaches of the Deep Periphery, IE relentlessly searches for the answers to mysteries dating back to mankind's first ventures into deep space, while simultaneously watching for any sign of the zealots who so recently waged the most horrendous interstellar war in modern history.

Interstellar Expeditions: Interstellar Players 3 describes the organization and efforts of *Interstellar Expeditions* as it continues to search within (and beyond) human-occupied space in the *BattleTech*® universe. First introduced in *Interstellar Players*, IE's operations have now gone truly universal, seeking answers and treasures not only from the lost and forgotten worlds of humanity's distant past, but also the distant colonies and civilizations that have risen—and even fallen—beyond the boundaries of the Inner Sphere. Gamemasters and players can decide which of these groups and discoveries may actually bear fruit, and which are the misdirections left behind by the surviving leaders of the Blakist war machine. Whether from this sourcebook or the gamemaster's own imagination, these discoveries can become the ultimate villain, ally, or unique new setting for any type of *BattleTech* campaign!

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Interstellar Players



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First and foremost, I would like to thank Christoffer "Bones" Trossen, who provided the original concept and writing for the *Interstellar Expeditions* Group. Without their appearance way back in the first *Interstellar Players* sourcebook, we'd probably be falling back on good old ComStar to try and dig for the Inner Sphere's secrets by now. Secondly, I would like to thank the efforts of Aaron Pollyea and Øystein Tvedten, who together helped bridge the gap between

the fictional BattleTech universe, and the wonders of our own real Milky Way Galaxy. And, as always, a hearty thanks to the BattleTech community—young and old—who have followed us faithfully through the Word of Blake Jihad and into the deeper, darker mysteries of what now lies beyond.

As always, of course, I also dedicate this volume to the Herblets: Oscar, Annie, Meggie, Blaze, Kurita, and Logan.

SHADES AND SPIRITS

UNINHABITED SYSTEM
22.7 LY COREWARD FROM MCEVEDY'S FOLLY
RIMWARD PERIPHERY
12 JUNE 3095

Standing beneath the moon-laden sky of a forgotten world, Wade couldn't have wiped the smile from his face even if he'd tried. This was *it*, he'd convinced himself. The find of a lifetime. He could see the headlines already: *Secrets of the Minnesota Tribe Revealed*. Come year's end, every academic circle in the Inner Sphere would be familiar with the work of one Wade Laurence Beauregard, Ph.D. Interstellar Expeditions would have to give him a raise, a healthy, healthy raise. Or better yet, to hell with IE. This find would mean he could get first pickings of any archaeological dig he wanted. He could live like a king in any nation that could afford his newfound prestige.

All he needed to do was find the godforsaken front door into this place. For that, he needed the help of his aerial locksmith.

The mostly-buried structure seemed remarkably intact, considering the amount of damage it had sustained during the ancient landslide that originally concealed it, but Wade didn't trust his eyes for things like this. An edifice that appeared structurally sound on the outside could be rotting apart on the inside, and moving the wrong stone from the wrong place might cause the whole endeavor to collapse. Thus far, countless attempts to find the best place to breach the exterior had met with sorrow. It was time to bring out the big guns.

Wade shifted his gaze upward to catch a glimpse of the small, silvery pinprick right at the sky's zenith and then keyed the radio clipped to his belt. "Lorenzo, Beau here. You still awake up there?"

Several seconds passed without a reply. The kid was probably dicking around on the wrong side of the *Howard Carter's* science station and hadn't even heard the transmission.

Wade shook his head. *Hobbyists*. Officially, eager volunteers like Lorenzo allowed Interstellar Expeditions to afford the myriad of projects IE undertook. As far as Wade was concerned, however, untrained personnel only made each task take twice as long as it should and ultimately cost IE more than they saved.

"Renzo here, Doc," the radio finally crackled in a distorted squeal.

"Anything from the radiological survey? Figured it should be done by now."

Another lengthy pause. "You sure these are the right coordinates?"

A sigh escaped Wade's mouth. *You definitely get what you pay for*. "Kid, I already had five doctorates before you were even born. I don't hand out faulty coordinates. Check it again."

"I already did," the hobbyist protested. "There's... something weird on the image. Like some kind of ghosting, a shadow that shouldn't be there."

"It's probably signal interference from minerals in the moon belt," Wade said. "Go ahead and send the image. We can clean it up later."

He cut the connection before Renzo could protest. Something was buried here, all right, and the ineptitude of some snot-nosed, trust-fund hobbyist wasn't going to take this find from him. No one was going to take this from him. No one. *He* had analyzed the stellar surveys that found this planet at the edge of the goldilocks zone closest to the star. *He* had supported the presence of previous habitation. *He* had convinced IE to let his team take a quick side trip from the current Grand Tour that was tracing the Minnesota Tribe's path around the Periphery.

While waiting for the orbital scans to download, Wade wandered through the encampment to check on his team. Oleg Spector, the expedition's head of security, fell in alongside him. Wade hadn't worked with Spector before this Tour started, but during the first leg the pair had quickly bonded over their mutual dislike of unpaid dabblers. Spector was a mercenary, but at least he was a *paid* mercenary.

"The rest of the security team's finally on its way," Spector reported. "*Grave Robber* managed to get her frozen docking collar unstuck, so I've got them double-timing it."

With more than just Spector and two armed security guards on patrol, Wade wouldn't have to worry as much about priceless artifacts growing legs. "How long 'til they hit dirtside?"

"Three days, thereabouts."

"Too long. Assuming Renzo can tell his ass from a literal hole in the ground, I hope to breach the entrance by tomorrow."

Spector frowned. "I can't cover the whole dig site with just three warm bodies. And I don't trust any of the volunteers."

"Then give me a gun and I'll do it myself," Wade said. "I've waited far too long for this to be deterred by a bad docking collar, Oleg. *Humanity* has waited far too long."

14 June 3095

Turned out Renzo wasn't as brainless as Wade first thought. The radiological survey images from the *Howard Carter* had showed a definite ghosting in them, a kind of double exposure. Once Wade's archaeological team excavated their way into the buried structure, they discovered an entire subterranean complex extending down several sublevels. The single composite image Renzo had captured couldn't do justice to the sheer number of twisting underground passages that had caused the sensor shadows.

But that wasn't why Wade popped open several bottles of expensive champagne for himself and his team. He had



SHADES AND SPIRITS

finally done it. He had found the mother lode, the holy grail of IE's archaeological endeavors. Ragged uniforms bearing the Minnesota patch of the 331st Royal BattleMech Division and the strange Terran wolverine emblem. Discarded husks of barely identifiable BattleMechs. Technical devices of Star League-era sophistication but clearly not of Star League manufacture.

Upon finding a collection of antique noteputers and perscoms, Wade was so filled with glee he could barely contain himself. Time had corrupted most of the data beyond recognition, but what few fragments his technical staff had been able to extract thus far helped piece together the most comprehensive picture of the Minnesota Tribe's entire history. After nearly three hundred years since the Tribe first appeared in Draconis Combine space, the veil of secrecy had been lifted, and Wade Laurence Beauregard, Ph.D., was the one pulling back the curtain.

Now that he knew what his team was dealing with, he transmitted to the *Howard Carter* a new set of imaging parameters that should hopefully account for the Minnesota colony's multiple sublevels and provide a perfect, three-dimensional map. Wade would've gone up to the DropShip himself, but the security team was still a day's burn away from reaching orbit, and not even Spector could convince him to leave his precious dig site.

15 June 3095

Rage boiled up inside Wade's chest as he stormed across the night-darkened encampment. Spots of wrath flashed across his vision, and his blood was one degree away from bursting out of his ears.

The datapad was missing—not one of the broken relics that displayed nothing more than a few characters before flooding the screen with random garbage, no. The Rosetta Stone of this whole damned operation had gotten up and walked out of Wade's collapsible tent, all while under lock and key. Had to be one of those accursed dig gypsies that followed every IE expedition. Had to be. His academic colleagues—paid contributors, all—valued the Minnesota

mystery just as much as he did, and Spector's mercenary goons wouldn't know the first thing about fencing something potentially worth trillions of C-Bills to the right buyer. That left only the unpaids—the hobbyists, the volunteers, the goddamned *groupies*.

His lofty dreams evaporated as he walked. If he couldn't ferret out who stole his life's work, he'd never be famous. He'd have to beg, borrow, or steal just to even see another dig site... or worse, be reduced to teaching while his students undertook field work that should have been his.

"Not much I can do until the *Grave Robber* arrives," Spector said, when Wade found him. "Not if you want us to keep the rest of the artifacts from being stolen in the meantime."

Small comfort to the theft of history and dreams.

"So help me, Oleg," Wade said, patting his holstered laser pistol, "if I find that filthy little thief, I'll kill him."

"Careful, Professor," Spector warned. "There's a fine line between justice and murder."

Before Wade could retort, his radio chirped.

"Renzo here." The distorted warble of the *Howard Carter*'s transmitter sounded worse than normal. "I think there's something wrong with the last set of parameters you sent."

Wade closed his eyes and knuckled his fist into his forehead several times in frustration. *Of all the incompetent, imbecilic...* "Remind me again

how many doctorates I have," he said. "Then rerun the scan."

"I have," Renzo said. "Multiple times. Something's mucking up the works."

If you want something done right... "Another ghost?"

"I dunno. I'm getting some kind of weird interference."

Wade gazed skyward and easily found the *Howard Carter*'s silver speck overhead, thanks to the streak of light from its drive engines. Behind the DropShip, a dozen moons and other rocky debris formed an impressive nocturnal backdrop that seemed to trail behind the speck of a vessel. "Lorenzo, if you don't—"



SHADES AND SPIRITS

His heart skipped a beat. A dark speck drifted across one of the moons, a speck that by all accounts should not have been there.

A needle of crimson light tore through the sky for just a moment—almost too fast to comprehend had he not been looking right at it when it occurred. Wade's insides went cold as he watched the *Howard Carter's* engine streak arc slightly. The red flash blinked again, and this time the slow-moving shooting star that was the *Howard Carter* flashed at its head. The *Carter's* engine streak stopped instantly.

The camp descended into chaos.

"Pirates," Wade said, never taking his eyes from the moon belt. A new streak emerged in the sky, this time as an angry red arc curling away from the dying white flare trail. The *Howard Carter*, burn in reentry. Renzo and the crew were probably already dead. "What the hell are we going to do?"

Cool as ice, Spector keyed his radio. "*Grave Robber*, this is Spector. We've got a situation here. What's your ETA?"

Long intervals of static intercut the reply. "—opy—ector! —swarm—ight—!"

Spector held the speaker closer to his ear. "Negative copy, *Grave Robber*. Say again?"

The signal cleared just enough for Wade to make out most of the anguished transmission. "We're—swarmed by Spectrals!—jamming our sensors—A *Thera* just—out of hiding behind one of these moons—shot down the *Carter*!"

"Hold tight," Spector radioed. "Break for LZ Beta; we'll meet you there." He turned to Wade. "Let's get moving, Professor."

Wade followed him through the camp. "How the hell did pirates find us all the way out here?"

"They're not pirates," the security chief intoned with a solemn shake of his head. "They're Word of Blake."

An icy shiver shot down Wade's spine, and he stopped dead in his tracks. The Blakists were dead, chased out of the Inner Sphere, hunted down to near-extinction. "How?"

"Only the Word flies Spectral-series aerofighters."

Above, the *Howard Carter* was still burning and breaking up in the atmosphere, just like Wade's dreams of fame and renown. The Word had already run rampant throughout the Inner Sphere during its thirteen-year Jihad, and now they were here to ruin his own little academic world. They'd come

to snatch up his life's work, to claim credit for everything he'd accomplished...

"Surely we can negotiate with them," he said. "The company has friends in high places. We can get them anything they want."

"There will be no negotiating. The Word of Blake already has what it came for. They just needed to verify the authenticity of this little trinket." Spector casually lifted a few centimeters' worth of the Rosetta Stone noteputer from his front jacket pocket to make sure Wade saw before sliding it back out of sight. His pistol leveled in Wade's direction. "I didn't want it to come to this, Professor. I was starting to like you. But you've found something the Word has paid good money to stay buried."

Wade stood speechless, stunned. If Oleg Spector—if that was even his real name—had been a Word plant all this time, how many other operatives were out there right now, sabotaging IE digs at every corner of the galaxy?

Out of Wade's peripheral vision, a bright explosion bloomed in the night sky. The *Grave Robber*, succumbing to the aerospace swarm. Right as Spector instinctively whipped his head toward the sudden burst of light, Wade drew his pistol and squeezed the trigger.

The Blakist fell dead at Wade's feet, a smoking hole in his throat.

Wade wasted no time snatching up the Rosetta Stone. "Told you I'd kill the thief that stole this," he said and spat on the corpse.

Then the ground shook, nearly knocking him from his feet. Night became instant morning as distant ordnance detonated beyond the far end of camp. Black silhouettes formed by wicked angles nearly blotted out the moons from the sky. And the explosions kept coming.

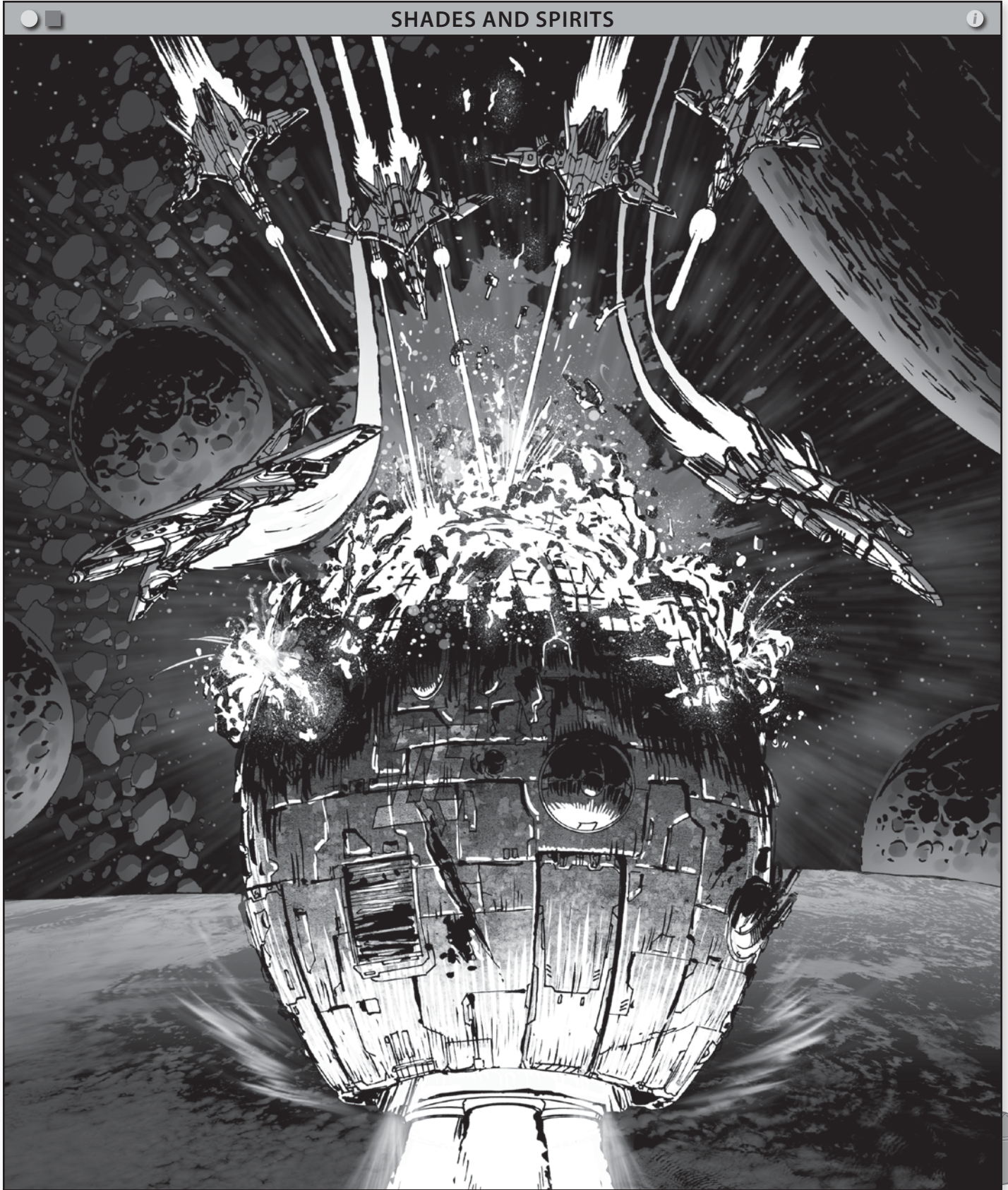
He thought about all the soirees and galas he'd would never be invited to, all the scholarly papers he would never write, all of the media interviews he would never grant. The money he could not donate to charity. The family back in the Commonwealth that he would never see again.

Wade Laurence Beauregard, Ph.D., clutched the Minnesota Tribe's Rosetta Stone to his chest and began to cry.

For the briefest of moments, the blinding mushroom cloud was the most beautiful thing he had ever see



SHADES AND SPIRITS 



INTRODUCTION

Greetings, investors and operations directors! For those of you who are new to us, welcome to Interstellar Expeditions. I'm Doctor Naomi Wilson, administrative CEO of this great organization and professor emeritus of anthropology of Oxford University on Terra.

Before you is the latest update on our company's organization and primary operations as of the final quarter of fiscal year 3095. In the spirit of the late Reiner Wooden, IE continues to work toward incorporating the highest professional standards into the business of exploration. Regardless of flags, houses, or Clans, our employees and associates are dedicated to piercing the veil between mystery and the truth—whether that mystery lies in the distant past of the fallen First Star League or the whereabouts of the Word of Blake's infamous secret bases. Unfettered by nationalism or any military agenda, we remain dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge that will benefit all of humankind, not just those living under one aegis.

Lofty goals aside, of course, you will find that our explorations of late—particularly those into the deepest reaches of the known galaxy—have netted scores of new and interesting discoveries. Many of these will undoubtedly provide us not only with a wealth of scientific and archaeological knowledge, but also bold new markets and resources that will easily sustain us and our investors for decades—if not centuries—to come!

Because of the sheer volume of operatives and associates involved on every front of our major endeavors, I have had this report compiled and arranged along six principal categories of focus: the hunt for Word of Blake remnant assets and bases, the four broad quadrants of our deeper space explorations, and an examination of the threat groups we have (or merely anticipate)

encountered in the course of exploratory adventures. Preceding all of these, of course, is a general overview of our company's background and organizational structure, for the benefit of our newer board members and operational directors.

Given the far-flung nature of these operations, you'll undoubtedly notice a few stylistic differences between the various reports. This is perfectly normal; as the core of our company is primarily administrative and directorial, we still employ a vast number of subcontractors who operate under slightly different standards, and are merely taking a while to assimilate what we lovingly call "the IE Style." (This includes a tendency to use whichever stellar catalog is found to be most convenient to the subcontractors and divisional directors at the time, as evidenced by the fact that some use pre-spaceflight catalogs such as Luyten and Gliese, while others have used Terran Alliance and first Star League catalogs.) In addition, some of these reports include other primary-source documents that have been retained in their original form, rather than reformatted, in order to minimize corruption. As time goes on, we plan to enact a stricter, more universal application of the company's style for all documentation, regardless of source, in the interests of smoother, more efficient record-keeping.

With that said, I thank you all for your continued support to our great collective, and look forward to many profitable and illuminating endeavors in the future!

—Naomi Wilson
Administration
Interstellar Expeditions Group

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Interstellar Expeditions: Interstellar Players 3 is a sourcebook for *BattleTech* players that picks up on the mysteries left behind in the wake of the Jihad and the Clan Wars of Reaving, from the perspective of Interstellar Expeditions—an inter-realm confederacy of corporate and freelance explorers. Following the war, IE has taken up the search for the elusive fugitives of the Word of Blake leadership, including the Order's rumored hidden bases and surviving military forces. At the same time, they also seek an answer to the mystery of what great catastrophe befell the Clans while the rest of the Inner Sphere battled for its survival, stymied by the Clans' unwillingness to discuss those events. Meanwhile, scores of discoveries in the Deep Periphery have been uncovered, not merely beyond the coreward edge of the Inner Sphere, leading toward the Clan homeworlds, but in all directions. Many of these are ruins of what once was, but a few still thrive today as legacies of forgotten colonies and overlooked exoduses.

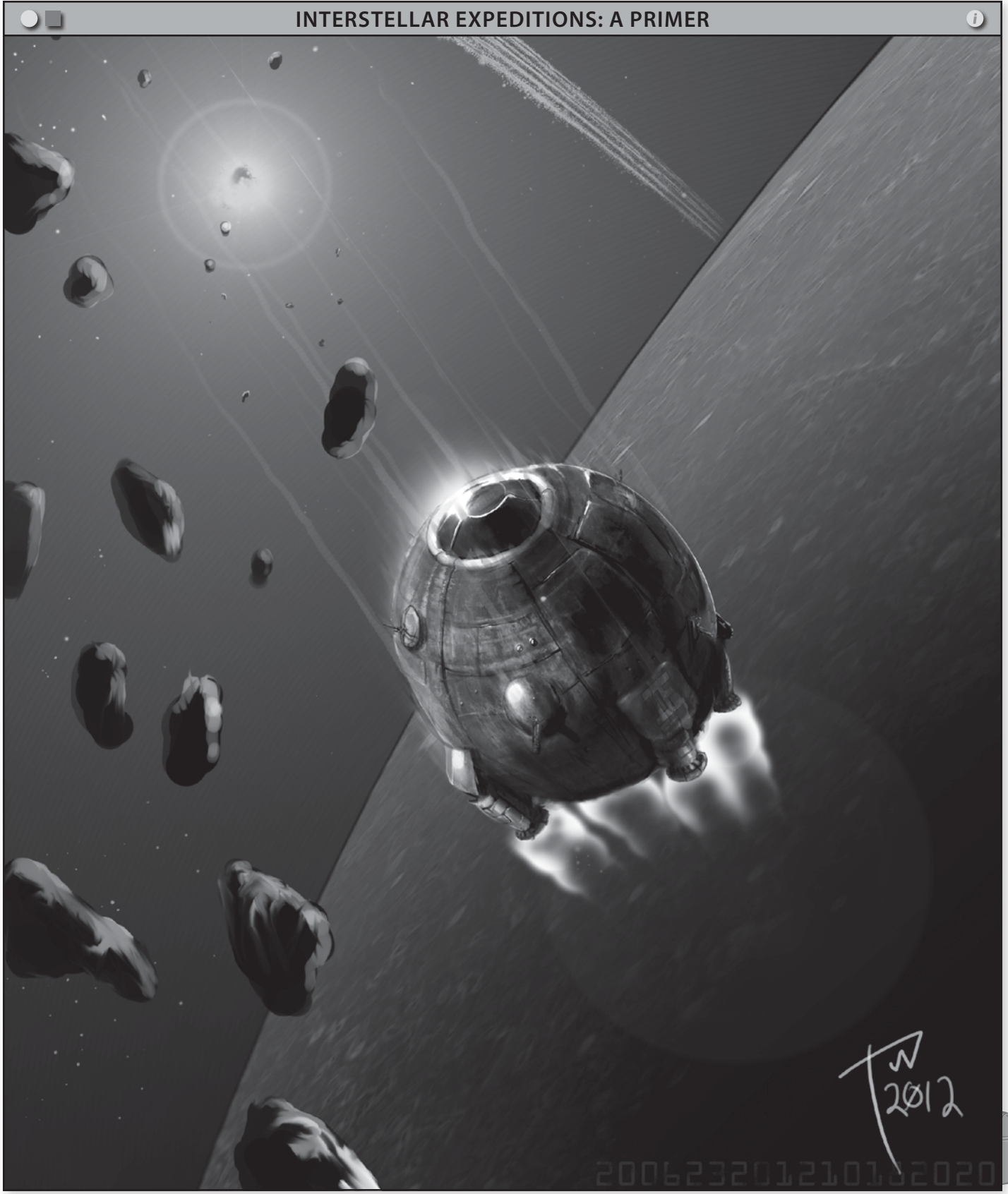
Each section is described by its overarching focus, including a specific overview of IE's operations in the post-Jihad era, a special review of its hunt for Word of Blake survivors and secrets, and a review of Deep Periphery explorations in each quadrant of operation

(Coreward, Anti-Spinward, Spinward, and Rimward of Terra), finishing with a review of the competing agencies who also seek to uncover—or possibly further conceal—the same secrets that IE's operatives are after. Each secret group or key discovery described in this book includes a gamemaster's guide to place it in its context within the universe, as well as *BattleTech* game rules compatible with *Total Warfare* and *A Time of War: The BattleTech Role-Playing Game*. Applicable for adventures and scenarios alike, these "hard rules" appear in their own chapter at the back of this book.

As with the previous *Interstellar Players* sourcebooks, not all is as it may seem in *Interstellar Expeditions: Interstellar Players 3*. Indeed, even though the gamemaster's guides and the rules provide "behind-the-scenes" details and a guide for using these various mysteries as a focus for one's *BattleTech* games, whether or not a given mystery actually pursues the agendas in this book—or, indeed, if it even *exists*—is ultimately up to the gamemasters and players of such campaigns. In that respect (and unless otherwise stated in the gamemaster information), the material in this book may all be considered optional elements.



INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS: A PRIMER



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INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS

A PARADOX

"The only reason for time is so that everything doesn't happen at once."

—Albert Einstein, Terran scientist (1879-1955)



Interstellar Expeditions isn't seen as a forward-looking corporation. By definition, an organization that focuses on archeology, such as IE, has its eyes on the dusty past rather than looking toward the future. This idea is far from being the truth, and IE sees it is a paradox. Former CEO Reiner Wooden said, "The only way to understand the present is by learning about our successes and failures of the past. Only then can we try and avoid the same mistakes and strive for the same victories in the future." Thus to truly understand IE, one must start by understanding how an archeological organization became the Inner Sphere's premier interstellar exploration service.

THE PAST

Interstellar Expeditions evolved from an organization called the Star Group in 2889. The Star Group was composed of two previous organizations, the Millennium Foundation and the Federation of Star Lookers. Both of those organizations were informal groupings of historians, archeologists, astrophysicists and anthropologists from across the Inner Sphere that had combined their expertise and helped each other gain funding for expeditions. The reputation of the Star Group meant that being associated with the group was a feather in any academic's hat. Expeditions that received funding would draw members of the Star Group from across the Inner Sphere, limited only by travel time and the shifting borders during the Third Succession War.

The Star Group's success in its expeditions was impressive, but often suffered from the attrition of the Succession Wars. One of the favored targets of the Great Houses was each other's institutions of higher education. When there was funding still left for a university or research facility, it was often directed at military research projects or reconstruction rather than projects that would provide little monetary benefit. By the beginning of the thirtieth century, the Star Group was finding it difficult to have a single expedition funded per year across the entirety of human space even though what expeditions that occurred produced spectacular finds (see sidebar, *Notable Expeditions*).

With funding increasingly tight, many members of the Star Group turned to treasure hunting and the looting and selling of historical artifacts on the black market. This activity came to be known as "Jonesing," after the notorious archeologist-turned-treasure-hunter Harold Jones stole nearly a million C-Bills worth of jewels from the burial crypt of the noble rulers of New Earth in 2967. Some even turned to commando-style raids on museums and universities to grab valuables needed for their own research, or to re-sell for further funding. The Star Group began to be known as "mercenary archeologists" whose ethics could be bought off. It was these actions that caused a significant number of the more respectable academics and volunteers to leave in 2968, and forced the remainder of the Star Group to consider halting operations entirely.

NOTABLE EXPEDITIONS OF IE AND ITS PREDECESSORS

Most archeological digs, planetary surveys, and other scientific expeditions pass under the collective noses of the Inner Sphere's mass media without them being any the wiser. That is not to say that none of these is important or that revolutionary findings were not made.

May 2875: The Millennium Foundation expedition to the ruins of the capital city of the abandoned world of New Dallas recovers video documentation of the mock trial and execution of the planetary governor during the Amaris Coup of 2767. Trideo evidence confirms that Governor Clay was heavily sedated during the proceedings and showed signs of torture before his execution.

January 2902: The Star Group's Stellar and Planetary Survey of 2902 to the star system SLSC (Star League Stellar Catalog) K7V.7449 discovers a Star League military complex on a marginally habitable world deep in the Draconis Rift. All items of value had already been stripped from the facility, but the remains of the buildings suggest conventional forces were stationed there rather than BattleMechs.

October 2966: The Star Group's Stellar and Planetary Survey of 2966 "discovers" an inhabited planet previously thought to be wiped out during the First Succession War along the Federated Suns-Capellan Confederation border (see SLSC F8V.1693). The planetary population was once nearly two billion, but nuclear bombardment of the planet, in addition to 200 years of survival conditions left barely ten thousand survivors. The remaining population lived a hunter-gatherer lifestyle in the ruins of the planet's once-great cities.

October 3001: An Interstellar Expeditions survey team discovers the drifting wreck of JumpShip *Louisville Belle* in an uncharted star system in Free Worlds League space near Andurien. Lost during the outbreak of the First Succession War, the *Belle* was carrying thousands of tons of platinum ingots looted from the coffers of the Star League Mint on Preston.

July 3042: Funded by Snord's Irregulars, the Interstellar Expeditions archeological dig on the Draconis Combine world of Fomalhaut uncovers the vault of a Star League bank that contained the perfectly preserved collection of stamps owned by a wealthy Terran collector from the twenty-fourth century. The collection included the only known surviving "Inverted Jenny." Rhonda Snord gave IE a bonus of twenty million C-Bills for the unique discovery.

The dissolution of the Star Group was halted by the intervention of MEN, the Mutual Exploration Network. Unlike the Star Group, MEN was an organization of amateur archeologists, armchair generals, backyard physicists and conspiracy theorists that had the backing of wealthy nobles and corporate executives with more money than sense. The Mutual Exploration Network was founded in 2894, and it had gained a reputation for being filled with crackpots whose sole purpose in life was investigating clues of the origins of the Minnesota Tribe, seeking out the location of the Greys' (a purported intelligent life-form seen by many "victims" of alien abduction during the latter half



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of the twentieth century on Terra) homeworld, and its investigations into many other unexplained phenomena across the Inner Sphere and beyond. At first there was opposition to a merger, as many felt the two groups had goals too divergent from each other. It was only a short time before the two groups saw that they complimented each other well. MEN had funding to spare, and the Star Group had academic credentials that would open doors that MEN was unable to pry open even with the liberal application of C-Bills. The merger was finalized in 2974 with the creation of Interstellar Expeditions.

THE PRESENT

Since its founding, Interstellar Expeditions has led each of its statements to the media and begun each funding proposal with its mission statement: "To advance the knowledge and understanding of the human race through the discovery and study of humanity's past." Holding true to its word, in the over 100 years of its existence, IE has contributed more to the study of archeology than any other private organization. All discoveries have been made public when the expedition was funded by a public entity, such as a planetary or interstellar government or a center of higher education. Contracts from private organizations and individuals usually contain a public examination period for any artifacts recovered that will be entering into private collections in order for proper scientific study to be made.

Interstellar Expeditions already had experience with deep space exploration and research before the Jihad, with its half-dozen stellar expeditions during the thirtieth and thirty-first centuries. Since the end of the Word of Blake's war against the rest of humanity, IE has picked up where ComStar's Explorer Corps left off. Returns on excellent investments made by IE's former CEO Wooden in the early 3080s made funds available for the purchase of several new JumpShips and DropShips for its Stellar and Planetary Exploration Division (SPED).

The end of the Jihad also saw an increase in funding to IE from the major governments of the Inner Sphere and Periphery. With the destruction of many worlds by the Word of Blake, there has been a driving need for groups of trained scientists and explorers willing to salvage desperately needed data that had been lost during the Jihad or objects and material from worlds riddled with bioengineered plague and radioactive fallout.

THE FUTURE

Now that you understand the history of Interstellar Expeditions and why the corporation is as popular in the scientific community as it is in the media at large, you can predict the path IE will take into the future. The acquisition of a large number of *Scout* and *Merchant* JumpShips in the years since the end of the Jihad shows no signs of slowing down as long as the recovery efforts across the Inner Sphere continue to provide large returns from the investments made by IE in the early 3080s. With the expected launch of two *Scout*-class JumpShips, the IES *Kitty Hawk* and IES *Hiram Bingham III* by the end of 3096, the *Invader*-class J IES *Diodorus Siculus* and its expected deployment from drydock

in 3097, and the two *Merchant*-class JumpShips IES *William Boyd Dawkins* and IES *Kenneth Oakley* by 3098, Interstellar Expeditions expects to greatly expand its interstellar operations.

The increasing reach of Interstellar Expeditions across the Inner Sphere and beyond will continue to draw high recruitment numbers from the history, archeology, and astronomy departments of major universities. With the increasing expertise these new graduates bring, the ability of IE to perform high quality research and exploration will continue to grow. The rise of the Republic of the Sphere and Terra's Rebuild and Recover policy has, over the past decade, been providing a small trickle of employment that only now has started to flood the company's coffers. Finally, the addition of abandoned or lost equipment that is continually being salvaged from the orbit of recently-destroyed worlds where IE has gained salvage rights will allow the logistical network of the corporation to grow to encompass the ever-expanding portfolio of contracts and research opportunities.

OUR MANDATE

While our mandate is different with each employer we have our own internal mandate. With the restructuring of Interstellar Expeditions beginning in the early 3090s, our mandate has shifted from a more focused dedication to exploring humanity's past through only archeology and history. The new Interstellar Expeditions is one dedicated to seeking out truth of any kind, through any means available to it. Our growing fleet of JumpShips will explore those areas of the galaxy where previous explorers have labeled "here be aliens," and make sure the truth of what's really out there is shown to us all. Our archeological and anthropological teams will not only be at the top of their professions when exploring historical sites and finding artifacts of the past, but they will also be able to handle first contact situations with lost colonies. Success in reintegrating these human experiences with our own will only help us better understand ourselves.

OUR ORGANIZATION

"The secret of all victory lies in the organization of the non-obvious."
—Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor (121-181CE)

Throughout the existence of Interstellar Expeditions, our organization has had a very loose structure based on individual groups that operate independently under the general guidelines set out by the Council of Peers. This led to chaos when dealing with large projects that required more than one team to complete. IE also had the appearance of unprofessionalism because of the large numbers of volunteers and the unreliable quality that each group could bring to a dig or a job.

While this type of existence worked, the passing of our longtime CEO Reiner Wooden in 3091 allowed the Council of Peers the chance to reorganize IE into a corporation that could push its way into the thirty-second century, shedding the stigma of being unreliable and unprofessional. While IE still utilizes volunteers, the quality control of those volunteers is much more standardized across the entire corporation.

INTERSTELLAR EXPEDITIONS CORPORATE DATA



Terran Stock Exchange Ticker: INEX
Corporate HQ: Aur

Main Satellite Locations

Mercenary Outreach: Galatea

SPED Inner Sphere Operations: Denebola (RotS), Castrovia (CC), Midway (DC), Manassas (FS), Loyalty (former FWL), Gulf Breeze (LC), Tukayyid (Clan)

SPED Near Periphery Operations: Richmond (Coreward), Detroit (Rimward), Mitchella (Spinward), All Dawn (Anti-Spinward)

ADMINISTRATION

CEO: Dr. Naomi Wilson

Change in Interstellar Operations had to come from the top down in order to succeed. The removal of the Council of Peers caused a great deal of concern among many of the groups in IE, but the ability of each shareholder to elect the CEO, and confirm the appointments of the CFO as well as the Board of Directors, quelled most of the arguments. Headquartered on the Lyran Commonwealth planet of Aur, the CEO serves a four-year term and may be reelected as many times as the shareholders wish. The CEO then appoints the heads of the departments that go on to form the Board of Directors. Separately, the CFO is elected by the Board of Directors to oversee the finances of IE. Currently, the CEO is longtime IE employee Doctor Naomi Wilson, who is also professor emeritus of anthropology at Oxford University on Terra. Dr. Wilson is also known for being a cousin of the command staff of the mercenary unit Wilson's Hussars, destroyed during the Word of Blake Jihad.

DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS

Chief Council: Dr. Tyran MacAuliffe

Lawsuits are a part and parcel of any contract that Interstellar Expeditions accepts. Lawsuits range from the frivolous, conspiracy theorists attempting to stop archeological digs fearing that IE will anger the Great Space Brothers, to the very serious: major interstellar governments attempting to halt salvage operations on derelict vessels discovered by IE. The wide range of legal systems and types of lawsuits that IE faces requires a massive legal department.

Dr. Tyran MacAuliffe served in the Second Star League's Office of Legal Affairs during that body's brief existence. Holding a doctorate from the University of Chicago on Terra, Dr. MacAuliffe saw the need for a drastic restructuring of the legal arm of IE. Instead of a single large team of lawyers based on Aur, Dr. MacAuliffe set up legal offices at each of the SPED operations centers to be staffed with legal teams versed both in interstellar law and the local legal system. There are few lawsuits when dealing with the Clans, except when they are being issued from the civilian populations of their occupied worlds. Unfortunately, challenges from the military of the descendants of Kerensky aren't unheard of, and when they do occur, the legal arm refers the matter to Public Relations (Mercenary Outreach).

DEPARTMENT OF SUPPORT AND LOGISTICS

Chief Logistical Officer: Dyson Brinson

Napoleon once said that an army marches on its belly, when referring to the need for a good logistical supply train, and Interstellar Expeditions is no exception to this rule. While IE isn't an army, the number of employees on expeditions flung across the Inner Sphere and beyond makes supporting the material needs of each expedition and the transport of all significant finds difficult.

Previous to the reorganization, there was no formal Support and Logistics department in IE. Contracts made with other corporations provided transport and material for any expeditions. The Department of Support and Logistics is centered on Aur, along with the corporate HQ, but distribution hubs for everything IE could need are placed at each SPED operation center. These orbital storehouses contain everything from one-man tents for wilderness excursions all the way up to spare K-F drive components for the company's large fleet of JumpShips.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC RELATIONS (FUNDRAISING AND MERCENARY OUTREACH)

Chief Financial Officer: Dr. Ramias Haroldson

Mercenary Operations Officer: Lieutenant (ret.) Maxwell Giordano

The history of Interstellar Expeditions and the flow of currency into its coffers is one that shows more struggles than even the hundreds of lawsuits filed against it every year have caused. Previous to the reorganization, IE relied on a small number of large investments made in the company by wealthy members and large contracts from large government institutions. Many of the independent groups that were a part of the company often had to do fundraising on their own to provide income for any projects on a local scale.

Security was also an ongoing concern to the individual member groups. During the first half of the thirty-first century, over twenty-five percent of Interstellar Expeditions-related operations were disrupted or ceased to operate due to banditry or sanctioned attacks by government-controlled militaries. Only large scale and widely important operations sanctioned by an interstellar government would be assigned any professional security, and even then it was under the auspices of those governments' militaries.



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During the reorganization of IE, both fundraising and security for the company's expeditions were seen to be desperately in need of a full-time department head, and staffed by people competent in public relations. Leading the department's fundraising arm is the Chief Financial Officer Dr. Ramias Haroldson, professor emeritus of interstellar economics at the University of Shiro III in the Duchy of Andurien. Also under the supervision of Dr. Haroldson is IE Publications Unlimited, IE's own in-house publishing agency. IEPU handles the publication of the *Interstellar Expeditions Explorer's Field Guide*, and IE's own peer-reviewed scientific journal, the *Interstellar Journal of Archeology and Anthropology*.

Directing the mercenary hiring hall on Galatea is Lieutenant Maxwell Giordano, a retired MechWarrior who once served in the Fifth Federated Commonwealth RCT. Used by his unit's command staff as a mercenary liaison during the Jihad, Lieutenant Giordano gained a large amount of experience dealing with widely varying styles of mercenary commands before the destruction of the Fifth RCT. His skill at negotiation has allowed the limited funding of Interstellar Expeditions to hire dozens of small mercenary units for use in securing our operations.

STELLAR AND PLANETARY EXPLORATION DEPARTMENT (SPED)

Director: Dr. Nicolas Basingstoke

Chair of Anthropology: Dr. Kurt Teller

Chair of Archeology: Dr. Jeanie Arrieta

Chair of Astronomy: Dr. Mark Lake

Chair of Earth Sciences: Dr. Amy Steelman

The largest department in Interstellar Expeditions by far, the Stellar and Planetary Exploration Department grew out of the hundreds of independent groups that originally formed into IE. Every IE archeological dig, anthropological study, stellar survey and planetary geological survey is completed by SPED. The mandate of Interstellar Expeditions would be unable to be pursued at all without the skilled professionals and hardworking volunteers of SPED.

Stellar and Planetary Exploration is divided into areas of operation. This is due to the vast area of space humanity has settled in its thousand years of interstellar travel. The operations areas (OA) are: Inner Sphere (comprising the five Great Houses of the Successor States and the Republic of the Sphere), Near Periphery (areas not including the Inner Sphere OA out to a distance of approximately 750 light years from Terra), and finally the Deep Periphery (areas more distant than 750 light years from Terra).

Over all of the areas of operation are the chairs of research that ensure that all scientific and cultural research is assigned to appropriate Interstellar Expeditions staff. The chairs are also tasked with hiring personnel for each OA in their field of expertise, so that Interstellar Expeditions never needs to subcontract out scientific work. The chairs also review any findings made in their

particular field of expertise and then submit those findings to the editorial staff of the *Interstellar Journal of Archeology and Anthropology* (IJAA).

Dr. Nicolas Basingstoke is the director of the department and sits on the Board of Directors as well as on the editorial board for the IJAA. He was chosen to lead SPED because of his longtime employment in Interstellar Expeditions and his experience in fieldwork relating to his specialty, linguistic anthropology. Reporting directly to him are the chairs, each one an expert in their field and well-versed in field operations.

SPED crews and maintains the large fleet of JumpShips, DropShips, and small craft owned by Interstellar Expeditions. Nominally, these vessels are assigned to specific teams and contracts by the OA headquarters from a pool. The exception to this rule is the Deep Periphery OA, which has no assigned IE teams or vessels. Instead, operations in the Deep Periphery utilize manpower and material taken from the nearest Near Periphery operational area. The vast amount of space outside of the commonly held borders of human-settled space requires this style of flexibility.

Key Focus Areas of SPED

The many areas of operation that Interstellar Expeditions currently has active contracts in stretches over a volume of space over two hundred million cubic light years in size that contains an estimated one million stars; in other words, everything except the Clan homeworlds and other Deep Periphery entities. Unfortunately, IE doesn't have the resources to cover every corner of mankind's dominion. We must focus on providing services closer to home in order to fund more pure science and exploration for discovery's sake.

Inner Sphere OA

The Inner Sphere Operations Area is the core of Interstellar Expeditions' business and contains slightly over half of the company's assets. Any operations inside the Successor States, the Republic of the Sphere and Clan-held territories falls inside the Inner Sphere OA. Due to the quickly changing political dynamics common to the Inner Sphere since the fall of the first Star League, Interstellar Expeditions has set up operation centers in each of the major political entities inside of the Inner Sphere OA. These operation centers are individually tailored to each state; all local IE employees are citizens of that state, and are well versed in the cultural heritage, languages and history that betters the company's understanding of any discoveries made while under contract to that state.

Interstellar Expeditions' largest current employer is the Republic of the Sphere. The Republic has contracted IE to assist the Republic Navy in surveying all the star systems within ninety light years of Terra in order to hunt for hidden Word of Blake assets, and to ensure that the Republic knows about every path

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to Terra. IE has been assigned nearly half of the thousands of star systems in that volume of space. Even with the current ten survey teams assigned to this massive undertaking, it is estimated to take twelve to fourteen more years to complete the survey.

The company's assets in the Capellan Confederation are centered on the smallest of the Inner Sphere SPED operations centers, on Castrovia. The Capellan government has repeatedly accused IE of espionage and collusion with the Republic of the Sphere. This has ensured that IE is denied any contracts and bids for planetary and stellar survey expeditions, as House Liao feels IE may see something they do not wish us to see. Operations in the Capellan Confederation are limited to archeological and anthropological studies, including help identifying the remains left from the Jihad.

Interstellar Operations has had a unique relationship with the Draconis Combine over the past decade. IE was the beneficiary of a large sum of currency from the will of Chandrasekhar Kurita, that allowed IE the first major expansion of its JumpShip fleet with the purchase of two *Merchant* and one *Invader*-class JumpShips. The Draconis Combine Operations Center is located on Midway, perched on the edge of the vast region known as the Draconis Rift. Current operations in the Combine are primarily stellar and planetary surveys of the Draconis Rift, and anthropological studies of the Combine's Japanese-styled cultural heritage.

The Federated Suns Operations Center on the planet Manassas has the largest permanent number of IE employees of any IE facility except for the HQ on Aur. The defunct Federated Commonwealth was always welcoming and supportive of Interstellar Expeditions, and many long-term contracts that are held by the company were initially let during that interstellar state's brief existence. The Manassas center also serves the breakaway Filvelt Coalition. Major contracts in House Davion tend to focus more on archeological digs, but a sizable minority of contracts require IE planetary surveys to search for valuable resources. The only major stellar survey mission currently underway is the mapping of the Adhara Complex, an area of dense stars and dust rimward of Andalusia.

The dissolution of the Free Worlds League in the 3080s was cause for concern for IE operations in that Successor State's space. The operations center on Loyalty, now in the Duchy of Graham-Marik, was all but closed until agreements were made between the major former League states and IE to continue to operate across borders under the same contracts and mandates given to Interstellar Expeditions previous to the dissolution of Parliament.

Current operations include a sizeable contract by the Principality of Regulus to assist in planetary and stellar surveys of many solar systems inside their borders for remnants of Word of Blake forces or hidden bases.

Historically, operations based in the Lyran Commonwealth, née Alliance, have been the largest and most complex that Interstellar Expeditions has undertaken. The exploration of the former worlds of the Rim Worlds Republic has always been a high priority of the company, and uncovering the history of the horrors of the fall of the Star League has held a fascination with many investors. The operations center in the Commonwealth is on Gulf Breeze Station, in the system that now bears the same name. The Star League once used this system—then known as CMO 26—as a mustering point for its logistical chain during its assault on the Rim Worlds Republic, and because of this IE has had ongoing archeological digs active in and around the Star League-era ruins on the primary world's dark side since 3043. Operations within Steiner space typically focus on the former worlds of the Rim Worlds, and the majority of IE's archeological teams can be found based in Gulf Breeze.

The Clan invasion corridor operations base is located on Tukayyid, a world now held by the Diamond Shark Clan. The employees of this operations base are a unique combination of Inner Sphere and Clan cultures. While IE does not have a military force, several bondsmen have nevertheless been taken from the Clans over the years through periodic Trials. While it remains IE policy to repatriate Kerensky's descendants to their home Clans, there have been many cases where the captured Clansmen refuse and wind up in IE's employ. Contracts and operations in the Clan invasion corridor are primarily archeological (when contracted by the Clans) or anthropological (when contracted by civilians). Of course, Clan-Inner Sphere relations being as they are, many operations in the coreward region are either heavily monitored by Clan agents, or even actively opposed by Clan military forces, making for a shaky relationship here.

Near Periphery OA

Unlike the Inner Sphere OA, the Near Periphery is split into quadrants of operations in the same way that ComStar has set up their operations areas for their Explorer Corps. The slow decline of the Explorer Corps through lack of funding provides Interstellar Expeditions many opportunities to expand its operations. The influx of former ComStar members has also increased the reputation and expertise of IE in the



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near Periphery. Even with ComStar ending its support of many Explorer Corps operations, IE has not been able to secure contracts to rent the former Explorer Corps bases in the Near or Deep Periphery. Operations in these areas tend to center on stellar and planetary survey, but important archeological and anthropological findings are often made due to the high concentration of failed colonies.

The Coreward Operations Center is located on Richmond, on the edge of Draconis Combine-claimed space. A portion of the Hanseatic League falls inside this OA, but operations in the League are assigned to the Deep Periphery OA. Current notable operations in the Coreward area include archeological digs on Star's End, exploration of the Coalsack Nebula, and the active stellar region known as the Theta Carinae Cluster, though equally interesting are the recent developments we have learned of in the Chainelane Isles. (See the Coreward Legacies section later in this document).

On the other side of the Inner Sphere is the Rimward Operations Area, with its base of operations centered on the Magistracy of Canopus world of Detroit. Access to heavy industry and ease of doing business in the Magistracy makes this branch of SPED the largest in the Near Periphery OA. Unlike the Coreward Operations Area, the Rimward area has a much stronger focus on archeology and anthropology at the expense of stellar and planetary exploration. Duties for the Rimward Operations Area include the Fronc Reaches, Magistracy of Canopus and Taurian Concordat. IE has significant personnel involved in archeological surveys of the solar systems in the more rimward areas of the Magistracy (see the Rimward Wonders section later in this document).

The base of operations for the Spinward Operations Area is on the Outworlds Alliance world Mitchella. The advanced industry of the planet provides much-needed logistical support for the operations in this area. Similar to the rimward operations theater, the IE teams beginning expeditions on Mitchella tend to be focused on archeology and anthropology rather than other disciplines. Realms and areas that fall inside the oversight of this OA include the Outworlds Alliance and its dozens of abandoned colony worlds and the Tortuga Dominions, when accompanied by mercenary security forces. One significant area of interest is the Mica system, a solar system with three inhabited worlds (two of which were only settled thanks to Star League technology). (See the Spinward Discoveries Section later in this document.)

Finally the Anti-Spinward Operations Area includes a large section of the former Rim Worlds Republic. Operations in this area are based from the IE offices on the Rim Collection world of All Dawn. IE based its operations here because the world was relatively untouched during the dissolution of the Rim Worlds Republic. All Dawn was used as a fallback position for the leaders of the Rim Worlds' Timbuktu Province as they attempted to flee from SLDF forces. IE has found immense amounts of documents and historical artifacts there. The areas under the oversight of the Anti-Spinward Operations Area include the Rim Collection, the Marian Hegemony and the former worlds of the Circinus Federation. (See Anti-Spinward Empires later in this document).

Deep Periphery OA

Unlike the Inner Sphere and Near Periphery OA's, the Deep Periphery OA has no central operations centers, though a number of transient bases do exist for support purposes. Given the vast area of space that they cover, and the sheer distance between waypoints, IE operations in the Deep Periphery must be as flexible as possible in their purpose and ability to take on new tasks.

Expeditions into the Deep Periphery use teams that have the broadest range of abilities, and are taken from any of the other operations areas. These same deployments into the Deep Periphery begin at the closest Near Periphery operations office. Currently, IE is investigating the option of approaching the Hanseatic League for permission to set up a new Deep Periphery field office on their capital world of Breman. Other current notable operations in the Deep Periphery include observations of the Society of St. Andreas on St. Andreas, first contact and anthropological studies of the Axumite Empire and New Delphi Compact, as well as deep space exploration past the rimward edge of the Magistracy of Canopus and Fronc Reaches.

FIELD OPERATIONS GUIDE

Much of the critically acclaimed *Interstellar Expeditions Explorer's Field Guide* (now in its twenty-second edition) is based off of trial and error of a millennium of deep space travel and the mistakes and successes of IE in its archeological and anthropological expeditions. While the rules and procedures that IE follows takes up a significant portion of the *Field Guide*, a summary of those expectations can be found in the attached video file.

System Scan Initializing



A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO SPACE EXPLORATION

Excerpts from the New Associate Orientation Holo, "IE and Me," circa 3090

[The video begins with a rotating IE logo which then is replaced with the words "PART 17: Rule to Live By." With a quick fade-away you see an attractive looking man wearing a white lab coat with the IE logo on its front pocket. He is standing in front of a holo-tank with a rotating image of a Scout-class JumpShip being displayed]

"Welcome back from the break. I hope that we haven't overwhelmed you with information...at least not yet! In this section, we will discuss the general guidelines and procedures about planetside or space-based operations that you, our intrepid employees, will learn to hold close to your heart. You may ask yourself why you should bother learning them? I can answer by saying what an officer in the Royal Engineers Bomb Disposal unit from the United Kingdom on Terra during the twentieth century said, 'We hold to guidelines and procedures because some poor sod turned into a fine red mist so we write down what he did wrong so you don't have to wear his wet boots.'"

[The man laughs cheerfully]

"Not that there are many situations where you will find yourself vaporized like that ... but there are enough situations where something could happen to you that would place you in the 'unrecoverable assets' column of some accountant back on Aur that makes you knowing these helpful for your long term well-being."

[The holo-tank image is replaced by the words "Rules to Live By: Command and Conflict Resolution"]

"Every expedition team has a team leader that reports all findings back to their Operations Area HQ at the end of the expedition. This is a person who is obviously highly qualified to be leading a team of highly educated and somewhat motivated IE employees in dangerous situations. The team leader also has the responsibility for maintaining a healthy and productive work environment. Thus your first guideline is: 'Listen to the person in charge!'"

[The words, "Rule 1: Listen to the guy/gal in charge!" appears in the holo-tank, floating beside the man to remind you what he said. Later, as he says each rule, the same rule appears next to him below the last.]

"If your expedition leader says, 'Don't leave camp after dark without a needler,' *don't leave camp after dark without a needler.* If your expedition leader says to run away and hide from an aggressor, don't sit there and argue until the aggressor's upon you! Obviously, if your expedition has attached security forces, those are the men and women who know what to do when your team is attacked. Help them out if they ask—remember, they have the guns!

"There is only one higher authority when deployed in the field and that is the person who everyone salutes when you are on your DropShip or JumpShip. The guideline when you are on board those vessels is Rule 2: 'Listen to the person who can get you home!' They know their ship better than their husband/wife/significant other/sex doll back home, and they have extensive training in risk management. If you don't want to be stranded in the middle of the Draconis Rift, consider them God on your JumpShip/DropShip.

"When you are involved in a stellar or planetary survey mission there are a few things that you should always do:

"Rule 3: When you first jump into a star system, make sure you check for signs of intelligent life. Radio signals, city glow on the night side of terrestrial planets, targeting lasers impacting the hull of your spacecraft, etc. An unknown group of humans is one of the largest hazards an IE survey team could encounter."

[The camera zooms in on the man's face, and the usual smile you see there has been replaced by a deadly serious look.]

"Interstellar Expeditions cannot stress enough that, while invaluable, official maps produced by ComStar and its Explorer Corps as well as other published sources cover only worlds with high population densities, major industries, and HPG coverage. We humans have an annoying tendency to move from place to place at a moment's notice. With the vastness of space, it is quite easy to lose track of a billion people now and then.

"It is vitally important for all Interstellar Expeditions employees and volunteers to ensure that any local population you encounter be assessed for the amount of danger they pose to your expedition. Remember, even a people dismissed as 'mostly harmless' can still present a lethal risk to personnel, equipment, and excavation sites."

[The camera zooms back out as the man's smile returns. In a blur of motion you can see the tiny text of a disclaimer streak across the screen, "Irresponsible risk assessments of local populations that result in disfigurement, dismemberment, cannibalism, or death may void IE's health care and life insurance policies on all IE staff involved. Please assess responsibly!"]

"In the next section of your orientation video we will visit with Professor Harrison of NAIS and listen to his presentation, 'The Dangers of Hyperspace Travel: Risks of Using Standard Jump Distances around Giant Stars.'"

[The holo-tank shows a JumpShip appearing from hyperspace dangerously close to a red giant's photosphere before the JumpShip disappears in a cartoonish puff of fire. The screen then fades to black.]



HUNTING THE WORD **GONE TO GROUND**

I was commissioned by Interstellar Expeditions to produce a report on efforts to locate surviving Word of Blake assets. My credentials include twenty years as an analyst inside Word of Blake's ROM and ten years as an employee of the Republic's Sphere Intelligence Service. My services were brokered through FSS Consulting Group per the retainer contract on file with IE's legal department.

The following report and attached documentation represents the culmination of the efforts of a dozen highly motivated staffers, research assistants, and associates. I also received considerable assistance from IE's archival specialists and the authors of the attached field reports. Everything contained within was only made possible by this combined effort.

—Annelise Schweizer-Yasujiro, FSS Consulting Group, 10 November 3095

HUNTING THE WORD

IE's corporate focus on the Word of Blake began during the Jihad. CEO Reiner Wooden cooperated with Chandrasekhar Kurita in discovering the Ruins of Gabriel, and threw IE behind Devlin Stone's Coalition. Corporate assistance to Stone took the form of logistical support from IE's JumpShip fleet, mercenary assets, and intelligence cooperation. In particular IE focused on exploration and research oriented toward discovery of the Word's rumored Hidden World bases.

The effort to locate the Hidden Worlds continued after the end of the Jihad, as part of a long-term agreement with the newborn Republic. In many respects it came to dominate the organization

THE CONSULTANTS 

Frost, Singh, and Shermarké Consulting Group was established in April 3082 by a trio of former intelligence agents. Precentor Ogden Frost was one of the most senior members of Word of Blake ROM to obtain a public amnesty; Savinder Singh was a former SAFE operative from Regulus who had helped carry out the Cameron-Jones purge; Josefine Shermarké was a former ComStar ROM agent linked with the notorious rogue spy Damocles.

How the unemployed spies came together remains a tightly-kept secret, but they have established one of the most effective strategic forecasting agencies in the Republic. Clients of the low-key agency include planetary governments, arms makers, entertainment corporations, and allegedly Victor Steiner-Davion. While FSS has studiously avoided attention, those in-the-know swear by their results.

This has led the group being cited as a sinister force by several conspiracy theorists. One account links Frost to a cabal of unreformed ROM agents operating as a part of the so-called Illuminati. More measured criticism focuses on the undue influence that former Blakists like Frost are accused of having on Republic institutions. As in the past, these accusations rest more on innuendo and assumption than hard fact.

—*London Review of Intelligence*, "Public Profile: FSS Consulting Group, LLC," Q4 3095

HUNTING THE WORD

under the remainder of Wooden's term as CEO. Traditional projects received lower priority, with complaints from the Council of Peers being ignored or answered with terse reminders of the Blakist threat. The arrest of council member David Styles in September 3084 for collaboration with the Word of Blake put an end to further open criticism.

Wooden's death provided IE with an opportunity to re-evaluate its priorities while building on his legacy of reform. The purpose of this report is to summarize those past accomplishments and to provide a forecast for future progress to aid the Council of Peers. It presents what may be the most comprehensive source possible for post-Jihad developments on the Word of Blake outside of the highly confidential files of the Republic's intelligence services.

Hidden Worlds

The Hidden Worlds have been of interest ever since Doctor Brooklyn Stevens and her crew rediscovered Jardine in 3067. Reportedly, these were five strategic bases, chosen by Jerome Blake and Conrad Toyoma during the First Succession War, and made to disappear from the Inner Sphere's consciousness. These bases were intended as a final fallback position in the case one or more Great House made an attack on Terra. As both Kenyon Marik and Minoru Kurita are known to have contemplated just such a move, the precaution was prescient on Blake's part.

Today, we know the locations and dispositions of three of these worlds.

Jardine and Mayadi were conventional colony worlds co-opted by Blake's agents during the First Succession War. ComStar stepped in as saviors after they were attacked by the Great Houses and manipulated the fear of destruction that engendered to keep the settlers in line. ComStar then used its monopoly of interstellar communications to falsify reports that the worlds had been depopulated and dropped them from the charts of its Cartographic Division. Outsiders were warned off by plague buoys and, in time, the worlds slipped from outside memory and interest.

Gabriel was a secret repair base established on an ice moon in the outer system of Odessa by Aleksandr Kerensky during the Rim Worlds Campaign. The Ruins of Gabriel were abandoned during the Exodus, but the Blakists knew the location of the site. Sometime in the First Succession War the facilities were reoccupied by a ComStar crew, which also went about refurbishing the many mothballed WarShips left there by Kerensky. Authorities on Odessa were subverted to provide necessary supplies and to insure secrecy.

All three of these known Hidden Worlds have been rendered defunct. Mayadi was the first, falling victim to a released biowarfare agent at least a century ago. Jardine was the victim of a traps volcano, allegedly initiated by Manei Domini warlord Apollyon, which scoured the planet of any remaining secrets. The Ruins of Gabriel facility was comprehensively scuttled by Manei Domini forces in April 3075. Accordingly, only Mayadi offers the

potential for significant intelligence gains and only through dangerous exploratory work on its plagued surface.

Two other Hidden Worlds have been revealed through cryptic references in a few high-level sources. Obeedah and Taussen are allegedly the Davion and Liao "Hidden Worlds." To date there has been essentially no progress locating either, though doing so remains a key priority for IE. Given the existence of Gabriel there is no reason to assume that either is a planet. In fact, the prevalence of hidden staging bases used during the Jihad strongly implies that there could be many more redoubts than just Obeedah and Taussen. And the willingness of the Master to sacrifice Jardine suggests that it was not considered absolutely critical.

Hidden Blakists

The Hidden Worlds are assumed to be a bastion of the remaining military strength of the Word of Blake. There is evidence that several Shadow Divisions and WarShips survived the Jihad and have most likely retreated to them. However, the bulk of the Word of Blake was never evacuated to secret havens. Most Blakist personnel knew nothing more of the Hidden Worlds, the Master, or the Manei Domini than the rest of the Inner Sphere did.

All evidence suggests that the Hidden Worlds were a closely kept secret before and after the Schism, and that by the time of the Jihad they were under Manei Domini control. As none of the cyborgs have defected or surrendered there has been no opportunity to interrogate one. If the Republic or one of the Great Houses did do so, they would invariably classify whatever they discovered. IE has no ability to seek out or capture a Manei Domini by itself, and could not deal with the cybernetic suicide implants without outside assistance.

High-ranking members of ROM may have some useful intelligence. However, the schism between the Manei Domini and other branches of the Word complicates matters. Precentor ROM Kernoff sided with Cameron St. Jamais in his feud with Apollyon, and the survivors of ROM seem to have maintained the vendetta. While there is no doubt that an organized pro-Blakist movement still exists, it does not seem to have many connections to the Manei Domini. There is even evidence that Light of Mankind operatives took to hunting down Manei Domini before their disappearance.

Thus, whatever information the surviving ROM organization possesses is likely out of date at best. There are public relations benefits to bringing in wanted war criminals, and the intelligence they can provide may be useful pinpointing other hidden Blakist facilities. The odds of finding a non-Domini Blakist with any relevant data on Obeedah or Taussen must be judged remote, however.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Exploration of Mayadi may yet uncover valuable new history of ComStar's Hidden Worlds deception. There is also an incentive to continue seeking the Hidden Worlds given the threat posed by the Manei Domini.

HUNTING THE WORD

However, there is very little reason to believe that Taussen or Obeedah can be uncovered by present efforts. One or both may not even be planets, and experience with Jardine and Gabriel makes it clear the Word can sacrifice their havens and survive. They have an indeterminate but certainly considerable number of hidden bases completely unknown they can relocate to. It is thus impossible to be certain that Taussen and Obeedah remain inhabited and/or recognizable as Hidden Worlds, even if there were any clues at all pointing to them.

This report must, in summary, conclude that the Hidden Worlds initiative no longer deserves the priority assigned to it by IE. While abandoning the program is impossible due to IE's contracted agreements with the Republic, it is our recommendation that IE reassign resources to pursuing more fruitful efforts

THE HIDDEN FIVE

And then there were two. Or three. Perhaps five. Was it ever six? Only a select few would know the truth, but of the secrets the Word of Blake kept, their Hidden Five is one of the most popular. In assembling this update, we relied upon what little evidence we have, including the Stevens debrief, popular rumors that are identified as such, and the testimony of Precentor Jarvis Bolarugu. For those not aware of Precentor Bolarugu, code-named Soma, he was a Word of Blake JumpShip captain who was captured by our agents on Antallos. He was responsible for shipments to or from covert locations in the Inner Sphere, including the Hidden Five. Though he resisted interrogation, we were ultimately able to retrieve a large amount of data from him.

The Hidden Five were originally rumored to be five systems that the Word of Blake used for testing, construction and bases which to strike from. They each had a Blakist name: the Ruins of Gabriel, Mayadi, Jardine, Obeedah and Taussen. What is often not known is that to the Blakists they were not the Hidden Five, but rather part of The Six, the sixth being Terra. The number six figures prominently for the Word, between the First Circuit, their military structure and these systems. It is generally accepted that three of the Hidden Five have now been found, leaving Obeedah and Taussen unaccounted for. While these two remain a high priority for IE, we must not ignore the other four.

RUMOR

Evidence suggests that the Ruins of Gabriel is the birthplace of the *Erinyes*. With the Word's capture of Sol only a decade old, Gabriel would be away from the prying eyes of any spies. A modified *Newgrange* would surely have been noticed around Saturn or Ionus. This asteroid-shooting WarShip would be a perfect use for Gabriel in the mid 3060s.

THE RUINS OF GABRIEL

Location: Odessa

Situation: Shattered

Use: Shipyard, Staging Point

Hiding in plain sight, the Ruins of Gabriel were hidden by a mixture of secrecy and human apathy. Its origin is largely unknown, despite its discovery. Due to the loss of records in the First Succession War, it could be an old secret Star League base or a Lyran shipyard that was abandoned and lost. It could also be a more recent construct, one of ComStar's design.

Regardless of who built it, the Ruins became one of ComStar's hidden worlds. With the shipyards in Sol, a shipyard in the Odessa system would not have been of great importance during ComStar's shadow years but was an impressive asset during the Jihad. WarShips could be repaired and maintained without returning all the way to Sol or the Free Worlds League. With the Odessan nobility in their pocket, and few people paying any attention to the distant fourth planet and its satellites, Gabriel was safe from detection. If there was an incursion, defenses were capable of quickly eliminating a small patrol before it could request assistance.

Safe until Chandrasekhar Kurita's agents learned of its whereabouts. Sadly, Blakist agents alerted Gabriel's defenders of the task force that assaulted Gabriel. Kurita's forces did secure the base after some deadly fighting and the destruction of a *Naga* that was being repaired, but little was left of the base. What wasn't stripped was booby trapped or destroyed.

Nor did the Blakists stay away for long. They returned to take the Ruins once more, and Odessa III was poisoned by a bioagent. The Ghost Bears entered the conflict, smashing the Blakists and anyone who stood in their way. What was left of Gabriel was destroyed by a self-destruct protocol Blakist agents managed to enact before they were overwhelmed.

BOLARUGU TRANSCRIPT

Gabriel? Sure I'll tell you about Gabby. Not much to worry about, The Faithful and your Share Bears did a great job of erasing anything that was there. It was the least self-sufficient of the Six. Booring place. So few people, too many stiffs. Just a hole cut into an icy rock. They had quite a stockpile of supplies there, enough for a fleet of WarShips. Heck, I was part of the evacuation team when you were coming.

Capabilities? C'mon, it was a fleet base. As I said, supplies, refit for the ships, stopover point for the Divisions. They had some repair bays for 'Mech and vees and whatnot. Smash your planets, stop over to fix up and then back out to do the same. Nothing really special there, maybe some plans for ships but those are long gone. I'm sure there are the writings of the Blessed Blake. You should read those.

HUNTING THE

With the Odessa system under quarantine and Gabriel asunder, there was little analysis that could be performed. The Lyrans sent scouts to look for more facilities but found none. Various scavengers braved the quarantine to find any remains of the Ruins, the basis for the short-lived gray market sales of a Piece of Gabriel. Luckily for the Odessans, the bioweapon failed in its mission. With only a thirty percent morality rate, Odessa survived. Thanks to the mercy missions by The Damned, terminally ill DropShip crews, and orbital drops, aid was delivered to the stricken planet in the 3080s. In 3091 it was downgraded to a level two quarantine and a level three label seems likely within a few years.

Missions have returned little intelligence now that the system is open. Millions have been spent on relics, with nearly half of those clever facsimiles. Yet the Ruins of Gabriel is in some ways the greatest mystery of the Hidden Worlds. Surely it was more than a mere shipyard. But any other conclusion at this point is at best conjecture, at worst, fantasy. Perhaps one day more information will unveil the true history of Gabriel but for now, it remains a costly, costly victory.

JARDINE

Location: Herakleion

Situation: Shattered

Use: Manufacturing, R&D

The first Hidden World to be discovered, little remains of humanity's presence on Jardine. Once a habitable world with three continents, it suffered greatly after the fall of the Star League, with great nuclear scars marking where most of the native populace died. Time has not been any kinder to the planet, as now one continent is currently covered in lava and ash, courtesy of a Traps-type volcano, likely set off by an asteroid collision during the Jihad.

During the Star League, Jardine was a relatively unremarkable world. It was best known for its feline native predator population. It was a well-inhabited world, with populations ranging from 400 to 500 million prior to the Exodus, and was located just outside the Marik Commonwealth. While it had a diversified labor force, it exported very little, primarily aerospace components, built near the mining centers on the continent of Taveuni. It was these few exports that led to the end of Jardine as a major population center.

With the coming of the Succession Wars, the very resource that brought in extra-system money to live comfortably made them a prime target. The industry was concentrated and not well defended, allowing a Lyran raid to easily capture the facilities and strip them clean of both finished products and raw materials. As a final insult, the departing Lyrans saturated the factories with a mix of nuclear and biological weapons before departing. The blast fallout and biological agents soon contaminated the entire continent, forcing the survivors to evacuate. Jardine was placed under quarantine, never to be disturbed again.

BOLARUGU TRANSCRIPT

Jardine...Garden...only if you grew up in Jersey. Hahaha... <cough>...oh, guess you guys haven't been to Terra. Beautiful place from obrit (sic), but get down to the surface and all that green is toxic. All that pollution, the stuff could take it survived, the rest died out. But the cats, now that was magnificent. Don't ask me how they look like cats, but they are so damned powerful. What? The base? A large complex, mostly interconnected structures. Had to be a few hundred thousand living there. You could go outside with a breather for a few minutes, but anything more and you needed a suit or a scrub down. I mean, you could live as all, but procedural requirements. Much more strict if you went to the mines. Three shifts in a week, only work one week a month. Well, until near the end, Those poor bastiches.

Or so everyone thought. While ComStar was generous in adding their transports to the evacuation, they were also secretly setting up their own private enclaves. In addition to the records "bait-and-switch" that re-branded the world under the name Herakleion and mixed up enough planetary data to further muddy the waters for explorers to come, the Decker Expedition discovered that ComStar built a complex on the far side of the planet from the epicenter of the nuclear fallout, on the continent of Rapa Nui. Specially designed air filtration kept the living spaces clean enough to allow habitation during the early years after the nuclear and biological attacks (probably with only a small increase in cancer among the new citizens of Jardine). Given the fact that Dr. Stevens' freelance expedition reportedly visited the world without requiring such precautions, these effects were either localized or dissipated within a generation of ComStar's resettlement.

Records uncovered indicate that it served as a research facility during and after the Third Succession War. Much of the population was descended from native Jardinians who refused to evacuate, and who were absorbed into ComStar's facility there. Here is where Bolarugu's account and that of Dr. Stevens diverge. According to Bolarugu, around the 3060s, the Word started up the mines again and placed refineries on Rapa Nui's outlands, then shipped the raw materials back to a main facility where a manufacturing annex had been constructed to produce parts for spacecraft, primarily aerospace fighters. Stevens' account, meanwhile, described a more idyllic setting of jungles surrounding a single settlement that served as a development and research site for cybernetically enhanced operatives—specifically the dreaded Manei Domini—and even places Precentor Apollyon as the planetary governor during the time of her visit.

Whatever the case, all of the facilities were apparently destroyed when an asteroid collided with Rapa Nui. Whatever survived the impact and resulting earthquakes was soon covered with lava, as a traps volcano eruption resulted from the impact. Surveys failed to locate any evidence of manmade construction on the continent. The other two continents are not directly affected by the eruption, but will endure the secondary



HUNTING THE WORD

effects such as increased particulates, toxins and decreased temperatures from the increased reflection of solar light off of the atmospheric particulates.

Is there any use left for Jardine? There remain a large number of intact structures on Taveuni, though the ongoing lava flow from the eruption, the high—and still growing—concentrations of atmospheric sulfur, and the immense damage to the ozone layer all present too many hazards for prolonged study. Preliminary reconnaissance of the mining operations shows nothing interesting other than the added protections for the once-radioactive environment. There could be more, but investigations are slowed by the limited time that teams could safely spend down there. Even more could be learned from some of the Star League-era facilities on the continent, though they are equally or even more dangerous than the Blakist mining and refining operation. The last continent, Mussau, appears to never have been highly populated and now suffers from volcanic fallout. The last of the Jardine feline species survive there—for now—but little else seems to be of interest in the last land Jardine has left.

MAYADI

Location: Tangerz

Situation: Toxic

Use: R&D, Training

The last of the discovered hidden worlds, Mayadi played no part in the Jihad. Located in the Tangerz system in the Draconis Combine, the system was not prominent outside of its neighboring systems. A very dry planet, Tangerz was only capable of supporting a few hundred thousand people. During the Star League, Tangerz built a thriving economy based one entertainment and tourism. Imported food and water allowed the planet's populace to grow to over 250 million permanent residents, with an equal number of visitors rotating in and out.

The planet was starting to gain fame outside of its region, and had even begun to receive terraforming assistance from the Star League, when the Usurper took over. Travel to Tangerz slowed down as people grew paranoid over the future. The quality of entertainment decreased along with the cash flow, further compounding the problem. When the First Succession War began, Tangerz collapsed. Resources were diverted and suddenly the world couldn't support even a third of the people on it. Tens of millions died from thirst and starvation, plus millions more from riots. Tangerz was vacated, supposedly so fast that there weren't enough to bury the dead.

At that point, Tangerz was a dead system, useless to anybody—except ComStar. A dead, but marginally habitable rock that none would bother with was perfect for them, and they exercised the same "bait-and-switch" used on Jardine to erase the world from the nav charts. They could start slow and allow the ecosystem to recover, requiring little more than a few hundred thousand people to maintain their secret base. Yet even under ComStar's secret



BOLARUGU TRANSCRIPT

Mayadi. Oh my. I kind of chuckled when I heard you'd found that. Not exactly what you were hoping for, was it? Find any Blakists? A haha haha hahaha ha. Heh.

Your people have been there, what do you want to know? It was dead before I was alive. I went there once. Just the once. No need to ferry supplies. Brought some Manais. Two shuttles. One went down to the surface. It came back up, but just to send a package to the other shuttle. Then the first one went back down, crew and all. Not sure if they self destructed or just threw a party for their last few hours or days or however it is long they had. The second one came back with us. I imagine you'll find the same bug on Alarion or Galax or somewhere.

I told you I don't know went on there. It was dead, just knew some bioweapon got loose. Of course the rumor was that some scientist got all upset because his lady-love rebuffed him or some such. Kind of over-board way to react, if you ask me. I wonder if anyone was ever saved by those drones out there. No quarantine like Jardine, despite being the more deadly planet.

reign, Tangerz would die again. The facility established there was lost some time in the thirtieth century, when a bioplague was accidentally released that killed all the organisms on the planet that had cell membranes. Even a century later, the bioweapon was still able to kill a band of pirates that stumbled across the lost facilities in 3046.

In addition to the exploration team finding ComStar's lost base of operations—located near the ruins of the old capital, Jarkarta—the remains of the dead pirate band and huge battlefields were discovered. The weapons of war from the Star League littered the nearby salt plains. Evidence suggests that ComStar used it for live-fire training. With the Com Guards not yet in existence, and so few in ComStar knowing about the Hidden Worlds, this was likely for whatever force guarded the Hidden Worlds themselves.

The official conclusion is that Mayadi is a dead end. This conclusion may be a misnomer, one that has been created to mislead those in search of the truth. A Republic force scouting the planet made the only hands-on visit to the system. If they had discovered an active Blakist Hidden World, what would their report to IE be? Just as ComStar before, claiming the world is dead and a danger to any visitor is another way to avert prying eyes. Perhaps they are building their own set of hidden worlds and have started with Mayadi, or perhaps the bioplague is truly that deadly and virulent. Clearly, IE must work with the Republic of the Sphere, but it behooves us to live by the old adage, "trust but confirm," especially in this case. Mayadi may well be dead, but firsthand evidence would help create a tombstone that can be trusted by all.

HUNTING THE

OBEEDAH**Location:** Unknown**Situation:** Unknown**Use:** Staging Point, Manufacturing?, Shipyard?

In sharp contrast to the other Hidden Worlds, even the rumors of Obeedah do little to aid in locating it. Supposedly the hidden world of the Capellan Confederation. Does that refer to the Confederation of the First Succession War? The Fourth Succession War? The beginning of the Jihad? No other realm has changed in size so much.

The Teller Mission, of 3091, was thought to have located Obeedah in the Achilles system. Sadly, it was merely a Blakist cache of weapons. Likewise, the disappearance of the Payton Mission in 3092 was thought to have been evidence that they had stumbled across Obeedah, but a follow-up mission, complete with Capellan WarShip support, turned up no trace of the Word in the Kumqwatt system. The Payton party was lost to a simple navigational error, jumping too far into the system and losing their JumpShip to an asteroid collision. Survivors made it to Kumqwatt IX, but were unable to survive long enough to be rescued.

Obeedah was invariably used in the Jihad. The strikes against the Capellan March as well as Sian itself required a base of operations closer than the Protectorate or the Concordat. Many Blakist vehicles had parts that contained serial numbers with an unknown identifier, OB1 or OB3, which are suspected to have originated on Obeedah. The isotopic composition between the two sets of parts vary only slightly, indicating that they may have come from different planets, asteroids, or moons, but most likely originated from the same solar system.

By the limited reports we have received, Obeedah is the most populated of the hidden worlds. This eliminates many of the marginal worlds that were lost in the First Succession War. This would indicate that Obeedah suffered a Jardine-esque catastrophe, but only in the reports. A false cataclysm, engineered by ComStar. Or perhaps a small disaster, blown out of proportion. In either case, Obeedah apparently remains a very habitable world, most likely possessing a standard of living rivaling the Star League era.

Of the two remaining hidden worlds, Obeedah has been the more sought. The Confederation is far more interested in assisting Interstellar Expedition efforts than either the Republic or the Federated Suns. While the Capellans may have some less than altruistic motivation behind finding an active base of operations and manufacturing center within or near their borders, locating Obeedah is IE's goal. What to do with it or any other Hidden World is beyond our abilities.

Despite the setbacks of two expeditions, analysis suggests that Obeedah will likely be found in our lifetime. The limiting factors are money and manpower. The grants from the Confederation and IE's backers should allow at least one expedition per year. As long as IE allocates a team to searching the Capellan systems that match the human intelligence, finding Obeedah will just be a matter of time.

BOLARUGU TRANSCRIPT

Obeedah, Obeedah, life goes ahhhhh! Pain is my mistress, not my master.

...

Yes, Obeedah. There is a great little place by the starport there. Serves the best goulash. I'm sorely tempted to reveal the location if you would take me there for one last plate. But one of you would destroy it. Such cute waitresses, too.

...

Yes, we went there a lot, towards the end. The fleets were using it, you see, so just capture one of those WarShips intact before the captain can erase the logs completely. Easy 'nuff task, eh? Lots of people there, few bazillion. Be a good place to prepare for the Third Transfer, nice planet. Sure we made it disappear, just told you...oh, no, no. Close.

...

Obeedah has these tropical islands. So nice, you can just go and relax. I spent a week there, once. Six is so sexy. Little umbrellas in the drinks. <Whisper, amplified> Be careful of the water. Use those whiskey stones.

...

So the Master, Minoru and Kerensky walk into a bar...oh yeah, they had yards. Nothing fancy bu...and they say to the bartender...

...

Big space station, part of some SDF. Better take a task-force with you. We should have installed some black holes, too. Damn braniacs couldn't come up with those. Not so smarty, are they?

TAUSSEN**Location:** Unknown**Situation:** Unknown**Use:** Staging Point, Manufacturing?, R&D?

The scourge of New Avalon, Tausсен was undoubtedly the staging point for the numerous assaults on New Avalon during the Jihad. What else does the most mysterious of the hidden worlds contain? The facts about Obeedah are more numerous than Tausсен. The Hidden World of the Federated Suns will likely be the last bastion of the Word of Blake in the Inner Sphere.

What is known is that Tausсен lies on the outer side of the habitable zone around a Class M star, given the species known to reside there. Tausсен seems to be the only Hidden World credited with BattleMech construction. With the likelihood of imported parts being close to nil, the system must have easy access to the trace elements that would be required for the complete construction of a BattleMech. Finally, the world must have some part of it survive the First Succession War to have a self-sufficient population.

Three expeditions have used promising data to locate Tausсен, only to come up empty handed—dampening our hopes to easily put an end to another Blakist stronghold. The Jiminez Mission of 3088 to Arcadia turned up nothing other than ruins and radioactive zones. Jiminez's next attempt, in 3090, was equally fruitless, with Versailles turning out devoid of habitable planets. The last mission, Chen in 3092, found evidence of Blakist habitation on Helixmar, but only a temporary base of operations.



HUNTING THE WORD

The Republic made an attempt to track down the serial numbers of Word of Blake BattleMechs, but the destruction of Gibson obliterated all of the records, making reconciling the Blakist army impossible. The serial numbering system for BattleMechs used by Word is far more complicated than their other weapons of war, so trying to correlate any Taussen production is difficult at best.

Taussen is most likely the most potent asset that the Word still owns. Protecting their few assets is their greatest priority at the moment. The greatest priority of the allied forces should be finally ending the Blakist threat, but they have fallen to their individual goals and conflicts. With searching for hidden bases continually decreasing in importance, IE will have a harder and harder time finding them, making a Blakist resurgence all the more likely. Both the Republic and Federated Suns have stopped providing armed support for IE missions. Their cooperation with researchers and scientists has likewise decreased.

Three of the Hidden Worlds have been discovered, yet little of any worth has been recovered from them. The remaining two are still a potent threat. Even if another Hidden World is located, it will be no easy task to pacify it. Raising a task force to accomplish that mission will create another political mess of its own. The Hidden Worlds may remain hidden on the map, but they will be anything but hidden from their impact on the Inner Sphere, even without blatant attacks on systems.

BOLARUGU TRANSCRIPT

Never heard of it.

...

Oh, the Bone Yard. You know why we call it that? All the 'Mech chassis? All the dead people? Nope. This place is like planet Sweden, everyone is pale and fair.

...

They had all these silver oaks by all the streets in Toyama City. Made all dese wiffs sansor philo...(SIC)

...

You know what planet in the Federated Suns produces the most 'Mechs? Taussen! Hahahahaha!

...

They supposedly had some great skiing there. Do I look like a skier? I went to watch their games instead. No Solaris but not bad. Got any mustard? This sandwich is dry. The best were when they had two captured warriors in 'Mechs without weapons. They both thought the other was one of the Faithful. So fun to watch. Too bad so many tried to attack the arena, someone upstairs had to trigger the explosives under the pilot's chair.

...

Just one shot? Not two? Nothing like the care on Taussen. One of my crewmen came down with a pretty bad fever, they fixed him right up. You wouldn't believe their facilities. Terrans should be so lucky.

...

Oh yeah, we were just about ready to jump out when they came in. On their way to liberate New Avalon. Or New Syrtis. Or New Davion. Wherever. We just waited. They recharged and jumped out again. Never knew they had discovered Taussen.

...

They have some lab boys there. Keep them away from everyone else, up on the pole. Leave them alone.

RUMOR

What could the remains of the Word be restocking themselves with? The fear is that *Archangels* and other Celestials will rampage across the Inner Sphere again. This is unlikely; look to the first build-up of the Word's armies. Older designs, such as the *Tessen* and *Buccaneer*, as well as old designs from the Star League era are more likely from a secret base than top of the line designs that barely made it to the battlefield. A Level III every year would make the Word a formidable foe for the future.

OTHER BLAKIST BASES

While the Hidden Five receive a remarkable amount of attention (despite contributing remarkably little to the Jihad), they were not the only little-known systems to host Blakist assets. The following is an assessment of obscure systems with known ComStar/Word of Blake connections.

COLUMBUS

Political Ruler: None

Star Type (Recharge Time): G2V (183 hours)

Position in System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 9.12 days

Number of Satellites: 1 (Amor)

Surface Gravity: 0.9G

Atm. Pressure: Low (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 13°C (Cool)

Surface Water: 67 Percent

Recharging Station: None

HPG Class: None

Highest Native Life: Mammals

Population (3095): 0

Socio-Industrial Levels: N/A

Affiliation: None

Because of its location in the Deep Periphery, 735 light-years from Terra, and substantial Explorer Corps facilities (in turn built on former Star League facilities), the planet Columbus was a primary suspect for Blakist skullduggery. Blakist skullduggery did reach Columbus, but did not linger. The facilities were brutally attacked

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by WarShips in or around 3070 while they hosted SLDF forces, then in retreat from the Clan homeworlds. The Columbus facility (ironically, located in a twenty-five-kilometer meteor crater) was reduced to overlapping craters by mixed naval weaponry.

A 3076 investigation of Columbus's silence found that Columbus, its Caisson satellites, and the DRUM satellites in surrounding systems had been destroyed. Among the wreckage were several dead lifeboats and wrecked fighters that enabled investigators to piece together what happened. Blakist WarShips and DropShips thoroughly swept the system during the early days of the Jihad, destroying the JumpShips parked there—including at least two of the *Faslane* YardShips—as well as all DropShips and aerospace defenders around the planet. The attackers then hovered over the ground sites at the edge of the atmosphere, balancing on engine thrust while methodically leveling the base and all supporting structures. An orbital survey of the planet found no other human activities subsequent to the Blakist bombardment, so the Word of Blake apparently did not utilize Columbus for its own ends. The conclusion is that the Word simply aimed to prevent Columbus from being used as a base for activities against its Deep Periphery activities, much as the world once supported the search for the Clan homeworlds in the mid-3050s.

The facility, located in meteor crater-turned-grassland near the equator, was originally developed in the 2600s by the Star League's various exploration agencies. ComStar re-discovered Columbus in 3023 and used it as a base of Explorer Corps operations thereafter. The revived facility had fortified buildings for a garrison, planet-based DropShip repair facilities, radio telescope facilities forming part of the Star League's Long Base Radio Interferometry Array, substantial housing (for up to 17,000), laboratory facilities and farms that provided fresh food. Under ComStar's administration, it also often hosted *Faslane*-class YardShips for JumpShip repairs, and a station on the moon Amor.

A long-standing mystery of Columbus was the fate of its SLDF garrison. In 2755, the sizable garrison departed to chase an unrecognized JumpShip and dropped out of contact with Columbus in 2756 (just a couple of years before financial pressure closed Columbus). The garrison did cease contact with Columbus, but for mundane reasons that Terra's labyrinthine SLDF archives recently revealed: the flotilla contacted the JärnFolk and, being years past the end of its tour of duty, returned directly to the Inner Sphere in 2757. Communications were no longer routed through Columbus after 2756. This archival finding has ruined countless thirty-first century conspiracy theories (except those that denounce the finding as fabricated to cover up aliens, a giant Periphery empire, etc.)

The planet would be of use to future settlers interested in such a distant colony. Its current ice age makes latitudes beyond sixty degrees unpleasant, but otherwise Columbus is a nearly ideal Terran-type planet. The ecosystem is relatively human-compatible, with mammal-equivalent life and abundant fresh water, and there is a large amount of fertile land in temperate to tropical regions.

MUNDO NUBLAR**Political Ruler:** None**Star Type (Recharge Time):** M4V (207 hours)**Position in System:** 7**Time to Jump Point:** 2.57 days**Number of Satellites:** 0**Surface Gravity:** 0.9G**Atm. Pressure:** Standard (Tainted)**Equatorial Temperature:** 20°C (Temperate)**Surface Water:** 80 Percent**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class:** None**Highest Native Life:** Fish**Population (3095):** 0**Socio-Industrial Levels:** N/A**Affiliation:** N/A

Mundo Nublar, known as EC3057-J83A by the Star League and later astronomers, is a semi-habitable planet orbiting an unremarkable red dwarf a few jumps anti-spinward of the Chainlaine Isles. Thanks to records recovered at Gabriel, it is now known that Mundo Nublar hosted a SLDF weapons testing facility. An IE scout deployed to Mundo Nublar was able to confirm rumors presented in a number of recent publications, such as *Field Manual: Updates*, that some sort of weapons were tested much more recently at Mundo Nublar by the Word of Blake.

The Word of Blake apparently identified EC3057-J83A from SLDF archives at the Ruins of Gabriel (as did this investigation). The facility had been established in 2723 as a naval weapons facility beyond the range of House observation, and the most successful projects were mammoth derivatives of naval Gauss rifles. The prototype mass drivers were operational in the 2750s and demonstrated on a refit *Kimagure*. The limited shipyard facilities of EC3057-J83A were inadequate for fast refits and reports of mass driver performance—only modestly better than current naval weaponry but with a much-more restricted field of fire—resulted in Kerensky ordering the facility shutdown in 2770. The technical personnel were relocated to the Gabriel facility, where SLDF ships were being repaired for the ongoing Civil War.

The Word sent a YardShip because records at Gabriel suggested that several half-disassembled WarShips had been abandoned at EC3057-J83A. Whether those ships were recovered is unknown; what is known that by 3065 the Word was mounting mass drivers on its YardShip. The Word was also reportedly disappointed by the giant weapons and investigated several other "kinetic attack modes" in what became known as Project Erinyes. The giant YardShip was used to nudge large asteroids into planetary impact trajectories. Such an attack is thought to be behind the asteroid bombardment of Taurus. *Erinyes'* voluminous repair bays were also reinforced to carry hundreds of thousands of tons of payload, typically pre-forged iron blocks, during hard acceleration to fractions of light-speed (ten to twenty percent, which could be achieved in less than a month). The last trials seemed to be refinements of navigational systems to accurately,



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precisely deliver the c-fractional projectiles after releases at several astronomical units from the target.

The planet, dubbed Mundo Nublar (“Cloud World”) by Blakist personnel, was only moderately habitable before the Word’s activities. It has temperatures and an atmosphere conducive to terrestrial life, but orbits somewhat beyond the life zone of its dim red primary. It remains at habitable temperatures because it closely orbits a mid-sized brown dwarf, which supplies sufficient additional warmth. Tidally locked toward the brown dwarf, Mundo Nublar has a day/night cycle 16 days long, which allows its large oceans to brew large storms. Storms are frequent and clouds extensive, leading to the name, and together make conventional agriculture difficult even for red dwarf-adapted crops. The slightly ellipsoidal shape of the world caused by the close orbit to the brown dwarf only contributes to the odd weather. Blakist weapon tests, particularly of kilometer-scale asteroids, produced superheated patches of ocean that sustained “hypercanes” for months and left the climate unsettled as of the last visit in 3077—to say nothing of the particulate matter blown into the atmosphere by the odd land strike. The planetary weapons development facilities were ground zero for the final *Erynes* weapons testing, as were any orbital facilities when the Word abandoned the facility. The debris from the orbital facilities was sufficiently intact to yield the records used in this report.

ROSS 248 / TERRELIBRE

Political Ruler: Premier Juan Flores

Star Type (Recharge Time): M6V (207 hours)

HPG Class: B (located at the fleet base site)

Recharging Station: Both

Affiliation: Republic of the Sphere

Planet Name: Mergelée

Position in System: 7

Time to Jump Point: 2.35 days

Number of Satellites: 2 (Timor, Metus)

Surface Gravity: 0.75G

Atm. Pressure: Trace (Toxic)

Equatorial Temperature: -152°C (Cryogenic)

Surface Water: 0 percent

Highest Native Life: None

Population (3095): 12,150,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-A-B-C

Planet Name: Rochegelée

Position in System: 8

Time to Jump Point: 2.36 days

Number of Satellites: 4 (Dijon, Besancon, Montbard, Langee)

Surface Gravity: 0.75G

Atm. Pressure: None

Equatorial Temperature: -172°C (Cryogenic)

Surface Water: 0 percent

Highest Native Life: None

Population (3095): 16,200,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: A-B-A-B-C

This fleet station is based at an uninhabitable red dwarf star deep in the Inner Sphere. It was used by THAF, SLDF, ComStar, and finally the Word of Blake as a fleet base. All worked to keep Ross 248 off the maps, though Focht-era ComStar published its existence and the Republic, which claims suzerainty, has provided most of the information in this report since it no longer uses the fleet facilities. The actual naval facility was a sizable—and nearly impregnable—space station buried in a metallic asteroid roughly five kilometers in diameter. The “Ross 248 Fleet Yard” was beyond the Ross 248’s small proximity limit, allowing KF drive vessels to conveniently arrive very close to the facility.

Stone’s Coalition wrecked the impregnable facility by jumping an unmanned JumpShip into the facility. Hyperspace field interactions with docked JumpShips and WarShips produced spectacular damage to those ships, while overlap between the kamikaze and the asteroid produced a kiloton-scale explosion in the vulnerable heart of the station. The conventional assault team that followed encountered little resistance when surface weapon emplacements, manned by locals, surrendered. The Terralibrans wanted no further part of the Blakists’ fight.

This leads to a unique feature of Ross 248: Terrelibre. Ross 248 was settled by one of ten successful “slowboat” interstellar flights (over a light-year in length) in human history, and one of three successful slowboat colonies. (The other two being Columbia and the abandoned Paraiso.) The Terrelibre mission had launched in 2091 using a purpose-built fusion spacecraft merely a decade before Kearny and Fuchida’s genius was confirmed. Like the eleven other late-twenty-first century slowboat missions, Terrelibre’s effort was private and motivated to flee oppression on Terra. Assuming that government-backed interstellar colonization would occur in the next generation and that those efforts would target habitable planets, Ross 248 was deliberately selected for its lack of habitable worlds. The resulting colony of Terrelibre (founded in 2145) was ignored by the rest of humanity for 200 years. It was only when the Hegemony decided to distract its restive populace in the 2330s that a search for the “lost, misguided slowboat colonies” began and Terrelibre was found.

Unlike Columbia’s and Terra’s Belters, Terrelibre’s space-oriented culture lives on a couple of uninhabitable, Terransized rocky planets (outside Ross 248’s empty life zone). These worlds have produced capable spacers for a succession of governments. When the Word of Blake annexed the Ross 248 Fleet Yard, it allowed the Terrelibrans to maintain their autonomy in exchange for continued staffing of the Fleet Yard. Thus not entangled with Blakist ideology or conflicts, the Terrelibrans were happy to cede the wreckage of the Fleet Yard to Stone. A thorough investigation of the small Terrelibran population and the Ross 248 system found no lurking Blakist diehards. Their current interaction with the Inner Sphere is limited to producing prodigious quantities of JumpShips for the Republic’s relocation programs.

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LONG BASELINE FACILITY-3**Political Ruler:** Station Manager Margaret Thompson**Star Type (Recharge Time):** None (Impossible)**Position in System:** N/A**Time to Jump Point:** 0.61 days**Number of Satellites:** 0**Surface Gravity:** 0.0065G**Atm. Pressure:** Vacuum**Equatorial Temperature:** -273°C (Cryogenic)**Surface Water:** 0 Percent**Recharging Station:** North Pole**HPG Class:** A**Highest Native Life:** None**Population (3095):** 20**Socio-Industrial Levels:** A-F-F-F-D**Affiliation:** Republic of the Sphere

The space station LBF-3 is part of the Star League's modestly named "Long Base Radio Interferometry Array" (LBRIA, typically pronounced "Luh-bree-uh"), which was over 1,500 light-years in diameter and covered most of the Inner Sphere. This behemoth astronomical instrument promised revolutionary radio-frequency imaging of the observable universe. It was first proposed in 2637, when astronomers realized HPGs allowed instruments to be linked across interstellar distances, though it was not started until 2691. Nominally reaching Phase I completion in 2730, the giant radio telescope never worked as promised because of unsolvable HPG issues. HPGs were insufficiently "real time" for true interferometers, and there were causality problems. A Hegemony astronomical society took over the LBRIA stations within the Inner Sphere in 2743 and operated them until 2767, when failing security during the Amaris Coup revealed LBRIA being used for signals intelligence and the society to be a front for Hegemony intelligence. Though the signals collected were sometimes years and decades out of date, the Hegemony found LBRIA useful to close gaps in old intelligence and resolve mysteries of House military activities.

ComStar recovered a number of the LBRIA stations, including LBF-3, in the 2830s with the avowed goal of "restarting basic science during this period of endless war." In fact, ComStar used LBF-3 exactly like the Hegemony. One of its non-military successes was the discovery of the Columbia slowboat colony in 2850, which had lurked unnoticed in the midst of the Inner Sphere for about 700 years.

Major LBRIA elements (such as Columbus and the Tartarus Caldera on Crossing) were located on habitable planets and included both large radio telescope arrays and the computing centers for the tsunamis of information produced by LBRIA. Secondary stations like LBF-3, on the other hand, were placed in geometrically advantageous positions rather than detouring light-years to a habitable planet. LBF-3 is 1.2 light-years from the nearest star. It was relocated some tens of billions of kilometers

from the ideal place to a convenient 400-kilometer ball of cryogenic ice, a Kuiper Belt object lost from some unknown system. Leboeuf, as generations of occupants have named it, provides a gravitational anchor for radio telescope satellites orbiting up to 10 AU away and supplies water and fuel to visiting spacecraft. Buried at Leboeuf's north pole to minimize radio leakage, LBF-3 has facilities for hundreds of residents, a 900-meter diameter grav deck, an HPG, a pair of energy storage batteries for visiting JumpShips, and a pressurized docking bay suited for the largest of JumpShips (which easily handled Leboeuf's 0.0065G), but under ComStar was only staffed with about 20 intelligence, astronomical, and maintenance personnel at a time. The Word of Blake sometimes staged small Manei Domini raids from LBF-3, but the station only had its regular crew when investigated by the Coalition in 3076.

When IE visited it in 3090, docking permission was not granted owing to supposed docking bay damage. LBF-3's crew was supposedly a Republic radio astronomy society, the credentials of which have raised some questions.

RWR OUTPOST #27

Rim Worlds Republic Outpost Number 27 (or Outpost 27) is the largest attempt to produce a Hidden World (well, eight worlds) in ComStar's history. Ham-handed attempts by ComStar and the Word to dismiss leaks about Outpost 27 led to House Kurita, House Steiner, and IE sending separate scout missions between 3074-3076, which found an interstellar nation, the Coreward Confederacy, and ruined Rim Worlds facilities that could be called Outpost 27. The full findings of the Kuritan and Steiner investigations were not shared with IE, though edited versions of their summaries agreed in general with IE's survey and diplomatic interactions with the locals.

Jonathon Chaffins II founded the Coreward Confederacy—then styled as the Autocracy of New Virginia—in 2371. An extremely wealthy Terran owner of the Chaffins Colonial Development Corporations (CCDC), Chaffins inherited the company from his father, who had been a driving force in settling the Inner Sphere in the twenty-third century (particularly during the late twenty-third century Terran Alliance exodus). Chaffins increased his wealth by more than an order of magnitude as his father's colonial investments matured into developed economies during the twenty-fourth century. Raised rich and spoiled, Chaffins spent his wealth in profligate fashions. Fifteen percent of the development in the Grand Canal of Mars was funded by Chaffins alone, and his Autocracy of New Virginia was his most grandiose—and far-flung—effort: a multi-world private empire where he could be king instead of yielding sovereignty to local governments, as he was forced to do with his colonial holdings. The Autocracy was thus founded far from bothersome Terran oversight and efforts were taken to obscure its location so Chaffin's new utopia could remain undisturbed for a long time.



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Backed by a corporate empire specialized in developing colonies, Chaffins had no difficulty arranging his private kingdom of eight star systems. Ruling it was another matter: being a king proved more fun in theory than practice and quite different than being a corporate CEO. Chaffin's last grasp at power (before his lynching) was to scuttle most of the Autocracy JumpShip fleet—excepting, of course, his private yacht, the *M.L. Crassus*, which possessed 152 tons of gold and platinum furnishings. The colonists replaced his Autocracy with a standard federal republic (using boilerplate from the Chaffins CDC government handbooks) and set about making their lives on a mix of eight adequate to ideal planets.

The next few centuries were not fruitful for the Virginian Union. The loss of most of the colony JumpShips proved crippling, as each of the eight systems were established with some degree of industrial over-specialization. With Chaffin's heirs battling over his estate in the Inner Sphere and fearing angry colonists, none of them returned to stake a claim on the isolated Union. Technology decayed to sustainable twentieth century levels, growth was slow, and the interstellar government became an almost non-entity with so little means of maintaining a connection. The planetary governments (balkanizing further into regional governments) mostly ignored the Union. By the twenty-sixth century, the Union was just a name the locals gave to the region, rather than a reference to an interstellar power in its own right.

The Rim Worlds Republic found the Union colonies in the early 2700s and swiftly absorbed them as a hidden state. Listing them as a settled district within its realm, the Republic fed false descriptions to Star League cartographers while assessing these worlds' potential. Stefan Amaris ultimately found a use for these worlds as secret training centers for his armies. He traded technology for land, using the unoccupied continents of the less-populated Union worlds to practice in perfect replicas of whole Terran Hegemony cities, preparing for his coup.

Contrary to the confused rumors in recent publications, these worlds were not targets for nuclear weapons—at least, not by Republican troops—though Amaris did test non-lethal biological agents on the unsuspecting natives. The locals apparently never recognized this, as many of those who thrived did so thanks to the new economic and industrial vitality of the Republic's advanced technology and manufacturing. Like the Hegemony-settled planets of the Rim Worlds Republic, Amaris was quite courteous in his relationship with the Union, clearly confident in his control over the backward, weak planets and found no need to rile them with heavy-handed control.

The massive training operation, collectively called Outpost 27 by Republican agencies, was stripped almost completely bare when Amaris launched his coup. Its skeleton crew and local populations, left out of the loop, were thus astonished when millions of diehard Republican refugees arrived years later, fleeing from the vengeful SLDF and Lyran forces. These refugees were

initially welcomed by the population-starved Outpost worlds, but it soon became clear that these refugees—who included among their number BattleMech-armed Republican troops—had no intention to integrate with the natives; they had come to conquer.

To survive the refugee threat, the locals eventually found themselves uniting with the Republicans in an increasingly centralized shared-power state. This arrangement gave the Outpost worlds unity they had not enjoyed since the early Union days, but did so by creating a political structure that soon led to the rise of demagogues, and the oppression of many civil rights once thought inalienable. The refugee threat was deemed defeated in 2798, and the Virginian Union was reborn—only to be torn apart by civil war less than twenty years later.

The hostilities that erupted in 2816 focused on the tools that made the reborn Union possible: JumpShips and the two shipyards. While primitive by Star League standards, the two sides had little trouble building and wielding nuclear weapons, creating the nuclear scars reported by later surveys. By the time it was over in the mid-twenty-ninth century, the shipyards were radioactive hulks and the vast Rim Worlds warehouses empty. The anemic Coreward Confederacy that rose from the ashes was a clone of the original Union: a feeble, powerless organization that grew increasingly easy to ignore as time wore on and resources grew scarce.

ComStar's Explorer Corps found Outpost 27 in 3034, first stumbling over Confederacy navigational buoys and the wrecked shipyards. The report of a Rim Worlds fleet facility was initially electrifying, and ROM wasted no time taking over its examination. Preliminary contact was established with the withered Confederacy as well, which proved even more electrifying. ROM reportedly attempted to subvert the government, but failed completely. A resulting wave of xenophobia swept the Confederacy, leading to the creation of a new constitution and more centralized government. ComStar retreated from Outpost 27 while periodically attempting to land ROM operatives. Plans to conquer the Confederacy through direct military action were drawn up, but ultimately dropped when the Clans invaded the Inner Sphere.

The Word saw some value in Outpost 27, but with the onset of the Jihad, their efforts stalled, and the Manei Domini operatives reportedly detached to the region eventually dropped out of sight.

The Coreward Confederacy is an interesting if only for the missed opportunity it represents. The eight worlds have retained a level of technology roughly equal to that of the Terran Alliance, and boast a collective population of around 500 million, three-quarters of whom are concentrated on the three most habitable planets. They have escaped the depredations of the Succession Wars and weathered only a modest number of pirate attacks. The centuries of quiet between 2820 and 3090 were an opportunity for the Confederacy to blossom, but instead the region remained stagnant due to a lack of interstellar communication and anemic competition.

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Governed as an anti-feudal federal republic paranoid about investing too much power in any one man, the realm suffers from heavy bureaucracy, stifling economic policies, and gross under-employment in state-monopolized industries. Though personal freedoms remain relatively secure and there are few truly destitute or sickly citizens, entrepreneurs have virtually no chance of challenging state monopolies or overcoming the bureaucratic morass. The Confederacy's very lifeline, in fact, lies in its sole JumpShip refit and repair yard, a slapdash affair whose renovation was motivated by ComStar's failed meddling. Capable mainly of maintaining the Confederacy's meager state-owned transportation fleet, the facility's operations are overstaffed and chronically run over budget by as much as 500 percent or more. Militarily, the Confederacy lacks BattleMechs and only possesses a modest number of primitive aerospace fighters and armored vehicles, all of which are produced by local industries heavily regulated by the central government.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Most of the worlds discussed here were primary targets for hunters of stray Blakists because of their combined levels of remoteness and obscurity. However, the worlds do not host regiments of grizzled Blakist diehards waiting for the Word to rise again.

Columbus would have been a useful, if well-known, base for Blakist diehards, but the Word of Blake destroyed all of its planetary facilities, equipment, and vessels during the opening years of the Jihad. Even DRUM network HPGs and Caisson satellites in surrounding systems (in a two-jump radius) were wrecked, as if the Word was deeply intent on crippling ComStar's exploration services in the area. This, of course, presents an ideal hook for a campaign: what was the Word so intent on hiding, possibly within a couple of jumps of a premier exploration forward base? Alternately, the Word concentrated its firepower on a single location on Columbus, the well-known base, but the planet had been in use for over a century by the Star League and for decades by ComStar. Did they leave anything behind elsewhere on Columbus? Did the Word's bombardment reach deep bunkers under the hardened military facilities?

Ross 248 is one of the original Hidden Worlds of the Inner Sphere. Developed as a fleet base by the Terran Hegemony that largely stayed off the maps, it also hides a colony (Terrelibre) interested in self-imposed isolation. A campaign for dedicated Word hunters almost certainly would find some former Word personnel living among the small population of the two exotic planets of Terrelibre, but the population as a whole never embraced or endorsed Blakism. On the other hand, Ross 248 does present a unique environment from which characters might originate: airless, frigid worlds almost ideal for creating spacers, and Terrelibre has a long history of contributing spacers to Terran-based nations.

LBF-3 is a 400-kilometer ball of super-chilled ice that could hide all manner of Blakist caches and secret facilities, though the only known and occupied portion is a rather more modest buried "space station" at the northern pole. LBF-3 presents at least two opportunities for player characters: it has a 350-year history of electronic intelligence gathering covering the Inner Sphere and potentially beyond, and it has previously been used to identify hidden worlds such as Columbia (not to be confused with Columbus). There is potential for spy games in an exotic environment, either to find some valuable data (perhaps transmitted decades ago, due to light-speed delays) or to reveal one of the unidentified Hidden Five.

Outpost 27—or the Coreward Confederacy—is a fairly low-tech Deep Periphery state. ComStar and the Word both attempted to turn it into a grand-scale hidden realm, but three Inner Sphere expeditions indicate they failed. Still, six of the realm's eight worlds are lightly populated, populated by decaying mock-cities established by Stefan Amaris on uninhabited continents, while the central government's ability to police the Confederacy is limited. Blakist holdouts could very well be found here. At the same time, the Confederacy does possess a limited JumpShip capability and natives hoping to escape the stagnation and slow decline of their homeworlds might find their way into the rest of human space someday. If so, they would make unique characters. Primitive, but far from technologically illiterate, they would lack any awareness of the Sphere-shaking events since 2780, and would likewise find the use of noble title and Clan castes equally confounding, as their society lacks either concept.

REFUGEES OF A LOST CAUSE

The Word of Blake, like ComStar before it, was a sprawling corporate empire and a philosophical order rolled into one. Most affiliates simply distanced themselves from the Word and carried on as before. Low-level Blakist personnel directly employed by the Word benefited from the amnesty passed by Devlin Stone. Blakists from the Successor States have found the Republic to be more amenable than their old homelands, and settled there in great numbers.

The exception to that relatively peaceful pattern is, of course, the Capellan Confederation. After discovering that the Word of Blake was responsible for bombarding Sian in 3068, a massive pogrom against Blakists was unleashed in Confederation space. The survivors were placed in re-education camps to "instill Capellan values" via prolonged psychological torture. *[Not to sound too much like an apologist, but the Word had nothing to do with that attack on Sian. Sun-Tzu probably orchestrated it himself and shifted the identity of the perpetrator as expedient, first blaming the Davions, then us. -OF]*

On the whole, such low-ranking personnel have little intelligence value and no complicity with alleged war crimes and so are of little interest to the powers that be.



HUNTING THE

TERRAN NATIONALISM: THREAT OR MENACE?

SPOILS OF WAR

The technicians and scientists behind the Word's advanced weapons were another matter. Throughout the so-called Jihad the Word of Blake unveiled new technologies that gave it a critical edge on the Houses. It was inevitable that the powers of the Inner Sphere would begin to bid on the loyalties of the vanquished.

The Republic had the upper hand in the struggle to exploit Blakist scientific personnel. The Coalition had captured Terra, and thus had physical custody of many of the most important design teams. Devlin Stone was in the position of absolute moral authority to decide what to do with them. His choice of clemency earned the Republic much goodwill among those scientists and technicians already disillusioned with the Blakist cause.

There was a darker side to the Republic's recruitment efforts, code-named STAPLER. The threat of being dragged before the tribunals in Geneva hovered behind every Republic offer. Reluctant former Blakists faced official harassment or prolonged detention even if they had committed no crimes. The *Portland Clarion* exposed the abuses in 3092, with the help of an anonymous whistleblower, leading to an end of the program. *[Some of us know who to credit, Annelise. -OF]*

The public investigation that followed blamed "rogue elements" of Republic intelligence and denied any systematic abuses. The chain of responsibility remains clouded, but few impartial and knowledgeable observers doubt that David Lear was aware of the program. *[What Lear knows, Stone knows. They keep our friend Victor in the dark, though. -OF]*

THE SWORDS OF BLAKE

The heart and soul of ComStar, and then the Word of Blake, was ROM. It kept the darkest secrets of the Order, insured its ideological purity and served as shield against the Houses. It is unsurprising, then, that ROM has established a Blakist underground to shield wanted suspects and promote the Word's continued existence. As the most formidable intelligence agency to ever exist, it remains a dangerous force in the Inner Sphere.

Not all members of ROM remained dedicated to the Word, of course. When the full nature of the Master's excesses became clear, numerous disillusioned agents defected to the Coalition, especially after the fall of Terra. After the war many of these former ROM operatives joined Republic intelligence, while others like Precentor Ogden Frost sought amnesty and brought their skills to the private sector. *[Bringing along a list of Capellan spies in Coalition command smoothed my own rehabilitation. Like all House lords, Victor was ever vigilant for the next war. -OF]*

Enough ROM members remained dedicated to the Blakist cause to establish a Sphere-wide terrorist conspiracy. Interrogation of captured personnel and analysis of surviving contingency plans have given a clear view of how ROM works on the planetary level. Agents are organized into cells that are kept completely ignorant of any other ROM personnel. Communications pass only one

At its core, Terran nationalism is a species of fascism. It exalts the glory and strength of the Hegemony, denigrates "foreigners" while blaming them for all of the Republic's problems, and looks for authoritarian leadership from the homeworld. It allied itself to the Word of Blake because it saw the Jihad as a chance to restore a Terra-centric order to the Inner Sphere, but is now set to identify itself with the cause of a new, independent Terran Republic.

The New Terran party of Marius Verloewen first articulated the principles of the movement. Its demise in the Jihad saw the torch taken up by countless local parties in the former Protectorate, and a Terran Nationalist Directorate based in Sydney on Terra. The Terran Legion, an association of Protectorate Militia and even Blakist veterans, has taken on a role organizing for Terran Nationalist causes. They also provide thugs and muscle in the form of their youth groups, intimidating other parties on planets with a strong nationalist presence.

The manifesto released by the Directorate last month calls for the abolition of the nobility, the dismissal of the Senate, the establishment of a hundred frontline regiments, and that the Exarch rule by decree while the Terran Republic is organized. If the group continues to grow in power and influence the victory over the Word of Blake will have been in vain. The fanatical militarism and totalitarian aims of the Blakists will come again to Terra, having simply donned a new guise.

—Editorial from *Tikograd Pravda*, 23/04/94

way, top-down, to individual cells. The cells are informed only of their part in an operation, and are given no indication what their contribution will accomplish.

The higher levels of ROM are more opaque. The ways in which orders are passed to individual cells makes it extremely difficult to trace them back. Third-party couriers, ads in local newspapers, and even mysterious calls in the night have been noted. In all cases such orders are signed by Control. Whether Control is a formal position on the planetary level, a planning organization, or the successor to Precentor ROM has not been determined.

Speculation about the leadership of ROM has not been dampened by the lack of available evidence. Precentor Jerome Marks, commander of the Light of Mankind, is the leading suspect for many. Others analysts prefer to focus on the mysterious figures of Lucifer and Eve, who were close to St. Jamais and Kernoff for the last few years of the Jihad. The most outlandish accusations finger former Precentor Frost, accusing him of links with the underground intelligence freelance syndicate styling itself the Illuminati. *[The Illuminati are just a professional network with a sense of humor. The accusations that I secretly run ROM deserve no comment. -OF]*

ROM seems to have taken a particular interest in hiding wanted war criminals. While the search for wanted Blakists has focused on the chaotic former Free Worlds League and ruins of the Circinus

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Federation, there is evidence many criminals are hiding inside the Republic. With the destruction of records and postwar disorders, it is trivial to create false identities that can stand up to bureaucratic scrutiny. IE's retainer to assist the Republic hunting Blakists should be reevaluated in light of this consideration.

There is no concrete evidence of ROM's long-term agenda, but it has cooperated with Terran Nationalist forces before. The potential for ROM subversion of local governments or even a political impact on the Republic cannot be ruled out. *[Many Republic citizens fought honorably for the Word. They haven't forgotten their experiences. In time a more complex story of the Jihad will be recognized in the Republic. The Nationalists are ahead of history, but it will catch up. –OF]*

THE MANEI DOMINI

The "Hands of the Master" have essentially disappeared from the Inner Sphere. The final confirmed activities of the Master's cyborgs all date to late 3081. Apollyon's successor, Berith, was last encountered during an ambush that killed rogue ComStar agent Tempest Stryker on Devil's Rock. An unnamed Manei Domini

infiltrating the Council of Paladins was also executed that year, becoming the sole Manei Domini to ever face a tribunal. *[Barrett just happened to die unexpectedly around the same time. Did Stone even intend his cover story to hold up to scrutiny? –OF]*

It is a common assumption in intelligence circles that the Manei Domini hid themselves away on Obeedah and Taussen. There is some evidence from 3080-3081 that a hidden party had taken on the task of hunting them down. Analysis of attacks on otherwise unknown infiltrators suggests that party may have been Light of Mankind itself. This evidence of a schism between the Manei Domini and the "Frail" ROM fits with indications that Cameron St. Jamais and Alexander Kernoff had broken with Apollyon, and possibly the Master, by the fall of Terra. The feelings of betrayal and regret expressed by many former Blakists have a violent edge that makes retaliation on the Master's favored agents possible. *[The Master was a false prophet, and a lunatic besides. That makes his followers heretics. If ROM turned on them, it was simply performing its duty. –OF]*

In any case the powers of the Inner Sphere have greatly refined their techniques for detecting augmentations and are more security-conscious than ever. Faced with a hostile operating environment, the Manei Domini may well have elected to withdraw and build their strength. Their long-term agenda, like so much about them, must remain an enigma until more evidence is forthcoming.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The Word of Blake did not simply disappear after the Jihad. Most of its followers returned home, or found new homes in the Republic. No one particularly cared about the many millions of Blakists operating on the lower levels of the organization. The Word of Blake holdouts everyone truly worries about can be divided into two groups: ROM and the Manei Domini. And the Manei Domini have disappeared from the Inner Sphere since 3081.

ROM has transformed itself into a fluid conspiracy with a cell structure that limits the damage the loss of any particular agent inflicts. It will be able to carry on subversion and terrorist actions for decades, if not longer. Its support network of dummy corporations and bank accounts will last at least as long, and there is every chance ROM will expand out into organized crime to fund itself.

Players hunting Blakist war criminals are likely to encounter ROM's opposition. Blakist sympathizers linked to Terran Nationalist organizations may also obstruct hunters, either in concert with ROM or on their own initiative. Another obstacle is the Illuminati, a post-Jihad network of former intelligence agents who take their name from a mythical Terran conspiracy. Including a large number of ex-Blakist personnel, not all of these agents have abandoned their allegiances and they may act to thwart investigations into ROM or war criminals.

THE MARKO LEWIS FOUNDATION

Founded on 6 June 3084, the Marko Lewis Foundation is the Inner Sphere's most prominent Blakist-hunting organization. It came about as a network of veterans of Stone's Liberators, and was named for the youngest member of the regiment to die from the Redburn Virus. Marko Lewis, who spent ten years in a Blakist internment camp, was only twenty-three years old, when he passed away in 3082.

Prominent agents of the Foundation include the husband and wife team of Roland Stansfield and Yuan Zhenli, the former Rabid Fox Michael Steele, ex-mercenary Theodore Sadamori-Marsh, and the Foundation's founder, Jordan Lewis (brother of the late Marko Lewis). Notable achievements of the Foundation have included the arrests of Precentors Douglas Nivens and Cynthia Schaechi, and the exposure of IE executive David Styles as a Blakist collaborator. Priority cases for the Foundation remain the mad doctor Ivan Gorlenko, notorious collaborator Marius Verloewen, and Light of Mankind commander Jerome Marks.

Publicly disavowed by the Exarch for its "vigilante methods", the Foundation has frequently found itself at odds with Republic bureaucracy. Local governments do not necessarily appreciate the Foundation's vigorous approach or broad assumption of authority without formal sanction. In turn, the Foundation has levied charges of Blakist sympathies against several planetary governments, leading to verbal battles that have damaged its image.

–*London Review of Intelligence*, "Public Profile: Marko Lewis Foundation," Q4 3095

KERENSKY'S SECRET 

Director:

As we approach the new century mark, I think it's time we re-evaluate our coreward operation; mission, parameters, guidelines, and even contracts and grants awarded. I know you're looking at expanding operations across the board. With your recent acquisition of a significant portion of ComStar's Explorer Corps equipment, IE is certainly poised to continue along with the successes that Director Wooden was famous for.

Nevertheless, I advise caution even as we explode in our growth and reach, especially with relation to our coreward Periphery operations.

I know you value frankness and honesty—a policy that has done well between you and I—so I'll pull no punches here. Naomi, this area of space is no longer just “risky.” It's downright dangerous. I can't quite put my finger on it, but from the mission briefs I've been seeing, even the random pieces of the puzzle make the hairs on the back of my neck stand straight up.

Ever since the success of Task Force SERPENT and Operation BULLDOG, ComStar's Explorer Corps project found itself the victim of Second Star League budget cuts and inter-House squabbling. As a result, the Corps slipped into near-obscurity as resources were tasked elsewhere. With the route to the Clan homeworlds sketched out, many House nobles and Star League officials felt that the Corps' primary mission—as defined during the '50s and '60s—was complete, and believed the Corps' resources were best served in different capacities.

The drop in Star League and ComStar-supported exploration opened up the doors to private ventures. The Corps served in an advisory role for many of these undertakings (for a fee, of course) and provided some open data for dissemination. IE became one of the largest and most extensive endeavors in this area.

While the bulk of our mission in this operational area focused on our continued search for the lost Minnesota Tribe and missing Rim Worlds-era colonies, we have also served as an unofficial monitoring service for ComStar and the League. After the Jihad broke out, our project vessels have become the only consistent source of coreward Periphery information for Lyran and Combine intelligence services, and to a lesser extent, for Clan Diamond Shark.

It is not easy to pin down the exact point where things shifted. Our contact with the Sharks became very limited; the last being a Trial of Possession for data on the REVIVAL road. Project Director Chrisof Daniels made the fatal mistake of attempting to pursue more data on the area after the Sharks explicitly told him to back off; his annoying tendency to be in control of everything (down to the smallest detail) got him and his entire team destroyed. All five JumpShips and personnel were killed when he jumped into the Isles to find out what the Sharks were doing. The loss of the *Adean Dulcimer*, our only Bug Eye-class WarShip, will be felt for years, if not decades.

Over the last ten years, our contact with the Inner Sphere Clans has done nothing more than anger them when questions are raised. The Ravens and Horses remain furtive in their “answers” to our queries. One Raven merchant, since passed away, hinted of some massive invasion that forced the Ravens to flee their

holdings and relocate to the Outworlds Alliance. The Horses simply changed the subject, instead offering curious warnings about “pressing too far into matters that do not concern us.” The Ghost Bears, always the stoic Clan, flat out refuse to answer.

Based on these reactions alone—all from anecdotal reports from our various contractors—it was clear some sort of power shift was occurring past the Periphery border. The sheer violence of responses from the Falcons and Wolves, however, provide an exclamation point to the analysis. The Wolves get angry when queried, first threatening violence (and in two instances, acting on the threat) and then severing complete contact. Especially prickly are any suggestions that the Wolves were running from some sort of power struggle or insinuating they had been stripped of their honor.

The Falcon reaction has been the strongest. The first instance occurred in 3075, when one of our merchant caste liaisons was killed after an innocent inquiry about the Clan's JumpShip movements along the Periphery. The action proved to be no fluke when Director Niles O'Leary and his Rim Project crew ran across the battered *Jade Aerie* near Erewhon. Both JumpShips and all five DropShips were destroyed after O'Leary offered to provide communications assistance to the distressed vessel.

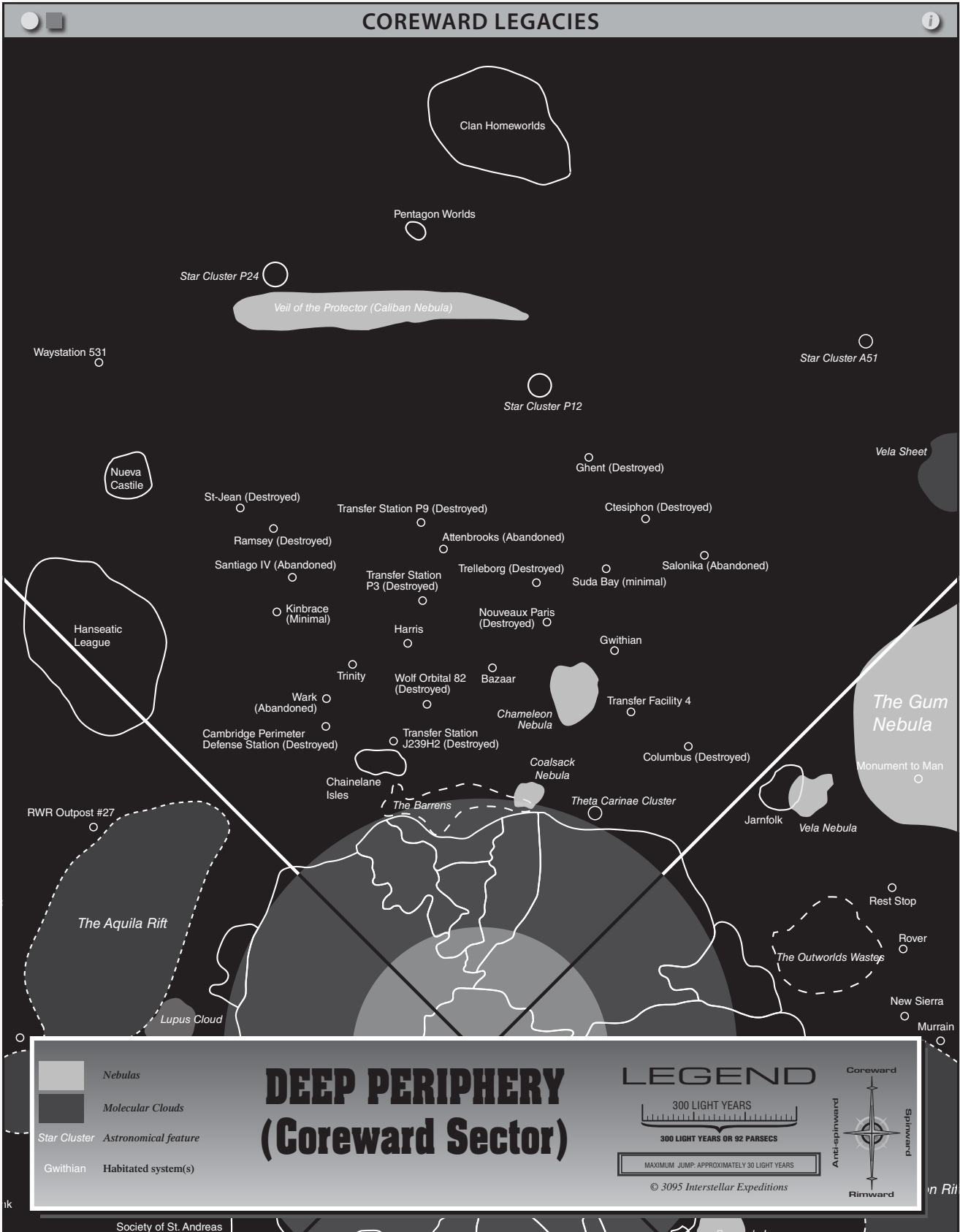
One would think that the two “friendliest” Clans to the Inner Sphere—the Wolves-in-Exile and the Nova Cats—would be a more stable source of information. The problem with such an assumption is not recognizing the perspective the other six Clans have of these two “Sphere-ized” Clans. Both the Exiles and the Cats are as perplexed regarding the problems brewing in the Deep Periphery and the Clan homeworlds as we are. Or, to put it another way, if either of these two Clans knows anything, they are playing stubborn just like their counterparts.

With the curtain of uncertainty drawing around us among the systems found along the REVIVAL Road, our attention must be focused instead among the far-flung proto-nations that reside coreward. The hope of establishing even an outpost among the Clan homeworlds—something once discussed with the Star League Embassy on Strana Mechty—has faded with whatever has occurred over the last two decades. If further exploration toward the core is one of IE's strategic objectives, alternate plans need reviewed. There are no viable systems near the Veil of the Protector that can support an IE deep space replenishment station. With no way to resupply, IE cannot realistically extend exploration operations past St. Jean or Ghent. And considering the last three JumpShips that jumped to those systems were never heard from again...need I say more?

Establishing a new colony or outpost world will cost IE billions, an expenditure that is highly prohibitive for an uncertain success. If IE is to move beyond our standard archeological and exploratory objectives, broader thinking and a new approach to this sector of space is required. Until then, the mystery of the Clan homeworlds remains just that: an enigma.

—Harvey Knopfstein
Chief Director, Explorations; Coreward Periphery

COREWARD LEGACIES



**DEEP PERIPHERY
(Coreward Sector)**

LEGEND

300 LIGHT YEARS
300 LIGHT YEARS OR 92 PARSECS

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

© 3095 Interstellar Expeditions

Coreward

Spinward

Anti-spinward

Rimward

Nebulas

Molecular Clouds

Star Cluster **Astronomical feature**

Gwithian **Habitated system(s)**



NOTES

Harvey:

Here you go. I pulled this from the Clan's main info node on Twycross. You were right—there's something up with the Sharks and the Chainelanes. This is probably the biggest load of information we've been able to glean on this forgotten little cluster of worlds. It came at a cost, though, and one you won't like.

Both Ricardo and Pam are dead. And I'm pretty sure my mug is on their Shark "watch list" and has probably been beamed to all their enclaves at this point. I hope this data dump is important for whatever you've got cooking, because if my face so much as crosses into another Shark system, I'm as good as eliminated.

For as much as we've made fun of the Clan Watch before, I'm not willing to cross Loremaster Kalasa and her Watch goons. Whatever happened out there in the Periphery has made them some of the meanest, dirtiest agents I've ever crossed. And that includes that Domini team on Radstadt back in '75.

—Laura Ivanko

MSG:ARCRYL:09211:15083089

::::attachment.ENCRYPT.201A-B-R::::

MSG ADDENDUM 30083089:: Ivanko is dead. We know you know. Your payment for our knowledge is death. Beware the water. ::SK::

STATES OF SURVIVAL: CHAINELANE ISLES

LOST OPPORTUNITIES

The Chainelane Isles, despite their close proximity to the Inner Sphere, remain largely untouched by the successes, failures, and turmoil of its neighbors. Originally situated along the coreward Periphery border of the Lyran Commonwealth, it now straddles the Falcon and Horse Occupation Zones. Even though it lies directly in the path of the REVIVAL invasion corridor, its sole encounter with the Clans so disgusted our brethren that it remained untouched and deemed unacceptable for occupation.

Considering that we seized bandit and pirate worlds in more disarray than those of the Chainelanes speaks volumes of how dysfunctional these systems are—and remain.

While the Isles consist of nine systems and a cluster, more than thirty separate factions occupy the entire sector. Ranging from multi-world systems (Far Reach, Idrmach, Paran) to a major star cluster with over seven distinct systems (Chaine Cluster), the worlds of the Isles contain a variety of civilizations, power blocs, and alliances. Common to all of them is an atmosphere of distrust and low-level violence that breaks out often in conflict.

Originally founded from "lost" Rim Worlds Republic colonies—systems abandoned after the Republic's destruction—the

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Chainelanes have remained aloof from the greater machinations of its larger stellar neighbors. Self-styled warlords, leaders, dictators, and adjudicators managed to sustain a seemingly undending low-level warfare with minimal industrial output. Most of these small powers rely on scrounging material from abandoned factories, both within and without the Chainelane region. Rare appearances by trading vessels, normally from the Lyran Commonwealth, ComStar, and even the Draconis Combine, were celebrated by these small-minded leaders. Contact usually included heavy bargaining (or the use of outright force) to acquire weapons and military expertise. Success meant a temporary tip in the balance of power and an increase of violence.

Those who refused to deal with the system powers were ignored. Many had little concern for events and people outside their own territory, unless the information would be beneficial to conquest.

Because of their preoccupation with gaining an advantage—no matter how small—over any and all rivals, little attention was paid to technology, industry, or standards of living. As such, the average subsistence and technology levels among the Chainelane powers fell near the state of the Third Succession War, and remain there today; fully operational BattleMechs are rare on these worlds, and most armies consist of Age of War-era formations of infantry and combat vehicles. 'Mechs—where they do show up—rarely deploy in frontline formations, as they are deemed too valuable to risk in such fashion and better suited to controlling rear areas and captured territory so that other forces can advance elsewhere.

What follows is a brief system dossier pulled from the wreckage of a ComStar Explorer Corps recharge facility at Transfer Station J239H2 and annotated by Factor Lorenzo after his latest visit to Brekke.

SECUREKEY::219912tr2g2tskb::&@BW

RONDANE

Ruler: Director Roberta Sandis

Star Type (Recharge Time): G1V (182 hours)

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 9.75 days

Number of Satellites: 1 (Brandt)

Surface Gravity: 1.07

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 20° C (Cool-Temperate)

Surface Water: 40 percent

Recharging Station: None

HPG Class Type: N/A

Highest Native Life: Amphibian

Population (3084): 387,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: B-D-F-D-D

The capital world of the venerable Rondane Syndicate, Rondane was settled by remnants of the Empire of the Stars in the early 2800s. The refugees, fleeing the fall of the Empire on Syrstart, settled near the verdant equatorial forests. With help

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from Agricorp, one of the larger corporate powers in the Isles, the settlers established several green zones and Kalikuta Enclave. Rondanians thrived under Agricorp's helping hand for a time. When the corporation started to acquire more power within the planetary senate, the citizen backlash was fierce enough to drive Agricorp off-world. Rondane suffered a heavy drought shortly after the corporation's departure, further crippling the world's agricultural businesses.

During the "Famine Years," a group of senators formed a syndicate to deal with the system's pressing need for food and organic resources. Limited progress was made in trade excursions to Far Reach and Paran. The syndicate struck "green gold" on Ingvolstand, brokering a long-term deal with the Helena Collective. Livestock, exotics, and volcanic ores from Rondane bought vessels of seeds, machinery, and fresh Ingvolstand water. With their personal power assured, the small cabal of senators formed the Rondane Syndicate to manage the centuries-spanning deal. The organization eventually acquired all of the system's transportation assets to facilitate the Syndicate's ever-growing trade power.

In 2987, the Stellar Supremacy attacked Rondane. The brutality of the assault—over a quarter of Kalikuta's citizenry were maimed or killed in the week-long orgy of destruction—caught the attention of their Collective allies, who staged a retaliatory attack on the Supremacy's stronghold on Ingvolstand and pushed the Supremacy out of the system. Capturing several Star League-era aerospace fighters and a few DropShips, the Collective moved on to Rondane. Though arriving after the Supremacy had withdrawn, the Collective bargained for and received the large island of Annon under the agreement that the Helenists would defend Rondane from future raids and assaults.

The arrangement has done much for both the Syndicate and the Collective. Every year, several dozens of Rondanian males are invited to Annon to partake in a partnering ceremony. The Helenists, using arcane methods and rudimentary genetic testing, match up the selected males to appropriate females. The couples relocate to Ingvolstand for a minimum of ten years, sequestered for "family building." After sufficient progeny is produced, the males and selected children return to Rondane to restart their lives. Rondanians consider this process a singular honor; many who are chosen and return often find themselves fast-tracked into positions of power within the senate and even the Syndicate. It is rumored that the Syndicate's board of directors consists entirely of men who have undergone the Helenist Selection Ceremony.

[3084 Update: *Of all the Chainelane powers, the Rondane Syndicate is the most puzzling. Many signs indicate the Syndicate is but a part of a more secretive power bloc within the Isles. Their security is astonishingly high in technology; several ciphers are well above Star League and Clan technology and near impossible to break. The Watch has found some evidence of Syndicate operations within the Hanseatic League, but for what purpose and to what end, we have yet to discover. —Lorenzo]*

HAUBLAN**Ruler:** President Craig Tome**Star Type (Recharge Time):** B0V (151 hours)**Position in System:** 1**Time to Jump Point:** 137.91 days**Number of Satellites:** 5 (Uno, Duce, Trois, Forte, Fiver)**Surface Gravity:** .94**Atm. Pressure:** Standard (Thin)**Equatorial Temperature:** 30° C (Mild-Temperate)**Surface Water:** 24 percent**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class Type:** N/A**Highest Native Life:** Bacteria**Population (3084):** 28,000**Socio-Industrial Levels:** D-D-F-D-C

Once a failed colony world within the Rim Worlds Republic, Haublan existed as a forgotten footnote until the Hanju Imperium re-colonized it in 2843. The dominant power in the Isles at the time, the Hanju visualized the world as their new capital. With a transit time more than four months long, the solitary world in the system was perfect as a home for the Hanju's highly paranoid nobility. Within ten years, the Imperium had built Spire, the system capital, and Sanrakshak, the home of Emperor Do, his two hundred forty-nine relatives, and their retinues.

The emperor's lasting contribution to the Haublan system is the *Midway* waystation. An old *Invader*-class JumpShip with a pair of attendant DropShips permanently moored to the hull, the vessel was believed to have been among the original colony's protection force, and was moved from Haublan's orbit to a position roughly halfway between the system's primary and the planet. *Midway* has remained under Hanju control since its relocation, though woefully undercrewed. Roughly every decade, a specialist team from the Klünder sælgeflåde (a Järnfölk family fleet) arrives, providing routine maintenance for the decrepit vessel. The arrangement provides the wandering space gypsies several hundred tons of Haublan rock pears, considered a delicacy among the Järnfölk.

Haublan remained in relative obscurity for several decades as the Hanju consolidated power among their territories in Syrstart, Rondane, and Fredotto. Mercenary agents and bodyguards found steady business in Sanrakshak as the emperor's family constantly sought to outmaneuver each other. With their focus primarily on the machinations of fellow family members, the Hanju nobility missed the subtle entrenchment of Agricorp during the late 2900s. The Isles' largest non-military corporate conglomerate annexed Spire in 2978, sparking a wave of violence and treachery among the Hanju nobles. For several decades, the Hanju families and Agricorp wrestled for power on Haublan until the Star Skulls pirate band arrived in 3038.



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The sudden appearance of the large pirate group sparked a three-way power struggle in the system. Brice Laughlin, leader of the Star Skulls, forged a tenuous alliance with several Hanju nobles. The partnership provided the pirates an opening to take half of Sanrakshak and force a truce with the remaining Hanju. The power bloc brought Agricorp to the negotiating table, as the conglomerate was unable to bring in more mercenaries to defend their holdings.

After several weeks of negotiation, cajoling, threats, and politicking, the three leaders formed a Council that would monitor and handle the rigors of planetary government. The neutral body—in theory—would provide safety and economy for all of the system's inhabitants. Over the last few decades, corruption has crept in as all three groups vie to control the Council. President Tome has kept outright war from engulfing the system, but the peace will last only as long as none of the three powers gains any sort of military edge. Rumor of a new and highly advanced civilization has sparked rumors of both invasion and phantom alliances, which keeps many Haublinites on edge.

[3084 Update: *In the two decades since this report, the Star Skulls executed a successful takeover bid of Agricorp, giving the aggressive corporation a serious and vicious punch. Haublin has descended into a shadow war between Agricorp and the Hanju, with both sides hiring espionage teams from Far Reach to conduct intelligence and black operations. The Hanju, with more money at their disposal, was winning the shadow war until the Skulls detonated a chemical bomb (found on a dead Rim Worlds planet outside the Isle) in the middle of Sanrakshak. The attack killed the Emperor's brother and two consorts; the former being the Hanju's head of military affairs and the latter, part of his harem. The Watch recently discovered the Emperor hired a Järnfölk specialist to "take care of the problem."* –Lorenzo]

IDRMARCH

Ruler: Supreme Leader Orlov Fedotenko
Star Type (Recharge Time): G0V (181 hours)
Position in System: 4
Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days
Number of Satellites: 2 (Ruby, Azure)
Surface Gravity: 1.01
Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 35° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 65 percent
Recharging Station: None
HPG Class Type: B (inactive)
Highest Native Life: Reptile
Population (3084): 1,628,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: B-D-F-D-D

Populated primarily by small pirate bands who used the system as a base of operations, Idrmarch has strayed little from its roots. When the Lyran Commonwealth struck the system in 2810 during an aggressive "pirate cleansing" operation along its

Periphery border, over forty different pirate and smuggling bands inhabited the planet. The Lyran assault was successful, destroying nearly all of the primitive arms manufacturing facilities and several of the larger pirate bands. The remaining criminals were left to die and the system would have perished, had it not been for the arrival of a colony vessel that had allegedly misjumped—in 2372.

The Idrmarch survivors heralded the mysterious arrival of the *Pendragon* and its 4,000 centuries-lost colonists as a saving grace. The circumstances of the strange misjump have been lost over the centuries—indeed, it may even have been an outlandish story told by refugees from the fallen Rim Worlds to conceal their connection to the Usurper—but the results have not. The infusion of colonists sparked new life and the planet transformed from a pirate haven into a self-sustaining system within a century. The original inhabitants considered themselves the dominant power and took control of the colony's direction. These self-styled "families" asserted and maintained their power through the age-old use of vice and crime.

Despite the families' stranglehold on the system, Idrmarch exploded in population and wealth (for a Periphery world) due to its agreeable environment. With the families concentrating mostly on their own internal power games and various vices considered legal (depending on which zone a citizen resided), common dissent among the general populace was minimal. As long as the families were happy and a person had their basic needs met, there was little to complain about. Even the breakdown of the planet's HPG caused little consternation; the facility retained its neutral status even after the local ComStar garrison formed Family Shapiro (named after ex-Precentor Barbara Shapiro).

While slavery had been present since Idrmarch's shadowy beginnings, the trade blossomed in the mid-2900s. As pirate bands outside the Isles grew in prominence and power, Idrmarch became a destination point for slavers looking to sell and trade their wares. The industry was lucrative for those families who were heavily involved, tipping the system's balance of power. The few families who opposed the buying and selling of human flesh quietly courted various fanatic fringe groups on Paran and built a powerbase among the more exotic drug trade. A full-blown war erupted in 2975 between Family Sih—a major power broker in the local slave trade—and Family O'Donnell—who specialized in exotic substance and fauna trafficking. The gangland-style war destroyed Family Sih, opening the way for Family Fedotenko to seize power.

Anatoli Fedotenko brokered a cease-fire even as his hired assassins (including a rumored Järnfölk operative) removed the leadership of his biggest competitors. With public sentiment against the families building and Fedotenko's violent alternative of deconstruction, the Assembly of Families ratified the Stellar Supremacy Accords.

Life on Idrmarch returned to normalcy under the rule of Family Fedotenko and the Stellar Supremacy. Anyone violating

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the law—which could vary from zone to zone—faced hard time in forced slavery or worse: excommunication. Violators cast out of the zones faced a short existence in the Idrmarch wilds, as the planet's predators enjoyed the taste of human flesh. All zone justice is meted by Family Shapiro, well-known even among other Isle worlds as a fair and neutral justice bureau. The Shapiro Justices consider themselves the ultimate arbiters of law on Idrmarch and take pride in being incorruptible.

Recently, Agricorp, General-Boeing, and the Vannite Pirates have been making inroads with several families. The Vannites, in particular, have been funneling small shipments of heavy equipment and tanks to their supporters. Family Fedotenko retains several regiments of infantry and support vehicles to defend their claim to power. If the rumors that the Vannites have provided a lance of BattleMechs to Family Ortega are true, it is possible there will be another violent shift in power on Idrmarch in the near future.

[3084 Update: *Last year, Family Fedotenko suffered a major setback with the death of Orlov's daughter. The young woman was only twenty-four, but controlled a sizeable portion of the family's financial and corporate dealings. Her death, which has been blamed on Paranese fundamentalists, has sparked a bloody and violent purging through Family Fedotenko. The swift removal of so many key players within this powerful family weakened it significantly, and it could not withstand a power grab by Family MacAllistair. While Orlov still holds the supreme leadership of the Stellar Syndicate, it is only a matter of time before Stredo MacAllistair makes his move and permanently retires the elder leader. When that happens, there is sure to be another violent family war—something we can capitalize on through increased arms sales and resource provision. —Lorenzo]*

INGVOLSTAND

Ruler: Queen Moira Richleau

Star Type (Recharge Time): F2V (173 hours)

Position in System: 3

Time to Jump Point: 18.75 days

Number of Satellites: 2 (Apollo, Hermes)

Surface Gravity: 1.23

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 22° C (Cool-Temperate)

Surface Water: 75 percent

Recharging Station: None

HPG Class Type: N/A

Highest Native Life: Bacteria

Population (3084): 648,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: D-D-D-D-C

Considered the oldest system in the Isles, Ingvolstand's history begins in the last days of the Rim Worlds Republic. Abandoned by Star League troops after the fall of the Republic, Ingvolstand went several decades without contact from any other stellar power. Because its vast manufacturing facilities required millions of tons

of raw resources and prefabricated parts from other Republic systems, the factories ground to a halt as the system was cut off. The few that remained operational—producing infantry arms and light armor—did so through mechanical cannibalization.

Without communication and trade, various self-styled warlords and dictators gathered power and fought for control of islands, continents, and the world. The still-functioning factories became epicenters of power and prestige, with most of the world's population eventually migrating behind their walls. Ingvolstand was a patchwork of armed camps, slowly strangling themselves to extinction when Hell's Queens arrived in 2802.

The Queens were the roving remnants of a pirate band terrorizing the Combine border throughout the twenty-eighth century. Looking for new ground to plunder, the Queens stumbled across an old stellar archive on Gravenhage and decided to prospect for lostech on former Republic worlds. What they found was a crumbling world on the verge of eating itself to oblivion. Francesca "Dirty" Borthollo saw a unique opportunity and acted quickly. Using her pirates' technology—including their three JumpShips and attendant DropShips—as carrots, Borthollo united the various factions under her banner. Any who opposed her were dealt with publicly and ruthlessly, cementing her band's power.

Once Ingvolstand was pacified, Borthollo reformed the planetary government into a matriarchal society modeled on the Queen's successful leadership. The Helena Collective retained the various sectors, appointing members of her band as overseers and restructuring the government into tiers headed by women. Men were relegated to positions that required manual and technical labor, often by force or indentured servitude. Over time and through rigid adherence to the new order, Ingvolstand rebounded and began establishing itself among the other Isles systems.

A strong trade agreement with the Rodane Syndicate in the 2800s opened the flow of exports that helped bring two heavy tank factories online after being defunct for a century. Though neither facility can produce more than half-dozen vehicles a year, the influx of new armaments has given the Collective serious trade clout. The Helenists have used their new exports in establishing deals for Fredotton mercenaries and Paranese exotics.

With Ingvolstand stabilized and on a slow growth curve, the Helenists branched outward. Trade deals with the Syndicate secured territory on Rondane, providing "neutral ground" for dealing with the smaller pirate and smuggling bands infesting the Chaine Cluster. Similar "Selection Ceremony" events on Paran and Vannes—seen more as controlled orgies for the Helenist women coming of age—have established stronger communication ties and a subtle power bloc on those worlds. Coupled with the constant manufacturing of small arms, ammunition, and war materiel, the Helenists have quietly risen into the top tier of power within the Isles.

[3084 Update: *Of all the Chaine powers, the Helena Collective is the most frustrating to deal with. Their leadership is very keen, often Diamond Shark-like in their shrewdness to the deal, and*

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constantly pushing for more. Our dealings with the Helenists have been sporadic at best and I have often felt we barely come out ahead in our arrangements with them. They are dangerous adversaries, especially to any male representatives sent to meet them. Caution is advised, lest we lose another Star of Piranhas to them as former merchant warrior Klaus did last year. –Lorenzo]

SYRSTART**Ruler:** Oyabun Fredrick Plougé**Star Type (Recharge Time):** A3V (164 hours)**Position in System:** 6**Time to Jump Point:** 39.38 days**Number of Satellites:** 1 (Utopia)**Surface Gravity:** 1.03**Atm. Pressure:** Standard (Thin)**Equatorial Temperature:** 40° C (Warm-Temperate)**Surface Water:** 86 percent**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class Type:** N/A**Highest Native Life:** Mammals**Population (3084):** 42,000**Socio-Industrial Levels:** D-D-D-D-D

Colonized in 2639, Syrstart was an unremarkable world within the Rim Worlds Republic. Despite having little to offer militarily, the world was raided several times by Lyran Commonwealth and Star League forces. When the Star League destroyed the Republic, they used Syrstart as a staging area. Selective bombardment from orbit targeted several of the SLDF depots, located well outside of most urban zones. Unfortunately, the Star League navy was overzealous in their destruction. Mass forest fires burned across the planet's sole inhabited continent and eradicated over fifty percent of its viable timber fields.

With the withdrawal of the SLDF fleet, Syrstart began a slow slide into anarchy. Concerned for the planet's future and its people, the three *oyabuns* that ruled the Syrstart underground set aside their quest for power and formed a plan. Overthrowing the unstable Republic governor and his corrupted cronies, the *oyabuns* seized control and established a ruling junta. The power grab staved off the planet's demise for a short while. In 2895, an unknown virus appeared from the depths of the vast Arishikage Swamp Sea and spread across the planet in record time. The virus, with no known cure, wiped out more than eighty percent of the population within two decades.

The planet has been suffering a population decline for more than a century. With little to offer prospective raiders, Syrstart remained only a recharging point for many of the Isle's more active powers. In 3042, two of the Vannite pirate bands landed with the intent of restocking their slave pens. The Vannites quickly discovered how vicious the defending yakuza gangs could be. Out of the six *Leopards* that grounded, only one DropShip escaped. Ironically, the five captured *Leopards* have given the Green Stars

clan a new lease on expansion. The powerful yakuza clan has been involved in several vicious raids on Paran and within the Chaine Cluster over the last few decades.

[3084 Update: *Initial surveys of the outer asteroid belt indicate large deposits of germanium. As the Syrstartians have no production capability (or desire) beyond the planet's sparse surface, we should dangle fertility technology in exchange for possession of the belt. –Lorenzo]*

FREDOTTO**Ruler:** Lord Gerald Markham**Star Type (Recharge Time):** M5V (206 hours)**Position in System:** 1**Time to Jump Point:** 2.45 days**Number of Satellites:** 3 (Rigoletto, Rodolfo, Angeletto)**Surface Gravity:** 1.03**Atm. Pressure:** Tainted (Breathable)**Equatorial Temperature:** 30° C (Temperate)**Surface Water:** 55 percent**Recharging Station:** None**HPG Class Type:** N/A**Highest Native Life:** Reptile**Population (3084):** 395,000**Socio-Industrial Levels:** D-D-F-D-C

Settled in the 2600s by a group of Lyrans fleeing the Commonwealth's tyranny, Fredotto began as a simple farming world. Named for a famous twenty-third century Terran neo-opera performer, the planet's first colony was patterned after the ancient Etruscans in the Italian region of Terra's Eurasian continent. Fredotto forged a strong trade partnership with the Rim Worlds Republic, ultimately joining the stellar nation in 2670.

The world became well known in Republic space for its craftsmanship of accurate rifle bores and precision miniature machine parts. Fredottos enjoyed their status as elite gunsmiths and had strong ties to the Republic's military. Several Dragoons regiments used the world as a training station and vast bunkers were built deep within the Venice Mountains.

The Republic's fall shattered Fredotto's economy. The collapse sparked off a chain of revolts, revolutions, takeovers, and civil wars between the city-states that dotted the main continent of Italia. By the mid-2800s, only three viable nations remained. These three powers formed a loose government that rotated control every century. During the month-long transition of power, the new ruling body formalizes its control by renaming the planet's satellites.

Fredotto's main exports take advantage of the constant state of violence within the Isles. Aside from brokering a large amount of spare parts in infantry weapons to all buyers, Fredotto exports its highly trained rifle platoons as soldiers-for-hire. Their snipers are especially feared for their astonishing accuracy and intense discipline.

[3084 Update: *The Markham family, currently in power, has been quietly subverting several government officials in neighboring Florenzo. As the Florenzo Consortium possesses the primary boring*

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facilities for Fredotto's three most popular rifles, controlling the city-state is crucial in directing the system's economy. With the new rotation period coming up in 3097, it appears that Markham is either preparing to absorb Florenzo and consolidate power, or setting up a puppet state under their control. Recommend the Clan approach Etrusca and tip the power balance back towards the center. –Lorenzo]

VANNES

Ruler: Lord Thomas Arthur Hoigart-Klaus

Star Type (Recharge Time): K0V (191 hours)

Position in System: 1

Time to Jump Point: 5.48 days

Number of Satellites: 1 (Cartagia)

Surface Gravity: .90

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Thin)

Equatorial Temperature: 28° C (Mild-Temperate)

Surface Water: 45 percent

Recharging Station: None

HPG Class Type: N/A

Highest Native Life: Amphibian

Population (3084): 524,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: C-D-D-D-D

Another former Rim Worlds Republic system, Vannes withered on the vine after the Republic's destruction. Barely 100,000 people remained on the planet's surface when the first pirates from the (now defunct) Void Nation arrived in 2890. The Voiders located and seized the old Republican fortress located near Ubis, a city that had suffered mass plague fifty years prior. Enriched by the leftover technology discovered within its depth, the Voiders relocated their suffering nation to Vannes, swiftly conquering the remaining populace.

The Vannite pirates owe their birth to the Voiders' continual paranoia and multiple splits within their ranks. Mikel Hoigart's Band of Black finally triumphed during the Fifteenth Vannes Civil War in 2910 and established the Vannite Pirate Kingdom. Though based solely within the Vannes system, the kingdom grew in strength and defended itself twice against assaults by the Empire of the Stars, who had their own designs on the planet's Castle Brian (known locally as Castle Vannes).

In 2984, Margurite Klaus and her Teutonic Plague stumbled across a mothballed Republic factory hidden deep within the dense tropical jungles along the planet's equator. According to the site's logs, the factory had been shut down in 2531 as new armor technology proliferated across the Republic. The facility contained a large storehouse of ancient Merkava tanks, preserved in sealed caverns. Klaus' people put several of the vehicles into combat use during her push to seize power in 2985. The Twenty-first Vannes Civil War ended in a truce between the Teutonics and Vannites. Margurite Klaus and Wilhelm Hoigart were wed a year later, cementing the kingdom's hold over the remaining pirate bands in the system.

The Merkava factory remained more of a spare parts warehouse and scientific base for several decades until 3056, when several visitors to the system arrived in obviously high-tech spacecraft. [These have since been verified as several Clan Goliath Scorpion Seekers. –Lorenzo] Lord Hoigart-Klaus, in a rare act of intelligence, negotiated with the visitors, rather than ambushing them and stealing their technology. The newcomers got the ancient facility working and trained several citizens in its maintenance and operation. In return, Hoigart-Klaus allowed the strangers complete access to Castle Vannes. Several pristine—and previously unknown—Star League-era BattleMechs were removed from the site, though the leader of the strangers left the Vannites an ancient *Talon* in a gesture of thanks. [According to the records, the *Talon* was left simply because there was no additional room in the Seeker DropShip. –Lorenzo]

With the activation of the Merkava factory, the Vannites became one of the more powerful Isle nations. Though only a handful of tanks are produced every year, it is enough to entice buyers from across Isles space and stands to greatly enrich the kingdom one day.

[3084 Update: A recent visit by a Clan merchant team provided the Vannites with new parts and suggestions for upgrading portions of the Merkava facility. Coupled with the deals made five years ago that provided new autocannons (stripped from our storage facilities on Trondheim), the Vannites now have improved Merkavas coming off their assembly lines at a slightly faster rate. The increase in firepower and production has provided an influx of weapons into the Isles, which will increase the tension levels across the board. I have tasked a few of our merchants to reach out through channels to the Markham family on Fredotto regarding the new upgrades, in hopes to prod the Fredottons in increasing their raids on Vannes. –Lorenzo]

PARAN

Ruler: Imam Lawrence Goito

Star Type (Recharge Time): A6V (167 hours)

Position in System: 6

Time to Jump Point: 32.76 days

Number of Satellites: 0

Surface Gravity: 1.05

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 25° C (Cool-Temperate)

Surface Water: 70 percent

Recharging Station: None

HPG Class Type: B

Highest Native Life: Fish

Population (3084): 277,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: D-D-D-D-C

Once a "breadbasket" world for the Rim Worlds Republic, Paran fell on hard times after that nation's collapse. With little other developed industry aside from its mass fisheries and island-spanning orchards, the Paraneses withdrew into isolation. The



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planetary HPG subnetwork's collapse in 2803—known in local history as “The Black Curtain”—accelerated the world's decline. Paran was destined to a long technological slide and slow death.

In 2819, the system's fortunes changed with the sudden arrival of the SLS *Pioneer* near Paran VII. The refugee survivors of the ex-Star League Expeditionary Brigade established a temporary camp on the small desert-like world, coming into contact with a small Unfinished Book monastery. Within a year, the monastery and SLEB camp merged.

Contact with the residents of Paran VI was initially hostile. The Paranese government had banned weapons shortly after the Black Curtain in an effort to reduce violence and civil insurrections. Marginally successful, the Paranese were skeptical of the SLEB's claims of neutrality due to the memories of the Republic and Star League's continual conflict. The SLEB's active defense of Paran against a Directorate raid in 2830 reopened the doors to negotiation. In 2835, the Paran Free System was formed.

Over the decades since its formation, Paran became known as a safe haven for political and religious expatriates. Persecuted civilians from other systems found a welcoming and unquestioning home among the Paranese; pursuing forces were quickly turned away by the presence of the SLS *Pioneer*. Even as the *Vigilant*-class WarShip slowly deteriorated, it was enough of a threat to guarantee the system's safety from large-scale invasions and raids.

Religious cults and groups make up the majority of the world's population. Each enclave or settlement can be identified easily with a particular practice or religion, operating under its own system of laws and government. A ruling body consisting of the leader of each enclave oversees matters of planetary concern. The defense of the system is left to the Paranese Civil Defense Compact, a multi-enclave volunteer force based on Paran VII.

The most recent addition to Paran is One Star City, an enclave formed from dispirited followers of the One Star Faith. The group bought Star Island, one of the larger pranj fruit orchards, modernizing the ancient Agricorn processing facility. Agricorn has since laid claim to the facility, sparking a covert war between the One Star followers and the corporate conglomerate. The recent assassination of Agricorn President Lawrence Poliska on Idrmarch is rumored to have been the work of One Star Faith operatives.

Paran's only other claim to fame in the Isles is its reputed location of one of the Rim World's mass treasuries. Lostech prospectors and treasure hunters arrive from time to time to search for the supposed storehouse of precious metals and technology, to no avail. If such a facility exists, the notoriety could vault Paran into the Periphery spotlight, bringing hordes of unwelcome pirates and other n'er-do-wells to the system. Such a horde would disrupt the planet's tranquility, something none of the Paranese leaders desire.

[3084 Update: *The Agricorn facility actually dates back to the founding of the Republic and sports extensive Star League-era modifications.*

Of equal interest is the ancient—and now, apparently, very inert—SLS Pioneer. Already damaged in the fall of the Star League, the ancient corvette apparently lost the ability to use its KF drive when it arrived in the Paran system and her crew was never able to effectively repair it. Degrading technical expertise and parts shortages over the decades after creating the “Paran Free System” took their toll, and by about 2860, the ship's capital weapons were empty or non-functional, and its transit drive was failing. By 2875, the Pioneer was reportedly set adrift in the outer system, ostensibly to be called upon only when needed...but no one now living seems to truly know where she is now, and our surveys of the system have yet to locate the wreck.

The SLEB was known for its innovative scientific experiments before its disappearance. While the CDC base on Paran VII is currently closed to us, it should be a target of opportunity for our Watch in the near future. The prospect of Star League-era technology and material locked away in their vaults is tempting indeed and should be something the Clan must pursue. —Lorenzo]

FAR REACH

Ruler: Monsieur Henry Tremaine XXIX

Star Type (Recharge Time): B3V (154 hours)

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 101.15 days

Number of Satellites: 2 (Paris, Helene)

Surface Gravity: 1.06

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 32° C (Temperate)

Surface Water: 95 percent

Recharging Station: None

HPG Class Type: N/A

Highest Native Life: Reptile

Population (3084): 7,162,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: C-D-D-C-F

One of the centers of the Rim Worlds Republic's corporate culture, Far Reach collapsed into complete obscurity after the Star League's destruction of House Amaris. Several interstellar corporations had large underwater facilities located on the planet, all of which eventually succumbed to watery graves after their systems failed from neglected maintenance. By the late 2800s, all that remained was General City, dominating the bulk of Dynamic Island. The corporate capital of General Dynamics–Republic Division survived solely through the perseverance of its stranded citizenry and workforce. While most of GD's underwater facilities were closed to them, the environs below General City did contain minor manufacturing centers and a small arms factory, providing a measure of survival against raiders and the more dangerous ocean fauna.

Far Reach clawed its way back to some semblance of normalcy by the early 2900s. The population's steady swell forced recolonization efforts to other islands, though intrasystem travel remained closed due to the lack of operational spacefaring vessels.

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Several of the remaining corporate enclaves formed functional conglomerates and collectives, engaging in limited skirmishes for resources and in some cases, slaves.

The discovery of a sealed facility containing three KR-61 shuttles reopened the system to the Reachers. While the system outpost on Near Reach—the first planet in the small system—had long since been abandoned, the ancient *Capital*-class space station at the system's zenith point remained intact. And occupied.

Used as a way station for Empire of the Stars raider vessels, the Far Reach station was modestly armed. The Reachers lost two of their three shuttles and half their marines in the boarding action, but captured the station. To the Empire's surprise, the Reachers successfully ambushed and captured an Imperial raiding force a month later.

With their fortunes on the rise, the Reachers formed the Far Reach Collective and stretched out to nearby systems. By utilizing their strength—corporate espionage on Far Reach is considered a high art form—the Collective first infiltrated neighboring powers and then used the gathered information to form several beneficial pacts and treaties.

A major war erupted between the Collective and the Empire of the Stars in 3047 as the Empire attempted to break out of its home within the Chaine Cluster. The Collective soundly rebuffed the invaders, using a combination of highly-trained zero-G marines (based on the Dynasty) and the planet's isolated island enclaves. Since the ill-fated assault, the Collective has stepped up its intelligence activities, launching tentative operations into systems outside the Isles.

[3084 Update: *The Collective was invaded by the Empire again in 3073, facing down Imperial troops as they fled from our own invasion in the Chaine Cluster. The Empire secured a small foothold on the planet at Earthwerks Island. In 3083, the Collective formally accepted the Empire's petition to enter the Collective. This has given the Reachers access to several small Imperial holdings in other systems and an intelligence network that may well be superior to our own. –Lorenzo]*

CHAIINE CLUSTER

Ruler: Clan Diamond Shark

Number of Systems: 7 (Turpin, Corell, Brekke, Aeryn, Alnabog, Hillburg, Dark Mist)

Consisting of seven systems in close stellar proximity, the Chaine Cluster proved to be unremarkable enough to the Rim Worlds Republic that it was not on the nation's colonization lists. Used primarily as a waystation for recharging jump sails, the Republic largely ignored the cluster beyond rudimentary surveys. Only the Brekke system—known on Republic charts as RWR-39110—held more than cursory interest to the Republic Navy.

Situated in high orbit around Brekke's single primary, the Republic constructed a mid-sized shipyard used to repair its WarShip and DropShip fleets in transit. The facility was

primarily composed of several unpressurized bays and a small components factory. It was abandoned after the Republic's fall, and later occupied by the Empire of the Stars in the mid-2800s. The Empire used the site primarily as a meeting place for its governing council and to perform minor maintenance on its small trading fleet.

Exploration of the rest of the cluster occurred during the late twenty-ninth and thirtieth centuries, carried out primarily by the Empire as it suffered a string of defeats across the rest of the Isles. The Empire was effectively finished as an Isles power, as its refugees faced a complete restart on every world. With very little industrial capacity and barely capable of conducting successful raiding operations, the Empire quietly faded into obscurity.

Of the seven systems in the cluster, Alnabog and Corell are the most conducive to colonization. Turpin, which contained an abandoned asteroid mine, and Aeryn, with three small moons sheltering a variety of slavers, pirates, and smugglers, are the harshest systems to host life.

[3084 Update: *The Chaine Cluster was chosen as Predator Galaxy Commander Raven Ghiberti's target for Operation SWEEP in 3066. Over the course of the next five years, Predator Galaxy moved among the cluster and claimed all seven systems. The former Empire of the Stars, a power in name and history only, was quietly absorbed into the Clan's labor caste.*

Large production enclaves began on Alnabog, Corell, and Hillburg, taking advantage of the natural resources and long transit times. The decrepit factory orbiting Brekke was the focus of a long-term rehabilitation project, modified with a mobile factory station procured from the Ravens. By 3080, the facility had been enlarged to five times its original size and capable of handling most naval vessels. The Clan bargained with the Falcons and Wolves to repair those Clans' WarShips in exchange for resource rights and military production.

At this time, the Clan is content with occupying the bulk of the Chaine Cluster and using the rest of the Isle as a buffer zone. The Clan Council has authorized the Watch and the merchant caste to conduct operations within the Isle to keep the various factions in low-intensity conflict. This is for the protection of the Clan and its rebuilding efforts. –Lorenzo]

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

More than thirty different societies sprawl across the Chaine Cluster, with many being singular planetary powers occupying territory that stretches little beyond their city borders. The more dominant ones, mentioned in the planetary dossiers, are the current ones in power, though they can fall at any time and replaced by another.

Technology among these systems rarely exceeds that from the early Succession Wars. Most Star League technology has since broken down into disrepair or been scavenged for parts used elsewhere. BattleMechs and heavy military equipment are prized, and can often be considered the key to a battle or armed



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diplomacy. With such rare technology, most Chainelane powers tend to assign these precious weapons to rearguard actions or defensive positions, limiting their exposure to frontline combat. As such, most armed conflicts consist of several regiments of infantry and common vehicle units, seeded with light conventional air power and artillery. Large military confrontations are rare, due to limited transportation assets, and most power grabs and conflicts involve board and throne rooms, small force engagements, espionage, assassinations, or even old-fashioned dueling.

Characters involved in the Chainelane Isles will find themselves wrangling with complex political maneuvering, secret societies and groups, altruistic leaders, and anachronistic civilizations. Overlying everything, Clan Diamond Shark maintains a distant but involved eye on the *status quo* across the Isle systems. The Clan's merchant caste steps in where it sees the balance reaching a tipping point, keeping the various powers off-balance and in a constant state of flux. Their ultimate motivations for such "puppet master" strategy is unknown, but most likely involves keeping their own presence within the Chaine cluster as mysterious as possible.

Consult the rules chapter at the end of this book for additional role-playing notes on the various internal powers within the Chainelane Isles.

THE BARRENS

The following is a review of the new nations of the Barrens and how they might affect operations by Interstellar Expeditions. The below overviews and attached appendices have been collected by myself and my fellow officers of Devers' Dreadnoughts through onsite inspection, publicly available sources and clandestine information gathering. In general there are opportunities for Interstellar Expeditions to operate safely in the Barrens, though care will have to be taken to not offend certain players.

Born from the wreckage of the Rim World Republic, the Barrens for many years represented the worst nightmares of failed civilization. Isolated and degraded, the worlds of the Barrens became worse than pirate haunts. Indeed, by the 3020s pirate bands had carved out proto-states of their own. With little interest in productive rule, these states were more random groupings of worlds for easy harvesting than any natural formations. All of this would change in 3049.

The Barrens were the first worlds of the Inner Sphere to feel the impact of the Clans. In a matter of months, with the exception of a few holdouts hidden in the asteroid fields of Star's End, the Clans had swept the Barrens clear of pirates. The people of the Barrens had traded one set of brutal conquerors for another and for the Clans, these were the people of Amaris. Yet, for the first time since Kerensky left the Rim World Republic in favor of Exodus, the Barrens had real government. Though still exposed and isolated, they could rely on the Clans for protection and now had actual laws that would be enforced.

Unfortunately for the Barrens, this did not last. While they were virtually untouched by the Jihad, the Clans were not. Faced with the need to concentrate their resources, the Clans began pulling back into the Inner Sphere in the mid 3080s. With the loss of their overlords the worlds of the Barrens have had to make their way as best they can. Some have tried to become miniature Clans. Others have rejected the Clans and their influence. Pirates and raiders circle, looking for weakness, while the Clans remain interested, well aware of the strategic position of the Barrens in relation to the occupation zones. The last century has seen microstates like the Marian Hegemony succeed; it remains to be seen if the Barrens can follow in their footsteps.

—Major Zhang Ying Ying

VON STRANG'S WORLD

The Barony of Strang treated its people as prisoners and serfs, arming the world for the "inevitable" assault from the Inner Sphere. When liberated by Clan Jade Falcon, hundreds of years of pro-Amaris propaganda initially produced some problems, but over time the Way of the Clans was fully embraced. With the retreat of Clan Hell's Horses, Von Strang's World has retained the caste system and formed their own warrior elite, aping their former rulers.

Unity City (Amaris City before 3049) is the heart of this brave new society. Heavily fortified, the citadel more than just resembles a Castle Brian. Hidden caches left by the Von Strangs dot the city, and salvage left by the Clan combat of the 3070s litters the countryside. This martial heritage has allowed Von Strang's World to not just defend itself, but support the combat element of Clan culture.

When Clan Hell's Horses pulled out, a series of martial Trials created a warrior caste, of which the highest ranking immediately reclaimed their pre-Clan surnames. Led by Khan Richard of the Anderson Bloodline, Von Strang's World has a mixed Cluster of BattleMechs and conventional arms available to it. Unfortunately (or fortunately) they lack DropShips or JumpShips to take the force off world.

Inspired by the Pentagon Worlds, Von Strang's World hopes an enlarged and scientifically superior population will be able to fully exploit the world and start a technological and industrial renaissance. To achieve this, they have established a breeding program to rapidly boost the population. Lacking iron womb technology, the Von Strangs have had to use traditional methods and strictly enforce breeding pairs. In addition, rich diamond mines have attracted Clan Diamond Shark, who is the primary source of trade. When its factors are on-world they find themselves continually badgered with Trials for merchandise. The Sharks, in turn, restrain the proto-nation with offers of JumpShip access and high technology.

Aggressive and belligerent, the future of Von Strang's World depends on whether they can get access to space travel. Lacking

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the ability to construct more than the most basic military hardware, a culture based on combat will soon wear down their defense forces. This makes them easy to control. On the other hand, if they do get the ability to move forces off-world, they are expected to perform well against the militaries of their neighbors. Von Strang's World may end up a kind of pirate Clan, as few nations would accept Clan-style Trials of Possession as anything less than piracy.

Conclusion

It took the elite Jade Falcon Keshik Cluster to clear this world in 3049. And that was before all the Clan updates. No mercenaries today have the firepower to repeat the effort. This is a problem, because if these guys ever get into space they are going to be a royal pain for you and every other operation traveling the void.

THE RAGNARÖK UNION

Relatively close to the Inner Sphere, Gotterdammerung, Botany Bay and Last Chance had become relatively prosperous under the rule of the Clans. Previously part of the Greater Valkyrate, anything was an improvement over the vicariousness of Susie Morgraine-Ryan. Under several Clans new technologies and immigrants allowed the exploitation of resources hidden under the icy surfaces of the worlds. This came to an end when Ferris rebelled against Clan Hell's Horses.

As marginal worlds at best, the retreat of the Clans was an existential crisis. Ironically, the ties created by the Greater Valkyrate came to their aid. By pooling their resources, the three worlds could achieve subsistence. With that goal in mind they formed the Ragnarök Union, under the rule of the Hu Xiao Lin, a wily concierge from the Valkyrate days who had managed to retain her position through the Clan occupation. Hu was able to tap into old ties with Lackhove and Erewhon, which are controlled by Clan Jade Falcon, and has allowed the Ragnarök Union to establish trade links to maintain the advanced technologies needed to prosper.

Militarily things are more difficult. Clan Jade Falcon has no interest in annexing the worlds, and hiring mercenaries to defend the worlds is problematic given the Clans' likely response. For now, the Ragnarök Union has managed to buy a Cluster of tanks from the Falcons, as well as equipment for an infantry militia. Training is a problem and negotiations are underway to get access to the Military Academy of Somerset. The Falcons have the Ragnarök Union over a barrel and are enjoying the benefits of colonization without the pains of occupation.

The future of the Ragnarök Union is unclear. With their underdeveloped military, they are attracting all kinds of interest. Von Strang's World would have invaded already if they could get access to a JumpShip. The icy nature of the Union's worlds means that settlements are concentrated and easily fortified, but future growth into a nation will require expansion beyond these settlements and increased exposure to attack. Whether the Ragnarök Union can make this leap is yet to be seen.

Conclusion

Mostly harmless. Interstellar Expedition ships should be able to get supplies and shore leave here without much trouble. Beware of the Falcons. They probably won't try anything, but they will know you were there and the Watch will take an interest in you after that.

KINGS OF THE CASTLES

At the center of Oberon City stands the bulk of Grimfort. While the Oberon Confederation may be nominally independent, they have been happy to accept the Ghost Bear Dominion's aid refurbishing the Hendrik-era fortress. And what a fortress it now is. Massive turrets and walls enclose what has been described as a modern Castle Brian. Given that the Grimfort is rumored to extend far below the surface, hardened against orbital attack, this description may not be far from the truth.

But what is remarkable is that it is not just here on Oberon VI. Similar fortresses are being built or refurbished on Gotterdammerung, Blackstone, The Rock, and Von Strang's World with the support of various Clans.

The question is why? Despite their retreat from the local Periphery, the Clans retain an interest in these strategically placed realms. Notably, several Clans have been *selling* surplus military hardware in the Barrens—never BattleMechs or aerospace technology, but small arms and conventional armor. This allows the Clan's military industries to keep ticking over and retain skills despite any decrease in equipment demands.

In any case, the presence of these fortresses cements the existence of the new nations of the Barrens preventing their easy destruction whether by pirate, House or Clan.

–Major Zhang Ying Ying

THE NEW OBERON CONFEDERATION

Despite its bandit kingdom status, the Oberon Confederation was on the verge of respectable statehood in 3049. General Hendrik Grimm IV had shown vision beyond his pirate roots, with Oberon VI industrializing and establishing mature diplomatic contacts beyond the Confederation. The latent nationalism survived the Clans, and resurfaced when they retreated.

The motivating figure behind this rise was a horse breeder from Placida. Benjamin Wright was able to gain influence in Clan Hell's Horses civilian administration and leverage that into outright rule. He now styles himself governor general, from his seat of power in Grimfort on Oberon VI.

With established pharmaceuticals, electronics and small arms factories on Oberon VI, the so-called New Oberon Confederation is the most powerful of the Barrens' proto-states, and incorporates



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the worlds of Oberon VI, Placida, Blackstone, Sigurd, and Butte Hold. Merchants are welcomed and the Confederation has even been able to purchase its own JumpShips with external financing. This, in turn, has attracted representatives from the Lyran Commonwealth and Draconis Combine with an eye to outflanking the Clan occupation zones.

The New Oberon Militia is one of the only Barrens military forces fielding 'Mechs. Operating an elite Trinary based out of Oberon IV, the Oberon Keshik acts as a response force for attacks on Confederation worlds. The five worlds each maintain a mixed Cluster of armor and infantry for local defense. The governor general has skillfully played off foreign interest to acquire a mix of Clan and Inner Sphere equipment and trainers. The result has been a well equipped, if eclectic, force.

In recent years the New Oberon Confederation has taken an interest in the Republic of the Barrens, probably because of their historic domination of these worlds. Likewise, the JumpShips and germanium of Star's End are temptingly close. The Confederation lacks the military or transport capacity to attempt any adventurism, but this has not stopped it issuing letters of marque, to the disquiet of their neighbors.

Conclusion

The New Oberon Confederation will accept any high profile nongovernmental organization with open arms, if only to assert their independence from the Clans. They would probably even allow you to open an office there. But don't assume that you can push them around. As a real nation in a strategic position they have friends in high places with far more pull than Interstellar Expeditions.

STAR'S END (NOVO CRESSIDAS)

Shielded in the Star's End system's asteroid fields with a functional JumpShip yard in orbit, for decades Novo Cressidas was a hidden refuge for pirates. It took the Clans twenty years to fully remove the pirate taint, and when they did, they stripped the JumpShip yard rather than occupy the world. When the Word of Blake detonated a nuclear weapon over the Yossaravas germanium processing facility on Novo Cressidas in 3080, the facility had been abandoned for a year.

In the years since, Star's End has become a home for refugees and outcasts. Not everyone adapted well to the retreat of the Clans, and many feared a return to the horrors of the Succession War years. Life on Novo Cressidas may be harsh, but at least it is hidden and defensible.

Initially dispersed in small subsistence colonies in the remains of Clan or pirate settlements, these small refugee groups have had to band together to form a rudimentary government. Settlements send a representative to the Council of Representatives. The Council then votes on matters brought before it. The result is not always accepted and hostilities between settlements are not unknown.

Militarily, Star's End is a paradox. Because so much of the current population arrived in JumpShips as refugees, many of the JumpShips have remained in-system, giving Star's End one of the larger fleets in the Barrens. On the other hand, these are not warriors or soldiers. Infantry militias are the order of the day, supplemented by whatever vehicles and heavy weapons they can get their hands on.

So far this hasn't been much of an issue. Pirates are still thankfully rare, but the basic facts of Novo Cressidas remain. The planet has large germanium deposits waiting to be tapped. If pirates could do it in the past, anyone can. An unidentified DropShip destroyed while attempting to reach Novo Cressidas in 3090 was the first of what has become a small but steady stream of raiders. A year later, another group was found scavenging in the radioactive remains of the Yossaravas facility, unaware of the danger. They violently resisted attempts to warn them until they all succumbed to radioactive sickness. More recent efforts have involved simple raiding. The great fear is that one of these raiding groups will stay and form a hostile grouping outside of the Council of Representatives. From there it is easy to imagine a new New Belt Pirates.

Conclusion

Something is coming here. There is too much potential money to be made. Keep well clear unless you are willing to get your hands dirty. And if it gets too out of hand a Clan will probably step in and reset everything back to square one at the point of a gun.

FORMATION OF THE BARRENS: A TIMELINE

- (November 3079)** Clan Hell's Horses finishes stripping Star's End of any useful material
- (October 3080)** The Bloody Tricentennial sees Star's End attacked
- (July 3083)** The Ferris Revolt.
- (October 3083)** Clan Hell's Horses begins its withdrawal from the local Periphery
- (May 3084)** Clan Hell's Horses continues its withdrawal from the local Periphery retaining troops on Nyserta, Elissa, Gustrell and Butte Hold
- (July 3084)** Ragnarök Union formed
- (July 3086)** Clan Hell's Horses completes its withdrawal and establishes a new border from The Edge to Lackhove
- (October 3086)** New Oberon Confederation formed
- (January 3087)** Republic of the Barrens announced
- (March 3087)** Ferris Collective announced
- (June 3089)** The Havens formed

COREWARD LEGACIES

REPUBLIC OF THE BARRENS

While never rich, the Clans brought the worlds that would become the Republic of the Barrens a degree of stability that had not existed since the days of the Rimworld Republic. Ferris' rebellion came as a shock to these peaceful worlds, but worse was to come. That Clan Hell's Horses would abandon them was a complete surprise. When the last DropShip left Gustrell in 3085, these five worlds—Crellacor, Drask's Den, Gustrell, Paulus Prime, and The Rock—found themselves alone and naked in the darkness of the Barrens.

All too aware of what might befall them, each world put out feelers, seeking reassurance from each other. In the end it was only natural that they would form a union. Throughout 3086 negotiations continued. Though inspired by what the Clans had achieved, the leaders of the nascent Republic also turned to more ancient sources. In the end, they kept the Clans' caste system, but no caste would be considered above the other. Each caste on each world could elect representatives to a senate that would rule the worlds collectively as the Republic of the Barrens.

With neither wealth nor military might, the Republic of the Barrens has adopted a pacifist stance. Surprisingly Clan Hell's Horses has proved most receptive to calls for aid. Unlike the Ferris Collective or Oberon Confederation, the Republic of the Barrens is not anti Clan. Indeed, the Horses consider the Republic a buffer state protecting their flank. Though their own resources are stretched, the Clan has even been able to act as mentor to the Republic's fledgling military, providing two Trinaries of tanks to each world over the last decade. This has had the downside of Horse trainers encouraging the warrior caste to consider themselves above the other castes and created a very real risk of a coup.

The Republic of the Barrens today stands at a crossroad. Not only does the warrior caste threaten coup, but external forces are eyeing the nascent state. The Oberon Confederation, with an eye to the past, looks greedily at the Republic and sponsors pirate raids to weaken them. The Ferris Collective, fearing attacks by the Republic, has attempted preemptive strikes, which in turn egg on the Republic's warrior caste. The future is not clear, but it is unlikely that the Republic of the Barrens will survive another decade in its current state.

Conclusion:

For now the Republic of the Barrens is likely to be welcoming to Interstellar Expeditions. Avoid putting down roots until the situation becomes clearer.

FERRIS COLLECTIVE

Ferris is the public reason for Clan Hell's Horses retreat from the Barrens in 3083. Apparent indifference by the Clan inspired the unidentified plotters to rise up and demand more resources

at the point of a sword. After a spate of violence, the Horses' reaction was unexpected. Analysis showed the Clan that it would be decades for the Barrens holdings to be profitable, and in the meantime they were a drain on the fragile Clan's resources. If the population didn't want their presence, it was logical for the Clan to withdraw and leave the natives to their own devices. By 3086 the Hell's Horses were gone.

Ferris overcame the shock of the Clan's unexpected retreat, and soon was trying out grandiose new national titles under the rule of the only surviving rebel leader, Emperor Ned Piggot. What caught them off guard was the formation of the Republic of the Barrens. With the new proto-nation attracting all sorts of Clan attention, Piggot decided Ferris would need the resources of a group of worlds to ward off attacks. With a battalion of tanks and infantry, he set sail in Ferris' lone JumpShip for the Elysian Fields.

The Elysian Fields had remained virtually unchanged by the arrival of the Clans. Nominally nature reserves administered by Inheritors and protected by the Oberon Confederation, the truth was that the pirates exploited the worlds' resources ruthlessly while the Inheritors increasingly took to hiding in the world's forests. The Clans continued the arrangement, without the fiction of Inheritor involvement. When the Clans left, the population was divided into those who lived as hunter-gathers and those who lived as subsistence farmers. On Elissa, Manaringaine and Nyserta in turn, Piggot arrived at the abandoned spaceports, claiming the worlds as "founding members" of the Ferris Collective. From the trees, the Inheritors watched on with bemusement.

Since then, the Ferris Collective has tried to aggressively exploit the Elysian Fields. Working against this is Ferris' own low population. Surrounded by enemies—real or imagined—the Ferris Collective has aggressively marketed itself in the Inner Sphere, pointing to the vast tracts of virgin land available to those brave enough to tame it. Distance and the presence of the Clans have limited responses to the undesirable or desperate, with most ending up in the Elysian Fields. The Inheritors fade into the wilderness when pushed, but occasionally a hothead pushes back, causing Collective settlers to respond with violence. More successful has been outreach to the Draconis Combine and Lyran Commonwealth, who have been happy to sell surplus military hardware to the Collective. The only limitations have been a refusal to sell 'Mechs and the Collective's limited buying power.

For now the Ferris Collective is of little danger to anyone except the Inheritors. Indeed, the reverse is true: the Collective is right to be paranoid, as its actions have drawn the attention of its neighbors. Given time, it may achieve the critical mass needed for long-term survival, but for that to happen the Collective will need to become far more diplomatic.



COREWARD LEGACIES

Conclusion

These people are more paranoid than the Capellans. Interstellar Expeditions can get supplies here, and establish governmental connections, but expect relationships to change on a whim. They see aggressive expansion as the only way that they can ensure their continued survival, and will not hesitate to seize IE assets for any perceived need.

The Havens

Porthos and Santander V were always oddities in the Ghost Bear Dominion. Porthos was a primitive world colonized by the Inheritors of the Elysian Fields, and Santander V, a hellhole ruled by the depraved Helmar Valasek. Neither world sat easily in a nation dominated by Ghost Bears, Kuritans and Rasalhagians. Observing the Horses' pragmatic withdrawal, the khans of the Dominion wondered if it would be an appropriate option for them. For Porthos, the solution was simple. Barely developed, it was given back to the Inheritors.

Santander V was more difficult. Its pre-Clan population—pirates and their dependents—was wiped out by Clan Smoke Jaguar. The new population consisted almost entirely of Clan immigrants. While the civilians could be relocated, the fact remained that Santander was a habitable world on the border of the Dominion that would attract pirates.

Ultimately, the world was placed in the care of Porthos' Inheritors, creating the Havens. Though nearly barren compared to Porthos, Santander V has attracted the more sophisticated and ambitious Inheritors, who have moved into the abandoned settlements.

Warden Will Hutardo, who is as much a spiritual leader as a political one, rules the Havens. Separated from the Taurian branch of the Inheritors, and living on isolated garden worlds, his Elysian Inheritors are less militant than their rimward cousins. Lacking the support of a major realm like the Taurian Concordat, they have long since regressed to a lifestyle somewhere near primitive hunter-gatherer tribes, something akin to Amish culture. This regression had been accelerated under the terror of Hendrik Grimm in his Elysian Fields homeworlds.

Military forces are nonexistent. That said, the Dominion Watch has made an effort to ingratiate itself with the population, teaching them to maintain and deploy surveillance equipment. They might not fight, but their tracking skills mean not much happens without them—and the Watch—knowing.

The future of The Havens is bright. While the Dominion no longer rules, they clearly maintain an interest, and only a fool would draw the attention of the sleeping Bear. On both worlds,

the Dominion retains an embassy and HPG, ensuring both planets of the Elysian Fields can communicate with each other and the outside world. For the Inheritors, this means that they can go about their lifestyle in peace. Some talk about freeing their brothers in the Ferris Collective, but for now that is little more than a pipe dream.

Conclusion

Basic supplies are available to Interstellar Expeditions ships on these worlds, and the Ghost Bear embassies are always happy to accept visitors more sophisticated than the local Inheritors, provided their conversation never strays into taboo topics.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Though the Clans arrived as conquerors, the last thirty years of Clan occupation are the best the Barrens have had since the days of the Rim World Collective. A citizen of the Inner Sphere may ask, "What did the Clans ever do for us?" "Well," a citizen of the Barrens might answer, "the sanitation, the medicine, education, viniculture, public order, irrigation, roads, the freshwater system, public health, oh and peace." Even those realms that want nothing to do with the Clans have nostalgia for Clan control, and compare their current rulers with their predecessors. At the same time, they have a dim memory of what came before the Clans. For most it was a time of fear and oppression and many would do literally anything to prevent a return to the old days.

Strategically positioned on the coreward flank of the Clan occupation zones, the Barrens is of interest to the Draconis Combine and Lyran Commonwealth. Both nations have sent envoys and spies to the region to try and bring it under their influence. For the Clans, the Barrens represent buffer states between them and the terrors they know to be lurking in the Periphery. Expect to find envoys from all of these nations trying to exert influence, possibly in opposition to the players. Likewise, beware of Watch and other intelligence operatives. These are better armed and less forgiving than envoys.

While modern cities exist in the Barrens, it must be remembered that these worlds were never rich and have relatively small populations. These can be relatively easily controlled by local authorities and, even in cities, there is a real feeling of everyone knowing everyone else. Isolation breeds self reliance and lone settlements have more independence. Of course, a stranger is more likely to disappear out there. Inheritors may strive for a simple life, but they are far from harmless and have been known to make problems go away.



COREWARD LEGACIES

ESCORPIÓN IMPERIO

100687

In the late 2800s, these relatively peaceful and isolated colony worlds were invaded by a faction the Castilians called the Umayyads. These invaders were notable for their use of giant walking war machines, a weapon previously unheard of by the natives. In the beginning, the nine worlds of Nueva

Castile were overrun by the superior enemy, but Castilian fortitude and tenacity pushed back. By reverse-engineering the Umayyad BattleMechs, the natives ground through a slow counterassault that took nearly two hundred years to complete. With a tenuous peace in place—proctored by the Word of Blake—both the Umayyad Caliphate and Castilian Principality then discovered that both sides were manipulated into the prolonged war. The culprit was the merchants of the Hanseatic League.

The early 3070s found the two nations in a precarious alliance against the distant League, with the Caliphate carrying out the bulk of raids on Hansa worlds after the Word of Blake departed. The Principality's forces remained nearby, better prepared to handle local defenses over the mobile needs of a raiding force—as well as protecting their people from an expected Umayyad betrayal. While the Caliphate struck back at the Hansa, the Principality suffered several targeted raids from Clan and bandit forces. The attacks only heightened the Castilians' apprehension, especially after the Hansa's merchants and technical advisors pulled out in 3078. Rumors built of renewed violence with the Umayyad Caliphate.

The Caliphate never had time to carry out such a plan, if one was even in the works. In 3080, a new invader arrived: Clan Goliath Scorpion. Within two months, the Clan had conquered all nine worlds and established peace under the Clan's guns.

A series of closed meetings on Granada forged a tentative plan, spearheaded by the Scorpion leadership. Using a form of integration apparently modeled on the Ghost Bear's dominance of Free Rasalhague, the Clan stratified both nations' societies and began merging them into the caste system.

Labor Caste

Because of the limited transportation available to the Clan, there was a profound gap in the number of labor castemen available to the Scorpions. This was alleviated by initial assignment of all Castilian and Umayyad civilians into that caste. Dedicated testing was carried out on all nine worlds over the period of a year. By mid-3082, Scorpion scientists formulated several caste assignments and began the restructuring process.

Though most Clansmen would insist otherwise, the majority of Castilians remained in the labor caste. Many Castilians saw this as a slight to their honor and profession. This perceived disparity would lay the groundwork for later problems.

Support Caste

Considered a new caste level, members of this caste are tasked with assignments that revolve around servicing the Clan and its unique needs. Support caste members are not technicians or mechanics, but fill roles dealing with supply, procurement, administration, emergency services and other similar positions.

NOTES

Data log:: 14 Feb 3089

Robert, kick this up the chain to Data Analysis. May be useful for Project FARSEEKER.

—Howard

**TRANSMIT::ORIGIN::CORD.B.::>>TO>>CSDRUM/
EXC29402::.....:RCVD/STORE30093087**

**RETRIEVED DRUM BATCH 342::.....:31123087
MESSAGE READS::**

The fact you're reading this means I was successful in transmitting the report. And probably means I'm also dead.

No, not being melodramatic here. You'd think, based on Inner Sphere perceptions, that the people of Nueva Castile are simpletons. Maybe at one time this was true.

Not anymore.

Things within this stitched-together group of worlds have changed, and drastically so. The arrival of a new power in the region has tipped the balance completely and threatens to overturn the table.

If you're not sure what I mean, read the report I've attached. I composed it on the run, so I apologize up front for anything unclear. It's not easy trying to do this with one eye perpetually glued to the back of your head.

Once you're done, I think you'll understand me when I say that any current and future operations planned for Nueva Castile should be postponed indefinitely until the situation can be better ascertained.

Please tell my partner and kids I love them. And make sure they get my life insurance benefit. I think I'm entitled to the "death and dismemberment" clause, all things considered.

—Klaus Schmetzer, Agent IE-2589

ADDENDUM: Agent Schmetzer's body was identified with sixty-eight percent certainty on Leon by Agent IE-718. —HW



COREWARD LEGACIES

Merchant Caste

Very few Castilians and Umayyads were reassigned to the merchant caste, making it the smallest caste in the Imperio. With opportunities for trade limited to a small radius outside the Imperio, merchants have been focused on streamlining the complex economies previously employed by the conquered nations. For the time being, the Clan Council has determined that merchant teams in the field must be accompanied by at least a Star of Scorpion warriors. No doubt this decision stemmed from a Umayyad terrorist attack that killed several merchants and blew up a Scorpion DropShip on Navarre in late 3081.

Technician Caste

A large number of Umayyads were moved into the technician caste, especially former soldiers. Their familiarity with the Star League-era BattleMechs fielded by the Caliphate's forces played heavily into their elevation, even as their fellow brothers-in-arms in the tank corps and infantry were moved ahead of them into the garrison caste. The reverse in status has created friction in many Imperio barracks, forcing technicians to bivouac under secure guard.

Because the technician caste was switched according to standard Clan caste doctrine, many of the Scorpion technicians were afforded the opportunity to retest as warriors. Nearly half of those selected tested into the Imperio's premier units; the remainder have been stoic in their change of status.

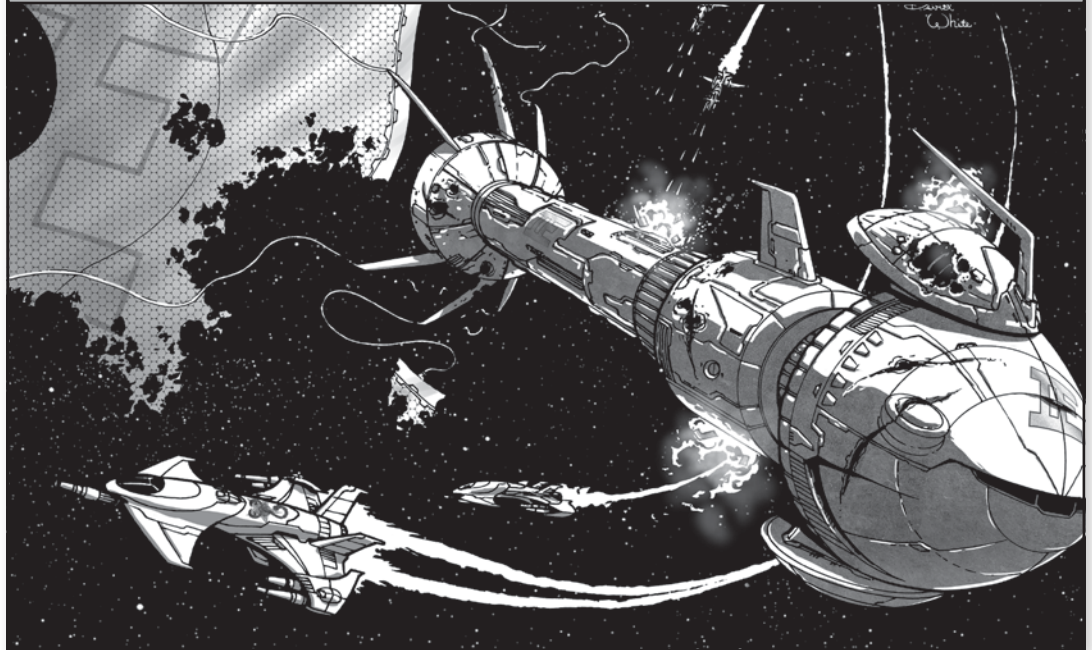
Grunt Caste

Another new caste layer, the grunt (properly called garrison by Clan warriors) caste is where the majority of Caliphate and Principality soldiers were assigned. Not considered good enough to test into the warrior caste, the garrisons are primarily vehicle and infantry (excluding battle armor) troops. These grunts are assigned to security and police forces and are expected to respond to planetary defense orders.

Scientist Caste

The least number of Clansmen populate this caste, which has been pumped up with a large number of Castilians, including all of the design teams responsible for producing, maintaining, and modifying the Principality's meager 'Mech forces.

COREWARD LEGACIES

**Warrior Caste**

Unsurprisingly, none of the Clan's warriors were demoted from this caste. The warriors did—albeit reluctantly—admit a small number of Umayyad and Castilian officers who passed their Trials of Position. Nonetheless, the Clan Council determined that, for the time being, non-Scorpion warriors would not serve alongside pure Clan warriors, keeping some semblance of cohesion within the ranks.

Imperio Leadership

Currently, the Imperio is ruled by a three-part council. The Clan maintains sole control of the military and warrior caste, through its khan and sakhn. The Loremaster serves as a liaison to the king and caliph, providing direction and understanding with regard to the Clan caste system, customs and perspectives. Many of the common citizenry believe their former leaders are nothing more than mouthpieces to the Clan, as edicts of late predominately favor the Scorpions.

200887

I've managed to visit three worlds of this so-called Imperio. Everywhere I go, the undercurrent is the same: uncertainty. The Clan makes no effort to hide their presence in any way; it is not unusual to see a BattleMech or a pair of tanks parked in some of the large open spaces. Groups of Elementals—both in and out of their massive battle armor—wander in random directions. In the open fields, it is not unusual to see a few ProtoMechs speed by, their destination unknown. It's as if the Clan is desperately trying to force some form of "new normal" onto the populace by displaying their armed presence.

COREWARD LEGACIES

As if the threat of violence would be enough to quell any thoughts of uprising.

I'll not lie; it seems to be working. But only just.

Pockets of normalcy exist, where everything and everyone seems to be running like clockwork. A society of precision. Each person in their place, serving as they should serve, to the best of their strength and ability. But these pockets are uncommon.

More common are the areas where things look normal, but the vibe is very different. There's an edge of ... *je ne sais quoi* in the air, as if something's not quite right. A stumble here, a grimace there, a lingering stare of hatred around the corner. It's not directed at any one group of people, but a twisted patina of distrust, disillusion, and fear.

In a few places, there's the outright rebellion. It's heavily suppressed—remarkably so. I happened to stumble upon it on Navarre. The Clan was building a gigantic facility well out in the Brownlands. From the rumors I heard, it was their grand attempt at some BattleMech factory complex. Security was tight. The site had its own city to house the various castes needed to build it.

Apparently, it also housed those who opposed it. Acts of sabotage were rumored to be rampant at times. The Clan would clamp down—violently—and work would proceed apace, but the rebels would start all over again. From what information I could dig up, that facility was two years off its projected pace.

220887

Integration with Castilian and Caliphate society isn't the only problem facing the new conquerors. Manufacturing industries are exceptionally rare among the Nueva Castile worlds, as the Castilians had no need for heavy war equipment before the Umayyad invasion. What BattleMech facilities that do exist are primitive compared to those on the least-industrialized Inner Sphere worlds. Vehicular factories are more common, though most are on the lighter side of tonnage. Aerospace is almost nonexistent, aside from the three basic-level DropShip maintenance facilities on Granada. There was little for the Clan to work with, especially since—according to whispers and rumors—they arrived with minimal material to build their own facilities.

With such a large technological gap between the two civilizations, the upgrade process has been excruciatingly slow. Frustration among the scientist, technician, and support castes continues to rise with each obstacle that presents itself. The Clan Council, in an attempt to divert attention to the lack of progress, authorized the design and production of two new IndustrialMech projects: the *Araña* and the *Reptar*. Both models are being produced, slowly, and incorporated into garrison caste forces and Omega Galaxy.

150987

I'm being tracked.

For a while now, I've had the feeling that I'm being followed. It first popped up on my departure flight from Granada. I'd made an observation about the *Lei Kung* and its obvious degradation in

the shuttle's forward lounge. The *McKenna* had massive rents and gaps in its armor, giving it a very shabby look. Never mind the fact there was little apparent work being done to repair it. In hindsight, using the ship's name was my giveaway that I was not a normal Castilian laborer.

Since then there's four faces I've been seeing somewhat regularly in my travels. Never close by, always at a distance. But they're there. I've done all I know to shake them, even those old Blake's Wrath tricks they taught us on Orestes. It's possible my paranoia is in hyper-mode, but better safe than sorry.

Unfortunately, my journey has pulled me into the outskirts of Madrid, the capital of Aragon. Here, there's precious little urban cover aside from the massive Umayyad warehouses. Empty warehouses, mind.

I'm getting ready to send my data offworld through my emergency plan. Hopefully, that old ExCorps DRUM is still functioning, because I only get one shot with that Clanner HPG before they take me down and scoop out my brain. Fortunately, Clan technicians aren't as smart as the Word of Blake boys they had here a decade ago. That makes things marginally easier...

<:::END OF MESSAGE>:::

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Life in the newly formed Escorpión Imperio is tumultuous on the best of days. With a mutual distrust underlying all three faction's relations to each other, suppressed aggression has become a daily constant. While there are places of relative tranquility and cooler, calmer heads, the complete upheaval of their societies has disrupted both the Caliphate and Principality citizenry.

The new caste system has not blended well with any of the three societies, especially those of the Clans. While many do recognize the need for change and adaptation—especially those of the younger generations—others see the change as a break from Kerensky's vision for civilization. A few radicals have even insinuated that seven castes is proof that the Society's influence is strong over the Clan's leadership, as seven was a favored number among the rebellious scientists.

The innate distrust has slowed down progress in every area where integration is being sought between the three powers. The stubbornness of the Clans, the reserved society of the Caliphate, and the perceived weakness of the Principality all work against their neighbors.

The constant turmoil makes the Nueva Castile worlds ripe for intrigue, rebellion, misinformation, and secret operations. Agents from the Hansa, Clan Coyote, Clan Stone Lion, and Clan Cloud Cobra are just beginning to infiltrate the Imperio and have their own agendas, as do agents from private corporations from the Inner Sphere (such as Interstellar Expeditions) looking for their own angles to play. Characters involved in campaigns or adventures on the Nueva Castile worlds should be ready for anything and trust no one.



ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

BEYOND CIRCINUS

The region of space anti-spinward of the former Circinus Federation has seen an immense amount of activity over the past decade. As the Word of Blake Jihad came to a close, remnants of the Master's forces fled anti-spinward in an attempt to hide from the pursuing Allied forces. Under an agreement with Devlin Stone, Interstellar Expeditions teams in the area were put on notice that they could be used to help track down any Blakist forces in the Circinus Federation area.

When word started to spread of the Regulans' heavy use of nuclear weapons on worlds where Word of Blake forces were either hiding or using as a stopover, our late CEO Wooden held an emergency meeting in order to ascertain threats to ongoing IE operations along the trailing edge of the spiral arm. It was thought that the Regular nuclear rampage would continue after the destruction of Circinus, going deeper and getting closer to the smattering of interstellar realms that IE had encountered there. Thankfully the terror stopped with the nuclear annihilation of Circinus, but many of the timetables for IE first contact operations in the area were pushed ahead by years if not decades.

ASTROGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

The anti-spinward quadrant, or "west" as seen on most maps produced by ComStar's Explorer Corps, contains the trailing section of the Orion Spur, a minor arm of the Milky Way situated between the main Perseus Arm (rimward) and the Sagittarius-Carina Arm (coreward). Like all galactic arms, Orion has a high density of stars. Toward the worlds of the former Rim Worlds Republic lie the Lupus Cloud and the dark clouds of the Aquila Rift. The dense molecular dust clouds of the Rift shield much of the coreward areas of this operations area from visual astronomical observations, and the solar systems contained within have dim night skies with few stars visible through the dust.

Moving away from the Inner Sphere through the Marian Hegemony and beyond, one encounters the brilliant Caesar's Crown, a large open cluster of brilliant young stars with planetary systems just starting to settle down into stability. One can also see the Caesar's Bow, a long arc of star systems that trail from the Crown to the Axumite Providence, around the edge of the Aquila Rift. The Bow has been barely surveyed, but seems to be fairly rich in habitable worlds and complex life.

Similar to the spinward edge of the Inner Sphere, the anti-spinward reaches are sparsely inhabited. The entire region isn't hospitable to planetary formation. Approximately 350 light-years outward from the abandoned Rim Worlds system Custozza is a rare binary red giant system that the Explorer Corps named the Eyes in the Dark. Located beyond the Aquila Rift, these ancient and massive stars have been migrating through the dense dust clouds of the Rift, remaining hidden from view. It is feared that one of these Eyes could be nearing the point of core collapse and, perhaps within the next five to ten million years, will form a Type II supernova. Fortunately,

the effects of this event on surrounding systems would be limited by the sheer distance to any nearby inhabited worlds.

HISTORY OF THE REGION

The human history of the anti-spinward reaches of the Periphery and Deep Periphery began in the early to mid-twenty-second century. The first explorers in the region were from Terra's Far East, Middle East, and Africa. The descendants of the Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, and those people who had been stuck between the two warring powers of NATO and the Soviet splinter states of the early twenty-first century, wished to push far from Terra's heavily centralized government, not wanting to be caught in any future conflict between the factions of the Terran Alliance.

Garden worlds such as Qurayyat and New India quickly became magnets for the disaffected from those regions of Terra. Some colonists and explorers wished to push even further into the unknown. The Outer Reaches Rebellion in 2247 was the cause for another wave of humanity into the Deep Periphery. It was during this time that one of the largest Deep Periphery nations was founded, the Axumite Providence.

Expansion and exploration along the Orion Spur reached its peak during the Star League era. The ease of colonization of the spinward and anti-spinward areas along the Spur was made possible by the high density of solar systems that had planets that could support human life. Before the creation of the Star League, humanity's exploration of the expanse of the galaxy was nearly spherical, centered around Terra, but then it began stretching into a long oblate spheroid. At its peak there were regularly visited worlds in the Star League's HPG network stretching over 600 light-years up the Orion Spur from Terra, and settled worlds that were too small for a HPG system or ones purposely avoiding contact with the rest of humanity for a further 600 light-years.

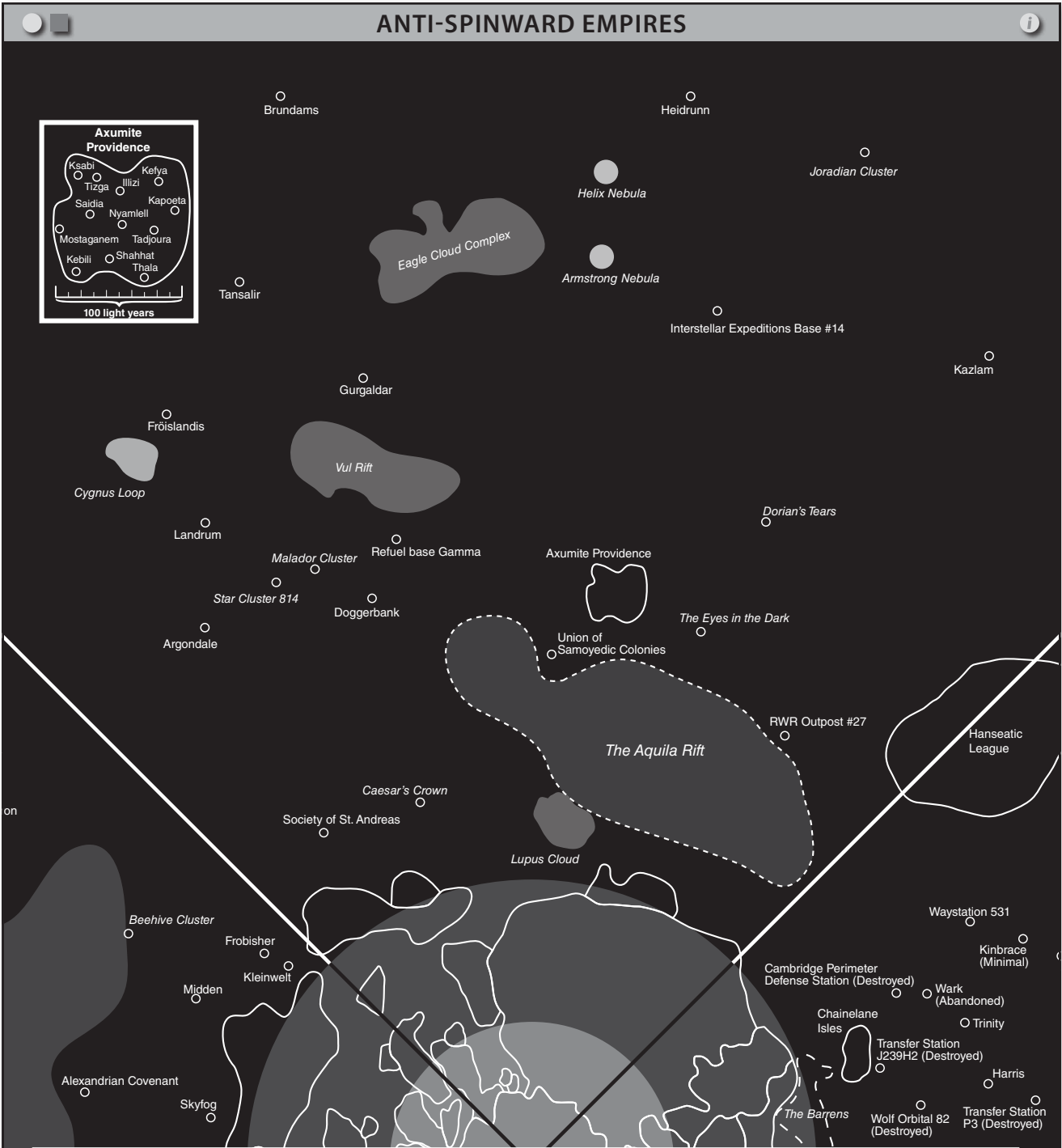
The Amaris Coup and the collapse of the Star League dealt a devastating blow to this entire region of space, but not because of direct warfare. As the SLDF obliterated the military of the Rim Worlds Republic, many planetary rulers in the Deep Periphery that were still in contact with the Inner Sphere were afraid that they would be rightfully or wrongfully accused of associating with Amaris. Planet after planet went quiet, shutting down their HPG systems, or spreading rumors of being destroyed by Rim Worlds forces with disinformation from sympathetic merchants. Other smaller colonies packed their bags and moved ever deeper into the unknown.

The planets in the Finmark, Timbuktu, and Erdvynn Provinces of the now-destroyed Rim Worlds began to be abandoned after their terraforming equipment failed or because they no longer could sustain themselves in the more restricted commercial atmosphere of the Succession Wars. This was a boon for many of the Deep Periphery colonies that were self-sufficient and wished to be forgotten about. Even ComStar, knowing that there used to be HPGs out along the anti-spinward Orion Spur, ignored much of this area of space.

ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

Axumite Providence

100 light years



Nebulas

Molecular Clouds

Star Cluster

Astronomical feature

Gwithian

Habitated system(s)

DEEP PERIPHERY (Anti-Spinward Sector)

LEGEND

300 LIGHT YEARS

300 LIGHT YEARS OR 92 PARSECS

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

© 3095 *Interstellar Expeditions*

Anti-spinward

Spinward



ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

Exploration along the assumed route that Kerensky took on his Exodus drew attention away from the Aquila Rift. While the rest of the Inner Sphere was trapped in the endless cycle of violence of the Succession Wars, the deep anti-spinward regions knew relative peace. Few bandits would range as far as the large colony worlds that were there, and even fewer knew about them. Growth among these entities was slow but steady, resulting in mature and stable societies. It wasn't until the dedicated exploration efforts of Interstellar Expeditions that the largest of the interstellar realms were rediscovered in the late thirtieth and early thirty-first centuries.

KNOWN DANGERS

Interstellar Expeditions has encountered few manmade dangers in the anti-spinward regions of the Orion Spur. Past the remnants of the Circinus Federation and the big game hunters of Hunter's Paradise, there are few bandits or organized pirate bands that would threaten IE operations. The primary dangers of this volume of space are astronomical in nature.

The Eyes in the Dark is one example, with its high probability of a supernova in the next few million years. While this danger does show a low probability of occurring inside any given human lifespan, the long-term dangers for humanity in the region are real, though local because of the binary systems location inside the dust clouds.

The star systems of Caesar's Crown and other young open clusters of stars pose a navigational danger. As most of the clusters within 1,000 light years of Terra in this direction are still quite young, stable jump points at standard hyperspace entry distances can be cluttered with debris. IE's *Astronavigation Guide* recommends exiting hyperspace at three to five times normal distances while exploring these new star systems and never using non-standard pirate points.

CURRENT IE OPERATIONS

The large number of successful and abandoned colony worlds in this region of space make the primary operations for Interstellar Expeditions here either archeological or anthropological. On the worlds of the former Rim Worlds Republic, archeological digs are commonplace in an attempt to recover lost information from the fall of the Star League. The farthest current archeological dig is in a distant section of the Vela Association, where IE has found the wreckage of a *Jumbo*-class DropShip on a planet similar to Mars in the solar system SLSC G1IV.2510. It dates from the early Star League era and is assumed to have been carrying scientific equipment to study the nearby Vela Supernova remnant.

First contact with former Rim Worlds colony worlds, while not common, does occur from time to time. Along with the first contact recently made with the Axumite Providence, IE has assigned three full-time first contact teams to the Near Periphery Anti-Spinward Operations Area for use there and in the Deep Periphery.

AXUMITE PROVIDENCE

"I often think that the night is more alive and more richly colored than the day."

—Vincent Van Gogh, artist, 1853-1890

OVERVIEW

The Axumite Providence is inside a small globular star cluster called the Providence Cluster by its inhabitants, located at the trailing edge of Orion's Bow, slightly more than 1,000 light-years anti-spinward from Terra. Of the thousands of star systems in the cluster, humanity has formed a rich interstellar society around a dozen, older stars near the northern outer edge of the cluster. The night skies of this cluster are bright with the glow of nearby stars and the vibrant colors of the reflection nebula of the Bow. The worlds of the Axumite Providence have no true night with their skies never getting darker than a night with a full moon on Terra, and often much brighter. Because of this, many of the worlds in the cluster have life that has evolved to take advantage of the bright nights.

AXUMITE PROVIDENCE

Founded: 11 Oct 2245
First Contact: 18 Jul 3085
Capital World: Thala
Government: Oligarchy
Ruler: Council of Elders
Economy: Restricted Capitalist
Primary Language: Arabic
Secondary Languages: English, French, Berber
Number of Inhabited Systems: 12
Number of Inhabited Worlds: 14

THALA

Noble Ruler: Councilman Alemu Mengistu
Star Type (Recharge Time): G9V (190 hours)
Position in System: 2nd
Time to Jump Point: 5.82 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Adulis)
Surface Gravity: 1.14
Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 35° C (Temperate)
Surface Water: 68 percent
Recharge Station: None
HPG Class: None
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Population (3095): 550,000,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: D-C-B-C-B

ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

HISTORY

To understand the origins of the Axumite Providence, one must understand the political turmoil of the Outer Reaches Rebellion that raged between 2236 and 2237. The rapid rate at which humanity was spreading out to the stars meant that corruption was becoming easy to hide on the outer edge of the expansion. Money and material were often lost or misappropriated for personal gain. Many colonists thought the Terran government was complicit in the corruption, or even the root cause. A protest on Freedom about corruption and taxation spread quickly to Denebola and beyond, causing the Terran government to crack down hard. Whole systems were interdicted by blockades at their jump points, and Terran troops ensured that weapons were taken away from the colonists and taxes paid.

A large group of settlers had just arrived at the newly opened colony Uhuru when reports of the massacre of nearly 10,000 civilians on Summit reached them. Uhuru Settlement Group Gamma, as that group was known, originated from the northern areas of Terra's African continent, and consisted of several colonial JumpShips and shuttles carrying all the supplies and equipment the 150,000 settlers in the group needed to survive on their new world.

Fearing that the Terran Alliance wouldn't stop in its oppression, the settlers convinced the crews of their vessels to join them in moving farther away from Terra. Pausing only long enough to trade supplies designed specifically for Uhuru's soil and native life for more rations and spare parts, the newly christened Axumite Settlement Group—named after an ancient North African empire—jumped anti-spinward. Records show that these colonists were last sighted at Dixie, where Terran officials attempted to intercept them to reclaim their valuable equipment.

The Axumite Settlement Group continued its journey for nearly a year. Passing through what would become the Circinus Federation, the navigators in the group detected a small star cluster visibly in near alignment with the brilliant super giant Wezen. In Arabic, Wezen means "the third virgin," and one of the imams of the group's Islamic faithful, Hasan ibn al-Thala took it as a sign from Allah that their new home should be in the star cluster. (To many faithful, Terra was seen as the first virgin, and Uhuru was to be the second, so the connection with Wezen completed the trinity from a spiritual perspective.)

It took another year of travel before the Axumite Settlement Group arrived in a system with a habitable planet on the outer edge of the globular cluster in late 2239. They named this world Thala, to honor the imam who convinced them to go there. Thala was a lush world with many small continents and old mountain ranges that had been worn down by time. The settlers quickly took to setting up large-scale agriculture using seeds brought with them from Terra and some of the local varieties of maize and meat animals.

As the colonists were building a new home, two of the flotilla's remaining JumpShips were detailed to conduct a stellar survey of nearby solar systems, while one of the remaining three ships—which had suffered critical damage during the journey—was stripped for parts and converted into a small orbital drydock. When the survey teams returned a year later, they found the welcoming sight of a functional space station in low orbit of Thala, now a successful colony.

The initial survey by Axumite JumpShips returned the same findings that a later Interstellar Expeditions survey showed: the systems of the Providence Cluster were teeming with life. When some of Thalans chose to relocate to one of these other star systems (Kefya, circling a K2V star), the Thalan leadership chose to form its own interstellar realm in 2245. They named it the Axumite Providence, its name implying the claim to all of the worlds of the cluster.

The original government was based on a Council of Elders, with a councilperson elected from each of Thala's major settlements. This eventually changed as the Axumite Providence expanded, so that the new colonies would not be underrepresented. The modern Council now consists of a single member from each settled Axumite world, but with the Council member representing Thala able to break ties in any vote.

The Axumite Providence expanded slowly, and not without great cost. The initial group of settlers and the crews of the flotilla were sorely lacking in specialists in heavy industry and K-F theory. While capable of basic maintenance on their JumpShips, any damage to the vessels' K-F drives fell beyond the Axumites' ability to repair. This came to a head during the colonization effort of Illizi in 2701, when a jump error sent one of the flotilla's three remaining JumpShips too far into Illizi's gravity well, and tore the vessel apart, killing all 4,000 Axumite colonists on board. Colonial efforts on Illizi eventually continued, but with only two JumpShips left for the entire Providence, the Council of Elders unanimously decreed that no new worlds would be settled afterward unless failing to do so would present a clear and present danger to the entire Providence.

The lack of specialists in heavy industry also caused problems. Only small amounts of advanced machinery or parts could be manufactured each year, and the advanced technologies used by the initial settlers were used and gone before the twenty-third century was out. While it was still possible to build small industrial fusion plants, it was much easier and cost effective to build coal-fired power plants. While the Inner Sphere knew a golden age of technology during the Star League, the average citizen of the Axumite Providence never saw technology much more advanced than the early to mid-twentieth century.

The lack of heavy machinery and mechanized agriculture led the Axumite Providence to grow slowly when compared with other agrarian societies of the past. In the 2890s this caused a small schism, when Ahmed Al-Hasar, the councilman of Shahhat, campaigned for a large-scale return to Terran space, in a bid



ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

to return with more JumpShips and technology. He ignored the concerns of the other councilors about the possibility that humanity could be extinct, or that the descendants of the Terran Alliance they fled would be hostile to the descendants of runaway colonists from beyond their periphery. The Council denied his request to use one of the Providence's remaining ancient JumpShips and cited recent progress in automated manufacturing had been made on Thala.

This automated manufacturing was a major step forward, but Al-Hasar refused to be denied his return to Terra. He and his followers commandeered the JumpShip located in his home system and led its back toward Terran space. While it is clear that this JumpShip ever made it to the anti-spinward borders of the Inner Sphere, its remains are what brought the Axumite Providence to the attention of Interstellar Expeditions.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Interstellar Expeditions was the first Inner Sphere agency to become aware of the Axumite Providence when the JumpShip *Montpelier* discovered the hulk of Al-Hasar's JumpShip in 3029, adrift near the zenith jump point of a worldless star approximately 150 light-years anti-spinward of Circinus. Recognizing the ship's ancient design, immediate salvage operations were undertaken, enabling IE to backtrack the ship's jump route.

IE began anthropological observation of the Axumites in 3035, entering their systems via non-standard jump points. The Axumite people still relied heavily on radio communication and used only rudimentary encryption on their secure transmissions. IE monitor ships were able to quickly learn the dialect of Arabic that they had developed over the centuries.

By the time Interstellar Expeditions arrived in the Providence Cluster, most mention of what they referred to as the Shahhat Journey was made during late night radio shows. Most of the population determined (correctly) that the lost JumpShip had likely malfunctioned on the journey back toward Terra due to the heavy strain of repeated hyperspace jumps, and the vessel and crew were considered little more than a lesson in hubris.

Citing the unspoiled nature of the Axumite culture (the Axumites clearly knew nothing of the rise and fall of the Star League, nor even that the Inner Sphere as such even existed), IE determined that making first contact would wait until an imminent external threat to the society presented itself or the culture become somehow contaminated by the observers' presence.

The former became a real concern in the closing years of the Word of Blake Jihad. Not knowing how far the allied forces—and specifically the Regulans—would push into the anti-spinward Periphery to exterminate the Blakist threat, IE put first contact teams on standby. The possible arrival of hostile military forces from beyond their space, armed with BattleMechs and enough weapons of mass destruction to level whole planets, were deemed a clear and present danger to the Axumites' survival.

Official contact was finally made in 3085 when the IE observation ship in the Thala system initiated an enthusiastic conversation via tightbeam radio signal to the Thala councilman's DropShip. While the knowledge of IE's presence in the Axumite Providence is known currently to only the Council of Elders, IE is under the impression that public knowledge of our presence will not be authorized in the near future.

SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Unlike most of the major interstellar realms of the Inner Sphere and the Periphery, the Axumite Providence is one where the majority of its population is Muslim. While each world in the Providence is allowed to govern itself as long as it elects a councilperson, only one world—Ksabi—is governed as a theocracy. Religion is an important aspect of life in the Providence, and IE has monitored thousands of religious broadcasts on each of its worlds so that citizens that are too far away from places of worship can still take part.

Seven hundred years of isolation has produced a distinct and difficult dialect of Arabic that stems from the Libyan and Sa'idi dialects on Terra, and is the official language spoken on all of its worlds. This language is taught in each major settlement's primary schools, funded by the planetary governments and free to all citizens. This free primary education has produced a population with a literacy rate higher than many worlds in the Inner Sphere, rivaling the literacy of the Taurian Concordat.

The government is centered around the Council of Elders, with the councilperson from Thala acting as a tie-breaker. Since the halt of colonial efforts, the Council of Elders has consisted of twelve members that gather on Thala once every two Thalan years (512 standard days) for between twenty to thirty local days to pass laws and oversee the functioning of their small interstellar realm. Technological development and the growth of industry have always been high on their list of priorities, but since first contact the Council of Elders has been discussing possibility of raising a small militia to attempt to defend their worlds in the event of an invasion.

MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The heavy industry of the Axumite Providence has always been seriously limited both by the lack of people skilled in the knowledge of how to build refineries and factories from the ground up and a relative scarcity of germanium, titanium, and rare earths in the settled section of the Providence Cluster. Those conditions caused the average technological development of the Axumite Providence to backslide to an almost pre-industrial level in its early years. At the time of first contact, the Axumites had finally begun to push ahead. Manufacturing capabilities were generally limited to technology equivalent to the early twenty-first century, with very limited amounts of high-tech goods, such as fusion power plants, produced at great cost and time.

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The Axumite Providence has no standing military and relies on a volunteer police force to keep the peace on its worlds. Equipped with ballistic sidearms and simple body armor, the police forces can barely be compared to the infantry of the Inner Sphere. This may change in the near future, as the Council of Elders debates the need to raise a militia to protect itself from threats similar to the Word of Blake. At the moment this militia would be limited to infantry and rudimentary tanks and hovercraft that can be produced in the Axumite factories.

PERSONALITY: ALEMU MENGITSU

Rank/Title: Councilman of Thala

Born: 3032 (63 in 3095)

The Mengitsu family has represented the world of Thala in the Council of Elders since the twenty-sixth century. Powerful and wealthy, the Mengitsu family ensures that at least one son and one daughter in each generation is given the best education in order to prepare themselves to represent their world. While there have been serious contenders to unseat the Mengitsu family, the wisdom that is passed between a ruling father and son or a mother and daughter in the family has ensured that the strongest candidates are always Mengitsu.

Alemu, son of Councilman Alagar, was a disappointment to the family when he was growing up. Expecting to latch onto the idea of power, Alemu shunned it. He saw the Council of Elders as just another way for a small group of men and women to control the millions of the Providence, much like what they knew of the Terran Alliance. Instead, he put his education to use in the art of poetry. Published by twenty-four, his epic poem, "Restless Dreaming," shoved him back into the spotlight. That first poem and his later epics, "A Forest with no Trees," and "Love" were made into televised dramas that were shown across the Providence.

His popularity shoved his brother to the sidelines as his large fan base put his name on the Council of Elders ballot as a write-in candidate during the election of 3070. He won without campaigning in a run-off election against his opponent as the generally dissatisfied electorate hardly turned up in numbers to equal his fan base. Thankfully, his popularity has helped him on the Council of Elders. His presence has made many heated arguments end when he recites a piece of his own poetry that is relevant to the discussion, or he recites a tale from the Koran as a way to show them all forward.

Alemu Mengitsu was the Councilperson IE contacted when first making our presence apparent to the Axumite people. His strong grasp of the Axumite dialect and his strong education has helped IE understand the Axumite culture much more quickly than it normally would have, and his support of IE on the Council of Elders has helped quiet any paranoia that normally would arise.

UNION OF SAMOYEDIC COLONIES

Situated more than 300 light years anti-spinward from the Lyran Commonwealth border, the Union of Samoyedic Colonies is unique among the microstates of the Deep Periphery. Unlike most far-flung alliances, the Union's settlements remain in a near-constant state of geographical flux, yet its constituent colonies stand united in a common purpose. The vast majority of the Union's residents closely identify with the religion and culture of Terra's Nenets peoples. Currently, the Union currently consists of two principal worlds within a twelve-planet system.

HISTORY

During the early years of the Terran Hegemony, the Samoyedic peoples of northwestern Siberia felt a spiritual calling prompting them toward the stars. Despite a few false starts, they successfully transplanted most of their purposefully primitive society onto worlds anti-spinward from Terra, with little damage to the integrity of their culture. Some of the Samoyeds' more technologically sophisticated neighbors attempted—without success—to convince them to leave their outdated cultural trappings behind. The Samoyeds refused. The ensuing conflicts resulted in the Samoyeds abandoning their original Hegemony enclaves for other worlds where they would not suffer persecution.

Following their spiritual leaders' advice, they continued anti-spinward, and history repeated itself. Again, the Samoyeds picked up and relocated from the Hegemony to the Lyran Commonwealth, from the Commonwealth to the Bolan Thumb in the Free Worlds League, and from the League to the Rim Worlds Republic. Every system in which they tried to put down roots either did not want them, ridiculed their way of life, or found ways to ruin their livelihood.

The last straw came in 2741 while the Samoyeds were living on New India, in Erdvynn Province of the Rim Worlds Republic. At night a group of enterprising vandals broke into an agricultural complex and riled an entire herd of precious *tih* livestock into stampeding over a cliff. Without the *tih* herd, the backbone of the Samoyeds' whole cultural identity, thousands of their people would freeze and starve. Incensed, the Samoyeds struck back by setting an entire New Indian village to the torch to flush out the perpetrators. More herds were killed in subsequent reprisals. Rather than risk the extinction of their whole *tih* population, the Samoyed leadership voted to uproot once more and continue anti-spinward, this time into uncharted territory.

Their JumpShips carried them further from civilization until their leaders—purportedly via a shamanistic revelation—found a marginally habitable planet to settle about 100 light years from the Republic border. They named the world Nyurteih, meaning "First" in the Nenets language.



ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

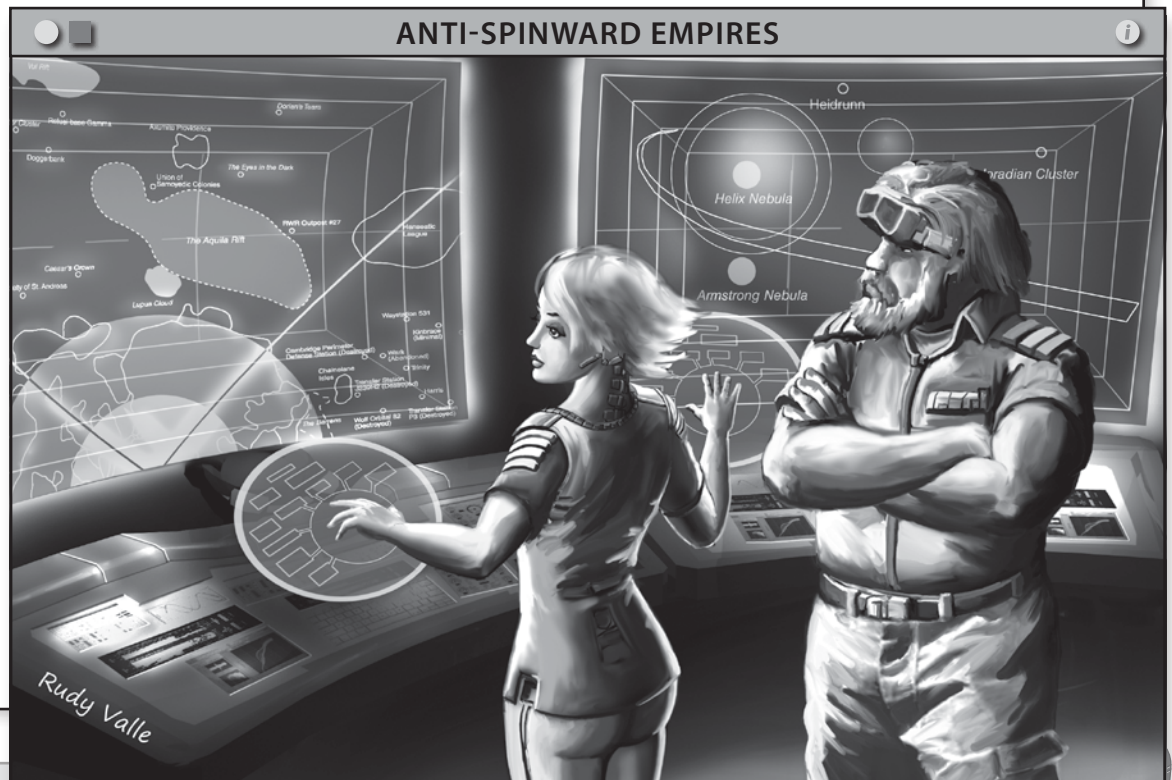
[EDITOR'S NOTE: Our efforts to locate this planet have thus far been unsuccessful. Either the Union's records are incorrect or the Samoyed yehrvs are deliberately obfuscating the truth. Some additional surveys are in the works, but the higher-ups feel we may be chasing a chimera here.]

From this point the Samoyed culture progressed in an unexpected direction. The spiritual nature of the people initially led them to eschew technology they felt interfered with their cultural heritage. However, leaving established civilization behind forced them to reevaluate this outlook. Tasks the people had once been able to accomplish via manual labor on already-established worlds became unfeasible on a raw world, lacking in infrastructure. Rather than return to persecution, the Samoyed leadership spent more than a month conferencing and performing soul-searching rituals to determine the right course. When they emerged from self-imposed isolation, the leaders formally sanctioned the use of any life-saving and population-sustaining technologies that would allow the people to live in peace. A few JumpShips sent back to the Rim Worlds Republic returned in short order with engineers, medical personnel, scientists, and other professionals the Samoyeds required to sustain themselves on a less than hospitable planet.

In seeking to preserve their own society, the Samoyeds nearly destroyed that fragile balance by turning to the very thing they sought to avoid for hundreds of years. Fractures split the people into several different ideological camps, each more progressive than the last. The most conservative splinter groups struck out on their own to find other systems to settle, quickly discovering that the old ways alone could not sustain them. These prodigals soon returned to Nyurteih with their tails between their legs. They still clung as hard to their original Terran ideals as best they could, sacrificing only what they believed they could ultimately do without.

Within fifty years, the Samoyed population spread to colonize all four of the planet's continents, with the first colony acting as the capital of the fledgling Union of Samoyedic Colonies. Apart from the travails of daily life on the rugged world, a few random pirate attacks were the worst the people would suffer. However, in 2837 the elder chiefs of the Union revealed the Samoyeds' collective destiny was to roam the stars, just as their nomadic ancestors on Terra roamed the forests and tundra of Siberia. Over the next ten years, JumpShip groups conducted surveys of all anti-spinward star systems within several hundred light years of Nyurteih and found a string of habitable planets stretching further away from the Inner Sphere. Advance teams then prepared the nearest habitable planet for a mass influx of colonists.

Unsurprisingly to the Samoyed people, the eldest generation—some of whom had been children during the vicious persecution in the Inner Sphere—chose to remain behind. They claimed a spiritual connection to the planet and contented themselves with wandering the land they knew rather than unfamiliar stars. The younger generations left these holdouts enough supplies and livestock to sustain themselves for another ten or twenty years, the assumption being that these last few thousand colonists would all naturally die out long before exhausting their remaining resources. The whole population of Nyurteih then migrated to the nearest prepared world.



SECURITY LEVEL AMBER

ANTI-SPINWARD

This migration pattern continued for a until the Samoyed people reached the very last habitable system discovered by their initial stellar surveys. Much to the people's dismay, the Union leaders deemed their old and ill-maintained JumpShips incapable of making further trips and ordered them dismantled for raw materials. Until their gods provided the people further means to continue on their spiritual journey, the Samoyeds would remain where they were. The system they had settled contained two terrestrial planets capable of sustaining life. The more temperate of the pair they named Yalumth, which means "Dawn" in the Nenets language. The larger and colder planet they called Sangovats, meaning "Difficulty."

Roughly once every generation after settling in the system, the Union leaders would announce a migration season. Large swaths of colonies across both planets would locate the next suitable site for their colony and undertake a mass exodus. During every migration, the eldest members of the population—nonagenarians and older—would volunteer to remain behind, to die in peace when their time came. Despite initial misconceptions, those left behind were never completely abandoned. Due to provisions in the Union charter, these elderly citizens still possessed a voice in the government, and in the case of pirate attack or natural disaster, assistance never lay more than a DropShip flight away.

Over the course of the past two hundred and fifty years, the Union slowly migrated from one side of each planet to the other, leaving a string of senescent colonies in its wake.

The Union of Samoyedic Colonies presently consists of three dozen individual colonies across Yalumth, the Union's present capital, and Sangovats. Rumors of a third—or even fourth—world abound, but as of this time we have been unable to confirm or deny these allegations. *[EDITOR'S NOTE: The Samoyeds tended to brush us off whenever our teams attempted to broach the subject.]*

The first definitive Inner Sphere contact with the Union came about in by sheer happenstance in 3030, when the mercenary group Wylie's Coyotes (now Blanc's Coyotes) misjumped into Samoyedic space. At first the people of the Union believed the *Geronimo's* arrival to be of divine provenance, that this JumpShip would help continue their spiritual journey toward the stars. Unfortunately, the misjumps had resulted in catastrophic drive failure, stranding the Coyotes in the system for the foreseeable future. The Union's lack of shipyards and heavy industry meant the Coyotes were forced to live among the Samoyedic peoples for the thirty-three years it took to repair their JumpShip. When it came time for the Coyotes to return home, some Samoyeds volunteered to join the *Geronimo's* crew, despite their knowledge that the mercenaries were voyaging in the "wrong direction."

HASTE MAKES WASTE

A surface glance at the Union's historical records shows a thorough and meticulous process for locating, cataloging, and preparing each prospective colony location before a single permanent colonist sets foot in the area. A deeper search, however, reveals this is not always the case, and we have struggled to determine why this occurs.

The most recent—and most easily investigable—occurrence is the first settlement on Sangovats's most frigid continent, named Parombas. For unknown reasons, the standard prep time—anywhere between six months to one year—was truncated down to a mere six weeks.

For even the most hazardous migrations, a year's prep time ensures a smooth transition. During this time, advance teams erect common pre-fab structures and test local flora and fauna for toxicity and potential risk. Then, a sample group of *tih* are brought in to test their compatibility with the immediate ecology.

Although the migration to Parombas occurred far ahead of schedule, all went as well as could be expected for the first few months. Then, without warning, *tih* herds began dying out in mass quantities. Panic ensued, and thousands died in the riots that followed. More died from disease bred by the mass livestock die-off. Even more peculiar, rather than returning to their previous settlement, those who survived the riots and plague stayed put. The *tih* herds eventually stabilized—but never truly thrived—and the colonists worked their hands to the bone to make the miserable continent more livable.

The interesting fact is, despite the continent's less-than-hospitable living conditions, its current inhabitants have not yet relocated. According to records, the first Parombas settlement should've been vacated and transitioned to a senescent colony sometime around 3027, but it hasn't. And no preparations appear to be in the works.

Something pushed these people onto this continent ahead of schedule and is currently keeping them there. Are they being held hostage by some strange religious belief, or is something more sinister at work here? I feel this is definitely worth a closer look.

—Internal IE memo 4912-E25C, 3 March 3095

RELIGION AND CULTURE

The Samoyedic people are a curious study in contrasts. When our expedition first encountered Pyas, the oldest of their currently inhabited colonies on Yalumth, the populace appeared remarkably primitive. However, beneath this primitive veneer lives a more sophisticated center. Once we knew what to look for, it was easy to notice the odd juxtaposition of the primitive alongside the technological. For example, a farmer might plant every seed in his field by hand, yet he will not think twice about employing an automated irrigation sys-

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tem, especially in more arid regions. Likewise, a *tadibya*—a Samoyed shaman—might hold a ritual baton in one hand and a noteputer in the other, and a hunter might ride a *tih* while firing at game with a laser rifle. Throughout every major settlement, tepee-like tents sit next to pre-fab structures of a far more modern utility.

Despite the Samoyeds' familiarity with technology, at the very core of the Union's lifestyle lies the *tih*, a domesticated ruminant similar to the Terran reindeer. In addition to being used as a draft animal, a single *tih* can feed a family of four for a week, and despite the availability of textiles, *tih* leather finds its way into clothing, bedding, and tents. *Tih* bones, which contain an abnormally high amount of carbon, can be sharpened into needles, awls, knives, or even curved swords that are nearly as strong as tempered steel. This animal alone can feed, clothe, and protect an entire clan, which makes it invaluable to the society as a whole.

Samoyedic culture is grounded in strong shamanistic beliefs, which culminate in a deep respect for the land and its denizens. To foster this belief, children must undertake the *tenes* ritual upon reaching their age of majority. They are sent out into the wilds alone, with nothing more than the clothes on their back, a knife carved from *tih* bones, and a single *tih*. These children must live off the land for two weeks without any adult assistance. Most survive the ordeal and are greeted as full adults when they return, but a few disappear. No search parties are formed for the missing, as they are considered to have found the spirit world.

Another odd area of contrast regards the Samoyed language. All Samoyed children are raised bilingual, learning both Star League English and the Uralic language known as Nenets. A Samoyed speaker can be difficult to understand at times due to their habit of mixing both languages into a single sentence, either for special emphasis, a regional dialect, or personal preference.

GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY

The Union of Samoyedic Colonies officially began as a charter agreed upon by the first three colonies of Nyrurteih in 2797. The charter outlined the solidarity of the inclusive settlements and laid out the basis of government. The drafters of the charter ultimately intended the document to serve as a defense against any inevitable cultural drift that might potentially ostracize fellow members. The Union's founders refused to allow another disastrous schism like the Nyrurteih crisis to tear the people apart.

The foundation of the Union government lies with the Samoyed family groups. At the head of every major clan presides the family's senior-most *tadibya*, called a *yehrv*. Each colony, be it an active settlement or a senescent community, annually elects a *yehrv* to represent them in the Council of Num. Currently composed of thirty-nine members, this body collectively votes on Union-wide affairs and regularly performs religious rituals to seek counsel from Num, the Samoyedic sky god.

LINCHPIN

The Samoyeds brought only one domesticated animal with them from the Inner Sphere, and their obsession with it knows no bounds. This deeply concerns me.

Although the *tih* are a hardy species, they function much like a canary in a mineshaft for potential settlers to a new region: if they cannot survive in the environment, the prospective site is abandoned and another is chosen, even if the area would otherwise support human habitation.

These people lost their Terran reindeer herds while still living in the Inner Sphere and replaced them with the *tih*, but if the same were to happen out here, there is no comparable replacement than even comes close.

In short, kill the *tih*, and the Samoyeds will die along with them.

Now, I'm not advocating the genocide of this people—far from it! I'm just saying that a whole society with a single linchpin this flagrant should be really, really worried. One rogue virus transmits to all the colonies and wipes out every single herd? Boom. The whole Union collapses.

—Internal IE memo 3261-A38E, 27 October 3094

Among the first agreed-upon measures was the creation of an armed contingent for each colony. The Samoyeds learned from their experiences with persecution in the Inner Sphere and vowed never again to walk down the road of pacifism. Although the Union does not maintain a standing, active military force in the same sense that most nations do, the people of this small nation are far from defenseless.

The Nenets Security Division acts as a police force and manages internal affairs, external security, crisis relief, and so forth. Elected *yehrvs* acts as the *de facto* heads of the NSD for each settlement, and below them are a number of senior officers called *erebatha* that oversee the day-to-day operations. Further ranks in the chain of command are *khar* (junior officer), *nibya* (NCO), and *nyu* (recruit).

Enlistment in the NSD is volunteer, yet the organization always has more volunteers than it needs at any given time. A member of the NSD is said to never retire due to active-duty status being on an as-needed basis, albeit with scheduled training sessions. Even NSD volunteers living in senescent colonies take up arms if necessary.

The NSD's scant materiel reserves were either procured from the Rim Worlds Republic after the signing of the Union's charter or are salvage from rare pirate attacks. Analysts believe the Union commands no more than a few handfuls of poorly maintained (or even non-functioning) Star League-era aircraft and two or three companies of armor in addition to standard infantry. However, even this assessment is debatable since the NSD usually performs training maneuvers in areas far from witnesses.

ANTI-SPINWARD

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The people of the Union of Samoyedic Colonies are inherently distrustful of outsiders and would rather be left alone. After spending countless years being persecuted in the Inner Sphere for one reason or another, the Samoyeds assume any outsider is either a pirate or someone out to destroy their carefully preserved culture. Because of this, player characters will need to go to great lengths to earn the trust of a Samoyed. If that trust is ever broken, it will be impossible to earn back.

Due to the Samoyed religion, any act deemed a desecration of a colony's natural habitat will be met with immediate violence or incarceration. These acts include wanton killing of native wildlife, pollution, deforestation, and so on. The purposeful killing of a *tih* for any reason other than for food and clothing can subject the killer to the death penalty.

The Council of Num

The ultimate goal of the Council is to pierce the veil of known space and thus attempt to find some knowable aspect of their gods. The Council's respect for the land prevents them from abusing any one geographical location for too long, which keeps the Union people on the move every generation or so. Before settling into their current system, both the Council and the populace believed that their course of interstellar migration would ultimately lead them to spiritual enlightenment.

Although the Council claimed the age and disrepair of the Union's JumpShip fleet was the only factor responsible for permanently settling on Yalumth and Sangovats, another motivator behind this decision lay in the Council's uncertainty regarding the Union's future. Stellar surveys beyond the present colonies had not found any further habitable worlds within 100 light years, which deadlocked the Council into believing they were going in the wrong direction that they misread one of the visions they were given. Rather than make this knowledge public, the Council opted for permanent settlement until a more feasible solution for further interstellar travel could present itself.

SOCIETY OF ST. ANDREAS

"If a little knowledge is dangerous, where is the man who has so much as to be out of danger?"

—Thomas Henry Huxley, biologist, 1825-1895

OVERVIEW

The Society of St. Andreas has origins that are similar to the Feifdom of Randis. Only where the Feifdom emerged as a knightly order in the spinward reaches of the Inner Sphere, the Society's path took them in both literally and culturally the opposite direction.

SOCIETY OF ST. ANDREAS

Founded: 1 Feb 2768

First Contact: 30 May 3032

Capital World: St. Andreas

Government: Theocracy

Ruler: Prior General Micah Winchester

Economy: Socialist Barter

Primary Language: Latin

Secondary Languages: German, English, Polish, Russian

Number of Inhabited Systems: 1

Number of Inhabited Worlds: 3

ST. ANDREAS (ST. TIMALIN)

Noble Ruler: Prior General Micah Winchester

Star Type (Recharge Time): M7V (208 Hours)

Position in System: 1

Time to Jump Point: 2.22 days

Number of Satellites: 2 (St. Chaeryl, St. Daniel)

Surface Gravity: 0.98

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 30o C (Cool-Temperate)

Surface Water: 75 percent

Recharge Station: None

HPG Class Type: None

Highest Native Life: Birds

Population (3095): 16,170,000 (St. Timalin), 6,000 (St. Chaeryl), 2,000 (St. Daniel)

Socio-Industrial Levels: F-D-A-D-B

Throughout human history religious movements have predicted the end of the world, and have quickly fallen apart after the Armageddon they expected never materialized. Conversely, the Society of St. Andreas is a Catholic religious movement that felt they had seen the beginnings of the Apocalypse and have hidden themselves away to ride out humanity's slow death rattle. Located nearly 250 light-years more distant than the Marian Hegemony capital, Alphard, the Andreans colonized a bland world of black colored vegetation and dull colored animals circling a dim red star. The star they dubbed St. Andreas—in honor of their society name—while the world they settled, and its twin moons, came to be known as St. Timalin, St. Chaeryl and St. Daniel (respectively).

HISTORY

The Catholic Church has always been the center of conspiracy theories, from more recent conspiracies dealing with the location of Rinzen Humpula-Serfass' body after it disappeared from its tomb on Alarion to ancient mysteries such as the Knights Templar and their possession of the Holy Grail or the Ark of the Covenant.



ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

One conspiracy theory dates back to the fifteenth century, when the Catholic Church created the *Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana*, or the Vatican Library, and later the *Archivum Secretum Vaticanum*, or the Vatican Secret Archives.

The conspiracy theories (and quite a bit of historical evidence) suggest that the Archives contained thousands of suppressed books from throughout history, including many works by the astronomer Galileo, remains of the scrolls from the Library of Alexandria, and many historical texts on non-Christian religions that were suppressed during the rise of the Catholic Church. While these claims are possible, there are more outrageous claims that say the library includes texts proving that the blood of the Merovingian Kings can be traced through the Davion bloodline, and who really assassinated Oleg Tikonov in 2011.

Whatever may have been found in the miles of bookshelves under the Vatican on Terra, one thing is clear: when Amaris launched his coup on Terra in 2765, he knew he wanted control of the pope (and by extension the Catholic faithful across the Inner Sphere) and the knowledge contained in the Archives. The pope and the College of Cardinals saw the atrocities being committed against the Islamic leaders in Mecca and the destruction of the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. They correctly surmised they would be next.

The pope entrusted the commandant of the Pontifical Swiss Guards, *Oberst* Andreas Kosovskaia, to empty the Vatican Library and Archives, and to save as much of the Vatican Museums as he could. Knowing he only had hours before forces loyal to Amaris would arrive at Vatican City, Andreas called together the rest of the Swiss Guards and their families. Andreas used them to move as many of the books out of the Library and Archive as they could and hide them throughout Rome. Paintings were torn from their frames and hidden in the books and small jewels were swallowed for later recovery. Andreas saw that they wouldn't get everything out of the Vatican in time and he ordered the least valuable of the books burned in order to deny Amaris anything of value.

As the remains of the Swiss Guard, along with the most valuable possessions of the Vatican, were melting into the megacity of Rome, Amaris' personal DropShip landed in Vatican Square. Andreas stayed at the pope's side and was the first to be killed when Rim Worlds infantry broke into the pope's personal chambers. Furious at the loss of the valuable books, Amaris ordered the destruction of the Sistine Chapel while the pope and the College of Cardinals watched before executing them.

The remnants of the Swiss Guard now fell to the command of two *oberstleutnants*; Chaeryl Brunegg on Terra and Daniel Nikolaus on Alarion. Over the next year, they coordinated the

smuggling operation that slowly took all of the valuables off Terra and moved them to the Ducal Palace on Alarion. After the last load of books and sculptures left Terra, escorted by Brunegg, plans were made. The Swiss Guard felt that humanity was falling apart and would destroy itself in the warfare that was sure to come.

Before Amaris' intelligence operatives could find where the treasures of the Catholic Church were being hidden, Brunegg and Nikolaus proposed moving the entire Vatican collection and the surviving Swiss Guard into the Deep Periphery to wait out the End of Days and to return to help rebuild the Catholic Church once the Devil (Amaris) had his share of souls. The Swiss Guard, along with their families and many faithful refugees, left Alarion in December 2766 using the three remaining Vatican JumpShips: the *St. Peter*, the *Adrian IV* and the *Pius XIV*. The Swiss Guards disappear from the records of the Inner Sphere soon after they left Alarion.

Since its inception, Interstellar Expeditions has had a vested interest in locating the lost Archives and Library of the Vatican, due to a trust that was set up by a wealthy benefactor in the late 2990s which funds yearly operations for the search. In the last century IE has been able to piece together many clues including, the discovery of the Society of St. Andreas itself.

Evidence shows that the Swiss Guards used uninhabited star systems for recharging their K-F drives and refreshing their food and water reserves. The discovery of refuse dumps on the surface of two uninhabited worlds in the space of the former Free Worlds League supported this theory. These trash-heaps contained nearly destroyed documents that could be traced back to the Vatican of the mid to late twenty-eighth century. IE reconstruction of these documents found at least one document torn from the logbook of a DropShip attached to the *St. Peter*, and another was a prayer card made on Alarion for the funeral of Andreas Kosovskaia. Both of these important discoveries pointed IE in the direction that the Swiss Guards took, anti-spinward and rimward.

In 3014, Interstellar Expeditions received reports of manmade artifacts being found on the recently settled world of Algenib in the Marian Hegemony. An IE archeological survey team was dispatched and found a large ferro-aluminum crucifix in the center of mass grave. Excavation and examination of the bodies found that one of them was still dressed in the uniform of a Swiss Guard. Later forensic testing came to prove that the body was that of *Oberstleutnant* Chaeryl Brunegg. Autopsies performed on the bodies, before IE reinterred them, showed they had all died of rapid decompression, severe burns, or smoke inhalation. IE's assessment was that there was an accident on one of the Swiss Guards DropShips.

ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

It was only happenstance that IE stumbled upon the inhabited system of St. Andreas in 3032, almost 150 light-years farther out than Algenib. The initial stellar survey of the system showed only a single planet orbiting closely to its tiny red parent star. Spectrographic analysis showed that there was no terrestrial plant life, with its telltale green color, to suggest human colonization, only the common deep black colors of plants that evolved around dim red stars. As the survey team was about to log the system for a later biological survey mission, the team's astronomer noticed dim lights on the dark side of one of the planet's two large moons.

A full survey of the system showed no radio or HPG transmissions from the planet or its moons. A single large city was seen on the surface of the planet, cut out of one of the world's dense black-leafed forests. Each of the moons had small domes on the surface surrounding a DropShip. That first IE team was lucky enough to have a trained first contact team deployed with them. Choosing the primary planet—later revealed as St. Tomalin—the Interstellar Expeditions team touched down outside the large primitive city. Very little evidence of industrialization could be seen, except for a small coal-fired power plant. Most construction materials were roughhewn timber and stone.

Evidence of the location of the Vatican Library seemed to be at hand. The IE team met with the leader of the world, called the prior general. He wore what seemed to be a recreation of a Swiss Guards uniform, and spoke Latin. Excitement mounted as the IE team was taken to the Priory, the prior general's keep. Inside the stone keep were the remains of a *Mule*-class DropShip with the coat of arms of the Holy See still visible on its hull.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

First contact with what Interstellar Expeditions would learn was called the Society of St. Andreas was the high and low point in its search for the Vatican Library. While it was clear that this group of men and women were the descendants of the Swiss Guard, they had little knowledge of their past beyond legends and stories. The citizens of St. Andreas were shocked to learn there were still humans alive beyond their own world. The people of St. Tomalin and its two moons, St. Chaeryl and St. Daniel, quickly became distrustful of any IE personnel or outsiders of any kind.

Artifacts documented around Calvary Hill, the city on St. Tomalin, were clearly from the Vatican collections. All were highly prized by the Priory and were cared for meticulously. When asked why these items were so prized, the answer was inevitably "Because it is our duty to keep them ready." Among the highest technology items found on St. Andreas were the Mauser 960 assault rifles used by the Swiss Guards on Terra—all still combat-ready through time-honored traditions of cleaning and maintenance.

On each moon, the small outposts were centered on a cluster of DropShips. The domes, tunnels, and chambers were all powered from the DropShips' fusion engines, and had life support provided by cannibalized systems from the same vessels. The inhabitants of the moons knew that the other groups existed, but had no wish to travel to the planet or try to communicate with them as it was their "duty" to stay where they were. The common story is that when it is their time to return to Rome, St. Andreas, St. Chaeryl, and St. Daniel will return in the Vatican's JumpShips.

In the years since first contact, IE has repeatedly asked the former prior general, and the recently elected prior general Micah Winchester, for the location of the Library and Archives of the Vatican. The only thing they can point us to is the small collection of books in the Prior's Keep that deal with agriculture and geology. While Interstellar Expeditions can't discount the possibility that we are being lied to by the generally distrustful Andrians, it is a distinct possibility that the Vatican collection isn't in the St. Andreas system.

Little progress has been made since that first contact. Interstellar Expeditions has yet to find any of the Vatican's JumpShips, and the DropShips seen on St. Andreas and its moons only account for half of their numbers when they left the Inner Sphere. One of the few clues IE has found is a partial jump sail bearing the coat of arms of the Holy See. An IE team chanced upon this item in 3088 in an unsurveyed system fifty-five light-years from St. Andreas. The sail itself was found entangled on a small asteroid, but subsequent sweeps of the system found no sign of the JumpShip from which it might have come.

SOCIETY AND POLITICS

The head of the government of St. Andreas is the prior general, currently Micah Winchester. Elected from the ranks of the Swiss Guard by the members of the Swiss Guard, the prior general commands a great deal of respect from the population of St. Andreas. Once elected, the prior general serves for life and holds almost dictatorial power over the administrative, religious, and military branches of government. The moons have no such position; rather, they are small enough that they act as communes.

The society and culture of the Society of St. Andreas revolves around two things: duty and religion. The stories we have recorded from the people of the St. Andreas system show that before leaving behind the vast majority of the faithful, *Oberstleutnant* Daniel Nikolaus and the other remaining high ranking Swiss Guards instructed the people to care for all the artifacts and pieces of art that he entrusted to the three worlds. The fact that the Society of St. Andreas refers to him as a saint is telling enough of the importance of his words. Most of the population has little understanding of the technology or artifacts they care for, except for the weapons of the Swiss Guard



ANTI-SPINWARD EMPIRES

that were left behind and the very detailed instructions on the maintenance of the DropShip life support and fusion power plants on St. Andreas' moons.

Religion is the other center of Andean society. The population of the three worlds are Catholic, but with some important differences. Services are led by priests who have spent much of their lives in quiet contemplation of the Bible. Important services, such as on the holidays of Christmas and Martyr's Day, that seems to pay tribute to Andreas Kosovskaia and the pope, are led by the prior general himself. There are few references made to Rome and the Vatican, as they have "Fallen." Heavy emphasis is placed on the Resurrection and the use of sacred images during services. The most sacred icon the Andeans possess is a holographic projector that has images of the Vatican from before the Amaris Coup, as well as images of each of the Society's saints.

MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX

The very low level of industrialization on St. Andreas hasn't caused the small population much concern. While the amount of industrialization on the two moons, St. Chaeryl and St. Daniel, is much greater than their parent world, the products made in the small tool shops are limited to those used to repair the slowly-failing systems of the cannibalized DropShips. If it wasn't for the scattered, and still functional, Star League-era technologies being used by the population, IE would rate this society as pre-industrial.

Unlike many societies of the modern age, the Society of St. Andreas has a standing military force that is composed of its leadership alone. Commanded by the prior general, the descendants of the Swiss Guard are well-trained soldiers, but also the Society's most educated citizens. Many Swiss Guard mothers and fathers school their children with everything they know. IE estimates that the Swiss Guard of St. Andreas consists of approximately a regiment of infantry, armed with Star League-era Mauser 960 Assault Rifles, but with little body armor except for leather and ceremonial plate armor.

PERSONALITY: MICAH WINCHESTER

Rank/Title: Prior General, *Oberst* of the Swiss Guards of St. Andreas

Born: 3061 (34 in 3095)

Only recently elected to the position of prior general, Micah Winchester is the third prior general to have to deal with the ramifications of knowing there are survivors of the Fall of Man and

that there are now two popes on Terra and New Avalon. Born long after Interstellar Expeditions made first contact with his Society, Micah has gotten used to ignoring the insistent questions from people coming from other stars.

From an early age Micah gained a deep respect for the artifacts of the Vatican scattered around Calvary Hill. He and his older brother snuck out of the house one night, after stealing their father's ancient needler sidearm. His older brother hadn't been taught how to load it, but felt like he had seen his father do it often enough. The weapon malfunctioned and killed Micah's older brother in front of him. After that incident, Micah dedicated his life to meditation and contemplation, and he left to live at one of the outlying monasteries until he became an adult in order to try and understand the Society's purpose for existence.

When he turned eighteen, he returned to his father and humbly requested to be trained to be a Swiss Guard. Micah's years of study of the Bible and other religious texts prepared him well for the Guard's duties of being a priest. His determination to understand how the weapons they use work also propelled him to the forefront of the Guards.

Intelligent and demanding, Micah Winchester was elected to the position of prior general after he promised to focus the monasteries of the Society on contemplation of the relics left behind by the saints, and how they may make more.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The Society of St. Andreas is filled with opportunities for the gamemaster to introduce legends and conspiracies of the past, ones that may have been lost to time that the Vatican may have preserved information on. It can also provide an excuse to use a very alien landscape for a wilderness campaign with St. Andreas' black plants and animals that naturally see into the infrared spectrums.

The gamemaster can also introduce a number of plots stemming from the existence of the Society. Where are the lost JumpShips of the Holy See? Is the Library and Archives of the Vatican on St. Andreas, its moons, or somewhere else entirely? Are there other worlds somewhere close by that have more descendants of the Swiss Guard who left with the JumpShips? What other artifacts does the Society have hidden away? Why were tiny clusters of people put on each moon? Why doesn't the Catholic Church of Terra or New Avalon send an envoy to the Society?

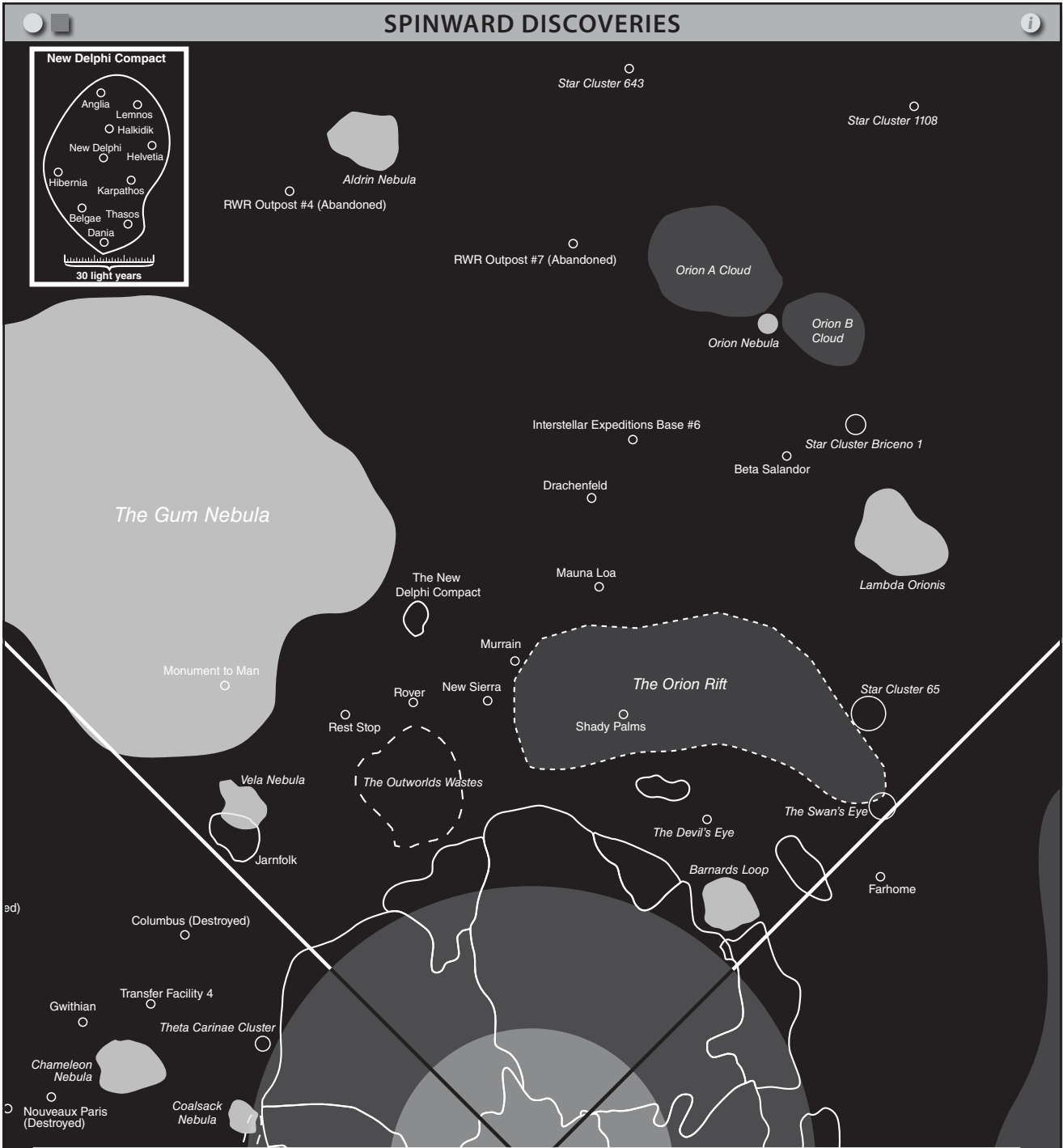


SPINWARD DISCOVERIES

New Delphi Compact

Anglia
Lemnos
Halkidik
New Delphi
Helvetia
Hibernia
Karpthos
Thasos
Belgae
Danja

30 light years



**DEEP PERIPHERY
(Spinward Sector)**

- Nebulas
- Molecular Clouds
- Star Cluster
- Astronomical feature
- Gwithian
- Habitated system(s)

LEGEND

300 LIGHT YEARS
300 LIGHT YEARS OR 92 PARSECS

MAXIMUM JUMP: APPROXIMATELY 30 LIGHT YEARS

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Spinward

Spinward
Forward
Anti-spinward
Backward

SPINWARD DISCOVERIES

THE ORION RIFT

As humanity first peered beyond the Terran system with telescopes able to spot the signature of planetary atmospheric oxygen, it was astonished to find such an aggressive chemical free on many worlds. The Magellan program, consisting of slower-than-light probes launched in the late 2020s and early 2030s, confirmed the telescopes' findings: three of the eight systems targeted by Magellan probes had human-habitable planets. The five other Magellan targets had free oxygen, water, ozone, and human-compatible temperatures just as distant spectroscopy had claimed, but were otherwise uninhabitable due to inadequate oxygen levels, contamination by other gases, or other issues. Some of those failed Magellan targets were terraformed by the early Terran Hegemony. The "manned Magellan" that founded the Columbia colony was cruelly tricked by those telescopes, finding a "super terrestrial" world with a breathable atmosphere but a surface gravity over three times Terra's. Later, exploration JumpShips would perform the roles of Magellan probes, confirming that the glimmers of light seen by telescopes were, in fact, habitable planets. This allowed the Terran Alliance to rapidly assess the million-plus stars of the Inner Sphere with a relatively modest exploration fleet, finding a still-amazing 2,000 habitable (or relatively habitable) planets within 500 light-years of Terra.

As the Terran Alliance and later realms discovered, habitable worlds were plentiful but not evenly distributed. An examination of the maps of the Lyran Commonwealth and Federated Suns shows gaps over thirty light-years wide. Stars are not absent from those areas, but habitable worlds are. The population density of habitable planets varies on larger scales, too, as even the Inner Sphere itself is a high-density region peppered with several lower density regions.

The Orion Rift is a vast region with a far lower density of habitable worlds than most. It sprawls for at least several hundred light-years beyond the Outworlds Alliance and Taurian Concordat, and is dominated by the so-called Dark Expanse. While the Inner Sphere might boast about one to three habitable or semi-habitable planets per thousand stars, the Rift has a fraction of that. This interstellar desert was partly responsible for stymieing growth spinward, though political issues, like the Age of War and the Succession Wars, also stalled colonial expansion.

Still, the region was not fully ignored. Settlers fleeing the Terran Alliance, the Age of War, various dictatorial governments, creditors, moral degeneration, or even the stress of high technology life itself—attempted to settle the Orion Rift and beyond as much as anywhere else around the Inner Sphere. Unfortunately for these poor souls, the barren nature of many would-be colony worlds proved their undoing. Fledgling colonies, widely dispersed and far from the support of the Inner Sphere, were settled with inadequate forethought and resources that led to their failures. Some simply collapsed technologically as they ran out of spare parts. Some died outright as the technology that kept them alive failed, or the isolated settlers turned on each other. A few survived at levels above subsistence farming, but they are few and far in between.

Contrary to the Inner Sphere's expectations, the Orion Rift is not a place of endless savagery and devolved colonies preying on each

other. While some have regressed to warfare among primitive tribes, these lost colonies cannot prey on other colonies because of a lack of JumpShips; barbarians do a poor job of maintaining 200,000-ton starships, after all. And while pirates have used the Orion Rift for havens they—like most other denizens of the region—rarely linger for more than a few years for lack of maintenance of their JumpShips. Most of the stable colonies found in the Rift are thus simple subsistence farmers who threaten no one.

Poorly mapped, lacking outside support, and mostly lacking JumpShips, the Orion Rift is an interesting footnote to explorers and few others.

**UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT:
THE JÄRNFÖLK**

**COUNCIL REPORT 45-2-11-3ge::LOR
ATTACHED::ESC-COL-67-4-7**

For the Council's reference, I have attached the Explorer Corps report we pulled from the wreckage of Columbus Station. This is an update to the compiled report, as we have determined it to be ninety-five percent accurate in its findings.

For the Järnfölk, the Inner Sphere conflict and the Clan war in the Periphery have been small ripples on a large pond. The nine (now eight) families have maintained their *status quo*, moving from system to system to conduct trade and other trappings of civilization.

The shakeup among the Järnfölk was the violent upheaval within the Jespersen family in 3073. Patriarch Jon found himself at odds with his two sons, Peter and Magnus, over Jon's sudden marriage to Magda Torvald. The proposed merger of the Jespersen and Torvald families drove a wedge between the older and younger generations. Jon's death at the hands of Magnus was legal—but Magda's was not. The bride-to-be and her maiden of honor were caught in the crossfire when Magnus burst into his father's bedroom suite.

Through a convoluted series of legalistic maneuvering, Peter absolved his brother of the crime, drawing several marks of death upon himself. The Torvald family sought complete justice for the murder of Magda and her sister. An overzealous son, Javier, triggered a bomb that blew up half the Jespersen estate on Hofn, killing the brothers and several other family members. Kenneth Jespersen, the oldest surviving family member at the age of ten, married into the Torvald family as part of the family's repentance. The family's *sælgeflåde* was absorbed into the Torvald fleet, along with its holdings on Hofn.

[I understand much of the above might seem confusing for our Clan warriors, being as it deals with the lower ideals of marriage and families. However, such information is important as background information, in case any of our warriors run across a Järnfölk trading group. The internal politics and family ties within this group of wanderers can be a political landmine and failure to understand the situation may lead to confrontations that could drain unnecessary resources from the Clan. —Lorenzo]

EXCERPTS FROM ESC-COL-67-4-7

Social Structure: The Järnfölk follow a clannish social order, based around strong leadership and extended families. Distinct tiers exist within the family units, the secondary families in each adhering to a hierarchy and seeking to prove their superiority over other families within the larger unit. This jockeying for influence produces a dynamic social order. Järnfölk language contains a multitude of nuances describing family relations—for example, clearly identifying maternal or fraternal relationships through words like “morfar” for “mother’s father” and “faster” for “father’s sister.” Members of the same clan refer to each other as “søskende” (siblings) irrespective of blood relationship.

Personal and family honor is central to Järnfölk existence, and insults (deliberate or otherwise) or attacks can lead to duels (usually to first blood, sometimes to the death) or ongoing feuds, some of which may last for generations. Conflict outside of sanctioned duels and designated vendettas, referred to as blood feuds by the Järnfölk, is forbidden and perpetrators face summary justice.

Seat of Government: No central authority; government is family-based.

National Leader: None. Family leaders are Mattias Essendorp, Jensen family; Elin Skjolden, Skjolden family; Georj Gudmundsson, Gudmundsson family; Jacob Hansen, Klünder family; Maiken Pedersdottir, Höeg family; Jannick Hastrup, Hastrup family; Thor Torvald, Torvald family; and Ingrid James, James family.

Principal Language(s): Hybrid of several ancient Scandinavian tongues, notably Danish and Old Norse. Each planet has a unique but comprehensible dialect; for example Järnfölk—as pronounced and spelled on Trondheim—more commonly appears as Jernfölk on Ålborg. Command staff on spacefaring vessels speak Standard English, but the degree of fluency varies considerably.

Approximate size: 2,650,000 people across four worlds: Hamar, Trondheim, Ålborg and Hofn

Economic Status: Principally agrarian. The Järnfölk planets support some high-tech industries as well, generally limited to small-scale artisans such as jewelry-makers. Small arms—exclusively slugthrowers—are treated as works of art and status symbols among the

Järnfölk. Trade exists mostly between the four worlds in the Järnfölk Cluster, but JumpShip crews also travel to nearby systems to trade with the locals. These family-controlled trading fleets—all highly decorated in family-specific motifs—are kept in mint condition (how remains unclear), and service with one such “sælgeflåde” (trade fleet) is one of the highest honors in Järnfölk society.

Standing Army: None, though notables within the ruling families each retain a cadre of highly trained bodyguards.

Contacts and Alliances: The Järnfölk have had contact with the Clans, who seized a Järnfölk vessel during their sole encounter, much to the chagrin of the Trondheim-based Heyerdal family. (That family’s subsequent fall from grace allowed the ascension of the James family, though the Heyerdahls’ Old Norse trappings continue to color Clan perceptions of the Järnfölk.)

History: The Järnfölk count 16 July, 2504, as the birth of their “nation”—the date of the first landings on temperate Ålborg—but the forefathers of the colonists departed the Inner Sphere at least nineteen years before that, escaping Combine predations in Rasalhague. Existing for many years as itinerant explorer-traders, the colonists sought to preserve the traditions of their ancient Scandinavian homelands, creating a faux-Scandinavian culture in much the same way as House Kurita built its pseudo-Japanese hegemony. With feuding and a rough lifestyle keeping their numbers in check, the Järnfölk (named for their “Järnskip,” or “iron ships,” the JumpShips in which they traveled to their distant homeworlds over several generations) have not expanded much beyond their four colonies, though their vessels trade everywhere. Järnfölk society formed during its early spacefaring era, with the ruling families descended from the command staff of the nine vessels while the subsidiary families are descended from their crews. The bonds and outlook fostered during this time—now more than half a millennium in the past—remain central to Järnfölk culture. The colonists had no substantive contact with the Star League or the Successor States, but records from Columbus suggest some dealings between the sælgeflåde and SLDF explorers stationed there.

::Complete file located on CDS.Trondheim.FP35003::

Militarily, the Järnfölk have not changed in any significant capacity. The Klünder sælgeflåde salvaged some heavy equipment and a few BattleMechs from Columbus station, which our Watch has since traced to the Hansa. During a Watch mission along several REVIVAL waypoints in 3083, both the Skjolden and Torvald sælgeflåde were observed picking through the ruins. At Bazaar and Wark, the Järnfölk quickly surrendered their salvage when challenged by our Watch Stars. Based on their actions, we can assume that the Trinity, Kinbrace, and Gwithian outposts were similarly picked over.

Additionally, our Watch operatives in the Hanseatic League have noticed an increase in the number of bodyguards that fit the described parameters of Järnfölk *skåret* (outcasts). While there are no plans for confrontation with the League at this point, Clan warriors and Watch operatives should be aware of this possible danger when dealing with the Hansa.

—Merchant Factor Lorenzo

GAMEMASTER’S SECTION

The Järnfölk can easily appear in a campaign as protagonists or antagonists, or even as a background element. Characters who make their way to the quartet of Järnfölk worlds or encounter a sælgeflåde will find themselves in a society as alien as that of the Clans (and perhaps even more dangerous, with the slightest *faux pas* possibly leading to a bloody confrontation). Most dangerous is the possibility that the characters are bystanders caught up in a Järnfölk contract slaying, or are even the targets of one. Politically oriented campaigns may see the player characters seeking to hire Järnfölk hit men.

Whether such attacks come from guild assassins undertaking freelance contracts or from *skåret* outcasts are largely irrelevant to their methods and techniques. However, the former will follow guild rules (filing vendetta on the Järnfölk worlds, not targeting bystanders, carrying out their mission swiftly and efficiently, and



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so on). The *skåret*, by contrast, usually strike without warning and show little compunction about eliminating witnesses to their actions. Mercy is also less common among the outcasts, who may deliberately inflict pain on their targets, sometimes refraining from a deathblow and instead leaving the victim to suffer for hours, days or even weeks.

THE OUTWORLDS WASTES

During the Golden Years of the Star League, citizens of the Inner Sphere heavily settled the Outworlds Alliance. It was safer to settle there, than in other major Periphery states like the Taurian Concordat. Unlike independent worlds of the Periphery, the Alliance was a developed region with existing industry and government. Though the Rim Worlds Republic was a much greater recipient of Hegemony settlers, the Outworlds Alliance certainly received a good share. Settlers from the Federated Suns and Draconis Combine also colonized the passive Alliance, producing a polyglot mix of booming mining colonies and corporate satrapies nominally administered by the Alliance.

In the Periphery rebellion immediately preceding the Amaris Coup, most of the Outworlds Alliance's Traders Domain, Onverwacht Province, and Blommestein Province remained loyal to the Star League. Their populations were almost entirely from the Inner Sphere, or were descendants thereof, who owed little loyalty to the Outworlds Alliance. As the Succession Wars erupted, the outer provinces of the Alliance found themselves suffering. They were not independent worlds in one or more ways. Some depended desperately on advanced technology to survive, though most were fairly habitable. The Outworlds Alliance had, more or less, the same density of habitable worlds as the Inner Sphere, and settlers had not yet been squeezed onto the less preferable worlds. Most of their high technology, though, was from the Inner Sphere, and the worlds were all deeply entwined with the Inner Sphere's economy. Without the Inner Sphere, the worlds would be impoverished and barely able to maintain modern civilization. Their Inner Sphere corporate masters also began diverting JumpShip fleets to answer wartime calls, and those JumpShips were being annihilated in unimagined quantities. While they could, many contract workers fled home to the Inner Sphere, leading to wholesale abandonment of some Outworlds planets.

Fearing war, many of the outer province worlds hired mercenaries, despite objections from Alpheratz. Unlike the original core of the Alliance, few of the planets had adopted the Omniss creed and thus had no objections to military might. The most desperate worlds were soon launching covert raids on their neighbors to acquire the advanced technology they needed to survive. As the Alliance central government proved incapable of dealing with the escalating pirate raids, worlds began to secede—singly and in small clusters.

By 2900, the seceded planets were independent of each other; the microstates had all failed. The provincial capital of Wynn's

Roost provided a typical example: that world took most of the Trader's Domain with its 2835 secession, but the new nation was short-lived. The worlds were too different and too fractious to cooperate. The Hegemony-dominated worlds hated the House-dominated worlds for destroying the Hegemony, and the Sun-settled worlds would not cooperate with the Combine-settled worlds. Many planetary governors saw their chances to be pocket First Lords and could not resist, and so on. Similar problems plagued the rest of the secessionists.

CENTURIES OF MISERY

The period between 2787 and 2900 saw a harsh winnowing of the seceded Outworlds colonies. Some had been evacuated as contract workers and their families fled to the "safety" of the Inner Sphere, an easy task when many of those worlds only had industrial facilities with populations in the thousands. Some worlds had been intended for more extensive settlement but, like many Inner Sphere worlds settled in the Star League, were less than ideal and subject to terraforming with the Star League's near-magical storm inhibitors, tectonic stabilizers, atmosphere processors, space-based mirrors to heat or cool planets, water filters, and other advanced equipment that depended on parts from the destroyed Terran Hegemony. Those worlds saw their entire human-compatible ecosystem collapse, some sooner than others when their desperate neighbors stole parts. This first century saw about a third of the seceded worlds abandoned or dead.

The survivors would sometimes envy the dead. When domestic piracy ceased for lack of JumpShips or anything left to steal, refuse from the Inner Sphere moved in. Shattered military units fleeing unending war used old maps to hide on "forgotten" ex-Outworlds planets that ComStar was not showing on modern maps. These units, more often than not, turned to piracy to maintain their advanced equipment. Some of them went beyond to the savagery that typified pirates known to the Inner Sphere; the former Outworlds planets were easy targets. In fact, the Outworlds Alliance was sometimes easier because a few of the former Outworlds planets could and did mount determined defenses.

Not that those defenses necessarily worked out well for the worlds of what has become known as the Outworlds Wastes. Wynn's Roost, for example, suffered several million deaths and lost several cities in the thirtieth century to pirates enraged by resistance.

Pirates were not alone in plundering these worlds. During the twenty-ninth century, the Federated Suns and Draconis Combine both plundered industrial facilities in the Outworlds Wastes for their Star League-era equipment. The Combine, in particular, smashed any sign of resistance and employed forced local laborers until their impersonal, professional looting was complete.

Entire planetary populations died off for lack of parts for advanced terraforming or water filtration equipment, but that was not the only problem caused by the Outworlds' dependence on Inner Sphere factories. Most of the worlds that did survive

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were without complete industrial bases, being specialized mining or industrial facilities for Inner Sphere customers, and even the complete colonies depended on imported goods. Left to their own, they were unable to build anything of Star League technology. Many found themselves lacking the tools and skills to even build Information or Industrial Age technology. When some of the worlds of the Outworlds Wastes started getting ahead and developing industry, the response of their neighbors and Inner Sphere expatriate pirates was to pillage them.

The region's reputation as a pirate's haven only brought more trouble. Unlike the former Rim Worlds Republic, there was a major Periphery state nearby that maintained adequate relations with both of its Inner Sphere neighbors. As a result, pirate hunting was a more common activity than the pirate endorsement near the Commonwealth-Combine border, where warring nations would encourage and aid the nascent bandit kingdoms in their raids against their enemies. The Outworlds Wastes were thus battered not only by pirates, but two Houses and the Outworlds Alliance, and those attacks focused on the "militaries" of the Wastes. Worlds found their abusive pirate defenders crushed, leaving them vulnerable to the next pirate group. On the other hand, this also meant no bandit kingdoms were able to arise in the Wastes.

Adding insult to injury, ComStar actively ignored the Wastes. The fractious area was, at first, a poor investment for reestablishing the HPG network. Later, its support of piracy and rapid decline led to ComStar even erasing most of the worlds from its maps. This had severe consequences; few traders or mercenaries would seek work in systems that did not exist on maps and had no HPGs. This, in turn, meant the Wastes had to accept whatever help they could get, paying ruinous amounts of gold and other rare materials to get any imported goods, and accepting the military "defense" offered by troops that were as likely to pillage their wards as another planet.

By 3000, all these factors had caused forty-five former Outworlds planets—nearly half of the secessionists—to be depopulated. On the other hand, that left half of them populated but unknown and ignored by the contemporary Inner Sphere.

THE CYCLE BREAKS

Abject exhaustion in the early- to mid-thirty-first century was a major factor in ending the degeneration of the region. The surviving worlds were impoverished, low tech and miserable, but they had time to catch their breath. The minimally budgeted pirate-hunting efforts of the Draconis Combine, Federated Suns and Outworlds Alliance likewise were able to gain traction because pirate groups were rarer and less able.

As piracy dwindled through the thirty-first century, the worlds of the Wastes have had a chance to recover. Even the Blakist-sponsored piracy in the Outworlds Alliance overlooked the broken worlds of the Wastes. Those worlds with higher populations have had unbroken decades to build some semblance of industry. Periphery traders willing to step beyond the major states had

always frequented the Wastes and provided a vital lifeline. Now, with a trickle of imported industrial equipment, teachers, and mercenaries often hired at ruinous prices in precious metals, they were able to start to grow.

The level of success varied. Many of the worlds lack adequate knowledge of social organization needed to establish schooling systems beyond village primary schools and successful industrial development programs. Project management and governance are arts and sciences that can be lost as readily as fusion engineering, and it shows on the many worlds of the Wastes that have been stuck somewhere at the equivalent of Terra's seventeenth to nineteenth century agricultural revolution. Populations ranging from the tens of thousands to the low millions are another bottleneck to further development because such small populations prevent diversification of skills, mustering of capital, and formation of sufficiently large markets to support advancement. About two score of the worlds of the Wastes fall into this category.

A few worlds of the Wastes are better off, though, including the former provincial capitals. All the surviving planets in the Wastes generally have tolerable environments, and some had larger populations than the typical corporate mining and industrial colonies. The few with better-preserved knowledge have native industries reaching Terra's Information Age and are flirting with more advanced technology, often based around imported workers and industrial equipment. Not one of them builds BattleMechs domestically, but they are able to offer rare minerals to foreign traders or simple technological goods (machine tools, basic noteputers, personal communicators, etc.) in high demand through the Wastes and even the Raven Alliance.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The forty-odd worlds of this region are mostly under-populated backwaters barely able to feed themselves and produce iron shoes for their draft animals. Their participation with the nearby Inner Sphere is hampered by not even appearing on maps. USILR codes are usually A to C for agricultural and resource needs, and D or F for other codes. As such, they provide a rich opportunity to hunt for pirate hideouts and diehard Blakists, or a chance to explore lost Star League-era industrial facilities and perhaps stumble upon warehouses of undelivered rare ores that were abandoned when the Star League fell.

Less scrupulous campaigns might even establish new pirate groups (noting the Raven Alliance next door) or a petty planetary empire—or, perhaps, not so petty and instead try to uplift one of the worlds. A handful of the planets are considerably better off and more populated, with some level of industrialization (industrial sophistication A to C), albeit at low technological sophistication (C to F). These worlds offer an excellent starting home for a character with a Periphery background, a stop for Periphery traders who can trade a few high tech trinkets for a large payload of low tech goods, or even an employer for pirate-hunting mercenaries, as these planets can afford to hire cheap outside help.



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[What about this Hanson? How was he? –MD]

[He was young, earnest, and polite. He answered every question we asked him, but nothing more. It's safe to say that he found out more about us than we did about him. –BJ]

BACKGROUND

The Compact consists of twelve planets in ten systems, all within thirty light-years of New Delphi, the Compact's capital. The original colonists were Outworlds Alliance and the Taurian Concordat refugees fleeing from

NEW DELPHI COMPACT

Report #DSE-MP30900516 from IE JumpShip Marco Polo, Captain Bannon Jacobi, commanding.

[Comments from Doctor Mandy Dewey PhD, IE's spinward director, and Captain Bannon Jacobi, Polo's captain]

When we emerged into system IE-702657-A, we were hailed by a JumpShip already in-system. We identified the ship hailing us as a *Merchant-class* JumpShip.

When we identified ourselves as being from the Inner Sphere, they identified themselves as the New Delphi Compact Customs Service vessel *Robert Brewster*. They welcomed us to the New Delphi Compact, but were politely insistent that we didn't land on Karpathos, the inhabited planet in this system. When we asked why, we were informed of the Delphi Curse. While they were reluctant to speak to us in person, they were very willing to talk to us about the New Delphi Compact and the Curse.

After several hours of conversation, we asked permission to go elsewhere in the Compact. We were given permission, but asked that for our safety, we should not land on any of the planets. If we were to land, they would not be responsible if we were exposed to the Curse. They also sent a Lieutenant-Supervisor Nathan Hanson to accompany us during our time in the Compact.

We spent the next two months exploring the Compact. We visited eight systems, including New Delphi. Hanson was the only Delphian we talked to in person. Most of our conversation with other Compact citizens were done through the *Polo's* comm systems.

[Do you think they are just shy or are they hiding something? –MD]
[We have no idea. –BJ]

the Reunification War. New Delphi was founded in 2587, and by 2602, seven more worlds had been colonized. The Compact was formed in 2604. A second refugee wave arrived in the aftermath of the Amaris-sponsored Periphery revolts. By 2752, four more worlds had joined the Compact. Most of the planets and major planetary features are called by Greek and Latin names, though English and French are the main languages spoken.

The Compact's population is three hundred and fifty million, with nearly a third living on New Delphi. Heavily influenced by the Omnis philosophy, ninety percent of the population lives an agricultural lifestyle with a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century technology level. The rest, working in medicine, government or in space, have roughly twenty-sixth century level of technology. With the exception of pest control technology and some power generators, most Compact citizens live as their ancestors did twelve centuries ago. Most will never see a motorized vehicle or go farther than fifty kilometers from their birthplace.

The Delphian's spacecraft technology is four hundred years out-of-date. They can repair and build Star League-era DropShips in their single shipyard, and even service older JumpShips, but the average time is seven to ten times longer than comparable Inner Sphere builds, due to the technological lag and small workforce. Of course, there are no HPG stations in the Compact, leaving JumpShips as the only communications link between planets.

[No need for modern technology? –MD]

[They're happy with just enough technology to keep the Compact functioning. Hanson showed no interest in any of our technology. –JB]

[Not even HPG technology? –MD]

[Not even that. –BJ]

SPINWARD DISCOVERIES

GOVERNMENT

The Delphians keep government simple. There are no political parties, and campaigns for political office are non-existent. Each planet is made of provinces. Every year, each settlement in a province elects one person, called a councilor, to a provincial council. They meet during the winter months to solve problems and allocate resources for the next year.

Planetary governments consist of a planetary council and a senior councilor. Every three years, each province elects two councilors to the council. Under the senior councilor's supervision, the council stays in session for an entire year, passing laws and establishing a three-year budget. At the end of the year, the council elects a new senior councilor, and the councilors return home. The senior councilor runs the planet for the next three years, using the laws and budget passed by the Planetary Council. A small bureaucracy is tasked with advising and carrying out the senior councilor's instructions.

At the Compact level, each planet sends two councilors to New Delphi every five years to form the Compact Council. The Compact Council spends a year passing laws and setting a five-year budget, elects one of their own as the chief councilor, then returns home. The chief councilor runs the Compact for the next five years, with input from the senior councilors. The current leader of the Compact is Chief Councilor Abraham Morris.

The councils don't meet outside of the mandated year unless a crisis arises, such as naming a senior or chief councilor's replacement. A senior or chief councilor can call for a council assembly if they see the need for it, subject to the council's approval.

By Compact law, a councilor can only be elected once to the provincial council, once to the planetary council, and once to the Compact Council. Each senior councilor and chief councilor is limited to one term in office and cannot hold any other elected office for the rest of their lives. All members of a councilor's immediate family are barred from any elected office until twenty years after their relative's term ends.

[Not fans of government, are they? –MD]

[Only enough to keep things running. They see it as a necessary evil. –BJ]

[What about talented leaders? Surely they can see the need for such people. –MD]

[They do, but not to the point of entrusting them with anything resembling full control. Hanson said they did it to make it impossible for any one family or group of families to become dominant in Compact affairs. –JB]

ECONOMY

Most of the Compact economy is based on bartering for goods and services. Closer to the planetary capital, bartering gives way to money, though bartering is still used by merchants and others who deal with people from the outlying settlements. Taxed can be either paid with money or in goods. The tax goods are either used by the government or sold at market, and the funds deposited into government accounts.

The Compact's tender is the talent, with one hundred *minae* equaling one talent. The talent is used mostly in and around each planet's capitals and for interplanetary transactions. Instead of banks, there is a banker's guild, with members in each major settlement on every planet in the Compact. Banking is heavily regulated to prevent abuse.

[Banking guild? Seriously? –MD]

[Considering only about twenty percent of the population uses money, it seems to work for them –BJ]

THE DELPHI CURSE

The Curse is a family of aggressive, contagious and adaptive viruses, highly resistant to treatment and almost impossible to develop consistent vaccines for. The viruses can be found on every Compact planet.

According to the Delphians' Virus Research and Immunization Institute (VRII), the mortality rate among non-Delphians is eighty to ninety percent. Seventy-five percent of the survivors will have a weakened immune system, and only five percent will fully recover. Among Delphians, the Curse still has a ten-percent fatality rate.

The VRII is the lead agency in fighting the Curse, and boasts skills on par with any Inner Sphere medical research organization in the fields of virology, immunization, and animal and human pharmacology. There are some indications that the Delphians may also have advanced knowledge of genetics and gene therapy.

[How extensive is their knowledge of genetics? –MD]

[Hard to say, as we only have vague notes about "genetic markers" and "RNA codon" –BJ]

[How nasty is this Curse? –MD]

[Doctor Baines read over the data transmitted from VRII. He says these viruses make what the Wobblers used in the Jihad look like the common cold. This Curse could wipe out the population an average Inner Sphere world within five weeks. It mutates so fast, the vaccines for each strain becomes useless within six months. –BJ]

[Or scare us into avoiding the Compact. How do they know what the mortality rate is among non-Delphians? –MD]

[Pirates. Hanson said they've had a few raids over the years. –BJ]



SPINWARD DISCOVERIES

MILITARY

The closest thing the Delphians have to a military is the New Delphi Compact Customs Service. These roving *Explorer*-class JumpShips function as customs inspectors, space rescue and law enforcement. Each planet has a police force, but these are small and lightly armed. Most Delphians living outside the cities have access to hunting rifles and rudimentary resistance training. The Compact has neither the resources nor the technology for a major military expansion, even if the strong anti-technology feeling among the population was overcome.

The VRIL is the only government agency found on every planet. Because of their mission, they have a broader mandate and can seal off entire provinces if they believe a new strain of the Curse has taken hold in that area. They have a small force of armed troopers trained in virology and containment techniques.

The few pirate bands that have tried raiding the Compact have succumbed to the Curse. All the police have to do is to wait for the pirates to die or become ill, then walk in with a VRIL team and arrest the survivors.

[Not even a standing militia? –MD]

[Nope. These guys make the old Outworlds Alliance look like a bunch of Death Commandos. But with the Curse, there isn't a need for a military – most of an attacking force would be dead or dying before they could do any real damage. –BJ]

SOCIETY

Delphian society is a mix of the Taurians' personal freedoms and the Alliance's pacifistic outlook. Laws are structured to provide the maximum amount of individual freedom. There is no evidence of an intelligence service, secret police, or major security organization in the Compact. There isn't much in the way of protests or government opposition, and that is mostly at the local level.

Like most things in the Compact, judicial matters are handled at the local level. There is a provincial court, which handles most court cases, and a planetary court, which handles any crimes crossing provincial borders and reviews any appeals. There is a Compact court for crimes on an interstellar level, but it has no say over the planetary-level courts.

Education is basic, with children attending local schools five days a week, for three-quarters of the year. Each planet has a single university, located near or in the planetary capital. New Delphi University is considered the best university in the Compact, famous for its medical program. For those who don't care to attend college, they can apprentice with a guild, learning skills such as blacksmithing, shoemaking or carpentry.

There is no official state religion, but a strong Deism movement does exist in the Compact. There are also small groups of people of other religions present, but there is no religious tension anywhere in the Compact.

CONCLUSION

The Delphians are a quiet, peaceful state that somehow combined several eras into a workable society. They have no interest in establishing regular contact with the Inner Sphere. The Curse makes it highly risky to land on any of the Delphian worlds, so any further attempt at contact must first involve getting samples of the viruses for study.

[Any chance of getting samples of the actual viruses? –MD]

[I don't see how. Besides, do you really want to risk letting something like this getting loose anywhere near the Inner Sphere? –BJ]

[Point. –MD]

NEW DELPHI

Political Ruler: Senior Councilor Virginia Nisimura

Star Type (Recharge Time): G2V (183 Hours)

Position in System: 3

Time to Jump Point: 9.12 days

Number of Satellites: 4 (Tonegawa Major, Tonegawa Minor, Myrdal Major, Myrdal Minor)

Surface Gravity: 0.95 G

Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 24 ° C (Temperate)

Surface Water: 40 percent

Recharging Station: none

HPG Class: None

Highest Native Life: Reptiles

Population (3095): 120,500,000

Socio-Industrial Levels: C-D-A-D-C

The heart of the Compact, New Delphi is not much different from any other Periphery planet. There are three continents: Nedze, near the equator, Naxus to the northwest and Kozuf, near the south pole. It is largely desert and plains, with forests and swamps along the coast of the three major seas, the Propontis, Mare Aegaeum, and Mare Internum. Most of the population is scattered along these coasts and fishing, as well as farming, are the major occupations. The Compact's only shipyard is in orbit around Tonegawa Major, the largest of New Delphi's moons.

The capital is Athenae, is located on Nedze. In addition to the planetary government, it is also the location of the Compact's government. The New Delphi University, considered the best school in the Compact, has its main campus on the outskirts of the city. VRIL's headquarters and main labs are twenty kilometers north of the city, inside a mountain. Inside the city limits, public transport everywhere, with only a few privately owned vehicles using fuel-cell technology. With the exception of a highway system linking all the settlements together, most technology stays within fifty kilometers of Athenae.

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GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The New Delphi Compact appears to be nothing more than a quiet backwater, far from the Inner Sphere. Lacking advanced technology, a military force or HPG technology, it would seem that the Compact should be a pirate's dream. Because of the Curse, only desperate or stupid pirates risk raiding the Compact.

The Compact just wants to be left alone. They have politely resisted the offers of the few traders that have made the trip from the Inner Sphere. Their biggest fear is the Curse getting loose beyond their borders and the backlash resulting from it. They promote the Curse as their main defense, as they know that any military action would roll over them without too much of a problem—at least until the Curse made its presence known.

The Truth About the Curse

The Curse is real and as dangerous as the Delphians claim. What the Delphians don't mention is that they have genetically modified their own and their animals' immune systems to effectively fight the Curse. Some of the VRIL's techniques and retroviruses are a generation ahead of anything in the Inner Sphere. Still, about 10,000 Delphians die each year from the Curse.

The source of the viruses comes from the New Delphian lizarat, a reptile similar to the Terran rat. Crafty, armored, with a high birth rate, the lizarat is found on every planet in the Compact. There is a continuing effort by the Compact to wipe out the lizarat population, but all the government can do is keep the population under control.

Virus Research and Immunization Institute (VRIL)

The most important organization in the Compact, VRIL's sole purpose is to combat the Curse. About a third of the Compact's budget is devoted to VRIL. Viral research, genetic mapping and immunization are the core of the Institute's work. VRIL employs the best of the best, and is on a par with any similar Inner Sphere organization.

Rumors circulate that VRIL is not above using the Curse to defend the Compact. Sudden outbreaks among pirate bands have coincided with the arrival of a VRIL team in the area. There are also rumors that the VRIL has weaponized several of the viruses, to be used in case of an invasion by an outside military. But even if there was solid evidence linking VRIL with pirate deaths or bioweapons, most Delphians wouldn't care.

Operating Within the Compact

Between the Compact's insular nature and the Curse, any outsiders will find it difficult to operate inside the Compact. Newcomers will stand out everywhere except in the capitals and even then, they will be confronted with lizarats and the Compact's lower technology level. Public use of any Inner Sphere technology will be noticed and authorities notified.

The Delphians are very concerned about outsiders being

infected with the Curse, and VRIL will take the lead to track these people down, arrest them and put them into isolation. Any equipment with them will be sanitized and examined, though the Delphians don't have enough of an industrial base to reverse engineer any equipment. Outside of the cities, outsiders will be treated with warily politeness, though any open display of advanced technology will be noted. Anyone showing signs of being infected by the Curse will result in the group being isolated and law enforcement and VRIL teams brought in.

After determining the outsiders are Curse-free, VRIL will hold them in insolation until a JumpShip from outside the Compact visits the system and the outsiders are shipped off. Any outsiders who are infected with the Curse will be made comfortable, but otherwise they will be left to fight the infection on their own.

The Delphian society is a closed society, but without the police state behind it. There isn't an internal security or intelligence organization, as most Delphians don't care about politics. VRIL has some of the powers of a police agency, but only when it directly relates to the Curse. The Curse has helped isolate them from the rest of the universe, leading to an insulated society that rarely sees beyond their own borders.

THE DARK EXPANSE

Stretching beyond the Outworlds Wastes—including the New Delphi Compact and the Orion Rift itself—is a region that has become known informally as the Dark Expanse. The Expanse also includes the entirety of the Aldrin, Gum, and Orion Nebulas, as well as the Lambda Orionis nebula and several stellar clusters. Also known as the Orion Spur, the Expanse earned its name not because of a lack of stars, but rather because of the hundreds of worlds that have been colonized within it, only to be later abandoned, destroyed, or otherwise left unable to support human life.

ASTROGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

The spinward reach of the Orion Spur is an area rich in nebulae and dust clouds, and has a dense network of stars with few large clusters. The era of rapid stellar birth in the region has long since passed, giving the untold millions of stars ample time to form planetary systems. Many of the smaller and longer-lived, cooler stars (M and K spectral classes) have had enough time for complex ecosystems to develop on worlds with the proper ingredients for life.

One of the brightest and most noticeable features in the Dark Expanse is the M39 Open Cluster, also known as the Swan's Eye. Located approximately 370 light-years beyond Great Gorge in the Federated Suns, the Eye is about two to three hundred million years old, giving the stars located within it ample time to form planetary systems, yet it is one of the areas in the Dark Expanse where life is difficult to find past the single cell stage of evolution. Most worlds here would require significant terraforming for human habitation.

SPINWARD DISCOVERIES

Almost overlapping JärnFolk territory is the Vela Nebula, a bright blue and red reflection nebula. Over sixty light years across, the Vela Nebula is clearly visible as an astronavigational aid throughout the Expanse. Another stellar landmark is T Cephei, a massive Mira variable red giant found approximately 100 light-years past Filtvelt. T Cephei, known to regional dwellers as either Typhon or the Devil's Eye, is large enough that it could swallow Terra's inner solar system and bright enough to be compared to a full moon from a distance of one and a half light years.

The largest feature explored by Interstellar Expeditions in this region is the Gum Nebula. Centered roughly 800 light-years from the outer borders of the Draconis Combine, this enormous supernova remnant is over 700 light-years wide, making it a massive feature in the skies of most worlds in the Expanse. The supernova was powerful enough to sterilize the life from all worlds within 250 light-years of its center, leaving a void where planets that once harbored significant biospheres

are either totally devoid of life or are still in the midst of a mass-extinction event. IE has yet to find any signs of a human presence besides our own observation satellites within this extinction area. Exploration close to the Vela X-ray source at the center of the nebula is impossible due to significant levels of ionizing radiation.

BEACONS IN THE NIGHT

The Dark Expanse consists of a volume of space millions of cubic parsecs in size. The untold multitude of stars that mankind has visited often have remains of our passage. An adequate description of all of Interstellar Expeditions' findings in the Expanse would require a set of books to easily fill a small library. To best summarize the general findings IE has made in the Expanse, we include in this briefing a list of IE's most important findings and largest dangers that any new employee of Interstellar Expeditions should be made aware of.

ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA

STAR: SLSC GoV.11407 (ROVER)

Location: 50 light-years spinward of former Outworlds Alliance world Maripa

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): G0V (181 hours)

Position in System: 3

Time to Jump Point: 10.43 days

Number of Satellites: None

Surface Gravity: 0.98

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 32o C (Temperate)

Surface Water: 79 percent

Highest Native Life: Reptiles

Population (3095): 0

Discovered early in Interstellar Expeditions' exploration of the **Dark Expanse**, the planet that became known as Rover was an interesting discovery. The initial stellar survey team that jumped into the system was almost immediately swarmed with communication requests from throughout the solar system. These communication pings were from hundreds of Star League-era observation satellites, ranging in function from meteorological sats in orbit of the habitable planet to planetary science probes circling each of the system's planets and major asteroids.

These satellites were programmed with an experimental networking program based loosely on the highly adaptive software found in the **AL2200 Track-Nav** battle computer in **Kanga jump tank**. When they detected the hyperspace exit of the IE JumpShip, the satellites attempted to download all the data they had been storing for over 300 years. Obviously forgotten about after the fall of the Star League, these satellites acted like yapping dogs, becoming

more insistent for some sort of attention until the common radio frequencies filled with unintelligible overlapping data.

IE spent over three months downloading data from each of the system's satellites before shutting most down. The programming of the satellites' adaptive intelligence is complex enough that IE computer scientists are still attempting to unravel the software.

STAR: SLSC M9III.2855 (REST STOP)

Location: 90 light-years spinward and coreward of the former Outworlds Alliance world Taumaturgo

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): M9III (210 hours)

Position in System: N/A (Nadir jump point station)

Time to Jump Point: N/A

Number of Satellites: N/A

Surface Gravity: N/A

Atm. Pressure: N/A

Equatorial Temperature: N/A (N/A)

Surface Water: N/A

Highest Native Life: N/A

Population (3095): 100-450

Found at the nadir jump point of a red giant star, Rest Stop has become a popular stopping point for Interstellar Expeditions teams traveling farther into the Deep Periphery. Discovered by an IE team in 2995, Rest Stop was a still-functional Star League-era recharge station. Initial archeological surveys of the station showed that it has been used repeatedly in its lifetime, even after the fall of the Star League, by a multitude of bandits, explorers, and even stragglers during Kerensky's Exodus.

ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA

Information on the recharge station's computers suggests the Star League constructed this station because of the red giant's prominence in the local area of space. Lost JumpShips could easily find this star, even with rudimentary astronavigational aides.

As Interstellar Expeditions has a presence here that has become known over the past century, Rest Stop has also drawn both businesses (such as the DropShip *Spinward Showgirl*, which hosts a large bar and brothel) as well as bandits wishing to steal what they can. While IE DropShips have enough firepower to defend themselves, bandit activity is increasing and may require a permanent security force if IE wishes to continue to use Rest Stop and the services of the *Spinward Showgirl*.

The planetary system below is unremarkable, consisting of three worlds, none of which are inhabitable. The innermost world is an airless, terrestrial rock, while the outer two worlds are gas giants. Two asteroid belts are also present in the system, both of which lie between the terrestrial world and the gas giants.

STAR: SLSC K2V.9006 (NEW SIERRA)

Location: 125 light-years spinward and rimward of the former Outworlds Alliance world Waini Point

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): K2V (193 hours)

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 4.62 days

Number of Satellites: None

Surface Gravity: 1.06

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 20o C (Boreal)

Surface Water: 58 percent

Highest Native Life: Mammals

Population (3095): Unknown

Discovered in 3012 after radio astronomy teams at Rover detected a brief manmade radio pattern coming from the direction of a small orange main sequence star, New Sierra is a lesson in what sort of madness could have resulted from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries of Terran warfare. Orbital surveys have shown that at its height, New Sierra was home to nearly three billion people. Images of the archeology of the surviving large structures and analysis of remaining satellites in orbit suggest colonists from the southern areas of North America on Terra settled this world in the late twenty-sixth century.

At some point during the late twenty-eighth century, a conflict broke out amongst the population and a global thermonuclear war was waged. The initial IE survey team that approached the planet was attacked by automated kill-sats armed with rudimentary laser systems and nuclear weapons. Since then, surveys of the planet have been done from a safe distance. The radio signal IE detected was most likely from one of the few remaining population centers

located deep under the planet's mountain chains. Thus far, all attempts at communication have resulted in silence or more ground-based or space-based assets attempting to lock weapon systems onto the signaling IE vessel.

The planet is currently recovering from a mass extinction event, due to the severe ecological damage caused by the widespread use of salted nuclear weapons. While the nuclear winter that was the result of the initial war is long since finished, IE studies show agriculture remains extremely difficult on the surface due to the ozone layer depletion, damage to the planetary topsoil, and extinction of oceanic ecosystems. Any survivors must be growing their food in underground greenhouses.

STAR: SLSC G9IV.1877 (MURRAIN)

Location: 85 light-years rimward and spinward of New Sierra

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): G9IV (190 hours)

Position in System: 5

Time to Jump Point: 5.82 days

Number of Satellites: None

Surface Gravity: 0.89

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Tainted)

Equatorial Temperature: 41o C (Tropical)

Surface Water: 77 percent

Highest Native Life: Microbes (Prior to outbreak, Birds)

Population (3095): 0

Discovered at almost the same time as New Sierra, the planet Interstellar Expeditions has named Murrain was a lush world that was settled in the early part of the twenty-eighth century by colonists from the Outworlds Alliance. Murrain (originally known as Richmond's World) is now a desert, with no life more complex than single celled organisms. Named after one of the biblical plagues, Murrain had an outbreak of what IE biologists found to be a unique virus similar to a Terran picornavirus. Brought to the world on livestock from the Alliance, the Murrain picornavirus was able to use the native plant life as a carrier due to the native life forms unique RNA chains. The virus quickly mutated and spread worldwide through the native plants before it became airborne and adapted to all Terran life.

IE archeological teams have found libraries on the surface in many of the major cities of the planet (named Richmond's World by the colonists) that gave us information on how quickly the virus spread. It took nearly ten years after the first settlers landed for the virus to jump back to Terran species, and once that occurred it was less than six months before the last news stories talk about starvation and rioting as the last settlers were infected and fought over the last untainted food supplies.

While the Murrain picornavirus was virulent enough to wipe out almost all life on the planet, it is now extinct. No longer able to find suitable hosts, it mutated away from being able to infect anything

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except the dwindling number of native plants. Biological hazard gear is required in case researchers stumble across a colony of the virus that is still active. Breathing gear is also necessary due to the low levels of oxygen remaining in the atmosphere, as that gas is no longer being replenished by any plant life. Access to Murrain is highly restricted, and all IE personnel must undergo six months of decontamination screening before returning from duty there.

STAR: SLSC F8IA.0086 (SHADY PALMS)

Location: 250 light-years spinward of Filtvelt

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): F8Ia (179 hours)

Position in System: 1

Time to Jump Point: 12.01 days

Number of Satellites: N/A (Location is an asteroid belt)

Surface Gravity: N/A

Atm. Pressure: N/A

Equatorial Temperature: N/A (N/A)

Surface Water: N/A

Highest Native Life: N/A

Population (3095): 1,260 (Occupying *Snowden*-class mining station)

One of the major first contacts made in the spinward reaches of the Deep Periphery was at the space station **Shady Palms**. Built during the Star League as an advanced astronomical observation facility, this space station linked hundreds of visible, infrared, x-ray, and neutrino telescopes/detectors that had been deployed throughout the system's asteroid field. Shady Palms and its telescopes were powered by solar panels and sails collecting the massive output of the system's primary star, a yellow-white super giant.

Shady Palms is a heavily modified ***Snowden*-class mining station** that the Star League deployed in 2749. Its large pressurized bays were turned into hydroponic bays for the crew to also use as recreation areas during the scientists' five-year tours. Its ore processing section was also converted to house the station's complex central computer. During its operation, the Shady Palms could easily process and analyze stellar data that could be then used to pinpoint planets around stars up to 500 light-years away. In the final years of the Star League, this facility provided the Star League with significant information on the Dark Expanse and other nearby areas of the rimward Deep Periphery.

"Discovered" in 3069 by Interstellar Expeditions, it was surprising to find inhabitants still aboard. The crew didn't descend from the original scientists that were left to die after the Star League fell apart. In 3010, a small group of refugees from the Outworlds Alliance stumbled upon the station. Seeing that the life support systems were still running and that there were ample amounts of food from the hydroponic bays, they chose to live there.

IE has been attempting to repair the computer core and the records it contains after the whole system overloaded soon after

the last of the original scientists died. The wealth of information this computer could contain is incalculable. IE teams are reminded while operating on Shady Palms that we are there through an agreement with the "natives" who call the station home. Please be respectful.

STAR: SLSC A0V.4900 (MONUMENT TO MAN)

Location: Approximately 500 light-years more distant than Land's End in the Draconis Combine

Not all Interstellar Expeditions employees and volunteers are solely archeologists or dull scientists. In 3076, Dr. Rachael Gemmon proposed a project that would involve future archeologists. **The Monument to Man Project** was accepted and funded by multiple universities across the Inner Sphere. A time capsule was to be built, containing some of the most important knowledge mankind has discovered in the past 1,000 years: replicas of artwork, stories and even a copy of the human genome. In the middle of the Word of Blake Jihad, many universities felt that this time capsule would be one way of ensuring a continuity of culture in case the Word of Blake was successful.

Built into a twenty-meter tall structure resembling a human being wearing a space suit with its arm stretched out in greeting, the Monument to Man was to be released into space at a very specific point and time. Calculating the exact distances, Dr. Gemmon freed the time capsule into a stable orbit around SLSC A0V.4900, a white main sequence star system with no habitable planets, on 30 October 3077. On that date, the light that was reaching that solar system from Terra's Sun originated on the date of the **first manned moon landing**, mankind's first journey to another world, 20 July 1969.

STAR: SLSC M6V.15810 (MAUNA LOA)

Location: 450 light-years spinward of Filtvelt

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): M6IV (207 hours)

Position in System: 6

Time to Jump Point: 2.34 days

Number of Satellites: None

Surface Gravity: 0.78

Atm. Pressure: High (Toxic)

Equatorial Temperature: 3470 C (Inferno)

Surface Water: 68 percent

Highest Native Life: None

Population (3095): 0

Only recently discovered in 3088, there are no records of a Star League terraforming project in this star system. Only a **Star League Stellar Catalog** number shows that the League even knew about this star, but in this system Interstellar Expeditions discovered some of the most extensive terraforming activity anywhere except the

ENCYCLOPEDIA GALACTICA

Mica trinary and the Sol system. Unfortunately, the planet that was the focus of the terraforming effort is far from habitable.

More distant from the Goldilocks Zone than most worlds considered for terraforming, the planet IE has named Mauna Loa had a large series of polar orbiting solar mirrors. Another two mirror arrays at Mauna Loa's L4 and L5 **Lagrange points** receive bursts of microwave energy from solar collectors located on an inner world. The assumed purpose of this complex setup was to very quickly, within less than a decade, to warm Mauna Loa from its Titan-like temperatures.

For whatever reason the effort was abandoned, but the Department of Mega-Engineering didn't want to, forgot to, or couldn't shut the entire system down. Since then, the amount of extra energy being put into the Mauna Loa system has overwhelmed to the planet. Its once frozen surface is boiling under thick clouds of water vapor. The changing stresses put on the planet by the melting ice have also allowed an ancient super volcano on the surface to detonate. This volcano is what gives the planet its name, and also causes one side of the planet to glow a deep orange on its night side as the lava flows pour out onto the surface.

SPINWARD DISCOVERIES

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

This thinly inhabited region of space is notable for several things: first, it is largely uninhabited. The great diffusion of humanity into the Milky Way did not stop suddenly at the borders of the Inner Sphere, contrary to the notions of Spheroids, though populations do drop exponentially due to the difficulty getting large numbers of people to distant colonies.

Second, for most travelers, the region is largely unmapped. Standard JumpShip navigational databases may list the mass, location, and motion of stars for great swaths of the visible galaxy—and JumpShips can use onboard sensors to plot jumps to nearby stars—but all of those databases say nothing about the planets orbiting stars beyond the Inner Sphere, let alone their habitability. In the low-habitability Rift, it would be quite possible to wander through thousands of star systems before blindly stumbling upon a world capable of sustaining human life, let alone one populated by humans. It has been suggested that Kerensky's Exodus finally went to the less-than-ideal Clan homeworlds not as part of a grand plan, but simply because his data miners found proof from old surveys that the best chances to find worlds worth settling was to move coreward, not spinward.

Finally, and despite the conditions noted above, the Orion Rift is rife with untapped potential. The sparsely inhabited, backwater Outworlds Wastes are a dense metropolis compared to the rest of the region. What few human-friendly worlds lie in this expanse are rarely claimed. Even pirates are rare out here, so far from the human prey they hunt for survival—and thus security is easy to establish. Explorers may find failed colonies, settlements

regressed to a stone age, abandoned ships, but—with few exceptions—there are no interstellar realms out here able to build or maintain their own ships. These settlements, so isolated from the bulk of humanity, may have divergent technology or lack major developments that players can exploit for fun and profit, like BattleMechs. It could be an interesting adventure to try to tip a tribal war, or an early industrial era war, with BattleMechs.

The Dark Expanse

The Dark Expanse is filled with opportunities for players to explore the unknown and see Star League history at its best and worst. The Deep Periphery locations of Shady Palms and Rest Stop can provide a convenient place for a gamemaster to base a campaign in the Deep Periphery, if the players don't mind the occasional pirate attack or life support failure.

There are quite a few questions that these locations in the Dark Expanse should raise, and a gamemaster may wish to use them. Why are the computer systems on the satellites of Rover so complex and who programmed them? How is it that the *Spinward Showgirl* stays intact even after pirate attacks? Do the owners have a deal with the pirates or are the pirates afraid of something? How did the nuclear conflict on New Sierra escalate so quickly, and are there really any survivors after this long or is it just automated computer systems running the war now? Did the plague on Murrain really end on that world, or did it spread to other worlds nearby through trade before people knew what was happening? Are there other worlds out there IE needs to try and quarantine? Why was a planet like Mauna Loa, so far from the Inner Sphere, chosen for a terraforming project?



RIMWARD WONDERS **HERE THERE BE DRAGONS**

It is a tale as old as the days of sail on Terra, when many believed that the world was flat and consisted solely of the Terran continents of Europe, Africa and Asia. In those days, it is said, the conventional wisdom was to keep one ship solely to the explored trade routes, closer to the mainland, than venture too far into the horizon. Fearing the unknown, a common phrase said to be found on navigational maps was "Here there be dragons.". Thus, for centuries, man remained convinced that Terra consisted solely of a barely-outlined landmass surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, bounded by ice in the far north and south, and divided within only by rivers, mountains and small seas.

As humanity went into space, of course, the number of unknowns multiplied. Thousands of new worlds meant millions of new discoveries a year, as each could potentially host alien life forms equal—or perhaps even superior—to mankind. The process of picking suitable colony worlds thus heavily favored studying the candidates from afar first, choosing not only those most *like* Terra but also those closest to Terra, in the event of a chance encounter with something the early settlers would need to warn home about. The more exotic the candidates became, or the farther from Terra they went, the greater was the perceived risk.

By the time of the first Star League, the momentum of deep space exploration had reached a stall point. New settlements were made on those marginal worlds that could be *made* into new Terras, rather than extending humanity's influence deeper into space. The major space empires and put down roots on hundreds of worlds each. The need for more was addressed by the closer worlds. For one reason or another, humanity's space travelers had decided to stay closer to shore. Sure, several Deep Periphery states had also developed in this time, but to most of humanity, anything past 650 light-years may as well be labeled "Here there be dragons" (or "Here be aliens", for those who still believe a first encounter with non-human sapiens still exists as a possibility).

As we now know, the coreward direction—coincidentally the direction in which Aleksandr Kerensky took his Exodus fleet and settled the Pentagon worlds—is rife with empires built by more daring explorers. Scattered smaller states also appear beyond the Inner Sphere's anti-spinward fringes as well, while the remains of failed experiments and a microstate or two litter the Deep

FARHOME: LAND OF A LOST PEOPLE 

To: Director Gaudenz Dreyer, Millenium Foundation Trust (MFT)

From: Professor DDr. phil. habil. Dr. h.c. mult. Christina Renczes, Leader of MFT Farhome Mission III, Head of the University of Past and Future

Director Dreyer,

Attached is the final draft of the informational brochure to be disseminated to post-graduate students who have been awarded the Excellence of Vision Scholarship. Malhase is butting in on things fiercely; please review this recorded example. Giving him a relatively free hand while making sure he never pursues the big picture seems to be the best stratagem to curb his interference. A positive side effect is that he's indeed an impressive enforcer, ensuring that our endeavor on Farhome will remain committed to humanities and social sciences. Note how he has simply not listed most natural sciences in the primer at all. For once, I was not willing to overrule this overt "lack of judgment."

Cordially yours,
C. Renczes

Periphery past the spinward fringe. Toward the galactic rim, we see once again that mankind has reached past the borders of its far-flung realms, but here the discoveries we have made proved to be closer to "friendly shores." It is as though few dared to venture more than a few jumps beyond the boundaries of the Taurian Concordat and the Magistracy of Canopus, for fear of being lost to the infinite unknown.

Perhaps this fear lies in the clusters of nebulae and molecular clouds that obscure the stars beyond, lingering like curtains that span across the interstellar horizon. Or perhaps—as some rumors suggest—there is an active effort by one or more of the dominant Periphery states in the region to prevent anyone from establishing a foothold beyond their borders and thus box them in. For whatever the reason, the Deep Periphery rimward of Terra seems among the least expansive region when it comes to human inhabitation.

—Dr. Naomi Wilson

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RIMWARD WONDERS

WHO WE ARE AND WHERE WE CAME FROM

Farhome is located ninety light years rimward of the Taurian border, and for a while was one of the most distant planets from Terra to appear on ComStar charts. Despite its solitude, it is one of the most idyllic worlds ever discovered, and one of the most enigmatic.

ComStar's Explorer Corps discovered the planet in July 2989. To the explorers' surprise, they found primitive humans inhabiting the forests and caves near their initial drop zone. Only after a few weeks of exploration was the truth uncovered in the shell of an ancient DropShip. In the first years of hyperspace travel, a group called the Naturists left human space and its woes behind to settle into a new, backward-oriented society. What was originally envisioned as a late-medieval utopia degenerated into a Paleolithic society. Though the Explorer Corps had contact with the people of the Montag Caves, they wisely chose to leave the planet again, after convincing the natives that they were neither gods nor emissaries of an evil force.

The founding of the Republic of the Sphere resulted in many ComStar documents being shared. Part of the contract with Interstellar Expeditions stipulated a new mission under the aegis of the academic Millenium Foundation Trust to be sent to Farhome. Arriving in system in June 3088, FIGYEL satellites were deployed and the system was fully charted. Farhome is a near-copy of Terra, sharing similar total size and a single moon akin to Luna, but is the largest planet in a star system bereft of large gas giants and any significant asteroid clusters. This sets it in regular orbit around its G9V star and largely reduces outside forces on the planetary conditions.

The planet itself is a prehistoric idyll, with comparable atmosphere to Terra and slightly higher equatorial and polar temperatures. Farhome has higher liquid water percentage, minimal aridity, and huge biodiversity, safeguarded by current global tectonic stability. A massive northern continent—named Céleste by the Naturists—houses most land fauna and flora of the planet, without an obviously dominant species. The titanic Clarisse range defines the equator, and creates both a natural border toward the south shores and an oddity in that elevated topography on Farhome is also warmer. The southern hemisphere is home to a much smaller and somewhat more arid continent simply named Farhome Bravo. The oceans are shallow in places, creating idyllic archipelagos with avian populations.

The lost planet Farhome turned out to be a rediscovered paradise.

IE MFT Farhome Mission I verified that there was no technologically advanced presence, signaling that the planet would provide a unique scientific opportunity. With an expanded mission contract, Interstellar Expeditions would be authorized to claim Farhome under Republic mandate. An institution titled the University of Past and Future would harbor all areas of academia and supply a platform for normative research free of commercial interests.

IE MFT Farhome Mission II confirmed that though in the general direction of the Minnesota Tribe's trail, the planet had apparently never been a destination. Thus, the planet could be isolated as a research station and strictly excluded from any Grand Tour endeavors. Various hyper-modern venues have been constructed for the University of Past and Future. Base Camp Omega, on the northeast outliers of the Clarisse Ranges, about 700 km from the Montag Caves, contains the main research

NOTES

John Malhase: "There is no reason to create any Institute of Theology in these facilities, Tina. These people's beliefs need to be viewed in context of their culture and should therefore be subject to studies by my department."

Christina Renczes: "John, we have been through this dozens of times. Between the origin of these people from Terra's Central Europe and North America, and the fact that across all tribes that we have observed they worship Biendieu we clearly are looking at a degenerated form of Christianity."

JM: "Come on! Beyond the name, there is nothing here that suggests Christianity at all. There is no organized cult element and no discernible rites that have anything to do with that religion."

CR: "Don't be so shortsighted. Think about how this reflects on your own scientific viewpoint. The Naturists turned away from all aspects of modern society and devolved more than they expected themselves. This should be your field of study, but..."

JM: "Naturists! I wasn't going to play that card, but now you did so yourself! We all know that naturism returned to non-cynical Theosophy in the mid-twenty-first century, and..."

CR: "...And you would assume that Theosophy is a purely anthropological, maybe historical, but certainly no theological field of study? Tut, tut, this is too overt, even for you, John. Besides, you are willfully excluding the Neo-Progressive Movement here. After all, at least a third of these people were American. No, listen! Despite basic pagan ideologies, there are clear influences of the Protestant confession in these people's religion and, by converse argument, their culture. After all, even the oral history recounted by their sages clearly illustrates a belief in manifest destiny founded in their belief in Biendieu.

"...But this is just another little probe, isn't it John? Look, we are both here and have to live with it. I am in charge of this mission and you know why. But we have to co-exist and I'm making it as easy for you as possible. The deanship of the facility was always going to be held by Anthropology—you, John—and I won't interfere. I won't even issue a call for papers. Just let me pursue my studies and get some of my staff here. If you assign a paper to the history and development of the Naturists' faith, and I strongly recommend you do, the scholar is welcome to work with us. We will support him or her and by extension you to the full extents of best practice. Anything else is up to you."

facilities, housing, and spaceport. The university has set out with over twenty departments, though not all are participating in the Excellence of Vision PhD program. Alongside scientists and logistical crew, Base Camp Omega is also the HQ of the Farhome Executive Corps, controlling any vehicles and IndustrialMechs deployed. Camp Alpha is not yet deployed, but will contain light facilities on ComStar's old landing site near the caves. Camp Beta is a meteorological monitoring station on Farhome Bravo, and Eta, Zeta, and Theta camps are marine stations on various small islands.

IE MFT Farhome Mission III will send out scientists to crew these facilities, marking the inauguration of the University of Past and Future.

RIMWARD WONDERS

Bringing the Past to Light

In your hands you hold an invitation to participate in the creation of a unique research institution on the planet Farhome. The founding of the University of Past and Future presents humanities, social and natural sciences with a unique time capsule. In accepting the challenge of moving to this mostly uncharted territory, participants will enroll for a minimum of four years, after which time there will be an option to return, or follow up positive research results. The completion of this initial period and a corresponding thesis will result in full PhD/ScD honors.

The following post-graduate scholarships are open to any current benefactors of Millennium Foundation scholarships. These are focused on social sciences and humanities that shape the exploratory nature of the University of Past and Future, natural science research projects are fully supported and follow the standardized best practices of new colonization. The department (multiple where applicable) is stated, alongside the responsible research staff. The brackets note cooperative institutes; research results must be shared regularly with these departments. Papers that require mandatory field research—aided by the Farhome Executive Corps—are marked by an asterisk (*).

Abstracts and project papers will be due 12/95. Research into the Minnesota Tribe is not appropriate, and any reference will immediately void the application.

Anthropology I* / Prof. John Malhase, PhD / Annex 1, Sections A-D

The once-discovered status of the Montag Caves community offers a unique entry point to contact with Farhome's people.

The department of Anthropology under John Malhase will re-contact the community, offering the University of Past and Future a unique chance to conduct field studies. Four research areas offer openings for six papers.

Community structure: using the Montag people as an example for the Naturist colonizers as a whole, a Neo-Paleolithic society is apparent. An immediate difference to historical societies is the sedentary nature of this community, unlike the nomadic nature of

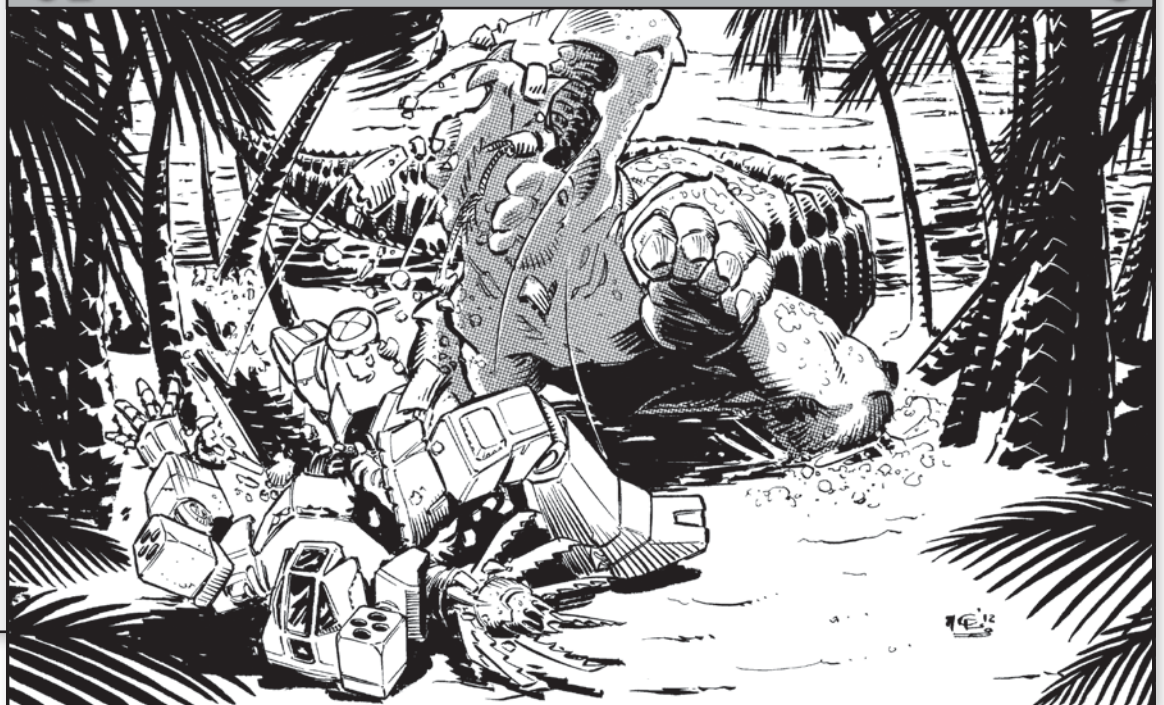
the majority of hunter-gatherers. The community is non-kinship oriented and penetrable to outsiders of other communities; rumors persist that several Explorer Corps members stayed on. Of special interest are the Montag people's interaction with fauna and their place in the food chain, in context of the presence of theropod-like apex predators. There is a call for two papers in this area, one focused on the latter, and one on societal aspects.

Hierarchical structure: while typically flat, three parallel leader figures exist, whose roles are focused on guidance rather than executive power. The strongest huntsman guides his tribe in action. A hereditary female cleric guides the faith to "biendieu," and is the only person in the community to use graphical depictions of mythical historical events or characters. A hereditary tale-teller keeps the aural history of the tribe specifically, and Farhome as a whole. Papers will focus on the hierarchical interaction of these guides and their influence on the community.

Societal degeneration: the Naturists not only eschewed modern technology, but also stopped using the textual medium. The department has determined the lack of a medium to preserve knowledge beyond aural history as the main cause for Farhome's societal degeneration. Papers on this subject will verify this assumption or provide new hypotheses as basis for future study.

Field research: PhD students are needed to support strictly non-intrusive observation probes to discover other communities without making the project's presence known. This is based on the assumption that despite penetrability, there is little actual contact between communities, due to their dispersion over Céleste. The data from these sorties will determine future research.

RIMWARD WONDERS



RIMWARD WONDERS **ANTHROPOLOGY II/SOCIOLOGY /
PROF. JANET ASSMANN, PHD / ANNEX 2,
SECTIONS A-B**

The Naturists' name, the demographic composition of the settlers and their idea to escape modern society indicate a clear dual influence on Farhome's colonization. The American neo-progressive movement sought purity through frugality and simplicity, while staunchly believing in a manifest destiny of their cause. The Central European naturist movements of the twenty-second century eschewed all aspects of modern society including clothes. Despite the fact that Farhome's Naturists no longer constitute the agricultural societies that both historic groupings derived from, the ideological heritage is manifest. Papers will analyze the adaptation of ideals in the settlement of Farhome and their normative character in shaping the planet's society.

**Genetics [Anthropology] / Prof. Kyoko Masuta, MD /
Annex 1, Section E**

Farhome's population started at an estimated 12,000 persons and is projected to have remained stable over the course of 700 years. This astonishing fact, in the light of so many failed frontier missions, leads to the conclusion that an ingenious procreation system was settled on early in the colony's history. Yet early reports show that communities have no strict family ties and are very penetrable to outsiders. This suggests Dravidian (modulo-2) or parallel cousins/consanguineous kinship rules. The exact determination of the Naturists' family ties will be achieved in cooperation with A1/A.

**Gender Studies / Prof. Ally Blackling, PhD /
Annex 1, Section F**

In conjunction with 1A/B, Professor Blackling's department will examine the hierarchical structures between men and women in the context of the society's history. A normative conclusion will be issued that will analyze the Naturists' success based solely on this aspect.

**Linguistics [Anthropology/Ethnology*] /
Prof. Michael Assenza, PhD / Annex 2, Section C-E**

Famously, the unique and complex language of Farhome's natives contain elements of English, forming the core of ordinary communication; French, apparently applied to abstract terms and situations as well as proper nouns; and American Sign Language, used to convey transitive and imperative meanings. Currently, papers for three positions are being accepted, all of which will be expected to be fulfilled in close interdependence. The language will be catalogued, building on existing, informal documentation and fieldwork with the Montag people. A theoretical construct focused on verbal, non-verbal, para-verbal and, in cooperation with the Institute of Anthropology, extra-verbal communication will be achieved. Finally, the possibility of field research and non-intrusive observation of other tribes will enable a record of regional variance in its socio-cultural context.

**Archaeology/History / Prof. Karl Triebdüs, ScD /
Annex 2, Section F**

This paper will document Professor Triebdüs' progress in collecting old artifacts of the initial Naturists. The current overlying problem is: how did they arrive? The one DropShip found on planet had nowhere near the capacity to transport the purported 3,000 families. Are more vessels on Farhome? Are they connected to current Naturist enclaves? Did the DropShip perform multiple trips, and if so, how was this done logistically? Were the Naturists missed, was their fate questioned? This paper will follow speculative argumentation threads to their logical conclusions.

**Art History [Ethnology/Theology] / TBD
[Prof. Christina Renczes] / Annex 1, Section G**

This opening is eligible to post-graduate students of art history with a focus on clerical artifacts. The Naturists use depictive paintings only in places of worship. This scholarship will focus on cataloguing the paintings found in the Montag Caves, and will assist Professor Renczes' work with the contextualization of the Naturists' religion.

Special Scholarship

MTF artists in residence can apply for a Farhome scholarship that will also last for four years, culminating in an honorary degree and either publication or a series of exhibitions. Artists of all mediums are encouraged to apply. Created material will be expected to contribute to academic publicity materials, as well as mandatory publications of the A1/A, A1/D, A1/G, A3/D and A3/G projects.

Natural Sciences / Various / Annex 3, A-I

Most parameters of planetary exploration have been covered by Interstellar Expedition's own staff, and are not the focal point of the University of Past and Future, but papers will be supported for the following.

- Zoology (theropodoids, Base Camp Omega)
- Zoology (therapsidoids, Base Camp Omega)
- Zoology (invertebrae maximae, Base Camp Omega)
- Zoology (Farhome Apex Predator "Saurosuchus", *)
- Geology (tectonics, Base Camp Omega)
- Marine Biology (Camp Zeta)
- Marine Biology (Camp Eta)
- Geography (Marine Topography, Camp Theta*)
- Meteorology (Camp Beta)

Mission Statement

Remember, always, our mission: To advance the knowledge and understanding of the human race through the discovery and study of humanity's past.

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RIMWARD WONDERS

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Interstellar Expeditions contracts missions for tertiary education institutions from all around the Inner Sphere, be they insignificant colleges on a backwater planet or the New Avalon Institute of Science. This universal working relationship works both ways, as there are thousands of students studying with the aid of Interstellar Expeditions grants or scholarships. As membership in IE is a prerequisite for funding, the corporation ensures its own brain trust. This also creates self-generating lobbying for further scientific missions, which are commissioned by graduated scholars.

Interstellar Expeditions has long merged the Millennium Foundation, a group with strong theological inflections to their original missions, the Federation of Star Lookers, astronomical explorers, and the Mutual Exploration Network, well-funded laymen with a mostly-genuine interest in exploration. Whereas the fundamental lines between these three defunct umbrella organizations have long blurred, they are upheld in academic issues with fierce pride. Most sub-organizations will take up a label of one of the three founding parties in their public academic presence, though the Federation of Star Lookers generally uses the name of the later Star Group.

Millennium Foundation programs focus on social sciences and arts, Star Group programs will generally support natural sciences, and the Mutual Exploration Network concentrates on field research. All programs and institutions funded by Interstellar Expeditions groups will have a unifying focus on archaeology and astronomy.

The endeavors on Farhome are of interest to all three groups, though the Millennium Foundation Trust is the one officially in charge. Happily for the planet, this interest group pursues research with an overt motive, to strengthen its academic standing. The dean of the university has a MEN-funded background and is interested in the planet's natural resources and the possibility of any undiscovered historical secrets. The Republic of the Sphere is the official external contractor and main sponsor of the MFT Farhome Mission III, and its interests are aligned with safeguarding this second Eden. DropShip and standing aerospace support is supplied by this backer, but more importantly, this guarantees political and military legitimacy and leverage on top of the academic respectability the mission and its institution possess.

Using Farhome in games dictates unconventional settings and objectives.

"They Live in the Darkness under the Trees"

Farhome is raising a lot of awareness in the 3090s. This second Eden features sport-like opportunities akin to Hunter's Paradise, combining similar challenges with less lethality. The Naturists' lifestyle and their apparent openness advertised by IE publications will invite outside interest. Hopes for the discovery of natural treasures can be another incentive for player characters to choose the planet as a destination.

Farhome can be a viable setting for man-vs-nature adventures, or more hedonistic settings.

The system is protected by a *Vengeance*-class DropShip and its aerospace fighter contingent, and any unsanctioned intrusion will be challenged.

Just Cause

If the above scenario happens, the real challenge will be the return to the Inner Sphere. Far more powerful than any real planetary defenses are the backers of IE's presence on Farhome. Any non-sanctioned intrusion will be prosecuted with extreme prejudice by law and force. All pre-existing relationships with the Republic will be severed, allies will mysteriously disappear, and there are enough shady forces at work in IE that large bounties on the player characters' collective heads are likely.

The Complete Lack of Wolverines

In a variation of the raid setting that serves various personal gains, there will be a large amount of interest in Farhome amongst IE's non-academic members. Of intrinsic interest to dig gypsies, the planet's location along the axis of the Minnesota Tribe's disappearance will create a lot of attention amongst attendees of the Grand Tours and affiliates with MEN sympathies in general.

The Dog Eat Dog World of Academia

Several scenarios would serve to discredit the Millennium Foundation Trust's leadership of the Farhome mission. Beyond the obvious hook of collegial animosity, any security breach of the planet would put the idealistic goals and methods of the endeavor into question. More seriously, any attack on Farhome that despoils the sanctity of the planet in regards to its people and nature and would impeach on the mission's very integrity.

None of the above are very combat-centric, and all largely eschew a BattleMech setting. Any encounter with or on Farhome needs to be very deliberate and serve to move the plot forward. It can serve as a very malleable background to a myriad of game directions, from the utopian to the disillusioned.

THE CANOPIAN RUINS

The past borders of the Magistracy of Canopus, at its height, once held over sixty inhabited worlds, not including the Trznadel Cluster. Comparing official maps produced by the Star League and later ComStar shows that many of these worlds were officially abandoned after the fall of the Star League. As in other interstellar states, the failure of terraforming equipment and the loss of advanced technology was the cause for much of the decline in the Magistracy. Interstellar Expeditions' discovery of ruins—and in some cases still-active colonies—in the region dubbed "The Canopian Ruins" shows that not all is what it seems. The size and extent of some of the projects and colonies discovered here suggest that the original Star League was heavily involved, and that the Canopian government continued to exploit the remains of many projects through the Succession Wars and the Jihad.



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ASTROGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

The Canopian Ruins extend through the former Deep Periphery border worlds of the Magistracy of Canopus and beyond. Stretching past the borders of the Canopian's former Ballad Province is a large scale feature of the Orion Spur dubbed the Diamond Garter, a long stream of bright white and blue-white main sequence stars that all formed at approximately the same time. Stretching from close to Thraxa to halfway to the Orion Nebula, this string of stars is brilliant in the night sky of many Canopian worlds.

Dominating this region is a truly massive feature over 300 light-years across called the Perseus Cloud. Approximately two million years ago, a powerful supernova created this hydrogen cloud, strong enough that when ComStar sent the Explorer Corps vessels *Fortitude* and *Discovery* to the Orion Nebula in 2982, they found no life bearing systems within thirty-five light-years of the nebula's core. Just beyond this lies the California Nebula is one of the farthest objects in the rimward region that was studied up close by ComStar's Explorer Corps.

Laying 300 light-years past the world we have called Midden, on the edge of the Perseus Cloud, is the Beehive Cluster. Containing hundreds of stars, the cluster has yet to have all of its planetary systems fully explored. IE survey teams that have entered the cluster have shown that the cluster's age is sufficient enough for rudimentary ecosystems to have evolved on many of the more habitable worlds, rare as they may be with the gravitational tugging of so many nearby stars.

The Perseus Cloud, California Nebula, and other features such as the Flying Bat Nebula and the Cepheus Cloud are all considered a part of the Perseus-Cepheus Cloud Complex. This immense area of gas and dust restricts the number of habitable worlds deep rimward of the Magistracy of Canopus. The violent birth and death of the stars that created it have irradiated many worlds that would require significant amounts of terraforming to colonize. But the destruction this has caused is also a source of beauty and life to the region. The skies of the Canopus Ruins region are bright with these nebulae, and the elements they contain from the novae and supernovae will help enrich worlds for billions of years to come.

POTSHERDS OF THE CANOPIAN RUINS

The Canopian Ruins, like other regions of the Near and Deep Periphery, consists of a volume of space millions of cubic parsecs in size. An adequate description of all of Interstellar Expeditions findings in the Canopian Ruins would require a significant amount of time. While it is recommended that new IE employees assigned to the region read *Collecting Canopian Potsherds: A Guide to the Archeological Ruins of the Rimward Reaches. Vol. 1* to

6 by Dr. Lawrence Bragg, we include in this briefing a list of IE's most important findings, and the largest dangers that any new employee of Interstellar Expeditions should be made aware of in the region.

STAR: SLSC M8V.8476 (SKYFOG)

Location: 50 light-years rimward of the Magistracy of Canopus world of Dunianshire

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): M8V (209 hours)

Position in System: 1 (moon)

Time to Jump Point: 2.09 days

Number of Satellites: N/A (Skyfog is the natural moon of a gas giant)

Surface Gravity: 0.91

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 490 C (Hot-Tropical)

Surface Water: 84 percent

Highest Native Life: Plants

Population (3095): 0

One of the more common sights in known space are "hot-Jupiters," gas giants that circle near their parent stars, inside the frost line. While these gas giants aren't habitable without floating cities such as could be built during the Star League, sometimes their moons are. Skyfog is one of these moons.

Settled during the Star League as a scientific observation post in much the same way as the Niops Association, Skyfog's goal was to study the evolution of habitable moons around gas giants. At its height, the colony had over two million inhabitants, but the environment of Skyfog was intensely hostile to human life. The hard radiation from the gas giant's radiation belts is often strong enough to punch through Skyfog's weak magnetic field. Flares from Skyfog's small red sun also spike radiation levels on the surface far beyond safe levels. Finally, the gravitational stresses put on the moon as it orbits a complex path around its parent planet and star has made it very geologically active. Most of the planet's limited land area is actually active shield volcanoes.

Skyfog was abandoned during the Amaris Coup in 2769, when the scientists decided to risk returning to the Inner Sphere rather than rely on the less-likely resupply missions coming from the heavily-taxed SLDF. Interstellar Expeditions rediscovered the Star League interest in this world in 3003 by chance, when a planetary survey team interested in the moon found a non-functioning electrostatic tether in the gas giant's magnetic field. IE excavations of the remaining structures on the surface of Skyfog are ongoing.



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STAR: SLSC K5IV.500z (FROBISHER)

Location: Approximately 100 light-years anti-spinward and rimward of the Magistracy of Canopus world of Ballad II.

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): K5IV (196 hours)

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 4.12 days

Number of Satellites: 1 (Ayde)

Surface Gravity: 1.16

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Tainted)

Equatorial Temperature: 37o C (Warm-Temperate)

Surface Water: 95 percent

Highest Native Life: Fish

Population (3095): 4,500

Discovered accidentally by an Interstellar Expeditions planetary survey team in 3089, Frobisher has become one of the most heated debates inside IE circles. Settled during the late 2690s, Frobisher's planetary ocean was used as the most extensive laboratory ever devised by the Star League for genetic manipulation of the human genome. Untold billions of Star League dollars were pumped into the construction of large underwater living quarters and land-based research facilities. The end result of this effort was a group of humans able to live entirely underwater. Combining DNA from the amazingly diverse underwater species of Frobisher, Star League scientists were able to keep the morphological differences in the treated human volunteers to a minimum. Gills were easily hidden under skin flaps, and webbed fingers and toes were all that could be seen that was different. These modified humans could still exist outside of water. It was a huge step forward in mankind's ability to colonize otherwise-hostile worlds.

With the fall of the Star League, funding ceased. The scientists employed on the Frobisher Project either found employment in the Magistracy of Canopus' advanced medical field, or lived out their lives on Frobisher trying to help the modified humans prosper. As the DNA manipulation equipment broke down, the modified humans could not address the genetic replication errors that presented as they aged. Combined with low population numbers, which resulted in severe inbreeding, the inhabitants of Frobisher barely resemble standard humans any longer. Each hand and foot of the Frobishans has only three long digits connected by webbing. They have little body hair, and only patchy spots of it grow on their scalp. Their eyes are much larger than those of a normal human, adapted to see in conditions with reduced light, and their lungs have atrophied to the point that they can only stay out of the water for minutes at a time.

Since IE has made contact with the people of Frobisher, they have repeatedly made several requests for help to IE anthropologists. Since the fall of the Star League, raiders from an unknown group have been stripping the laboratory facilities

and surface complexes of anything valuable. The Frobishans have asked IE to find where this material is being taken, as it was the only thing keeping their genome in check. This drifting genome has also become a virtual prison to the people of Frobisher. They can no longer exist outside of the oceans of their world due to massively compromised immune systems.

Interstellar Expeditions is currently exploring many options to assist the Frobishans. Without a military to defend their world, and the inability to transport them to a more secure location, IE's options are very limited.

STAR: SLSC A1V.096o (MIDDEN)

Location: 45 light-years anti-spinward of the former Magistracy of Canopus world of Helvetica

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): A1V (162 hours)

Position in System: 1

Time to Jump Point: 47.06 days

Number of Satellites: 0 (dust ring)

Surface Gravity: 1.38

Atm. Pressure: High (Toxic)

Equatorial Temperature: 58o C (Hot)

Surface Water: 29 percent

Highest Native Life: None

Population (3095): 2,500

Life in the Canopian Ruins can be found in many unexpected places, but Midden is one of the most unique. The IE stellar survey team that discovered it named the world after the word used to describe a garbage dump in most archeological texts. The name fits, as the world was evidently home to several highly toxic industrial manufacturers and strip-mining operations and a chemical weapons research and storage facility (likely established sometime during the Age of War, and subsequently shut down and sealed during the time of the first Star League).

Used by both the Star League and the Magistracy of Canopus through the end of the twenty-eighth century, Midden had a semi-permanent workforce that staffed the highly automated factories, refineries and DropPort. With no native life and an atmosphere composed primarily of nitrogen, sulfur dioxide, and carbon dioxide, the tiny population had to rely on imported foodstuffs and live deep underground. The final workers were employed at a nuclear waste reclamation plant near the planet's southern pole, and their artifacts are both the most recent and best preserved.

Human life quickly came back to Midden, as scavengers and bandits began to comb through the trash heaps, abandoned factories, former habitation domes and chambers scattered across the planet. One group in particular has been successful at living on Midden. Calling themselves the Bannermann, these scavengers have successfully built a rudimentary and dangerously



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leaky fission reactor out of nuclear waste and garbage from across the planet. Using it to power atmospheric scrubbers, and getting oxygen from electrolysis of water, the Bannermann have restarted a platinum mine. Using the refined precious metal as a trade good with IE and other passing merchants, the Bannermann are able to sustain a fairly comfortable existence underground at the added cost of significant amounts of cancer in their population.

STAR: SLSC G1V.7100 (PIOCHE)

Location: 115 light-years rimward and anti-spinward of the Magistracy of Canopus world of Weistheimer

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): G1V (182 hours)

Position in System: 4

Time to Jump Point: 9.75 days

Number of Satellites: 1 (Francois)

Surface Gravity: 1.00

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 22o C (Cold-Temperate)

Surface Water: 60 percent

Highest Native Life: Reptiles

Population (3095): 18,000

Discovered by Interstellar Expeditions in 3062, Pioche is a world slowly recovering from a devastating mass extinction event caused by an asteroid impact in 2799. Initially settled in 2585 by colonists from the Magistracy of Canopus and the Andurien region of the Capellan Confederation, this world was a temperate one with small continents and a low axial tilt that made the seasons more mild and conducive to year-round agriculture. The rich soils allowed significant amounts of food to be produced, and the population boomed. The fall of the Star League did little to slow the growth of Pioche, and at its peak this agrarian world reached a population of nearly 200 million.

When the asteroid was detected two weeks before impact, the population of Pioche panicked. Without a hyper-pulse generator, the government couldn't signal any nearby worlds for help even if there were ones close enough to communicate with. The short notice before impact precluded the use of the remaining DropShips.

The global firestorm after the impact wiped out most life on the planet, including large portions of the population. The nuclear winter after the event lasted two local years, during which almost all of the remaining population perished from disease or famine. The once fertile world was reduced to a barren burnt-out wasteland. The large ice caps that formed over the planet's shallow polar seas during the intense cold of the first decade reduced the planetary albedo enough to slow the recovery of temperatures to pre-impact levels.

Some of the inhabitants did survive through luck, but their descendants are little more than hunter-gatherers roaming the

recovering wasteland and fishing the large lakes that still have fish. Almost no Terran plant or animal life survived, except some hardy evergreen trees near the equator. The new tribes of Pioche rely on the more hardy species of native plants and animals to feed themselves. IE has yet to make contact with the tribes of Pioche, and has instead been observing them with unmanned drones in order to learn more about Stone Age societies.

STAR: SLSC K3V.10599 (KLEINWELT)

Location: Approximately 50 light-years rimward of the Magistracy of Canopus world of Thraxa

Planetary Information:

Star Type (Recharge Time): K3V (194 hours)

Position in System: 2

Time to Jump Point: 4.62 days

Number of Satellites: 2 (Freiheit, Gleichheit)

Surface Gravity: 0.93

Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)

Equatorial Temperature: 30o C (Temperate)

Surface Water: 68 percent

Highest Native Life: Mammals

Population (3095): 25,000

Many of the former colony worlds of the Magistracy of Canopus were abandoned during the early Succession Wars because of failing terraforming equipment or unsustainability. Kleinwelt was neither of these. Kleinwelt had a small population of miners focused on exploiting large deposits of uranium, gold and iridium. The fall of the Star League saw rising attacks by bandits, and the population chose to abandon its single large settlement in 2788. The Magistracy of Canopus never resettled the world—significant deposits of those same minerals had been found in already-inhabited systems in large enough quantities to supply the far smaller industrial output of the Magistracy during the Succession Wars.

In 3044, a number of slaves were being transported on the Marian Hegemony *Invader*-class JumpShip *Scrimshaw Sailor* from Alphard to Islington. The slaves held a successful revolt just prior to making the jump to Islington. Killing most of the crew of the JumpShip and its attached DropShips, their ringleader Marcus had enough presence of mind to ensure that the JumpShip's navigator survived. Marcus, the former slave of a high ranking individual in the Marian Navy, had seen copies of Star League-era star charts that gave him the idea to seek out one of the former Canopian worlds.

It is unknown what happened to the *Scrimshaw Sailor* after its arrival in the Klienwelt system. When IE asked the new citizens of the abandoned world in 3082, they refused to say. Each DropShip landed in a different region of the planet's temperate and agriculturally productive climates. The new capital is centered

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on the recently-renamed DropShip *Marian's Folly*. A community of over 10,000, Marian's Folly is a bustling frontier city with a significant amount of basic industrial equipment being turned out of the DropShip's engineering deck, utilizing left-behind mining equipment from the Star League.

IE has been asked to not officially inform the Canopian government of the presence of the former slaves of the Hegemony and their descendants. The current planetary president, Marcus (now in his seventies), wishes to wait until 3100 to formally request official recognition by the Canopian government.

GAMEMASTER SECTION

The long human history of the Canopian Ruins opens up many possibilities for a gamemaster to explore. There are dozens of worlds heavily settled by the Magistracy of Canopus during the height of the Star League that, by the end of the thirty-first century, are either abandoned or resettled. Worlds like Kleinwelt that were settled by refugees from another nation, like Vixen and Ballad II that were resettled by the Canopians before the outbreak of the Jihad, or systems such as Cayuga, Helvetica and Reinbak that are still uninhabited (probably), are all opportunities for archeological expeditions or exploration in general.

A gamemaster may wish to introduce some of the more unique and disturbing groups of humans from the Canopian Ruins. The example given of the world of Frobisher is only one case where the Star League and Canopian push for genetic improvements have gone wrong. In all cases the gamemaster should keep in mind the rarity of these types of surviving groups of experimental subjects.

There are also many possible plotlines to explore stemming from the Canopian Ruins. Why did Star League scientists decide to use an electrostatic tether to produce energy from the gas giant's highly ionized magnetic field in the system of Skyfog, rather than rely on more common fusion reactors? Did they need more energy for a larger project? Where is all the stolen research and material from Frobisher being taken, and who is benefiting from it? What other horrors did the Canopian obsession with medical technologies and an "anything goes" culture produce? Why was Midden used as a dumping ground in the first place when uninhabited systems with settled planets would do just fine? Did something being produced or disposed of need to be hidden from prying eyes?

THE ALEXANDRIAN COVENANT**TO THE LIGHTHOUSE**

As best we can tell, the Alexandrian Covenant began in the 2580s as a confluence of two distinct cultural groups. To flee the coming ravages of the Reunification War, a group of civilian refugees from the Magistracy of Canopus headed rimward in search of a home where they hoped to escape the SLDF. Likewise, a similarly sized band of Taurian Concordat émigrés fled to

RISK ASSESSMENT

Subdirector,

Took us a long time, but we finally managed to infiltrate the Covenant and find what we needed. For all the trouble we went to, I just hope the effort was worth it. We lost a lot of hardware and manpower through trial and error here.

Look over the attached report and let me know if there are any areas you believe would warrant further study. I'll let you know if your concerns might warrant the need to bring in more specialized teams.

Right now, I do not believe the Covenant is an immediate threat to our overall security, but I guarantee the more we push them, the bloodier things are going to get.

—KZ

—Message to IE Subdirector Jesse Amano via mobile HPG, 29 March 3094

uncharted space, rather than witness their nation become a Star League vassal state. Several failed colonial attempts later, both groups found themselves on neighboring planets in the same solar system, approximately 270 light-years from the Concordat's rimward border. This serendipity led to an uneasy alliance between the worlds of Eros III (the Taurian settlement) and Phaeton IV (the Canopian enclave).

During their original emigration from the Periphery, both the Canopian and Taurian refugees had brought vast stores of knowledge and technology with them. The ex-Canopians believed the Reunification War would ultimately result in the wanton destruction of unrecoverable knowledge, history and technology. These colonists wished to safeguard some measure of civilization in case the whole Inner Sphere caught fire and descended into barbarism. The Taurians, however, initially planned to establish a Deep Periphery redoubt for the Concordat, a world where they could build up military assets without Star League interference. The people of Eros III had one day planned to strike back at the SLDF while their collective back was turned and retake the Concordat. This dream would never come to fruition.

We have not yet been able to nail down the exact date, but fragmentary Covenant records show that at some point Eros III suffered some manner of catastrophe that cost the former Taurians most of their fledgling military industry and a large portion of their population. Preliminary archaeological analysis of Eros III shows definitive evidence of a mass meteor shower that laid waste to several population centers. Rather than allow the Taurian expatriates to perish, the Canopians sent DropShips to evacuate as many people to Phaeton IV as they could.

At first the transplanted Taurians maintained separate enclaves on Phaeton IV and lived their lives without much contact with their Canopian neighbors. However, before an indeterminate number of years had passed, the two cultures started to mix, and the lines between Canopian and Taurian



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began to blur. Before long, the leaders of the separate nations chose to formally pool their resources and join forces. Rather than having two disparate polities on the same planet, the two governments chose to meld into one single body politic by the signing of the Covenant Pact.

This new government's first edict changed the name of the planet to reflect this spirit of collaboration. Thus, Phaeton IV became Pharos, a portmanteau of the two original colony worlds and an homage to the storied Lighthouse of Alexandria in ancient Egypt on Terra. With caches of Canopian history and Taurian technology nestled in safe places across the planet, the emergent Alexandrian Covenant hoped to one day light a path through the rocks for a troubled Inner Sphere.

This new government modeled itself upon extant Canopian and Taurian politics, and the established legislative body comprised a bicameral assembly. The all-female House of Dames represented traditional Canopian issues, and the all-male House of Lords championed formerly Taurian ideals. The elected leaders of these two chambers, the protectrix and magister, formed the Covenant's executive branch and acted as heads of state.

With the blessing of this new government, nearby worlds were colonized, each one vowing to uphold the Covenant by sending legislators to Pharos and establishing repositories to safeguard learning and technology. These colonies flourished, and a steady stream of trade between the Covenant capital and its neighboring systems afforded the people a measure of prosperity. This newfound security allowed the small dissident nation to sit back and covertly watch the realms of the rimward Periphery labor beneath their Star League shackles.

DAY AND NIGHT

Here is where Covenant history starts to get a bit hazy. Surviving records from this period are incomplete, but our team was able to extract enough fragments to assemble a rough picture of what transpired between the Covenant's formation and what is known as the First Upheaval.

Our best guess places the First Upheaval sometime in the early 2700s, during which the Alexandrian Covenant transformed nearly overnight. Pharos erupted into war, turning the whole planet inside out. Although no weapons of mass destruction were employed—despite rumors that the original contingent of Taurian expatriates had fled from the Concordat with a stockpile of nuclear weapons—this conflict rendered the planet nearly unrecognizable. The capital city of Rhakotis lay in ruins. Whole cities burned. Hundreds of thousands fled into the wilds and were forced to live off the land. The other Covenant worlds likewise devolved into horrific violence once word of the war reached them. Research estimates perhaps a quarter of the nation's population perished during the tragedy.

While Pharos and its neighbors burned, a new government seized the reins of power. The Alexandrian Covenant mutated

from a bicameral republic into a veritable dictatorship led by a new protectrix and an all-female advisory council culled from the surviving ranks of the House of Dames. The current administration of the Covenant attests that the Covenant Pact document has remained unchanged since their nation's founding, but probing beneath the surface revealed this new protectrix shredded the existing Pact after the First Upheaval and rewrote it to fit her own ends. Under this new Pact, only women were allowed to own property, helm a business enterprise or hold positions of high rank in the military.

The most tragic loss of the First Upheaval, however, was the accidental destruction of several library archives and technology caches. The lighthouse flames behind the Covenant Pact started to diminish, threatening to plunge the nation into darkness.

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

We have been able to reliably place the Second Upheaval during the 2800s. Available documents only allude to a mass political insurrection, but references to the actual cause have either been lost in the wars since or have been purposely excised from Alexandrian history. The result of this insurrection, however, is well known: revolutionaries overthrew the protectrix-led matriarchy and raised a new government loosely based on the original House of Lords. The self-proclaimed magister redrafted the Pact, which permanently deposed all female Alexandrians from positions of power. The Second Upheaval was ultimately more destructive and tragic than the First. In addition to the loss of further caches during the war, hate crimes ran rampant until the new patriarchal government stabilized matters within the Covenant. Thousands upon thousands of women were brutally murdered; newborn girls were often left out to the elements. Over the next 250 years, at least two more coups occurred for unknown reasons, each revolution more devastating and brutal than the last.

The coup of 3042—what we have tentatively termed the Fifth Upheaval—was blamed on a magister-led government that supposedly allowed a horrific plague to run rampant. In 3075, the Sixth Upheaval replaced the sitting protectrix government for allegedly allowing a tragic meteor strike to destroy a significant population center.

Over the past few hundred years, war and the loss of technology have led to a marked devolution in religious belief amongst the Alexandrians. Sometime after the Second Upheaval, the people of the Covenant had lost the capability for interstellar travel, and the idea of the nation's mothballed JumpShip fleet eventually developed into the belief that Pharos was under the protection of a sky god. The people became highly superstitious, believing that they were not meant to leave the planet. Any pirate bands that occasionally tried to land on Pharos were seen as deceiving demons, and the Covenant military destroyed them with extreme prejudice.

RIMWARD WONDERS

THE SPARK OF TRAGEDY

The biggest mystery surrounding the Alexandrian Covenant is what ultimately triggered the First Upheaval. History is, of course, written by the victors, so what few records are available from that period shed very little light on the subject. Our only real method of divining the truth lies in piecing together the fragments we do have and extrapolating a subtext based on the historical shape of the negative space left behind.

Thus far, we have developed several working hypotheses as to the nature of the catalyst.

The most probable cause is that the sitting magister and several Taurian expatriates heading the House of Lords were convicted of supreme corruption. The protectrix ordered the entire body to be purged and reconstituted after each new member underwent a ruthless vetting process. The House of Lords, exerting the strongest control over Covenant military assets, retaliated and led the nation into all-out war.

Another equally plausible theory posits that the House of Lords uncovered corruption running deep within the House of Dames. When confronted with these allegations, the protectrix launched a preemptive military strike against the House of Lords and nearly wiped them out. By this point, the allegations were already made public, and those who publicly backed the defunct Lords took the war to the protectrix's doorstep.

A thesis with less physical evidence is that a terrorist organization within the Covenant triggered the war by destroying one government House and blaming the attack on the other. Some undated accounts mention the House of Dames being destroyed by a massive explosion, whereas others from the same time period speak of the House of Lords being the victim of the bombing instead. There is enough evidence to

show some political unrest on either side of the fence, but not enough to prove the existence of any underground movement, let alone establish a motive.

The newest theory to come to light is perhaps the most far-fetched, but it still retains enough credibility to remain plausible. Our orbital surveys and archaeological investigation of Eros III's southern continent have uncovered a small, anachronistic settlement that dates back to the 24th or 25th century. Either the Taurians colonized Eros III far earlier than any extant Covenant records claim—which would invalidate most of their reasons for fleeing the Concordat—or the Taurian settlers had no knowledge of this settlement. The most obvious conclusion is that a third group had colonized the planet and was small enough to escape notice when the Taurian refugees arrived. The overriding theory is this out-of-place settlement belonged to the scions of the Tikonov Galactic Rangers. After the formation of the Capellan Confederation in 2367, Chancellor Franco Liao purged private armies from his new realm, and the Capellan armed forces chased the Rangers through the Taurian Concordat and the Federated Suns. The Rangers eventually headed toward the Periphery in stolen Taurian vessels and disappeared, last seen in the Davion system Sanurcha. If this Eros III settlement did indeed belong to the Galactic Rangers remnant, they might have hidden themselves amongst the Taurian expatriates upon the evacuation of the planet. It is then entirely possible these erstwhile Capellans formed an unacknowledged third voice amongst the population and ultimately subverted the Covenant's political structure for their own ends.

—*Anthropology Today: The Alexandrian Covenant*, Interstellar Expeditions Press, 3095

In 3082 a prestigious member of the House of Lords was convicted of blasphemy and sentenced to death. His crime: proposing a motion to repair an ancient, rediscovered DropShip (found in a heretofore hidden technology cache) in order to try reaching the sky god. Female-led dissidents within the government once more rose up against the sitting patriarchy and overthrew it after a short but vicious coup for allowing such blasphemy to take root.

Our expeditions discovered Pharos in this state of superstition and barbarism in late 3093. Despite our initial caution in attempting to observe these people, the Alexandrians destroyed three IE DropShips and severely damaged two more using surface-to-orbit missiles. Our later attempts to peacefully intermingle with the people ended in Covenant security forces rooting out the first few expeditionary teams and immediately executing them. Further attempts to live amongst the people eventually yielded fruit by gaining access to destroyed knowledge caches and managing to restore some of the corrupted data.

THE TIP OF THE SPEAR

Although the Alexandrians are a traumatized, broken, and paranoid people, the Alexandrian Armed Forces remain strong and are always ready for "demonic incursions" or the next inevitable coup. Despite the Covenant's warring and political dichotomies, the nation's military displays remarkable patriotism and morale when massed against an exterior threat.

The smallest unit of AAF organization is known as the chariot, which is roughly equivalent to a standard armor company and is led by a lieutenant. Five chariots denote a squadron, headed by a captain. Five squadrons form a division, led by a charioteer. Among all chariot divisions, the foremost charioteer holds the title of first charioteer and reports directly to the protectrix (or magister, during patriarchal reigns). Under the current matriarchal government, all AAF officers are women, but men—both volunteer and conscripted troops—still form the bulk of the enlisted ranks.



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Due to the rapid decline of technology, the AAF's non-infantry assets are composed solely of light to heavy tanks, conventional fighters and support vehicles. Aside from a few surviving relics, internal combustion engines have replaced fusion engines in nearly all chasses. Ballistic munitions, predominantly light- to medium-caliber autocannon, dominate nearly every offensive profile due to the Covenant's inability to manufacture most energy-based weapons.

To guard against external threats, the AAF maintains firebases housing crude but effective surface-to-orbit missile silos. Since these installations form a vital component of Covenant security, they are the only military target that both the ruling and dissident factions have always agreed are completely off limits.

Since the worlds of the Covenant cannot communicate with each other due to a lack of courier ships, the AAF appears in a similar yet different form on each planet. Subtle variations exist between each system's AAF iteration—such as differing rank titles or the number of chariots per squadron—but such differences are largely cosmetic.

CONCLUSION

The Alexandrian Covenant was formed with two noble goals. Its spectacular failure in both of these aims has turned the nation into a bitter and belligerent collection of isolated systems without the means to contact other worlds. The insular nature and primitive technology level of these people would make them poor allies at best. A suitable invasion force might be capable of wresting these systems from Covenant control, but the AAF's tenacity and defensive capabilities might render an invasion far costlier than any potential gains.

If we can maneuver the political and religious waters, we might be able to reconnect the detached systems of the Covenant with its immediate neighbors and reignite the fires of communication and commerce. If the Covenant eventually reunites, this wayward nation might someday become a worthy ally state.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Having remained largely undiscovered for several hundred years, the Alexandrian Covenant is a fractured nation filled with mysteries. While some of these mysteries have been resolved, other looming concerns may envelop the Covenant for years to come. Here are a few options gamemasters can incorporate into campaigns involving the Alexandrian people.

Tikonov Galactic Rangers/Eros III

Regardless of whether the descendants of the Tikonov Galactic Rangers caused the First Upheaval is moot. Recent archaeological investigation into the mysterious settlement on Eros III has found conclusive evidence that some of the Rangers' progeny did indeed put down roots there. Due to the Upheavals destroying census data and other sociological records, it is impossible to know which current Alexandrians descended from the Rangers. Thus, archaeologists and historians can only speculate as to what place these ex-Capellans might have in the Covenant's delicate power structure.

Snuffing out the Lighthouse

IE believes only a small portion of the Covenant's original library and technology caches have been found. Several have been destroyed across the Covenant worlds during the various Upheavals, but evidence points to a great many more, their locations lost to history. Just one of these as-yet-undiscovered caches would be enough to tip the political balance against the sitting matriarchy. Also, since there are no signs that nuclear weapons were deployed during any recorded coup, IE believes one or more of these caches contains nukes from the Taurian Concordat. If such a cache were found, the Alexandrian Covenant could very well transform itself into a radioactive wasteland.

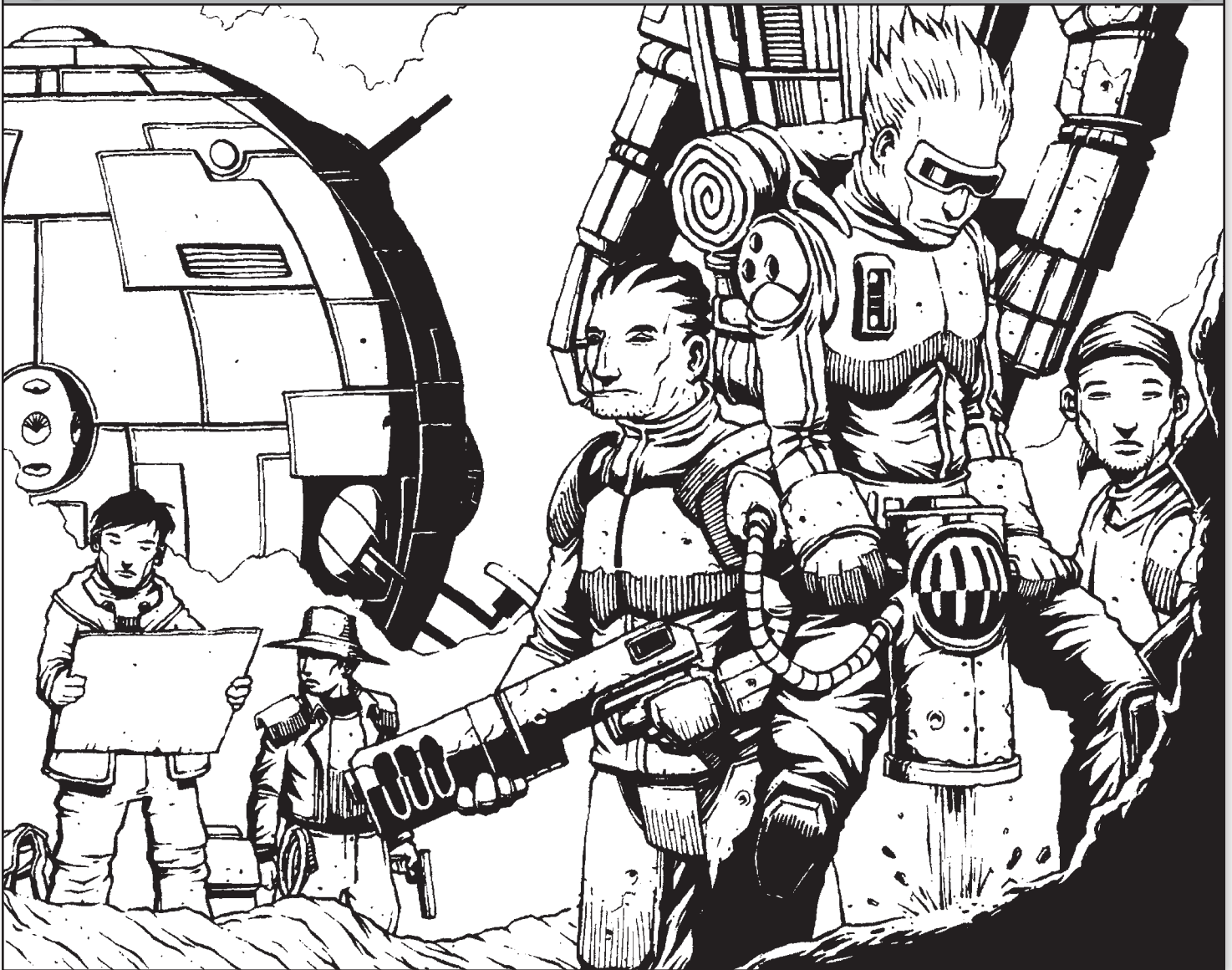
Lost Worlds

At least two currently uninhabited planets have been verified as previous members of the Covenant. The system identified as Cyrene shows signs of past habitation and an extinction-scale level of destruction, yet the estimated date of depopulation does not correspond to any known Upheaval. The deserted planet of Sophos shows extensive Covenant civilization but no overt signs of warfare. Archaeologists are still attempting to determine how and why the people of Sophos vanished and where they could have gone.

Another matter under investigation is the concurrence of events across the Covenant. Despite Pharos being out of communication with other Alexandrian worlds due to lack of interstellar travel, the conflicts and political turnovers on Pharos also occurred near the same time on these neighboring planets. Most working theories involve an underground information trade—such as a black market or secret society—that covertly travels between Covenant worlds by launching DropShips into orbit from uninhabited continents. Thus far, no concrete proof of any such group has been found.



THE COMPETITION



THREATS ALL AROUND

For anyone working in the field, what follows here goes without saying: Interstellar Expeditions is not the only organization seeking answers in the lost and the unknown worlds of deep space. Where hunting the Word of Blake or delving into the mysteries of the Clans' civil war would be dangerous efforts by themselves, throwing in the activities of the elusive Green Ghosts, the remnants of ComStar's Explorer Corps, the Great Houses and untold scores of pirates and lostech prospectors make this an operation rife with competition.

The nature of each threat varies greatly, and our official policies regarding the appropriate responses for the safety of IE assets and their discoveries are equally varied. For instance, when dealing with independent explorers such as prospectors, privateers, and

pirates, our standard policies tend toward a basic "give what you get" approach. If the opposite number approaches the IE team without hostility, then respond in kind; protect the integrity of the discovery or operation at hand, lest the newcomer have dishonest intentions, but do not offer violence to a stranger who has given no cause.

That may sound like common sense, until one considers the feeling of intense vulnerability that comes with many of our field operations. When scouring ruins on some dead, alien world, it is easy for teams to feel isolated and exposed to unknown threats. Lacking even IE's resources, independent parties in this same predicament may likely be heavily armed and quick to assume that all organized groups larger than themselves are predators, perhaps pirates come to take whatever it is these prospectors



THE COMPETITION

have come for themselves. With tensions so high, a little paranoia is understandable, but even the slightest act of aggression can instantly transform an uneasy encounter with an otherwise well-meaning soul into a shooting war. It is for this very reason that we at IE prefer to hire mercenary forces for security, rather than trust the martial discipline of our field operations teams, whose real expertise should be far more academic.

Military threats, including those from pirates or the Green Ghosts, represent the opposite end of the spectrum. With these opponents—who often announce their presence through weapons fire—we encourage our teams to protect themselves and their discoveries to the best of their abilities, but also to retreat if overwhelmed.

Separate reports on the Green Ghosts and the Clans will follow, but below are brief overviews of the government-backed dangers our field teams should always be aware of.

GOVERNMENT-BACKED COMPETITION

Military threats can, of course, also come from government-backed groups, including the remnant forces of ComStar's Explorer Corps and those of the Inner Sphere Successor States. Since the Jihad, these groups have been more active than ever, as they too seek any signs or hidden bases of the Word of Blake. Nominally, these groups would appear to be aligned with our goals and, indeed, have been valuable allies in the past—particularly when the Word was actively waging war against them. Since that time, unfortunately, many of these agencies have assumed their own agendas, and now tend to see IE as a meddling organization beyond their control.

Publicly, all of these groups—and their parent governments—decry the increasingly violent incidents that have taken place between themselves and IE teams since the 3080s, but after-action reports from IE survivors have convinced our directors that these events reflect a deliberate policy of aggression aimed at anyone these government agencies perceive as a threat.

Furthermore, it should be realized that, given their nature, all of these state-run operations tend toward extreme secrecy and cannot be seen as altruistic in any way. For centuries, exploration for its own sake was never part of the Houses' mandate, and only became part of ComStar's concern after one of their primuses suddenly decided to take the search for Kerensky's whereabouts seriously. These groups will see the hunt for Word of Blake bases and assets as a treasure hunt. To them, any weapons and intelligence they discover will be a strategic boon for the group that captures it first—and all of them intend to be the first. This not only suggests a fight will erupt should IE and House operatives cross paths, it also means that these groups will be highly unlikely to share information or coordinate in any way unless they can control the result and claim any prize for themselves. Field leaders must be wary of this, always, should they even attempt to parlay with government forces while on an expedition.

ComStar Explorer Corps

Of the government groups IE teams should be on guard against, ComStar's Explorer Corps is by far the most dangerous. Though this group suffered badly during the Jihad through Word of Blake predations and a plunging budget, the postwar Explorer Corps have been revived with the primary goals of determining the extent of the Word of Blake's hidden assets and—we suspect—protecting new ComStar operations within the Republic of the Sphere. This latter supposition stems from a documented increase in Explorer Corps encounters, particularly within a radius of ninety light-years around Terra.

In most cases, the Explorer Corps teams opt for diplomacy, making contact with the IE teams they encounter first and then politely insisting that they depart. This insistence is often backed up by the visible presence of armed forces among the Explorer Corps teams, which appear almost entirely made up of mercenary muscle. (This, of course, is consistent with the terms of the Com Guards' disbandment and integration into the RAF ten years ago.) In rare cases, ComStar forces have even offered IE teams "compensation for their troubles" to leave as expediently as possible.

In a few rare cases—particularly those in which IE teams are discovered planetside—some Explorer Corps teams and their mercenaries have attacked first. When these assaults occur, they take place in absolute radio silence, with neither the ComStar team or its mercenaries hailing the IE groups they encounter. It is only by the grace of the Explorer Corps' limited firepower (most appear to employ no more than a lance of mercenary units and marines equipped with small arms) that any of our teams have escaped to report on these incidents.

Though we have maintained diplomatic relations with the government of the Republic and ComStar's First Circuit, there has been no satisfactory explanation to date for these Explorer Corps assaults. ComStar representatives challenged to answer why they are undertaking any form of military action since the formal dismissal of the Com Guards have often insisted that these Explorer Corps "hit squads" do not exist, or may even be remnant Blakist units operating under false colors.

Regardless of the reasons, all IE field teams are advised to exercise extreme caution when encountering units identifying themselves as ComStar Explorer Corps, especially within Republic space or along the coreward Periphery (where they have also been encountered). Because of the danger inherent in ComStar's resources as a financial institution and intelligence-gathering source backed up by the authority of the Republic of the Sphere, we recommend that all out field teams yield to the Explorer Corps' demands without resistance, and retreat immediately if attacked. Determining why such attacks are taking place is of secondary importance to ensuring the survival of IE teams and IE equipment assets.

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The Successor States

Understandably driven by paranoia due to the certainty that a great many Word of Blake forces not only survived the war, but likely even operated for decades within their borders on hidden worlds since before the conflict, the five Great Houses of the Inner Sphere have been engaged in their own state-run exploratory operations. Most of these remain particularly focused on worlds within their own borders, but it is not unheard of to encounter House forces operating within their neighbors' space as well.

Clearly, this "out-of-state traffic" represents covert operations the various Successor States continue to wage against one another—and it is for this reason that encounters between such House "explorers" and IE teams tend toward a greater likelihood of violence than those with ComStar's Explorer Corps. Where once our efforts may have been seen as a valuable source of information during the Jihad, we have now become the nosy interlopers and unfortunate witnesses to the shadow wars the House Lords continue to fight beneath public pretense of peace.

As it is with ComStar, we enjoy public support from most of the various major powers of the Inner Sphere due to our "shared mission" and our "mutual goals of scientific exploration." Only the Capellan Confederation has made it publicly known that we are not wanted in their space. Regardless, it would behoove all of our field teams to regard any encounters with House-affiliated groups in the Deep Periphery or other isolated "off-map" regions—including dead, forgotten, and even wholly unpopulated systems—as an encounter with bandits. Chances are, after all, these House forces will be operating off the grid, and thus feel free to engage any "intruders" they find, no matter how loudly they identify themselves as a humble team of explorers.

Moreover, in civilized space, team leaders are advised to stay on their guard, especially at any government-run ports of call. Recharge stations and spaceports operated exclusively by House agencies tend to produce an alarming amount of extraneous bureaucracy when dealing with IE expeditions, often citing "security concerns" and "enhanced customs protocols" as the reasons why our ships will require a few more days of inspection and a shuttle-load of additional permits and passports just to gain access to a recharge. For this reason, a list of IE-friendly commercial groups and intermediaries capable of lending logistical support and other assistance must be secured before any major expedition within the borders of a Successor State.

All of this applies even when dealing with the Republic of the Sphere, by the way. Even though it is well known that the Republic has been far more accommodating of Interstellar Expeditions and its mission of scientific and historical exploration, we cannot ignore the fact that the Republic is a realm essentially made up of agencies and segments of the other five House states.

Furthermore, given its close ties to ComStar—see the Explorer Corps section earlier—we can be reasonably certain that our activities even within Exarch Stone's grand experiment are being closely monitored at all times.

Periphery States

The primary difference between the Successor State powers and the Periphery, when it comes to their relative danger to IE operations, is their relative lack of resources to spend on exploratory operations and covert surveillance. Yet this is not a reason for us to believe that such risks simply vanish when one ventures into the Periphery. The major Periphery realms, in fact, do have functional intelligence agencies, with the Magistracy of Canopus' Magistracy Intelligence Ministry (MIM) among the most dangerous and well equipped. Indeed, the rather anemic number of discoveries in our rimward theater suggests that the Canopians—and perhaps the Taurians—have taken an active role in curtailing deep space activities in their regions. This could also be a side effect of the two most historically powerful Periphery realms' efforts to clear the region of pirates.

Fortunately, this does still mean that IE operations in the Periphery and beyond have enjoyed less government interference. Out on these fringes, piracy is more common, as are encounters with lostech prospectors and other independents. Depending on the region, additional threats, including the Green Ghosts and the Clans, may also manifest. Thus, IE teams should always be on their guard—no matter where they operate.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

Interstellar Expeditions' entire assessment regarding the dangers of government agencies and their motivations is spot-on. With the Word of Blake shattered and withdrawn to parts unknown, the major powers of the Inner Sphere have once again turned wary eyes upon one another while spending the last decade and a half rebuilding their damaged infrastructure. With less military force available and populations of survivors who remember all too well the horrors of the Word's terror war, major conflicts have receded, but covert activities have increased dramatically—and the pretense of "hunting Blakists" has proven as good an excuse as any for House ships to appear where they should not be.

IE-affiliated groups conducting operations that interact with or directly compete with those of the major governments can expect all manner of hindrances, ranging from an over-abundance of red tape that slows down communications and/or supply needs to an all-out attack aimed at silencing potential witnesses to a top secret operation. In most cases, government forces will assume the most aggressive posture only when caught (or believe they have been caught) in the act of something that could spark a major incident. The following are just a few examples.



THE COMPETITION

Underground Arms Race

In the wake of the Jihad, a combination of diplomatic, economic, and popular initiatives have discouraged the Great Houses from rebuilding their militaries too quickly. With WarShips yards destroyed, and most JumpShip manufacturing reduced to the capacity of only one or two factories per Great House, the need to build standard JumpShips and DropShips just to make up for the sheer level of damage done to interstellar trade and transportation has produced most visible aspect of this “disarmament.” Still others include the very public decommissioning and scrapping of other heavy weapons platforms—including BattleMechs.

But while many ‘Mechs and vehicles *are* being scrapped and slagged, and many of their factories *are* being retooled to civilian or industrial purposes, every Great House is secretly stockpiling a portion of this decommissioned weaponry and augmenting it with the miniscule surplus from their limited military production lines. Ostensibly set aside in case one realm or another shatters the postwar balance of power, these stockpiles are being placed in increasingly hard-to-find sites, including dead worlds and moons deep within each realm’s territory.

IE teams stumbling upon one of these caches may have to contend with automated defenses, booby traps, or—if they are very unlucky—a full military escort detail in the process of storing this equipment. Fortunately, most of these dangers may be surmountable, especially in the event of unmanned defenses. After all, escorting and storing a bunch of mothballed machines is not often a task given to elite troops.

Covert Operations

Spies and other covert operatives do not always travel along the established spacelanes. When secrecy is paramount, some states may insert covert teams using dead systems for their waypoints, often under complete radio silence and with no identifying colors or insignia to trace back to their homelands. These operatives typically travel in small units to minimize their chances of detection, and are more likely to seek cover and wait out an unsuspecting patrol than engage it directly—unless they believe their mission compromised.

An encounter with covert operatives could go down one of two ways. The first is that the operatives try and bluff their way through the encounter by pretending to be another exploratory team, or perhaps black market smugglers who “just don’t want any trouble” with the IE team. The other—often used only if the first way fails—is full-on violence. A covert operations team can be assumed to be elite in nature and combat capability, and will likely attack under their most optimum conditions, ambushing the unsuspecting IE team when they are most vulnerable, and shooting only to kill.

Tech Hunting

Of course, the government forces could be up to exactly the same thing as the IE team: searching for some lost cache, a secret item, lost information, or even Word of Blake fugitives. Because this is about the most “innocent” way in which government operatives and IE teams might interact outside of routine traffic in settled systems, this is also the encounter least likely to result in a crossfire. In fact, if there are local dangers that might impede the search for whatever the government group is after, they may even be amenable to a temporary partnership with their IE counterparts, perhaps even offering to cut them in for a share of the spoils. This can transform what might otherwise be a race for the prize into a cooperative challenge that can only be won if both the IE team and the government operatives work together.

Whether or not this alliance lasts once the prize is in hand is another matter entirely. If the subject of the search turns out to be particularly lucrative, powerful, or potentially harmful to the government that sent its own operatives to secure it, the government operatives could suddenly renege on any offers to share it with IE. In extreme cases, this could even lead to a shoot-out if the IE team refuses to take no for an answer or—just as likely—is seen as a group that now “knows too much.”

MEMORANDUM



Director:

One of our more ongoing problems has been that of the Green Ghosts. This group has been a thorn in our side for nearly forty years. They have raided countless dig sites, stolen billions of C-bills of equipment, killed numerous employees and contractors and been a major hazard to many of our anti-spinward and Deep Periphery operations.

A major priority of ours after the Jihad was to delve deeper into the mystery that is the Green Ghosts. There have been a lot of theories as to their origins, purpose, mission, leadership, and more—and unfortunately, our efforts have not answered them. While some portions of the picture are much sharper than before, others remain murky.

I’ve attached three different samples for your review. These represent the best conjectures we can make and should give you a broad spectrum of understanding in order to formulate a new response paradigm.

Yours,
James Carlsbad, Esq.

THE COMPETITION

THE GREEN GHOSTS

LOST CHILDREN OF THE RIM

James, while I normally don't recommend transcripts from obvious kooks, this one caught our interest. See what you think. You'll understand after you read it.

-Patrick

TRANSCRIPT::INTERROGATION OF Y-92G//SESSION 251

[Captain Mitch Stevens, LIC]: This is session seventy-four with subject Y-92G—

[Trenton Calooph]: "I told you, my name is Trent!"

[Stevens]: "—subject Y-92G, captured on Tomans on 1 Aug 3068. Patient notation: Y-92G diagnosed with mild Bertuzzi Syndrome, which halts emotional and mental maturation around age 12. Consider subject responses as forty-five percent trustworthy at this point."

[Calooph]: *[singsong]* "You say Tomans, I say Toumains..."

[Stevens]: "Subject claims that he was a member of the pirate group known as the Green Ghosts."

[Calooph]: "WAS. That's the key word, yep yep. WAS."

[Stevens]: "Yes, Trent, was. You're safe now."

[Calooph]: *[laughing manically]* "Safe, safe. Who's really safe? You know they'll come get me. They always come. 'No soul left behind,' so they say. So they say."

[Stevens]: "It's been four years, Trent. They're *not coming*. They don't even know you exist."

[Calooph]: "They don't?"

[Stevens]: "No, they don't."

[Calooph]: "So you say."

[Stevens]: "Trent, would you like me to break out the needle again?"

[Calooph]: "The needle. The needle lies... LIES..."

[Stevens]: "Calm down, Trent. Let's go through the questions again, okay? Can we do that without an incident this time?"

[Calooph]: "Yes. Sorry about that. Did you get the stains out?"

[Stevens]: "Never mind that. Shall we begin?"

[Calooph]: "Yes, yes, yes. No incident. I promise."

[Stevens]: "That's great news, Trent." *[paper rustling]* "Tell me again, what system are you from?"

[Calooph]: "Gabenstad. I'm from Gabenstad. In the void, along the rim, masked by dark. Gabenstad."

[Stevens]: "We've gone over this, Trent. Gabenstad has been a dead world for centuries."

[Calooph]: "Not dead. Quiet. Silent. We liked the silence of the stars."

[Stevens]: "Fine, fine. Notation, please: No progress made on Y-92G's origins." *[paper rustling]* "Trent, how did you get off your world?"

[Calooph]: "They took me. Came in the green eggs, the mechanical monsters hatched out and forced us to come."

[Stevens]: "BattleMechs. You mean BattleMechs."

[Calooph]: "Giant robots. They stomped my uncle's house."

[Stevens]: *[sigh]* "So these monsters forced you into their eggs and carried you to the stars."

[Calooph]: "Yes, yes! Taught us how to use the boom sticks. I wanted to ride in one of the robots, but Gregor wouldn't let me. Gregor was mean. He had this big spider robot that was cool."

[Stevens]: "Why was Gregor mean? Was he mean only to you?"

[Calooph]: "Oh no. No, no. He didn't like anyone from Gabenstad. Or the angelen. He just liked the guys in his gang." *[whispers]* "Scorpions! They had a cool gang picture."

[Stevens]: "Angelen? You've never mentioned them before."

[Calooph]: "Oh, no? The angelen protected us. They weren't angels like momma meant them. No wings. But they always wore white robes and had pale skin. Mikal, he was the nicest. He had yellow eyes you could see in the dark..."

[Stevens]: "See in the dark?"

[Calooph]: "Mr. Suit-man, I don't feel good."

[Stevens]: "Come on, Trent, tell me more about Mikal."

[Calooph]: "Uhhhh, I think I'm having an... incident..."

[Stevens]: "Orderly!"

Transcript 251#2; recorded 18 Nov 3072

Session Notes

From what we've been able to glean, the subject was the lone survivor from the Green Ghost attack on Tomans back in 3068. They'd arrived just after Clan Jade Falcon launched a raid. Calooph was found in some building wreckage under an overturned APC; the rest of the crew was already dead.

His condition is a rare one; the last recorded medical incident of Bertuzzi's Syndrome was back during the Star League. The condition was specific to several colony systems in the Rim Worlds Republic and easily cured, but unfortunately in Calooph's case, the condition was misdiagnosed, and the damage was permanent.

Calooph's accounts—there are over 100 transcript logs covering nine years before his death in 3077—were mostly gibberish. He was consistent on many points over the years, however. According to him, the Ghosts were a mix of lost Rim Worlds colonists, Word of Blake soldiers and crewmen, plus a smattering of what appears to be Clan Goliath Scorpion warriors and technicians. What they were searching for, Calooph didn't know; he was relegated many times to scut work. During raids, he worked as a corpsman, clearing the battlefield of any dead and wounded while setting charges on any of the Ghost's equipment that looked operational.

It's not much, granted. But it does seem to confirm—provided Calooph even had his facts straight—that the Ghosts were, at least in part, working with the Word of Blake.

Even more intriguing, however, is the idea of a lost Rim Worlds colony world. Where there's one, there's bound to be a few more.

Whatever the case, it is worth considering opening up a few more grants to get some independent explorers poking around that area of space. And if we're lucky, they'll poke the Ghosts in their nest.

—Director Patrick Wendt; 18 Mar 3089

SECT OF THE WORD 

The most obvious answer to the Green Ghost question is the simplest one: it is the Word of Blake. For part of the Jihad, the Ghosts certainly seemed aligned with the Word and became a snide answer to a continually valid question. As the years marched on, that sarcasm has slowly transformed into one of the best theoretical answers we have. Who else *but* the Word of Blake?

ROM was notorious for setting up and cutting loose special operations with broad operating parameters. [*The Republic records in Geneva can bear this out with a quick query search. Check for ROM headers 535-2K, 922-1D, 891-S, and 730-T for four of the most recent entries. -RM*] Compartmentalized and compact, these operations were given time and space to carry out their purpose, targeting individuals, corporations, scientific discoveries and even whole systems.

The entire focus of IE lends itself as a prime target for such an operation. Our various grants and expeditions are all focused on discovering the answers to mysteries of the past, finding new resource fields for future study, and exploring the vast unknown. All three of these paradigms run contrary to the Word of Blake's notorious secrecy and attempts at controlling scientific knowledge.

Consider the following:

- The Ghosts actively hit archeological digs along the breadth of the Lyran Alliance Periphery border from as early as 3065;
- Ninety percent of the sites were those of either ancient religious or scientific significance;
- Seventy-two percent of the affected sites were under IE charter or third-party contract;
- All instances record the Ghosts using cutting-edge technology, some of Clan origin;
- In instances where IE sites put up significant resistance, no bodies remained from any fallen Ghost machines; and
- At least three of the Ghost's JumpShip drive signatures matched to "missing" ComStar vessels.

A large portion of the sites IE has contracted along the Lyran border are those on either former Rim Worlds Republic planets or systems bordering the past Periphery nation. Often, we are contacted by local universities or specialized corporations wishing to conduct archeological digs at abandoned sites, in order to recover lost data or something of historical significance. Only eight percent of these sites yield anything of true value, but it is enough for us to continue funding or at least subsidizing future endeavors.

Considering that the Word of Blake maintained a stake in suppressing the proliferation of scientific knowledge [*see Republic record #8173-4-FOCHT225-b*], it is predictable that these projects would attract their attention. Before the Jihad, operating openly against our people would be in violation of several charters and agreements. Setting up a natural blind through several fronts would allow them to circumvent such political landmines [*see Republic record #21-32t55-ASTROKAZY-634n*].

In every encounter with the Ghosts, they have been noted as using cutting-edge military equipment, such as *Templar* OmniMechs, lithium-fusion jumpdrives and c3i communications networks. Clan equipment has been prominent in some conflicts, often models typically associated with the Clans' second-line forces. Few, if any, major organizations have the resources and capabilities of providing such materiel to what has been called a "fringe Periphery pirate group."

What is most disturbing is the lack of biological evidence in the few occasions where BattleMechs and battle armor have been destroyed. Certainly, the possibility of remote-controlled operation and artificial intelligence can be ruled out. During the Jihad, the Word of Blake was notorious for destroying their pilots with "suicide seats" and the *Manei Domini's* self-destruct hardware. Without proper DNA samples, it is near impossible to determine anything of note from the salvaged remains of the Ghost's equipment.

No pirate group has been noted as operating with such wide-ranging parameters in technology, tactics, and failsafes. Pirates, on average, strike at varied targets for a variety of reasons that revolve around their own survival: food, supplies, war materiel, slaves, and so on. The Green Ghost's targets [*see Republic record #9129-3-GREENGHOSTS410-e*] have been nothing of the sort. The common thread of their presence has been that the site is related in some fashion to IE, the location is historically significant (predominantly those of religious or lostech importance), and located mainly along the Lyran Alliance and Falcon OZ border with the Periphery.

ComStar did have an operation during the early 3070s attempting to infiltrate the group by allowing agents to be captured. However, that operation met a swift end after all three agents were found dead one system away, their bodies left at the gates of the world's HPG. It would be easy to assume that WOB-ROM, who had great success during the '50s and '60s in winnowing out ComStar agents from their ranks, easily identified the infiltrators.

While there is no singular piece of evidence that conclusively points to the Green Ghosts operating as a WOB-ROM group, the circumstantial and historical evidence strongly points in that direction. Until the unit is captured in full or somehow their main operational facilities are disclosed, there is simply no way to know for absolute certainty who—or what—the Green Ghosts are.

It is the recommendation of this department that, based on the anecdotal and indirect evidence in hand, the Green Ghosts be considered rogue agents of the Word of Blake. While they pose little threat to the Republic, assistance should be offered to the LIC and a joint task force created to hunt down and eliminate this threat to the Republic and its ally's interests.

—Captain Rodney McCreary, SIS, Geneva, Department of External Threat Assessment; 8 Aug 3092

THE COMPETITION

FACT SHEET://JOINT NAGELRING-FOCHT TASK FORCE ON THE GREEN GHOSTS PROBLEM

Funded by Interstellar Expeditions

ABSTRACT

To be honest, the question we are about to pose doesn't have an easy answer. Evidence is scant and our knowledge of the anti-spinward side of the Lyran border is sorely lacking beyond the mapped Republic worlds we know of. So.

Who are the Green Ghosts?

It's a question that is relevant mainly to the Ghosts' primary opponents. Interstellar Expeditions is clearly number one on their shit list. Of the 310 recorded attacks between 3060 and 3089, IE sites have been the target in forty-two percent of them. The next target is Stellar Archeology, Inc.—at five percent. Clearly, IE has done something to raise the ire of this mysterious antagonist (see *Appendix A*).

Discovering who the Ghosts are would unlock the questions that arise of "why." And it's that question that has no easy answer, outside of myriad conspiracy theories and conjecture existing throughout the systems along the anti-spinward Periphery border.

While our purpose here isn't to definitively answer the question posed above, we are attempting to organize the hard facts we do know. This will provide us a baseline for future think tank development projects.

Sightings

The Green Ghosts are typically sighted engaging an archeological site or a location that has been deemed religiously sacred or historically preserved. Oddly, they rarely take anything from the site, though at times observers have noted the Ghosts deploy a specialized scanning team (see *Appendices B & C*). Their objective appears to be to drive off what they term "interlopers," forcing the occupiers to either withdraw or face execution. Prisoners are rarely, if ever, taken.

Force structure

Seventy-three percent of the time, Ghost tactical doctrine follows standard Inner Sphere military organization: lances, companies, platoons, and so on. Other formations have included a typical Clan arrangement—Stars, Binaries—and that of the Com Guards—Level Is and IIs (see *Appendices D, E, & F*). There appears to be no reason why the shifts in doctrine occur, as the Ghosts do not match the organizational style of their opponent.

Combined arms are the most prevalent combat mix of force, though BattleMechs tend to form the core of the Ghosts' fielded units. Battle armor troops are rare, though available. When fielded, they have been observed to use Fenrir, Infiltrator, and Purifier models, usually operating in standard squad formations.

Support services

No artillery support has been noted in any recorded engagement. Aerospace support is minimal, coming in the form of bombing strikes by light and medium aerospace fighters. The Ghost's DropShips never engage forces on the ground, often deploying between the targeted site and enemy force if space is available. The action indicates they view the naval vessels as ground shields, protecting their appointed "charge."

There are at least five different JumpShips in service to the Green Ghosts. Only one instance recorded an armed JumpShip—later reclassified as a *Peregrine*-class WarShip, an ancient Clan design that saw only a handful built during their so-called Golden Age. No statistics are available regarding this mysterious vessel, though it was less than 200,000 tons and lightly armed. Its appearance was recorded in the early 3070s in the Deep Periphery and has not been seen since (see *Appendix G*).

Base of Operations

Unfortunately, there is no reliable evidence as to where the Green Ghosts are based. While suspicions abound as to where—a lost Rim Worlds system, an Age of Colonization colony world, a Word of Blake training facility, hiding in plain sight within the Inner Sphere—there is zero evidence to support any theory.

Miscellaneous

In less than ten percent of recorded Ghost occurrences is radio traffic detected among their forces. These transmissions, while recorded, use a cryptologic key that has yet to be broken. Even their infantry, when used, speak little beyond barking one- and two-word orders (see *Appendices C & H*). While many observers have recorded a low-level static hum in some engagements, no discernible transmissions are detectable. (This has led many to believe the Ghosts utilize some form of hivemind cybernetic communication, a technology that exists only in theory in some Great House military think tanks.)

Up until the last decade, the Ghosts have used a simple flat green paint scheme and numbering sequence for their exterior units. No more than two units in any engagement have what is called a "commander's mark," a white snake entwining the unit from top to bottom. Battle analysis has determined that these commander units are found in the center of the battle's conflict, with the rest of the Ghosts maneuvering around them in some mysterious tactical plan. These commanders are the first to arrive on the field and the last to leave (see *Appendices B, D, E, & I*).

After 3080, Ghost attacks have been less frequent. While many still utilize the simple marking scheme, several units bear a new symbol, a flaming sun disc that incorporates a teardrop shape and a rampant scorpion similar to that of the Clan Goliath Scorpion's emblem (see *Appendix J*). These units usually maneuver together, often splitting off into flanking attacks or attempting to enter the defender's rear area. The few times they have been successful, these "blood disk" Ghosts have left nothing alive—not even their fallen, who are destroyed on the battlefield by their comrades.



THE COMPETITION

CONCLUSIONS

So where does this amalgamation of facts leave us? Sadly, no closer to the truth. The Ghosts have become more militant in their assaults and unheeding of collateral damage. Though more brutal than in years past, they are also less frequent in appearance. While many of the board may believe this is enough to lower funding for defensive contracts for IE sites and exploration teams, we exercise caution in this regard. Funding should remain at 3070 levels for the time being. A more thorough study of the sites struck by the Ghosts is nearing completion; our hope is that with its analysis, we can better determine what future projects may be of higher risk for Ghost intervention, and budget accordingly.

Further data will be assimilated in this report as it is gathered. Check back quarterly for updates.

—Michael Corcoran, Ph.D, M.M.S., M.Ed., Professor Emeritus, Nagelring

—Percival A. Brown, M.INT, M.D., Ph.D., M.M.H., Dean of Military Studies, Focht War College

Original abstract dated 7 July 3090

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The Green Ghosts remain one of the universe's unsolved mysteries. Are they a blacklisted mercenary unit, preying on academic types and seeking revenge for an intellectual wrong? Are they a lost Clan Goliath Scorpion Seeker unit, fighting their own battles against an unholy Inner Sphere? Are they a secret Word of Blake operations unit, carrying out their last orders until their dying breath? Or are they a mix of all three? Perhaps...or perhaps the Ghosts are something else entirely.

All Green Ghost attacks concentrate on a site of historical, religious, or sacred significance, often targeting academic dig teams or uncaring tourists before running into planetary security or defense forces. The Ghosts are well-trained

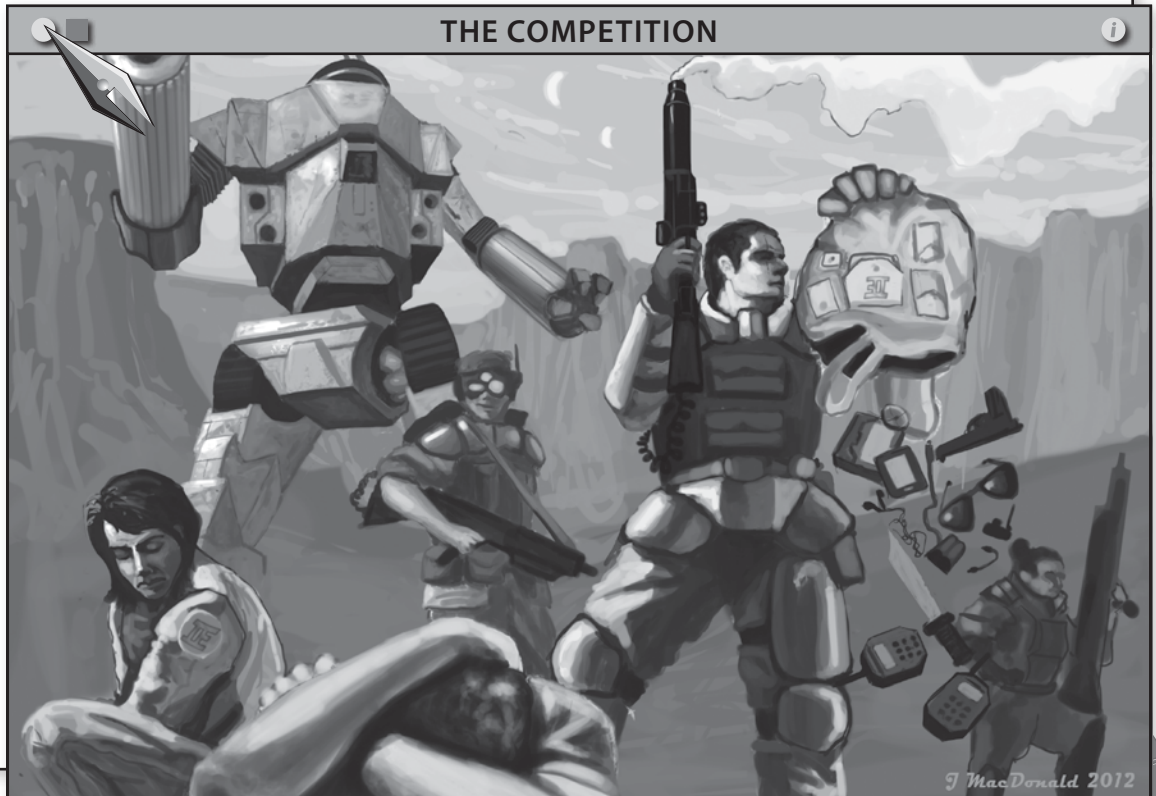
and operate as a cohesive unit, though rarely take heavy risks beyond protecting their "charge." Commanders are considered the elite of their grounded force and take pride in arriving first and exiting last from the battlefield. Many Ghost units will refuse to follow forced withdrawal commands until their commander gives permission, or has fallen on the battlefield.

Characters going up against a Green Ghost attack will find their opponent unrelenting and unyielding in their assault, but hardly rigid in their tactics. The Ghosts use the terrain to their best advantage and have no qualms in placing their DropShip assets on the ground between the perceived defilers and the objective. If their objective is harmed in some way—often by accidental collateral damage—the Ghosts will run down the offending unit or press the attack to punish the crime.

The Ghosts fight with no honor and hardly play by the unspoken rules set in place by the Great House armies. They do respect opponents who withdraw in an orderly fashion, so long as no treachery is involved. Ghost units that have fallen on the battlefield are either salvaged by their comrades or given a battlefield execution. Very little is left of them for study or analysis, which has made it extremely difficult to pin down who exactly the Green Ghosts are and where they originate.

It is a mystery that a campaign can revolve around, as the Green Ghosts make an excellent recurring foe.

THE COMPETITION



OBFUSCATION

Subdirector,

I wholeheartedly apologize for the rather nebulous and fragmentary nature of these reports, but this is unfortunately the sort of thing my teams keep running into all across the Clan Occupation Zones and the coreward reaches of the Deep Periphery. It's bad enough we have to constantly deal with pirate threats this far out on the ass end of nowhere, but the Clans' disproportionate military overreaction to our investigative forays has seriously hampered our efforts in figuring out just what they hell they are up to. I'm not normally a gambling man, but I would bet my next month's salary that the Clans are purposefully trying to obstruct our operations even though we've proven to them time and again that our goals in this area are completely benign.

There's just no pleasing some people, and the Clans are about as obstinate as they come.

After reading these reports, please advise on our next course of action, and we will proceed accordingly. Can't guarantee hard results at this point, but that certainly won't stop us from trying.

—CM

—Message to IE Subdirector Gerhardt Hirtzel, 6 November 3094

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On 3 October 3093, we finally triggered a response in the system M78527-Theta, about 21.7 light-years coreward from Santander V, when Captain Dantos of the DropShip *Cousteau* sought to ease the team's frustration at being continually ignored. Against protocol, she ordered the *Cousteau* to perform a nonthreatening flyby of the Dominion convoy in order to obtain a positive ID on any of the vessels or even possibly identify what the Bears were doing in the system. Without even the courtesy of a warning, a whole Star of Dominion aerofighters launched and tore the *Cousteau* apart. Then the Dominion fleet broadcast a single word in several different languages:

"Leave."

Since then, we have understandably given the Dominion navy a relatively wide berth.

An interesting item of note: shortly before the *Cousteau's* destruction, her crew reported IDing a vessel believed to be the *Night-lord*-class WarShip CGB *Ursa Major*. However, since we were unable to recover any of the *Cousteau's* wreckage to analyze her flight recorder, we can only take that declaration at face value. What one of the Dominion's four WarShips is doing out here in the Periphery is anyone's guess. My initial reaction is she's intended to combat banditry, but given the post-Jihad rarity of WarShips, a single battleship hunting down pirates seems a gross misallocation of naval assets. Considering the August 3073 raid on the Dominion world Thule by suspected Clan Star Adder elements, it is possible the Dominion navy is bracing for a full-on invasion by Star Adder forces.

Of all the Clan territories, the Ghost Bears' near-Periphery holdings seem to be the least plagued by pirates, which strikes me as odd considering the increase in merchant caste activity in the region we have observed in recent months should draw far more thieves than this. In fact, we have observed only one instance of overt piracy since focusing our efforts on the Dominion. Either Dominion forces have successfully chased away all but the most tenacious pirates—despite a veritable honeypot dangling in front of would-be bandits—or there is something else scaring them off. So far our observations are inconclusive.

—Dr. Jillian Standish, Team Leader, Ghost Bear Dominion region

REPORT #817H: CLAN HELL'S HORSES

[Filed 17.08.3094] Although my colleagues in other exploratory areas have reported extreme difficulties undertaking expeditions in their respective regions, I am fortunate to say my team has run into only one major—but horrendously tragic—setback. All but one of the scant Hell's Horses patrols we've run into have been halfway respectful before boarding our ships to verify our attestations that we are not pirates.

By far the worst incident we have suffered at the Horses' hands has been the Trial of Annihilation leveled against the *Vespucci's* DropShip complement in May. Upon the Horses' marines boarding our security detail's DropShip, the senior Horse warrior angrily declared the DropShip's military equipment was "unsuitable for

THE CLANS

OVERVIEW

Since the midpoint of the Word of Blake's Jihad, the Clan territories in the Inner Sphere have remained largely closed off to all outside traffic except for the occasional merchant convoy, and even then only under direct Clan military supervision. Rumor of a so-called Clan Civil War has prompted our Clan Region teams to investigate and dig a bit further into the matter. Initial attempts to pierce the veil of secrecy shrouding this conflict—whether it is real or simply grist for the rumor mill—initially met with zero success and provoked some disastrous results. However, we have recently come into possession of a breakthrough, which should shed some light on the matter [see Report #259S below—CM].

The following compilation of reports comprise what little information our teams near the Clan Region have been able to uncover and includes a brief analysis of the significance of this data.

REPORT #215D: GHOST BEAR DOMINION

[Filed 30.07.3094] Given the reception encountered elsewhere across Clan territory, my teams expected our probes in and around the Dominion to meet undue belligerence. However, Dominion forces tended to ignore us until we pushed too far into their sphere of influence. Countless times we would jump to an uninhabited system near the Ghost Bears' most coreward holdings and not even realize a Dominion flotilla was present until we almost stumbled into them. They would maintain radio silence remained unresponsive to our hails.

THE COMPETITION

members of the scientist caste." Minutes later, Clan marines began killing every member of our primary security team. Horse assault ships then proceeded to destroy every DropShip collared to the *Vespucci* but left the JumpShip itself intact.

I know the Clans harbor very strong feelings regarding the separation of caste duties, but this reaction cost us the expertise of Drs. Spichenko and Vallerand and all of our armed protection.

Non-military seizures have thus far been limited to various dummy artifacts among our inventory that were specifically meant to attract Clan attention away from more important articles. Thankfully, the Horses' searches have not yet found [redacted], so I will be able to hand that over personally upon our return to base.

Apart from the *Vespucci* incident, the Horses' territory has proven relatively easy to infiltrate. Evidence suggests this is because their military appears to be stretched relatively thin along on their Periphery-facing border. Brief surveys into the OZ proper have revealed some of these planets—such as Von Strang's World, The Rock, and Manaringaine—are bereft of any military presence beyond paramilitary police. Either the Horses are convinced no immediate threats are forthcoming from the coreward Deep Periphery, or they are more concerned with their own borders with the Jade Falcons, the Wolves and the Ghost Bear Dominion to care about bogeymen. Whichever is the case, pirates largely seem to avoid the immediate area. Dr. Jensen's working theory is these systems have little to offer prospective pirates. This is not to say the area is completely dead, however, as the *Vespucci* incident and marginal signs of Clan merchant traffic through the region have proven.

The few pirates we've crossed paths with, both within the Horses' territory and in the immediate Periphery, have evidenced alarming amounts of Clan technology for mere bandits. Until we can gather more conclusive evidence, it is possible these pirates are the scattered dregs of Clan Ice Hellion's disastrous attempt to invade Hell's Horses and Jade Falcon space in 3071. Another strong probability is these are refugees from the Clan Civil War or—Unfinished Book forbid—advance troops from another as-yet-unidentified Homeworld Clan invasion force. Until we can successfully capture and interrogate one of these Clan-tech-equipped bandits, this matter will have to remain in the realm of conjecture.

—Dr. Kieron Loudermark, Team Leader, Clan Hell's Horses region

REPORT #133J: CLAN JADE FALCON

[Filed 06.10.3094] Our attempts to monitor and investigate Clan Jade Falcon's dealings have thus far met with undue tragedy and sorrow, and I question the wisdom of continuing operations against them. Since the Falcons have the third largest WarShip fleet among all the Inner Sphere Clans (trailing behind only the Snow Ravens and Diamond Sharks), they are more than capable of leveraging considerable firepower against us. Unfortunately my colleagues have found themselves on the receiving end of this force several times.

Most points of entry to the Falcons' Occupation Zone host regular patrols by their considerable WarShip fleet [*"considerable" by post-Jihad standards, that is—CM*]. Even in cases where our teams have shown a complete lack of offensive posture, Falcon WarShips or assault DropShips have accosted us at every turn. Our broadcast in every case remains the same: "We are an independent group of scientists and researchers wishing to forge a cooperative effort with your scientist caste, for the mutual edification of our respective cultures." In five recorded incidents [*and counting—CM*], the Falcons met these completely nonthreatening overtures with outright hostility. Their unprovoked attacks have thus far resulted in the loss of twelve JumpShips, their attendant DropShip complements, and countless academic minds that have worked with us for decades.

All of these losses I would normally chalk up to a diplomatic misunderstanding between our two cultures, but the events of 6 July have really thrown me and my advisory council for a loop. According to IES *Hawass*, which managed to jump to safety before she could be accosted, a chance encounter at Barcelona with what is believed to be the C/JF *Jade Talon* [*This has since been confirmed—CM*] ended with the capture of the *Hatshepsut*. According to transmissions, Falcon marines boarded *Hatshepsut's* DropShips and abducted only scientific personnel while killing anyone else who opposed them. Right before *Hawass* jumped out of the system, her crew witnessed the *Jade Talon* destroy *Hatshepsut* and her collared DropShips with a single broadside. While my intent is not to make light of this terrible tragedy, forgive any perceived flippancy at my saying I wish I could've been present when the Falcons realized they wasted their time in taking *Hatshepsut's* scholars captive. Since Clan scientist caste members only care about eugenics and weapons development, I can only imagine how angry they became upon learning Drs. Adelaide, Gellar, Stockholm, and the others possess doctorates in anthropology, sociology, and other soft sciences that the Clans apparently have no use for.

As the Board is aware, one of our longstanding goals regarding the Falcons' OZ has been discovering what caused the supposed OZ-wide HPG blackout in 3073. Fragmentary reports that our data forensics teams have managed to reconstruct imply this HPG network failure also partially affected the OZs of Clans Wolf and Hell's Horses. Our only conclusive data thus far has partially confirmed our suspicions that the blackout began on Erewhon and rolled out from there. However, armed presence in this system (according to the most recent intelligence documents we have found regarding the Falcons' military disposition) precludes any attempt to study the affected HPG directly. To this end, we have stationed a team in the system to monitor for any changes; the moment the Falcons redeploy, we intend to gain access to the HPG and put this mystery to bed. Since the Falcons will never grant us the leeway to study the HPG itself we can only surmise that the blackout has something to do with this Clan Civil War that rankles Clanspeople—or invites open hostility—whenever we attempt to broach the subject.

—Dr. Pauline Cavendish, Team Leader, Clan Jade Falcon region

THE COMP

REPORT #259S: CLAN DIAMOND SHARK

[Filed 16.09.3094] According to contact with my fellow teams operating within the Clan Occupation Zones and the immediate coreward Periphery, it appears Clan Diamond Shark has thus far been the most forthcoming of all their Clan brethren [*This is, of course, dependent on one's interpretation of what the Sharks were willing to share—CM*]. However, all of the information we were able to glean from them came with a price.

We have spent a good portion of time monitoring the Sharks' enclave on Itabaiana as closely as Clan Nova Cat and the DCMS navies will allow; unfortunately the Shark bases on Twycross and Trondheim—in the Falcon OZ and the Ghost Bear Dominion, respectively—remain off-limits to us. We are also aware the Sharks have a facility in the Chainelane Isles, but that is, to my knowledge, being covered in a different report.

The Diamond Shark Khanates have always reacted to our encounters with initial caution followed by the same transmission, which is verbatim in nearly every instance: "Is there anything you require?" These "transactions," as the Sharks call them, always occur under heavily armed Clan supervision on a DropShip halfway between our respective flotillas and have run the gamut from open, civil discussion to outright hostility and, in some cases lethality. Fortunately, the teams I've sent to undertake these negotiations have returned safely more often than not, although most that return have far emptier pockets than they previously had. As for the "transactions" that left all or most of a team dead at the Sharks' hands, we are still trying to hypothesize what incited our hosts toward violence, since no recording devices were allowed during the proceedings. (A possible cause for this has been advanced as wariness whenever the negotiations are undertaken too close to one of the Sharks' new ArcShips, but this is only conjectural.)

Despite these setbacks, my teams have been able to negotiate for a good number of articles, including the following: scientific devices of Clan origin that should prove useful on our next archaeological survey; various reports on a myriad of topics germane to the Clans; rumors regarding other Clans and the Inner Sphere nations the Sharks have been known to trade with; and other insignificant pieces of hardware, such as Clan-made small arms.

By far, the most valuable trade my teams were able to negotiate with the Diamond Sharks cost us the *Mariana* and her DropShip complement. In exchange, the Sharks provided us perhaps one of the most comprehensive reports regarding recent happenings in the Clan homeworlds. Initial perusal of this fragmentary document has revealed some rather incredible things, which leads me to believe some of the information contained within may be inaccurate. I will leave that to your own discretion, however. In any event, I believe the attached document should go no further than the Board of Directors, else it could cause undue furor within the Inner Sphere.

—Dr. M. Nicholas Katsumoto, Field Director, Clan Diamond Shark Observations

THE WARS OF PURGING

Degraded records retrieved from CDS Listening Post 3217-Theta before its decommissioning on 2113078:

>Begin decryption sequence<

...delegates from the Unfinished Book movement still trapped at the Third Babylon Diet...contributed to the labor caste uprising...cil voted on institution of a Trial of Purg... while previously hidden Clan Blood Spirit Galaxies descend on Albion...nd Council vote approves Clan Fire Mandrill Absorption of Clan Cloud Co...ire Mandrill Khan Hollyann Kardaana: "The Wars of Purging have begun. May the Founder have mercy on our souls"...ial of Purging declared against Kindraa Mick-Kreese-Kline-Kardaana-Khatib resulted in the destr...ratified the "Blood Adder" alliance which buried two centuries of animos... reappearance of Kindraa Smythe-Jewel from the bandit c... Grand Council dissolved by Trial of...renewed invasion against the Founder's wayward childr...

...ogether we will rise

To bring with us the Founder's wrath

And the true vision of humanity's destiny.

—The Remembrance (*Clan Star Spirit*), Passag...

>end decryption sequence<

REPORT #9251P: COREWARD DEEP PERIPHERY

[Filed 27.10.3094] I regret to say we have nothing to report out here in the coreward Deep Periphery, and I mean that in the most literal sense. The last five years' worth of surveys along the Operation REVIVAL route toward the Clan Homeworlds has uncovered a whole lot of absolutely nothing. We expected to run into a whole host of the Clans' Deep Periphery bases, but every single one we have on record has turned up either as a long-abandoned ghost town or an empty tin can circling an uninhabited planet, with everything of value either stripped or slagged. Without station-keeping drives engaged, all of the Clans' empty recharge stations or naval supply depots are slowly decaying in their orbits. Not even Clan Wolf, with its historically strong logistical chain reaching back to the Homeworlds, seems to possess a single base beyond the edge of the Clan occupation zones.

Beyond the Diamond Shark base in the Chainelane Isles, there is complete, dead silence out here. No bases, no functioning HPG relays, no listening posts, no naval presence—nothing at all to suggest any link to the Clan Homeworlds whatsoever. Even more disturbing, the teams I've sent past the 1,000-light-year radius from Terra have failed to report in even six months after their last scheduled contact. This makes me hesitant to send further teams out in that region, as I feel I would be effectively signing their death certificates.



THE COMPETITION

I've never considered myself a believer in ghosts, but all this unnatural silence scares the bejesus out of me. Upon the expiration of my current contractual period, I respectfully request reassignment to a different region of operations. Otherwise, you may respectfully consider this my resignation.

—Dr. Flemming Møller, Team Leader, Coreward Deep Periphery, sent via mobile HPG

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, we have very little verifiable data regarding the Clans' recent concerns. With such fragmentary information, we cannot draw any concrete conclusions. The report provided by Dr. Katsumoto gives us a small insight into the Clan Civil War, but a large portion of the report fails to explain Dr. Møller's Deep Periphery observations. Other sections we have been unable to reconcile to extant data models and what we already know of Clan history. To that end I have concluded that parts of the Diamond Shark report are either in error or are purposely misleading. The real question is which parts of the report—if any—hold water.

Based on the data at hand, my colleagues and I have arrived at the following hypothesis. We believe there was a falling out between the Homeworlds and the Inner Sphere Clans, and the Clan Star Adder raid on Thule is the precursor to a second REVIVAL invasion. We believe this invasion could occur at any moment, as our Deep Periphery teams have more than likely run into the Homeworld Clans' advance fleet.

Whether or not we warn the rest of the Inner Sphere about this impending invasion is up to the Board.

GAMEMASTER'S SECTION

The bottom line regarding the Clans during this period is none of them are talking with outsiders at all about the events and activities going on in the Deep Periphery and the Homeworlds. When trading with the Clans' lower castes, or dealing in any way with the Clans bordering the Periphery, gamemasters can incorporate the following Clan sentiments into their campaigns.

Ghost Bear Dominion

The Dominion considers non-military targets within or near its borders as beneath its notice. Non-Dominion player characters venturing too close to Dominion concerns or that evidence a less-than-benign posture will draw an immediate response from Dominion forces. Characters that can prove they are legitimately non-military will then suffer—at the very least—immediate expulsion from Dominion territory.

Clan Hell's Horses

Preferring to focus their efforts rimward, the Hell's Horses are not as vigilant about patrolling their Periphery-facing border as the Ghost Bears or Jade Falcons. However player characters

venturing into the Horses' coreward worlds are likely to encounter pirates that are better equipped than average. It is believed the Horses have allowed these pirates (or the rampant rumors of such pirates) to pass through their coreward territory unchecked as a way to dissuade would-be interlopers without needing to redistribute forces from their borders with the Dominion, Jade Falcons, or Wolves. The reason for focusing rimward is a matter of debate.

Clans Jade Falcon and Wolf

More so than any other Inner Sphere Clan, the Jade Falcons have grown increasingly irritable regarding any outside mention of matters pertaining to scientific endeavor. Player characters interacting with Jade Falcon warriors run the risk of encountering a violent reaction if they mention anything relating to the Clan's scientist caste or about scientific matters in general.

The Clan also grudgingly acknowledges a nebulous "interstellar communications difficulty" during the Word of Blake Jihad, but they refuse to go into specifics for fear of perceived weakness to their neighbors. It is possible their reaction to scientific matters and the communications difficulty are related, but no one outside of the Clan itself knows for certain.

For their part, the Wolves assume a similar posture and attitude as the Falcons toward the events taking place in the Clan homeworlds—but only to a point. Rather than resorting to violence, Wolf Clan members pressed about such events will instead opt for a mask of indifference toward their "lesser brethren", as if the mere discussion of the homeworlds and the inter-Clan fighting that took place during the Jihad were of little consequence to them. In fact, if pressed to share their concerns about current Periphery events, the Wolves may even shrug them off as "the Horses' affair now".

Clan Diamond Shark

The Diamond Sharks will not initially treat player characters as hostile unless given reason to do so, but of late they have become noticeably devious in their dealings with non-Clan entities. Recently reorganized into massive trading fleets called Khanates—each centered on a large hybrid collection of DropShips permanently moored to their remaining WarShips (dubbed ArcShips)—the Sharks will engage in open trade but will only seal a deal in which they ultimately come out ahead, despite perceptions to the opposite. If confronted regarding the veracity of their reports or intelligence, Diamond Sharks meet all such entreaties with shrugs, noncommittal responses, or overt denials that any such reports exist.

Gamemasters looking to include more detail in campaigns that span the Inner Sphere Clans, the Homeworld Clans, and/or the coreward Deep Periphery should consult *The Wars of Reaving* sourcebook for additional details.

RULES ANNEX



ROLE-PLAYING RULES

The following additional rules are designed primarily for role-playing campaigns using the core rules found in *A Time of War (AToW)*, as well as the advanced expansions found in the *A Time of War Companion (AToWC)*.

CREATING CHARACTERS BASED ON ELEMENTS IN THIS BOOK

The following rule modifications primarily apply to creating *A Time of War* characters and NPCs that hail from the various new factions described within this book. Because the events of this sourcebook are largely focused on the mid-3090s, not only do the basic character creation rules found in *A Time of War* apply, but the era-based modifications found in the role-playing rules annex of *Field Manual: 3085* also have some bearing.

Affiliations

The new Affiliations described below add to those featured in *A Time of War* and modified in *Field Manual: 3085*. Affiliations present in *A Time of War* that are not discussed here are unaffected by the era of play and characters may be created from those basic rules without modification. These Affiliations rules apply primarily to the use of the Life Modules form of character creation, but can also serve as a guide for creating characters and NPCs using the Points-only method. Where an affiliation described in this book is not featured below, gamemasters and players are advised to use the Independent/Generic Affiliation (see p. 63, *AToW*) and modify as they see fit.

NEW AFFILIATION: DEEP PERIPHERY/ALEXANDRIAN COVENANT

Module Cost: 50 XP

For over 300 years the Alexandrian Covenant has been trapped in a self-perpetuating cycle of unremitting war. Since the political landscape is capable of changing overnight, the Alexandrians are prepared for any eventuality and are ready to defend their beliefs to the death. Outsiders, whether traders, explorers, or bandits, are met with a shoot-first-ask-questions-later policy.

Primary Language: English

Secondary Languages: Chinese (Mandarin), French, Spanish

Fixed XPs: [Attributes] STR (+50 XP), RFL (+150 XP), DEX (+50 XP), WIL (+25 XP); [Traits] Compulsion/Superstitious (–100 XP), Compulsion/Xenophobia (–100 XP), Equipped (–50 XP), Illiterate (–50 XP); [Skills] Perception (+20 XP), Small Arms (+10), Survival/Any (+10 XP)

Flexible XPs: [Skills] +10 XP to any two of the following Skills: Artillery, Demolitions, Melee Weapons, Stealth, or Support Weapons

Note: Alexandrians are ineligible for any of the following life modules: Spacer Family, University, Solaris Internship, Explorer, Merchant, or Travel. In addition, Alexandrian characters must choose a “sub-affiliation” in the form of either the Matriarchy or the Patriarchy. The effects of this choice on character creation are described below:

- **Matriarchy:** [Attributes] CHA (+50 XP); [Traits] Compulsion/Distrust Patriarchy (–50 XP); [Skills] Protocol/ Alexandrian Matriarchy (+15)
- **Patriarchy:** [Attributes] BOD (+50 XP); [Traits] Compulsion/Distrust Matriarchy (–50 XP); [Skills] Protocol/ Alexandrian Patriarchy (+15)

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**NEW AFFILIATION:
DEEP PERIPHERY/AUXUMITE PROVIDENCE****Module Cost:** 50 XP

Fleeing from the horrors of war during the Outer Reaches Rebellion, this small interstellar nation was founded on the principles of peace and self-determination. Before Contact with Interstellar Expeditions, the Auxumite Providence slid backward technologically and is only now beginning to recover, but this didn't stop the society and culture of the Providence to continue to develop. Because of this, the universities of the Auxumite Providence have some of the most well developed art, poetry, and musical programs in human space, and most citizens have a deep respect for the arts and religion.

Primary Language: Arabic (Auxumite dialect)**Secondary Languages:** English, French, Berber

Fixed XPs: [Attributes] CHA (+100 XP), EDG (+50 XP); [Traits] Equipped (-75 XP), Extra Income (-50 XP), Wealth (-75 XP); [Skills] Art/Any (+20 XP), Interest/Auxumite History (+10 XP), Perception (+15 XP), Protocol/Auxumite Providence (+10 XP), Small Arms (+5), Survival/Any (+10 XP)

Flexible XPs: [Skills] +10 XP to any three of the following Skills: Art/Any, Interest/Islam, Language/Any Secondary, Navigation, Zero-G Operations

Notes: Auxumite Providence characters may not take any of the following Life Modules: Born Mercenary Brat, Mercenary Brat, Military School, Nobility, Solaris Internship, Solaris VII Games, Military Academy, or Organized Crime.

Also Auxumite Providence characters should only take the Illiterate Trait with the permission of the GM due to the society's high level of literacy.

**NEW AFFILIATION: DEEP PERIPHERY/NEW DELPHI
COMPACT****Module Cost:** 50 XP

Descended from people fleeing the Reunification War and the Amaris Civil War, the people of the Delphi Compact just want to be left alone. With the presence of the Delphi Curse, the average Delphi's immune system is much stronger than most humans, but most Delphians have no interest beyond their own fields and communities.

Primary Language: English**Secondary Languages:** French, Japanese, Spanish

Fixed XPs: [Attributes] BOD (+100 XP), INT (+75 XP); [Traits] Equipped (-75 XP), Introvert (-75 XP), Poison Resistance (+30 XP), Toughness (+15 XP) Wealth (-100 XP); [Skills] Interest/Compact History (+15 XP), Perception (+15 XP), Protocol/Delphi Compact (+15 XP), Small Arms (+5 XP), Survival/Any (+10 XP)

Flexible XPs: [Skills] +10 XP to any two of the following Skills: Appraisal, Art/Any, Language/Any Secondary, MedTech, Negotiation, Science/Immunology, or Tracking/Wilds

Notes: Delphi Compact characters may not take any of the following Life Modules: Any Clan-based, Born Mercenary Brat, Intelligence Operative Training, Mercenary Brat, Nobility, Slave, Solaris Internship, Solaris VII Games, Military Academy, Travel, Organized Crime or War Orphan.

**NEW AFFILIATION:
DEEP PERIPHERY/SOCIETY OF ST. ANDREAS****Module Cost:** 50 XP

Descended from Terra's Swiss Guards, the Society of St. Andreas is a theocratic society based heavily on Terra's Catholic Church. Modeled on the culture and politics of Vatican City before its sacking by Stefan Amaris, the Society emphasizes the twin virtues of duty and faith. The self-appointed guardians of many Vatican artifacts and tomes taken with them into exile, the Society remains cloistered in its tiny system to this day.

Primary Language: Latin**Secondary Languages:** German, English, Polish, Russian

Fixed XPs: [Attributes] INT (+100 XP), WIL (+75 XP); [Traits] Equipped (-50 XP), Introvert (-75 XP), Wealth (-100 XP); [Skills] Interest/Catholic History (+15 XP), Interest/Terran History (+10 XP), Perception (+15 XP), Protocol/St. Andreas (+15 XP), Small Arms (+5), Survival/Any (+10 XP)

Flexible XPs: [Skills] +10 XP to any two of the following Skills: Appraisal, Art/Any, Language/Any Secondary, Negotiation, Tactics/Infantry, Tracking/Wilds

Notes: Society of St. Andreas characters may not take any of the following Life Modules: Born Mercenary Brat, Mercenary Brat, Nobility, Spacer Family, Slave, Solaris Internship, Solaris VII Games, Military Academy, Explorer, Travel, or Organized Crime.

**NEW AFFILIATION: DEEP PERIPHERY/UNION OF
SAMOYEDIC COLONIES****Module Cost:** 50 XP

Having suffered centuries of persecution and marginally inhabitable worlds, the Union of Samoyedic Colonies has evolved into a hardy and adaptable realm where both primitivism and technology coexist side-by-side. The Union's mission continually pushes its people further from established civilization and thus has created an insular and suspicious populace who would prefer to simply be left alone.

Primary Language: Nenets**Secondary Languages:** English, German

Fixed XPs: [Attributes] BOD (+100 XP), WIL (+75 XP); [Traits] Compulsion/Xenophobia (-100 XP), Compulsion/Primitivism (-50 XP), Fit (+75 XP), Illiterate (-100 XP); [Skills] Animal Handling/Any (+15 XP), Arts/Any (+10 XP), Interest/Samoyed Religion (+15 XP), Survival/Any (+10 XP)

Flexible XPs: [Skills] +10 XP to any one of the following Skills: Archery, Melee Weapons, or Thrown Weapons

Notes: Due to their remote and isolated nature, a Samoyed cannot take any of the following life modules: Born Mercenary Brat, White Collar, Mercenary Brat, Combat Correspondent, University, Solaris Internship, Solaris VII Games, or Covert Operations.

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**NEW AFFILIATION:
MINOR PERIPHERY/CHAINLANE ISLES****Module Cost:** 50 XP**Primary Language:** English**Secondary Languages:** English, German

Characters hailing from the Chainlane Isles live in a fractious realm thick with complex political maneuvering, secret societies and groups, altruistic leaders, and anachronistic civilizations. The recently-arrived Clan Diamond Shark maintains a distant but involved eye on the *status quo* across the Isle systems, its merchant caste stepping in where it sees the balance reaching a tipping point, and thus keeping the various powers in a constant state of flux. The Sharks' ultimate motivations for such "puppet master" strategy remain unknown.

Fixed XPs: [Skills] Interest/Any (+10 XP), Negotiation (+10 XP), Protocol/Chainlane (+10 XP), Protocol/Clan (+10 XP), Streetwise/Chainlane (+10 XP)

Flexible XPs: None

Notes: When creating characters and NPCs from the Chainlane Isles, use the Independent/Generic Affiliation from *A Time of War* (see p. 63, *AToW*), but apply the following modifications for Chainlane characters that choose to align with any of the following sub-groups:

- **Agricorp:** Employees of this aggressive corporate concern automatically receive an additional +150 XPs toward the Equipped Trait, to reflect their access to higher-quality personal equipment.
- **Far Reach Collective:** Trained in the art of corporate espionage, Collective agents may improve any one non-combat skill they possess as if they possess the Fast Learner Trait for that skill alone. (If the character already possesses the Fast learner Trait, the selected non-combat skill is treated as a Natural Aptitude instead.)
- **Fredotto:** Characters from Fredotto must pass through the To Serve and Protect Stage 4 Life Module at least once before the start of game play. These characters also advance their Small Arms skill as if they possess the Fast Learner Trait. (No additional effect occurs, however, if the character already has the Fast Learner Trait.)
- **Hanju Empire:** Characters with a Hanju background automatically receive -200 XP toward the Dependents Trait and +300 TP toward Toughness Trait.
- **Helenist Collective:** Female characters must have a minimum INT Attribute score of 5 before starting play.
- **Paranese Cultist:** Any member of a religious collective or cult based on Far Reach must purchase additional negative Traits totaling a minimum of -6 TP.
- **Rondane Syndicate:** Members of the Syndicate intelligence network receive an additional +100 XP to their INT Attribute score after character creation, to reflect their paranoid nature and aggressive intelligence-training regimen. Syndicate males with a minimum Attribute score of 5 in BOD and INT are eligible for the Helenist Selection Ceremony.

- **Syrstart Yakuza:** Characters with a Syrstart Yakuza background must have a minimum DEX Attribute score of 3 and pass through the Organized Crime Stage 4 Life Module at least twice before game play starts.
- **Vannite Pirate Kingdom:** Characters from the Vannite Pirate Kingdom may not possess the Glass Jaw, Thin-Skinned, or Title Traits. Any Science, Protocol, Negotiation, or Strategy skills possessed by Vannite characters advance as if the character has the Slow Learner Trait. (If the character already has the Slow Learner Trait, double the XP costs and training times needed to advance these four skills.)

**THE BARRENS, FARHOME, OUTWORLDS WASTES,
AND CANOPIAN RUINS**

Outside of the newer Deep Periphery affiliations discussed above, and those covered in *A Time of War*, the remaining potential character factions presented in these pages reflect realms and independent worlds that are too shattered, small, or newly incorporated to have gained any distinctive culture and society to speak of. For this reason, many fall under the catchall categories of the Independent Affiliation (see p. 63, *AToW*). Nevertheless, the following restrictions and supplemental rules should be kept in mind, based on the characters' region of origin.

Barrens Affiliations

Having lived under Clan rule for decades, all of the new (and reborn) Periphery affiliations in the region collectively known as the Barrens may select the Independent/Generic, Independent/Pirate, or Independent/Spacer Affiliations. In addition to the normal Life Modules for Inner Sphere characters, those hailing from the Barrens may select any Clan Life Module available to non-warrior caste characters, to reflect their upbringing under the time when the Clans ruled over their worlds. First-generation Barrens characters may not, however, take any of the following Life Modules: Born Mercenary Brat, Nobility, Mercenary Brat, any Military schooling (outside of Family Training), or any Solaris- or ComStar/Word of Blake-based Module.

Barrens characters may select Clan-based Protocol and Streetwise skills in addition to those appropriate to their native region, but may not possess the Title/Bloodname Trait. Finally, characters from this region in the Periphery receive the following additional Traits: Equipped (+100 XP), and Reputation (-100 XP).

Farhome, Outworlds Wastes, Canopian Ruins

All of these regional affiliations reflect worlds that are largely incapable of interstellar travel and communication. Most have even regressed in technological capability to a level approximate to Terra's early industrial age (or even earlier). While they may also be host to more sophisticated operations from off-world concerns (such as the permanent scientific research groups on Farhome), such groups are considered native to other organizations and affiliations, and thus the following guidelines cover only the native inhabitants of these worlds.



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To reflect these isolated “world-locked” groups, only the Independent/Generic Affiliation can be used as a baseline, while the following Life Modules are also disallowed: Born Mercenary Brat, Mercenary Brat, Spacer Family, all forms of Higher Education (beyond basic Trade Schooling, Police Training, and Family Trained military—if the gamemaster permits), Explorer, any Clan-, Solaris- or ComStar/Word of Blake-based Module, Postgraduate Studies, or Travel. Furthermore, if any of the Modules chosen provide skills or Traits based on space travel (such as Zero-G Operations), the player should select another Trait or skill of equivalent XP value instead.

Characters in particularly toxic or damaged worlds—such as those of the Canopian Ruins—must include one or more negative Traits that reflect the genetic damage they have sustained through environmental or hereditary conditions. Examples of such Traits include Compulsion, Glass Jaw, Handicap, Lost Limb, Poor Hearing, Poor Vision, Slow Learner, Thin-Skinned, or Unattractive. If the players have access to the expanded rules found in *A Time of War Companion*, the Mutation Trait may also be used, especially in conjunction with characters such as the “merfolk” of Frobisher. (Positive side effects of these mutations may also be noted, as well, if applicable, such as the “merfolk” ability to breathe underwater.)

On those worlds where governments are minimal, characters may not possess any significant Traits that indicate social strata or property, including: Citizenship, Equipped, Property, Rank, Title, Vehicle, or Wealth.

NEW CREATURES

MEGALOSUCHUS (RAUSUCHUS GOLDINGI INCOGNITUS)

Home world: Farhome

Preferred environment: Shorelines and rainforests

Farhome’s ecosystem is very similar to Terra’s, but has never been subject to major extinction events. This means a wide variety of species to those of Terra’s own history coexist in wide variety. Unlike in bygone eras on Terra, terrifying theropod-like reptiles are not the singularly dominant species. Most of these dinosauria are encountered regionally in highland areas and dense jungles, while proto-mammals of smaller size inhabit lowlands, moderate rainforests, and coastal areas. All of these creatures are kept at bay by the megalosuchus, an enormous apex predator resembling the rausuchia of Terra’s Triassic period.

The megalosuchus looks like an enormous crocodile on upright legs, and ranks amongst the most massive land predators in known space. Despite its size, it is also elusive, spending most time in relatively shallow shore waters, where it lurks under the surface, barely visible. Its behavioral pattern has shaped its habitat in a way that greatly benefited smaller fauna, including the Naturists in centuries past. With reliable predictability, the megalosuchus will only attack and kill creatures of proportions larger than a Terran horse, otherwise feeding on carrion. It is a very territorial loner, and the presence of another large animal will set off a unique hormonal



reaction that launches a quick and unstoppable assault. Nothing can withstand this attack, which is dangerous even to ‘Mechs.

The reptile has both a very slow breeding cycle and metabolism, which means its population is low, but can sustain itself. A lifespan estimated to be hundreds of years has allowed it to grow to huge size in its aquatic environment. Though the megalosuchus truly is the most dangerous game, Farhome is under the rigid jurisdiction of *Interstellar Expeditions* and, by extension, the Republic, preventing it becoming a second Hunter’s Paradise. Scientists on-planet treat known habitats with the utmost respect.

NEW DELPHIAN LIZARAT (DRACAENA VERMINUS DELPHINAE)

Home world: New Delphi

Preferred environment: Forests, jungles, cities

The cause of the Delphi Curse, lizarats are slightly larger than Terran rats, have six legs, and can be found everywhere in the Compact. Their bite, feces, claws, blood, and slime all carry the Curse’s viruses, even though the animal itself is immune. They will eat any organic matter they can find, and are not too picky about whether or not it’s alive. Lizarats generally run in packs of eight to ten, through there are packs as large as twenty or more. They can easily sneak onto DropShip, which is how they spread from New Delphi to all the Compact planets.

They prefer dark, warm, and humid places for their nests, which they will defend to the death. A lizarat female can lay between ten and thirty eggs at a time, and can lay up to four clutches a year. Their tough hides make them more difficult to kill than Terran rats, but their bite and claw makes them dangerous in-close. When excited, they excrete a putrid-smelling slime that repels attackers and alerts the rest of the pack.

RULES ANNEX



With only a couple of predators able to consume lizarats restricted to New Delphi, the only thing that keeps the population under control is constant search-and-destroy operations by the Compact government.

TIH (RANGIFER TARANDUS FIANNACUS)

Home world: Fianna

Preferred environment: Grasslands, mountains, forests, tundra

The heart and soul of the Samoyedic peoples, the *tih* is an arctic ruminant originally native to the Lyran Commonwealth planet Fianna. The Samoyeds began domesticating *tih* shortly after their herds of transplanted Terran reindeer fell victim to numerous tragedies. For a few generations the Samoyeds raised *tih* and reindeer side by side, until the *tih* gradually supplanted the degrading reindeer population and eventually became the culture's sole domesticated animal, suitable as a riding or pack animal.

Tih share many superficial traits with the Terran reindeer, such as the quality of its meat and utility of its hide and bones, but the differences outweigh the similarities. *Tih* sport two pairs of eyes to better detect predators, and their bones and antlers are naturally reinforced with carbon to prevent breakage. Each fetlock ends in a pair of hooves, which allows the animal to navigate steep hills and rocky, snow-covered cliffs with ease.

**SPARK BEETLE (PERIPLANETA GIGANTUS AZURIUS)**

Home world: Azur

Preferred environment: Jungles, Forests, Swamps

Originally native to Azur in the Outworlds Alliance, the spark beetle is a giant pest insect that managed to propagate off-world during the heyday of the Star League, and is now a familiar—if not terribly common—sight in many Periphery realms and their bordering Inner Sphere regions. Roughly the size of an adult human's fist, spark beetles take their name in part from their similar appearance to many terrestrial beetles, but they are most known for their peculiar attraction to electricity. Their native diet consists of native worm-like creatures that possess the same "shock touch" ability of the Terran electric eel. This has led to the beetles' tendency to swarm over and gnaw on live power transformers, capacitors, power conduits, myomer bundles, and generators. This unfortunate habit almost always ends when the beetle's sharp mandibles strike a live line and the a flash of light marks their immediate demise, leaving many hapless techs to clean up the mess and repair the now-frayed electrical systems.

To combat this, early travelers took to carrying bounding mantises, a raccoon-sized pseudo-arthropod that represents the spark beetle's hardiest native predator. Ironically, poor population control and a thriving underground trade in both the beetles (as a potential tool for sabotage) and their predators has resulted in large numbers of both creatures appearing in the wild on the same worlds—a fact that means seeing spark beetles almost guarantees that bounding mantises are not far behind.





RULES ANNEX

NEW CREATURES TABLE

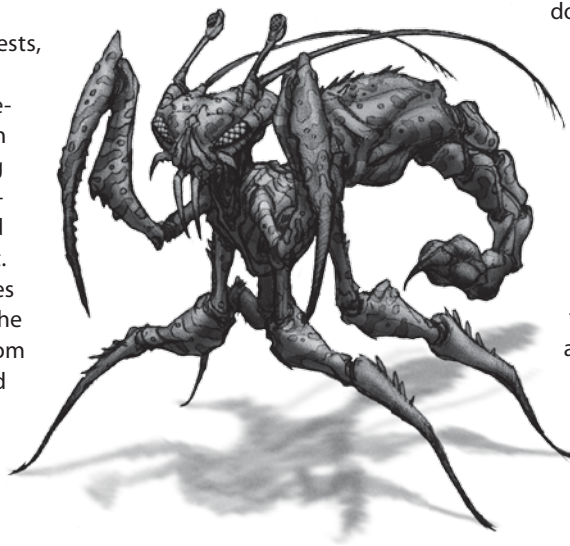
Creature Name	Mass (kg)	Attributes (S/B/D/R/I/W/E)	Size Class (Modifier)	BAR (M/B/E/X)	Damage (AP/BD)	Move (W/R/S)
Tih	270	18/25/2/6/4/4/1	Large (+1)	2/1/0/0	1M/3	15/35/70
Traits: Domesticated, Good Vision (+2), Good Hearing (+2), Offensive Adaptation (Antlers) Skills: AniMelee +3, Perception +3						
New Delphian Lizarat	0.8	1/1/5/7/4/5/2	Tiny (-4)	1/1/1/1	1M/0	6/11/22
Traits: Armor (+1), Exceptional Attack (victim may contract disease on physical contact or a successful bite; for bites, roll twice on the Random Disease Table [see p. 247, AToW]); for physical contact with bare skin, roll once on the same table, applying a -1 roll modifier.) Skills: AniMelee +2, Climbing +2, Perception +5, Tracking +0						
Megalosuchus	27,000	272/248/2/7/3/8/2	Monstrous (+4)	3/2/1/2	4M/10	10/15/85
Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+3), Camouflage (+1), Cold-Blooded, Offensive Adaptation (Fangs/Claws); Notes: Amphibian (Air-breather) Skills: AniMelee +4, Perception +7, Swimming +2, Stealth +5						
Spark Beetle	1.2	2/2/3/4/2/2/1	Very Small (-2)	1/1/0/1	2M/1	1/12
Traits: Armor (+1), Flight (+1), Good Smell (+3), Hardy, Offensive Adaptation (Fangs); Notes: Smell sense is specifically effective at finding live electrical sources; Typically swarms Skills: AniMelee +1, Perception +2, Tracking +3						
Bounding Mantis	7	3/4/5/6/4/6/2	Small (-1)	2/2/1/2	2M/2	9/21/42
Traits: Aggressive, Armor (+3), Good Smell (+3), Hardy, Poison (Injected; AP/Strength: 2/3; Duration: 4 turns; Continuous), Offensive Adaptation (Claws/Fangs) Skills: AniMelee +3, Climbing +2, Perception +4, Tracking +5, Running +2, Stealth +3						

BOUNDING MANTIS (STAGOMATIS GARGANTUS AZURIUS)

Home world: Azur

Preferred environment: Jungles, forests, swamps

The main predator of the spark beetle, an annoying Periphery pest drawn to powered electronics, the bounding mantis is so named for its haunting resemblance to Terra's praying mantis, and its peculiar pouncing, gazelle-like gait. Though flightless, the mantis manages to catch its prey through stealth while the spark beetle forages, often emerging from the shadows, tall grasses or from behind nearby rocks. Upon attacking, the mantis uses its foreclaws to restrain the beetle until it can deliver the killing blow with its powerful, scorpion-like poison stinger.



Though used to contain spark beetle populations, the bounding mantis is not a species that can be domesticated. Threatened mantises have little fear of creatures larger than themselves—including humans—and thus they are just as likely to attack as they are to flee. The fact that the bounding mantis—like the spark beetle—can also reproduce asexually means that using these creatures to contain a spark beetle population can potentially leave one with an equally large mantis population instead. For many, this is seen as an acceptable trade, as the mantis is not drawn to electronics and will generally meander away once they have consumed their fill of spark beetles.



RULES ANNEX

BATTLETECH RULES

The following rules are designed primarily for use with the tactical war game rules as presented in *Total Warfare* and *Tactical Operations*.

RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TABLE

Random Assignment Tables (RATs) are designed to aid players who wish to quickly generate diverse forces for game play, but can also be used as a guide when determining the likely equipment used by the Escorpión Imperio. Players are not required to use these tables, but they can be immensely helpful in a pinch. If used, the following tables and rules replace those presented in the core rulebooks, such as *Total Warfare* and *A Time of War*.

USING THE RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TABLES

The Random Assignment Table (RAT) for 'Mechs presented here is more extensive than those seen in the core rulebooks, and is meant to reflect the various levels of equipment quality and types that forces may draw upon based on their prestige, reliability, and so forth. To use the 'Mech RAT, first determine the appropriate Equipment Level for the force being generated. Then, consult the Equipment Level Table below, applying the modifier appropriate to the force's Equipment Level to the 2D6 dice roll used when determining the units used.

CLAN EQUIPMENT LEVEL MODIFIERS

Equipment Level	'Mechs
Keshik	+8
Frontline	+6
Second-line	+0

Omni Units

Whenever a RAT result indicates an Omni unit (including battle armor equipped with modular weapons), the controlling player can select any desired configuration available. Omni units are marked on the RATs with an asterisk (*).

UNION OF SAMOYEDIC COLONIES: NENETS SECURITY DIVISION

The following provides detail on the use of the military forces in the Union of Samoyedic Colonies

Assigning Samoyedic Units

The Nenets Security Division may field Star League-era units available to the Rim Worlds Republic or Lyran Commonwealth (for Random Assignment Tables, consult the realm's appropriate *2765 Field Report*). The maximum size of a typical NSD force is roughly two companies of combined 'Mechs, vehicles and infantry. (Only the Union world of Yalumth may field two such forces.) The NSD has no access to battle armor.

The NSD has very limited access to ready aerospace fighters and/or pilots. To reflect this, roll 2D6 when determining NSD forces. On a result of 10+, a maximum of 2 aerospace/conventional fighters may be deployed; otherwise, no aerial forces can be chosen.

Setting up the NSD

The Samoyedic Union's military consists of militia-like volunteer units that are often lacking in parts, maintenance, and/or discipline. When setting up an NSD force, apply all of the following before the game begins:

'Mechs: An NSD force may field no more than one lance of 'Mechs at any given time. After determining the 'Mechs to be used, randomly apply 1D6 (+1D6 per each weight class above Light) 5-point groups of damage to the unit's Front facing; reroll any damage that would cripple or destroy the unit. Randomly apply 1 critical hit; reroll any engine or gyro hits.

Aerospace/Conventional Fighters: Randomly apply 1D6 (+1D6 per each weight class above Light) 5-point groups of damage to the unit's Bottom facing; reroll any damage that would cripple or destroy the unit. Randomly apply 1 critical hit; reroll any engine hits.

Vehicles: An NSD force may field no more than two lances of combat vehicles in any given scenario. After determining the vehicles to be used, randomly apply 1D6 (+1D6 per each weight class above Light) 5-point damage groups to the unit's Front facing; reroll any damage that would cripple or destroy the unit.

Infantry: The NSD can field up to a company of infantry forces in any given scenario. Each infantry unit begins the game with 1D6 fewer troopers than the unit's maximum size.

ALEXANDRIAN COVENANT: ALEXANDRIAN ARMED FORCES

The following provides detail on the use of the military forces in the Alexandrian Covenant

Assigning Units

The Alexandrian Armed Forces operate in armored companies called chariots by the locals, though each Alexandrian world typically possesses up to 25 such formations (Pharos and Ptolemy each possess 50), with conventional infantry support. The AAF may field Star League or Reunification War-era vehicles appropriate for the Taurian Concordat or Magistracy of Canopus, but no unit may be fielded that weighs more than 75 tons.

Due to lack of hardware and training, the AAF is strictly limited to combat vehicles and conventional infantry. The AAF cannot field 'Mechs, DropShips, battle armor, or aerospace fighters.

SDS FIREBASES

Each planet in the Alexandrian Covenant maintains at least one firebase capable of Surface-to-Orbit attacks (see pp. 109-110, *Strategic Operations*). These surface-to-orbit batteries are derived from older technology, but perform in gameplay in the same manner as a Barracuda capital missile. Each installation may house up to two capital missile launchers, equipped with 2 missiles each.

Alexandrian firebases are considered Hardened Fortresses (see p. 117, *Tactical Operations*) that occupy 3 hexes and stand 10 levels in elevation. Each firebase has a CF of 150 and an Armor Factor of 150.

All firebase crews have a Gunnery Skill of 4 for all Surface-to-Orbit attacks.



RANDOM ASSIGNMENT TABLES (ESCORPIÓN IMPERIO)

2d6	Light	Medium	Heavy	Assault
2	EPT-C-1 Reptar [35] (ISP3)	ARA-S-1 Araña [40] (ISP3)	CPLT-C1 Catapult [65] (3039)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
3	EPT-C-1 Reptar [35] (ISP3)	ARA-S-1 Araña [40] (ISP3)	ARC-2R Archer [70] (3039)	VTR-9B Victor [80] (3039)
4	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	SHD-1R Shadow Hawk [50] (XTRP1)	RFL-1N Rifleman [50] (XTRP3)	CGR-A1 Charger [80] (3039)
5	STG-3G Stinger [20] (3039)	HBK-4P Hunchback [50] (3039)	CRD-3R Crusader [65] (3039)	STK-3H Stalker [85] (3039)
6	WSP-1A Wasp [20] (3039)	TBT-5S Trebuchet [50] (3039)	QKD-4G Quickdraw [60] (3039)	AWS-8Q Awesome [80] (3039)
7	LCT-1V Locust [20] (3039)	WVR-6R Wolverine [55] (3039)	RFL-3N Rifleman [60] (3039)	BNC-3E Banshee [95] (3039)
8	UM-R60 UrbanMech [30] (3039)	SHD-2H Shadow Hawk [55] (3039)	WHM-6R Warhammer [70] (3039)	STK-3F Stalker [85] (3039)
9	FS9-K Firestarter [35] (3039)	PXH-1 Phoenix Hawk [45] (3039)	GHR-5J Grasshopper [70] (3050U-I)	LGB-0W Longbow [85] (3039)
10	THE-N Thorn [20] (3050U-C)	INI-02 Initiate [40] (3060)	ON1-K Orion [75] (3039)	GRN-D-04 Grand Crusader II [80] (3055U)
11	JKR-8T Jackrabbit [25] (3075)	STN-3L Sentinel [40] (3050U-C)	GLT-3N Guillotine [70] (3050U-C)	CRK-5003-2 Crockett [85] (3050U-C)
12	MON-66 Mongoose [25] (3050U-C)	LGH-4Y Lightray [55] (3067)	LNC25-01 Lancelot [60] (3050U-C)	HGN-732 Highlander [90] (3050U-C)
13	TLN-5W Talon [35] (3058U-C)	WVE-5N Wyvern [45] (3050U-C)	FLS-8K Flashman [75] (3050U-C)	THG-11E Thug [80] (3050U-C)
14	HSR-200-D Hussar [30] (3050U-C)	LNX-9Q Lynx [55] (3058U-C)	BL-6-KNT Black Knight [75] (3050U-C)	EMP-6A Emperor [90] (3058U-C)
15	Icestorm [25] (3060)	Griffin IIC [40] (3085-PP)	Fire Scorpion [65] (3060)	Warhammer IIC [80] (3085-PP)
16	Hellion [30] (3067)	Shadow Hawk IIC [45] (3085-PP)	Galahad [60] (3055U)	Marauder IIC [85] (3085-PP)
17	Commando IIC [25] (3060)	Hunchback IIC [50] (3058U-C)	Rifleman IIC [65] (3085-PP)	Bane 2 [100] (3055U)
18	Fire Moth [20] (3050U-C)*	Mongrel [45] (3058U-C)*	P1 Perseus [75] (3067)*	Stone Rhino 2 [100] (3055U)
19	Horned Owl 4 [35] (3055U)	Ice Ferret [45] (3050U-C)*	Hellbringer [65] (3050U-C)*	Gargoyle [80] (3050U-C)*
20	Adder [35] (3050U-C)*	Stormcrow [55] (3050U-C)*	Summoner [70] (3050U-C)*	Warhawk [85] (3050U-C)*

2d6	Light	Medium	Heavy	Assault
2	J. Edgar (ICE) [25] (3039)	Engineering Vehicle (AC) [40] (3039)	Bulldog (Standard) [60] (3039)	Schrek PPC Carrier (Standard) [80] (3039)
3	Galleon GAL-100 [30] (3058U-I)	Hetzer (AC10) [40] (3039)	SRM Carrier (Standard) [60] (3039)	Schrek AC Carrier (Standard) [80] (3039)
4	Heavy Tracked APC (Standard) [20] (3060)	Maxim (Standard) [50] (3039)	AC/2 Carrier (Standard) [60] (3039)	Rhino (Standard) [80] (3050U-C)
5	Pegasus (Standard) [35] (3039)	Vedette (Standard) [50] (3039)	LRM Carrier (Standard) [60] (3039)	Demolisher (Standard) [80] (3039)
6	Lightning (Standard) [35] (3050U-C)	Zephyr (Standard) [40] (3050U-C)	Demon (Standard) [60] (3050U-C)	Ontos (3053 Upgrade) [95] (3058U-I)
7	Scorpion (Standard) [25] (3039)	Prowler (Succession Wars) [55] (3085)	Von Luckner VNL-K65N [75] (3039)	Fury (Standard) [80] (3050U-C)
8	Main Gauche (XL) [30] (3067)	Myrmidon (Standard) [40] (3060)	Burke (Standard) [75] (3050U-C)	Ontos (Light Gauss) [95] (3058U-I)
9	Odin (Standard) [20] (3060)	Ares (Standard) [40] (3060)	Ishtar (Standard) [65] (3060)	Puma PAT-005 [95] (3050U-C)
10	Mithras (Standard) [25] (3060)	Ku (Standard) [50] (3060)	Oro (Standard) [60] (3060)	Alacorn Mk VI [95] (3058U-C)
11	Svantovit (Standard) [35] (3060)	Hachiman (Standard) [50] (3060)	Ishtar (Standard) [65] (3060)	Huitzilopochtli (Standard) [85] (3060)
12	Zorya (Standard) [35] (3060)	Bandit (C) Hovercraft [50] (3058U-I)*	Athena (Standard) [75] (3060)	Mars (Standard) [100] (3060)

2d6	Light Fighters	Medium Fighters	Heavy Fighters	DropShips
2	Guardian Fighter [20] (3039)	Pride Conventional Fighter [45] (XTRDeep)	Thunderbird Strike [100] (XTRDeep)	Sassanid (TR3057)
3	Light Strike Fighter Angel [10] (3039)	CSR-V12 Corsair [50] (3039)	VLC-5N Vulcan [80] (3075)	Manatee (3075)
4	Medium Strike Fighter Defender [25] (3039)	HCT-213 Hellcat [60] (3075)	CHP-W5 Chippewa [90] (3039)	Condor (2801) (TR3057)
5	SYD-21 Seydlitz [25] (3039)	SL-25 Samurai [50] (3039)	RPR-100 Rapier [100] (3039)	Triumph (2593) (TR3057)
6	SB-27 Sabre [25] (3075)	LTN-G15 Lightning [50] (3075)	TRB-D36 Thunderbird [100] (3075)	Union (2708) (TR3057)
7	SPD-502 Spad [30] (3050U-C)	HCT-231B Hellcat II [50] (3050U-C)	HMR-HD Hammerhead [75] (3050U-C)	Union-C (TR3057)
8	Chaeronea [25] (3067)	GTHA-500 Gotha [60] (3050U-C)	AHB-443 Ahab [90] (3050U-C)	Broadsword (TR3057)
9	Issus [40] (3067)	IRN-SD1 Ironsides [65] (3050U-C)	Xerxes [85] (3067)	Gazelle (2531) (TR3057)
10	Sulla [45] (3055U)*	Tyr [55] (3067)	Hydaspes [95] (3067)	Overlord-C (TR3057)
11	Avar [35] (3055U)*	Turk [50] (3055U)*	Kirghiz [100] (3055U)*	Lion (Clan) (TR3057)
12	Batu [40] (3055U)*	Visigoth [60] (3055U)*	Sabutai [75] (3055U)*	Titan (Clan) (TR3057)

2d6	Infantry/Battle Armor/Protomech
2	Horse-Mounted Infantry Platoon (3085)
3	Scout Infantry Platoon (3085)
4	Clan Motorized Point (Laser) (TW)
5	Elemental (3058U-C)*
6	Undine (Upgrade) (3058U-C)
7	Elemental (3058U-C)*
8	Salamander (Laser) (3058U-C)
9	Afreet (Standard) (3075)
10	Triton ProtoMech (Standard) (3075)
11	Roc ProtoMech (Standard) (3060)
12	Satyr ProtoMech (Standard) (3060)

RULES ANNEX

NEW UNITS

The following units are designed for use with the appropriate tactical gameplay rules found in *Total Warfare*, *Tactical Operations*, and *Strategic Operations*.

REPTAR AND ARAÑA MILITIAMECHS

EPT-C-1 Reptar

Mass: 35 tons

Chassis: Unknown Biped

Power Plant: Fuel-EX 175 series Fuel Cell

Cruising Speed: 54 kph

Maximum Speed: 86 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None.

Armor: Industry-Z Heavy

Armament:

1 Clan ProtoMech AC/8

2 Clan Light Machine Guns

Manufacturer: Quixote Industries

Primary Factory: Navarre, Aragon

Communications System: Unknown

Targeting and Tracking System: Unknown

ARA-S-1 Araña

Mass: 40 tons

Chassis: Unknown Quadruped

Power Plant: Unknown Fusion 200

Cruising Speed: 54 kph

Maximum Speed: 86 kph

Jump Jets: None

Jump Capacity: None

Armor: Industry-Z Heavy

Armament:

3 Clan Extended-range Medium Lasers

Manufacturer: Quixote Industries

Primary Factory: Asturias, Granada

Communications System: Unknown

Targeting and Tracking System: Unknown

Overview

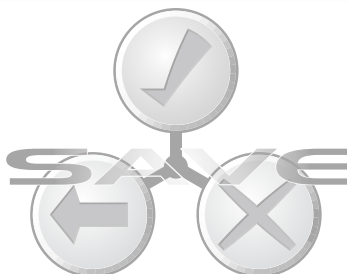
[Director: This report is more conjecture than actual fact, based on the limited data dumps we received from Agent Schmetzer before his unfortunate disappearance. We did, thankfully, manage to piece together some of the recon video he took during a Castilian training exercise. This data isn't of much use except to prep any of our deep space mission teams, in case the Imperio comes calling. –Roger]

With the current turmoil embroiling the three powers occupying the worlds of Nueva Castile, it is a wonder one military project, much less two, found its way from drawing room to production floor. Such are the two newest war machines filling in slots among the forces of the Escorpión Imperio.

Both the *Araña* and *Reptar* are curious designs, as they are standard MilitiaMechs rather than actual Clan BattleMechs. Built with lesser chassis and armor technology, these platforms appear to be meant for the conscripted Castilian and Umayyad freeborns in the Scorpion touman. The two designs are also found in large numbers among the Imperio's new "garrison" caste. It seems Scorpion scientists intend both 'Mechs to be a stopgap measure until new Clan-built BattleMech facilities can be completed and brought online.

The *Reptar* is thirty-five tons with a low speed curve. The bipedal design is not meant to fill roles meant for true scout 'Mechs. Its weapons load contains a ballistic-centric profile, mounting an autocannon found on heavier ProtoMechs and two light machine guns. The Scorpions apparently have a surplus of their 8-series autocannon, indicating a lack of new ProtoMech construction. At first glance, the choice of light machine guns seem odd, as they would do little damage to other MilitiaMechs, much less a full BattleMech. The primary opponent these pilots will see, however, are the lighter vehicles and infantry of most Deep Periphery powers.

In the few training maneuvers observed, *Reptars* are typically held back as a reserve force or to protect a vital objective such as a command post or forward observer station. When the Imperio force needs a diversionary tactic or "bait," *Reptar* and *Arañas* are expected to throw themselves at specified points in the opponent's line, to distract or confuse the enemy long enough for superior firepower to arrive.

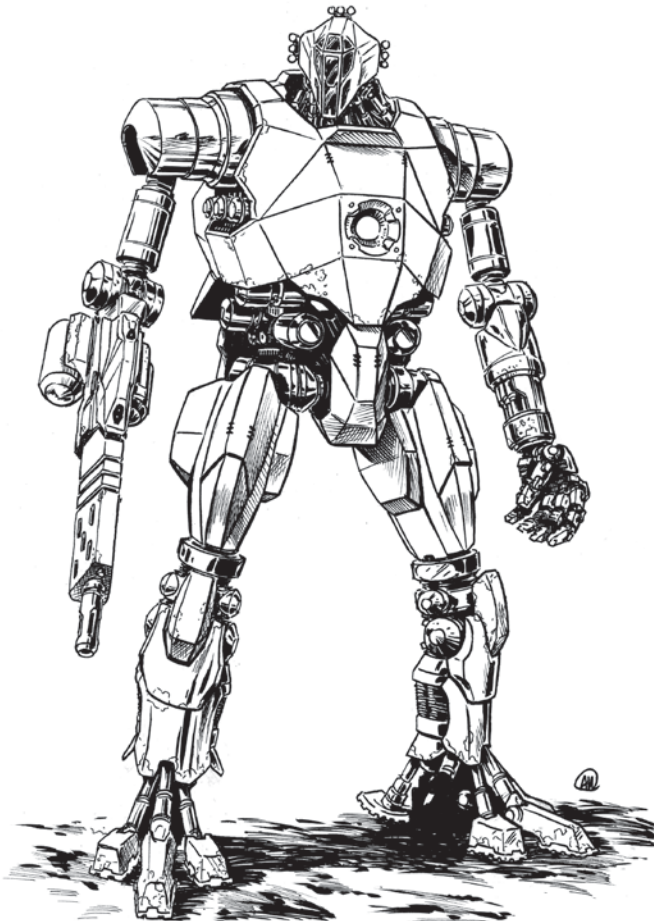


RULES ANNEX

The *Araña* MilitiaMech is an unusual quadruped design, appearing more as a bunker-on-legs with a top-mounted gun turret. Built using a mix of IndustrialMech construction and Clan fusion technology, the *Araña* is configured as a heavy back-up to the *Reptar* series that can keep pace with the lighter and weaker design.

Sporting three extended-range medium lasers in a 360-degree turret, the *Araña* packs enough firepower to dissuade enemy scouts. Caliphate forces have already begun utilizing hull-down ambush tactics in hilly and urban terrain, maximizing their turret weapons to great effect. The strategy benefits the *Araña* pilots as well, since the armor is not 'Mech grade but heavy industrial. Scorpion designers thoughtfully included an ejection system, in order to save its greener pilots from death through poor decision-making.

Both of these militarized industrial designs are being produced in modest numbers, the better to fill out the Imperio's growing military. With the current unrest bubbling to the surface on several systems, it is not surprising that both are being fielded with domestic protective services as well, most likely to be used as a deterrent to suspected dissident actions.



Type: **Reptar**

Technology Base: Clan (Advanced)

Tonnage: 35

Equipment Rating: F/X-X-F (Advanced)

Battle Value: 514

Equipment

	IndustrialMech	Mass
Internal Structure:	IndustrialMech	7
Engine:	175 (Fuel Cell)	8.5
Walking MP:	5	
Running MP:	8	
Jumping MP:	0	
Heat Sinks:	2	1
Gyro:		2
Cockpit (Industrial):		3
Armor Factor (Heavy Industrial):	80	5

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center Torso	11	12
Center Torso (rear)		3
R/L Torso	8	9
R/L Torso (rear)		2
R/L Arm	6	8
R/L Leg	8	9

Weapons and Ammo Location Critical Tonnage

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Critical	Tonnage
ProtoMech AC/8	RA	4	5.5
Ammo (Proto AC) 20	RT	2	2
Light Machine Gun	RT	1	.25
Light Machine Gun	LT	1	.25
Ammo (Light MG) 100	LT	1	.5

Notes: Features Advanced Fire Control. Features the following Design Quirks: Non-Standard Parts, Poor Sealing.

RULES ANNEX

Type: **Araña**

Technology Base: Clan

Tonnage: 40

Equipment Rating: F/X-X-F (Advanced)

Battle Value: 1,092

Armor Factor (Heavy Industrial):152 9.5

	Internal Structure	Armor Value
--	--------------------	-------------

Head	3	9
Center Torso	12	18
Center Torso (rear)		5
R/L Torso	10	15
R/L Torso (rear)		5
R/L Front Leg	10	20
R/L Rear Leg	10	20

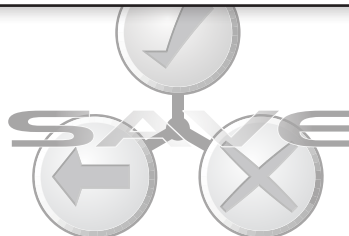
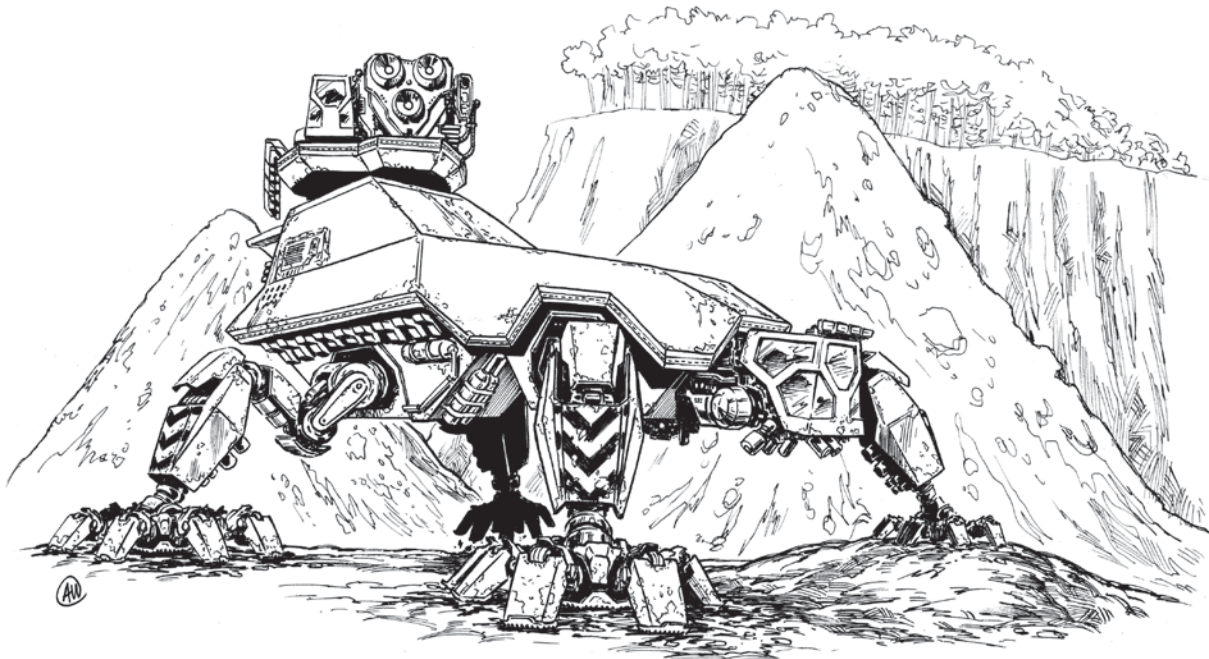
Equipment

	IndustrialMech	Mass
Internal Structure:	200 (Fusion)	8
Engine:	200 (Fusion)	8.5
Walking MP:	5	
Running MP:	8	
Jumping MP:	0	
Heat Sinks:	15	5
Gyro:		2
Cockpit (Industrial):		3

Weapons and Ammo Location Critical Tonnage

3 ER Medium Lasers*	RT	3	3
BattleMech Turret (Quad)	RT	1	.5
Ejection Seat	H	1	.5

Notes: *These weapons are mounted in a Quad BattleMech Turret. Features Advanced Fire Control. Features the following Design Quirks: Non-Standard Parts, Poor Sealing.





RULES ANNEX

QR 243 HPG RELAY SATELLITE

The QR 243 is one of the most common HPG relay satellites. With every invading Clan wanting at least one, sometimes two links to the Homeworlds, with redundant layers where possible, there might be hundreds of these satellites throughout the coreward Deep Periphery. It is assumed that they bridge the gaps between the manned waypoints, fleet bases and garrisons the Clans seeded through the Periphery. The key word is assumed: despite being numerous, only a handful have ever been seen, let alone studied. Space is big and empty and QR 243s are small and typically stationed in the deepest, darkest parts. Indeed, most of our information about the QR 243 comes from the Clans themselves.

The QR 243 is a true creature of the void. Where most satellites are deployed in solar systems, the QR 243 can be deployed in interstellar space in the most efficient places at maximum ranges for HPG transmissions. In these conditions solar cells are a waste of mass, so a fusion reactor provides power instead. Though three tons of fuel are carried for emergencies and can provide over a year of loitering capability in unusual locations, for the most part a light sail holds the QR 243 in position when it is deployed at standard jump points.

At the QR 243's heart is its HPG and communications system. Consisting of a broadband RF receiving dish and a transmitter, the system is able to simultaneously send and receive data across a 50-light year radius as part of a relay with minimal latency. One of the more interesting uses of the QR 243 was discovered when one was found in the outer reaches of the Coventry system in 3086. Rather than acting as a simple relay, the QR 243 was coordinating an array of stealthy spy satellites closer to the inhabited part of the system. These satellites would transmit directional burst messages to the QR 243, which would then relay the message down the HPG network. Orders could then be sent back the same way. This discovery dramatically demonstrated the other reason why the QR 243 has never been studied. When the Lyran recovery team tried to grapple the satellite, it exploded, killing two of the salvage crew. Similar events have been experienced by Explorer Corps teams over the last thirty years.

It's unknown which Clan placed the Coventry QR 243, as it is impossible to trace HPG signals to their destination. It seems logical to assume that the Clans have other systems under similar surveillance. Just as worrying, the basic technology is not beyond ComStar or the Word of Blake, and now the Republic of the Sphere. Who knows who is watching whom?

Type: **QR 243 HPG Relay Satellite**

Chassis Type: Satellite (Medium)

Mass: 65 tons

Equipment Rating: F/X-F-F (Advanced)

Battle Value: 33

Equipment

		Mass
Chassis:		5.5
Engine/Controls:	Fusion	3.5
	Station-Keeping Thrust: 0.1G (0.2 Thrust)	
Structural Integrity:	1	
Heat Sinks:	20	20
Fuel:		3
Tons/Burn Day:	0.005	
Armor Factor (BAR 5):	36	1
	<i>Armor Value</i>	
	Nose	9
	R/L Side	9/9
	Aft	9

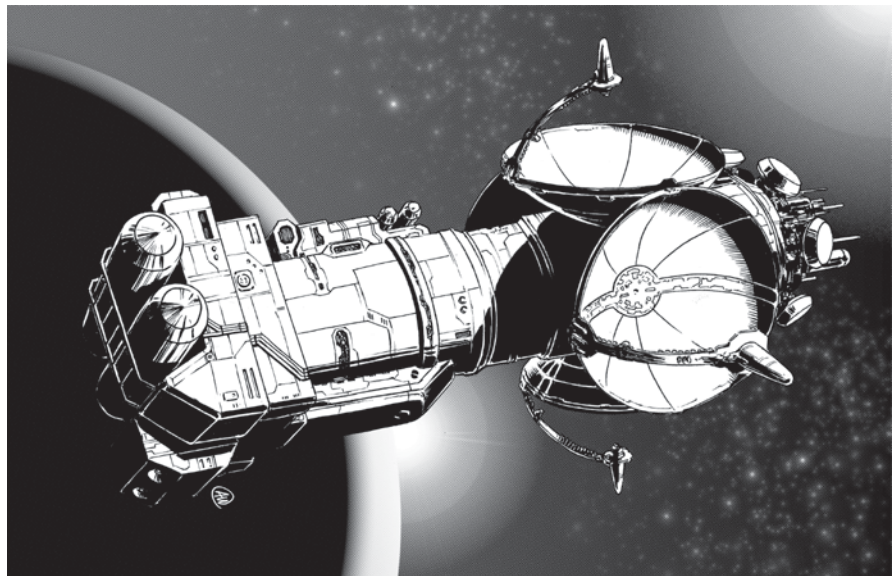
Weapons and Ammo

	Location	Mass
None	—	—

Crew: None

Cargo: None

Notes: Features Ground Mobile HPG (12 tons), communications equipment (7 tons), Light Sail (6.5 tons, Rear), Booby Trap (6.5 tons). Fuel is not used when the light sail is deployed.



RULES ANNEX

SHACKLETON AESV

Donovan-Miter is not the only manufacturing company with major ownership by Interstellar Expeditions, but its Magellan Series Four is certainly the most important exploration vehicle in IE's inventory. The excellence of its prototype secured the company's CEO Walter Donovan (already a Millennium Group hardliner) a place in Interstellar Expeditions' executive office in 3056, putting him in charge of all other R&D and production. Efforts were underway with the aid of Blackwell Industries to create an OmniVehicle variant of the Magellan in the late 3060s. Due to Blackwell's destruction on Outreach, the Magellan Series Five was never completed, but Series Fours produced since 3072 feature Slide-In/Slide-Out (SISO) modular electronics based on Star League technology.

Instead, Donovan-Miter focused on creating a new vehicle that would supplement the Magellan's utility by serving as a more maneuverable scout in all terrains, including in vacuum. The new vehicle would also address the shortcomings of Interstellar Expeditions' Jonah-class submarine that had resumed production in 3032 but, contrary to Star League-era advertising, had proven to be a spectacular failure in its secondary role as a spacecraft. The design specs called for a mobile exploration vehicle intended for shorter sorties, which could travel anywhere and prevail in even the most hostile environments, earning it the name Shackleton AESV (All-Environment Survey Vehicle).

A wheeled chassis suited for light vehicle bays was chosen to simplify logistics. Donovan-Miter also started construction of vehicular jump jets from Star League records, to give the Shackleton cross-country and vacuum mobility. Alas, this decision caused endless technical problems, clashing both with the fragile motive system and mass restrictions imposed by the environmental sealing.

IE's contract with the Republic of the Sphere was a milestone for the organization. There was a huge influx of technology that benefited the Shackleton program. Donovan-Miter refined the metallurgy, engineering and electronics of the AESV to Clan levels, which afforded the mass for a robust motive system. Realizing that the Shackleton was intended for extreme situations, the Magellan's manipulators were replaced with a clamp-like lift hoist to remove obstacles. A forward-facing excavation system and machine gun were installed to handle anything the lift hoist could not. In sum, the Shackleton is a sturdy and surprisingly flexible vehicle that represents a worthy alternative to the use of 'Mechs for exploration, removing the need to recruit MechWarriors for these duties.

One caveat of the AESV's capabilities, which are genuinely closer to a 'Mech's than a vehicle's, is the psychological strain of extreme environmental experiences. During a high-endurance test drive on an asteroid, the assigned geologist Chris "Rockhound" Miller overrode the gunner's machine gun controls to start randomly firing at imagined aliens. While the incident caused no human casualties, psychology tests are now a routine part of Shackleton crew training.

Production of the Shackleton started in 3093 and is exclusive to Interstellar Expeditions and the RAF, which is evaluating the vehicle for scouting roles.

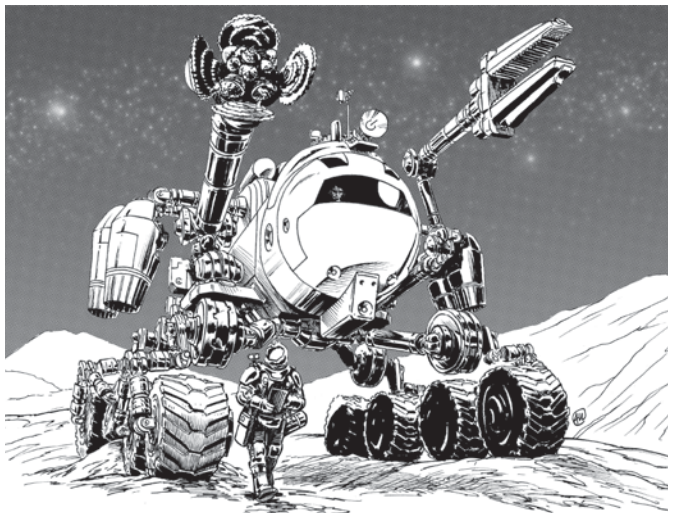
Type: **Shackleton AESV**
 Chassis Type: Wheeled (Medium)
 Mass: 50 tons
 Equipment Rating: F/X-X-F (Advanced)
 Battle Value: 298

Equipment		Mass
Chassis:		22.5
Engine/Controls:	Fusion	4
Cruise MP:	4	
Flank MP:	6	
Jump MP:	4	
Heat Sinks:	0	0
Fuel:		0
Turret:		0
Armor Factor (BAR 10):	76	4
	<i>Internal Structure</i>	<i>Armor Value</i>
Front	5	26
R/L Side	5	17/17
Rear	5	16

Weapons and Ammo	Location	Mass
Machine Gun	Front	.5
Ammo (MG) 100	Body	.5
Advanced Fire Control	Body	.5

Crew: 5 (1 officer, 3 enlisted/non-rated, 1 gunner)
Cargo: None

Notes: Features Armored, Environmental Sealing and Off-Road Chassis Modifications, armored motive system (7.5 tons), lift hoist (3 tons, front), mining drill (3 tons, front), vehicular jump jets (2 tons), Beagle Active Probe (1.5 tons), communications equipment (1 ton).



RULES ANNEX 

BUG-EYE-CLASS SURVEILLANCE WARSHIP

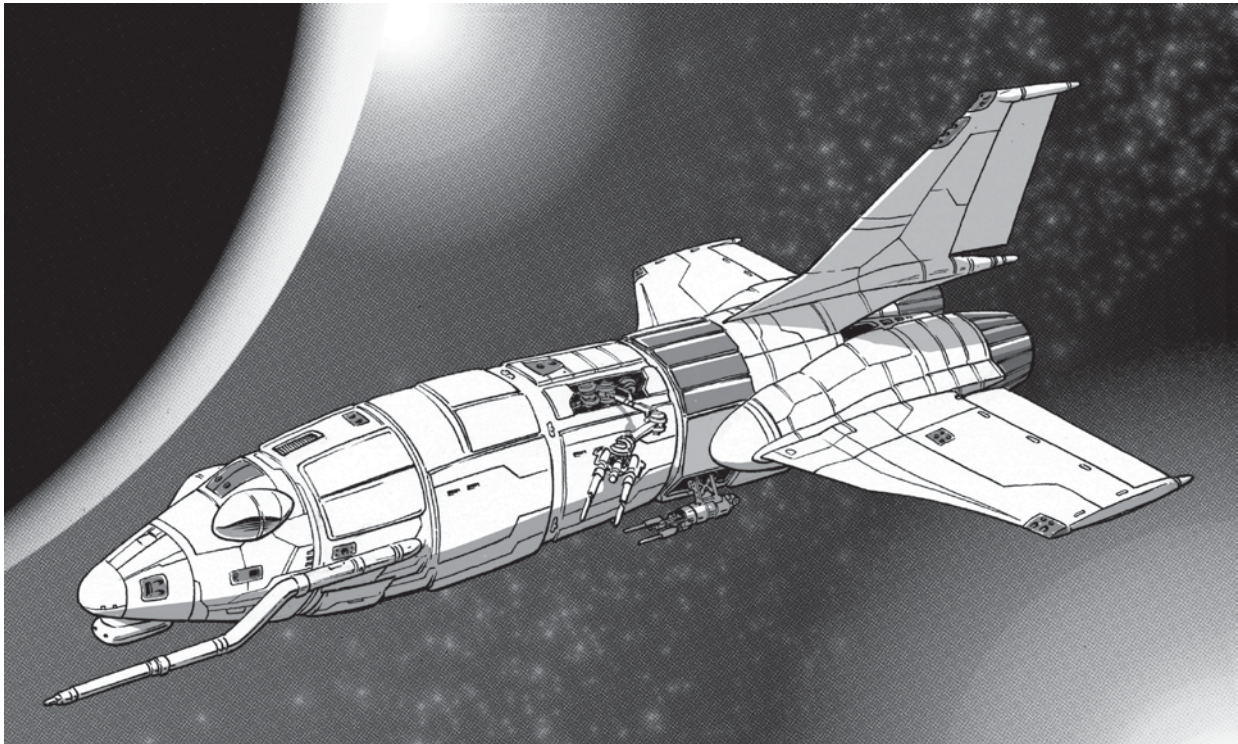
The *Bug-Eye* was the Terran Hegemony's premier spy ship, which it used to observe its five hostile neighbors and the peripheral nations of its Star League empire. The HAF was willing to spare no expense on its valuable spyships, and the *Bug-Eye* exemplified this. Almost ten percent of its mass was given over to a large naval comm scanner suite, and supplementary ground observation systems (lookdown radar and hyperspectral scanner) were fitted in the ship's ventral sensor bays.

The *Bug-Eye* was unique in some of its structural features. It was about the size and shape of common aerodyne cargo DropShips like the *Buccaneer* and *Sylvester*. With simple, modular fittings requiring only a few weeks in a shipyard, it could be disguised (optically and thermally) as one of those DropShips. However, like all KF drive vessels, the *Bug-Eye* was incapable of atmospheric entry or landing. Its disguises and cover stories were usually those of passenger liners and other DropShips

that did not need to land. Further, the *Bug-Eye* often operated in conjunction with a standard JumpShip that provided the appearance of having transported the *Bug-Eye* into the system. This either involved the *Bug-Eye* arriving far earlier than the JumpShip on the fringes of the system and passing it at a standard jump point, or making a risky, simultaneous jump with a minimal safe separation (about twenty-eight kilometers) between the two.

In case of trouble, the *Bug-Eye* had few options. Its defensive weapons were minimal, enough to deter the lightest of fighter pursuit, and its armor hardly thicker than a medium fighter's. Its frame was relatively robust, and it did have very high acceleration for a WarShip. With its fuel endurance and acceleration, it could often outrun pursuers.

Crew fittings were sparse. While the ship had plenty of crew space, amenities were Spartan, without even the smallest of grav decks. Crews were thus often burdened with zero-G exercise routines and bone-preserving medical treatments, in addition to their tense duties as spy ship crew.



RULES ANNEX

Bug-Eye-class Surveillance Ship

Tech: Inner Sphere (Experimental)

Introduced: 2620

Mass: 6,100 tons

Length: 129

Sail Diameter: 86

Fuel: 96 tons (960)

Tons/Burn-day: 2.82

Safe Thrust: 5

Maximum Thrust: 8

Sail Integrity: 3

KF Drive Integrity: 3

Heat Sinks: 105

Structural Integrity: 20

Battle Value: 1,169

Armor

Nose: 2

Fore-Sides: 3

Aft-Sides: 2

Aft: 2

Cargo

Bay 1: Cargo (102 tons)

1 Doors

DropShip Capacity: 0

Grav Decks: 0

Escape Pods: 0

Life Boats: 0

Crew: 8 officers, 39 enlisted/non-rated, 1 gunner, 12 steerage class passengers

Notes: Equipped with 2 tons of Ferro-Aluminum Armor, a Sub-Compact K-F Drive, a Large NCSS, a High-Res Imager, Infrared Imager, and Look-Down Radar. All crew quarters assigned as Steerage-class (5 tons per crewman). Features the following Design Quirks: Improved Communications, Obsolete/2770.

Weapons: Capital Attack Values (Standard)

Arc (Heat) Type	Heat	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme	Class
Nose (10 Heat)						
1 PPC	10	1 (10)	1 (10)	—	—	PPC
LBS/RBS (8 Heat)						
1 Large Laser	8	1 (8)	1 (8)	—	—	Laser
Aft (7 Heat)						
1 AC 20 (30 rounds)	7	2 (20)	—	—	—	AC

FASLANE-CLASS YARDSHIP

The *Faslane*-class yardships are basically WarShips constructed around ship-repair yards. Though these vessels weigh only 550,000 tons, they reach almost three times the length of a Clan *Whirlwind* destroyer.

Based on the Star League *Newgrange* class, six *Faslans* were constructed by the Com Guards between 2882 and 2949. At least two of those vessels, the *Rosslare* and *Glamorgan*, were dispatched to the Periphery to aid Explorer Corps operations. The remaining *Faslans* were docked at the Luyten 68-28 and Ross 248 holding facilities. The Com Guards took great care to protect these ships from marauding pirates and to conceal them from the Clans.

Though nominally non-combat vessels, *Faslans* carry respectable arrays of weapons and defensive systems. Every *Faslane* features anti-fighter lasers and LRM launchers, medium naval PPCs and autocannons. Each *Faslane* also mounts 100 tons of ferro-aluminum armor, though this armor is primarily designed to protect the ships against accidental collisions rather than weapons fire.

After operating in support of Explorer Corps in the search for the Clan homeworlds, most of ComStar's fleet of *Faslans* were destroyed by the Word of Blake. The remaining three ships eventually merged into the naval forces for the Republic of the Sphere, and are now stationed in the Terran system, where they presently act as repair tenders in an effort to make up for the wartime damage done to the Titan shipyards.

Faslane-class YardShip

Tech: Inner Sphere (Advanced)

Introduced: 2882

Mass: 550,000 tons

Length: 1,810 meters

Sail Diameter: 920 meters

Fuel: 1,000 tons (2,500)

Tons/Burn-day: 39.52

Safe Thrust: 2

Maximum Thrust: 3

Sail Integrity: 4

KF Drive Integrity: 12

Heat Sinks: 817

Structural Integrity: 30

Battle Value: 22,659

RULES ANNEX

Armor

- Nose:** 16
- Fore-Sides:** 12
- Aft-Sides:** 9
- Aft:** 8

Cargo

- Bay 1: Small Craft (2) 2 Doors
- Bay 2: Cargo (136,811 tons) 2 Doors
- Bay 3: Unpressurized Repair Facility (2,000,000-ton capacity) 1 Doors

DropShip Capacity: 2

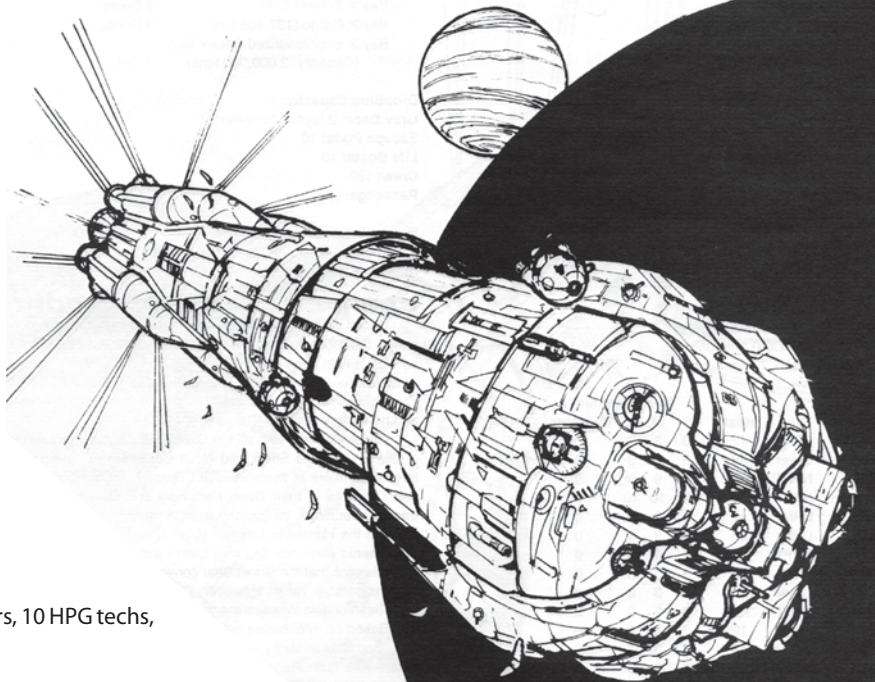
Grav Decks: 2 (110-meter diameter each)

Escape Pods: 10

Life Boats: 10

Crew: 25 officers, 130 enlisted/non-rated, 26 gunners, 10 HPG techs, 10 bay personnel, 90 second-class passengers

Notes: Equipped with 80 tons of Improved Ferro Aluminum Armor and Mobile HPG (50 tons). Features the following Design Quirk: Docking Arms



Weapons: Capital Attack Values (Standard)

Arc (Heat) Type Heat Short Medium Long Extreme Class

Nose (273 Heat)

1 MNPPC	135	9	9	9	9	Capital PPC
1 NAC 10	30	10	10	10	—	Capital AC
(100 rounds)						
8 ER Large Lasers	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—	Laser
2 LRM 20	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—	LRM
+ Artemis IV (48 rounds)						

FL/FR (243 Heat)

1 MNPPC	135	9	9	9	9	Capital PPC
8 ER Large Lasers	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—	Laser
2 LRM 20	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—	LRM
+ Artemis IV (48 rounds)						

LBS/RBS (303 Heat)

1 MNPPC	135	9	9	9	9	Capital PPC
1 NAC 20	60	20	20	20	—	Capital AC
(166 rounds)						
8 ER Large Lasers	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—	Laser
2 LRM 20	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—	LRM
+ Artemis IV (48 rounds)						

Weapons: Capital Attack Values (Standard)

Arc (Heat) Type Heat Short Medium Long Extreme Class

AL/AR (243 Heat)

1 MNPPC	135	9	9	9	9	Capital PPC
8 ER Large Lasers	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—	Laser
2 LRM 20	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—	LRM
+ Artemis IV (48 rounds)						

Aft (273 Heat)

1 MNPPC	135	9	9	9	9	Capital PPC
1 NAC 10	30	10	10	10	—	Capital AC
(100 rounds)						
8 ER Large Lasers	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—	Laser
2 LRM 20	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—	LRM
+ Artemis IV (48 rounds)						



BATTLETECH

'MECH RECORD SHEET

(Industrial)

MECH DATA

Type: Reptar EPT-C-1 MilitiaMech

Movement Points: Tonnage: 35
 Walking: 5 Tech Base: Clan
 Running: 8 Era: Dark Age

WARRIOR DATA

Name: _____

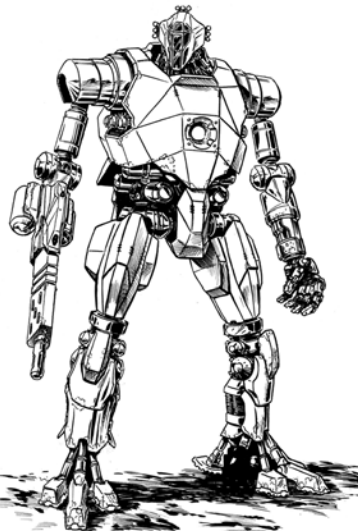
Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness#	3	5	7	10	11	Dead

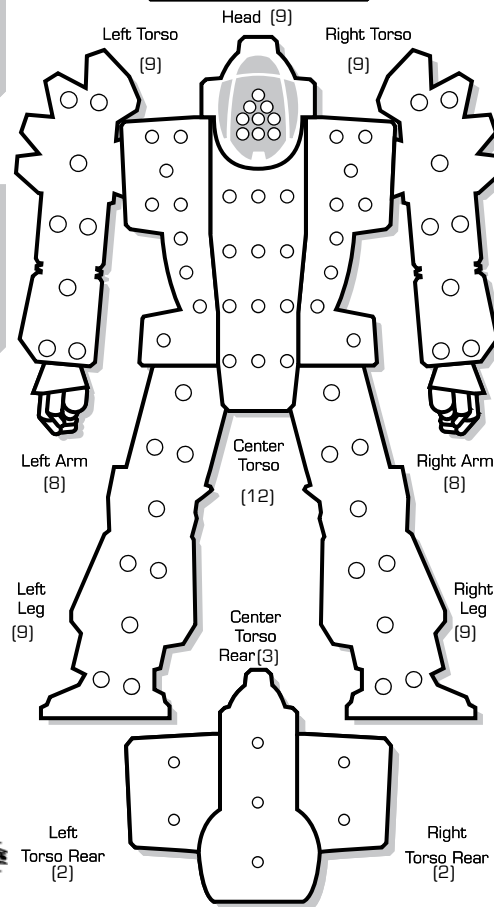
Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Light Machine Gun	RT	0	1 [DB,AI]	-	2	4	6
1	Light Machine Gun	LT	0	1 [DB,AI]	-	2	4	6
1	ProtoMech AC/8	RA	2	8 [DB,S]	-	3	7	10

BV: 514



ARMOR DIAGRAM



CRITICAL HIT TABLE

Left Arm

- Shoulder
- Upper Arm Actuator
- Lower Arm Actuator
- Hand Actuator
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

1-3

4-6

Head

- Life Support
- Sensors
- Cockpit
- Roll Again
- Sensors
- Life Support

Center Torso

- Fuel Cell Engine
- Fuel Cell Engine
- Fuel Cell Engine
- Gyro
- Gyro
- Gyro

1-3

4-6

Left Torso (CASE)

- Light Machine Gun
- Ammo (Light Machine Gun) 100
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

1-3

4-6

Left Leg

- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

Right Arm

- Shoulder
- Upper Arm Actuator
- Lower Arm Actuator
- ProtoMech AC/8
- ProtoMech AC/8
- ProtoMech AC/8

1-3

4-6

Right Torso (CASE)

- ProtoMech AC/8
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

4-6

Right Torso (CASE)

- Light Machine Gun
- Ammo (Proto AC/8) 10
- Ammo (Proto AC/8) 10
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

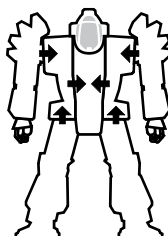
1-3

4-6

Right Leg

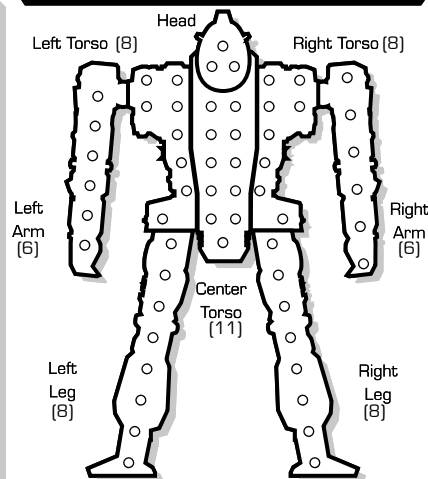
- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

Engine Hits ○○○○
 Gyro Hits ○○
 Sensor Hits ○○
 Life Support ○



Damage Transfer Diagram

INTERNAL STRUCTURE DIAGRAM



Heat Scale

Overflow

30*
29
28*
27
26*
25*
24*
23*
22*
21
20*
19*
18*
17*
16
15*
14*
13*
12
11
10*
9
8*
7
6
5*
4
3
2
1
0

HEAT DATA

Heat Level*	Effects	2 (2) Single
30	Shutdown	
28	Ammo Exp. avoid on 8+	
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+	
25	-5 Movement Points	
24	+4 Modifier to Fire	○
23	Ammo Exp. avoid on 6+	
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+	
20	-4 Movement Points	
19	Ammo Exp. avoid on 4+	
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+	
17	+3 Modifier to Fire	○
15	-3 Movement Points	
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+	
13	+2 Modifier to Fire	
10	-2 Movement Points	
8	+1 Modifier to Fire	
5	-1 Movement Points	

BATTLETECH

FOUR-LEGGED 'MECH RECORD SHEET

(Industrial)

'MECH DATA

Type: Araña ARA-S-1 MilitiaMech

Movement Points: Tonnage: 40
 Walking: 5 Tech Base: Clan
 Running: 8 (Advanced)
 Jumping: 0 Era: Dark Age

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Ejection Seat	HD	—	[E]	—	—	—	—
3	ER Medium Laser	RT	5	7 [DE]	—	5	10	15
1	Quad Turret	RT	—	[E]	—	—	—	—

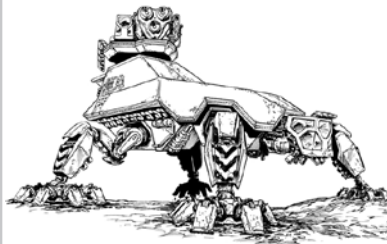
BV: 1,092

WARRIOR DATA

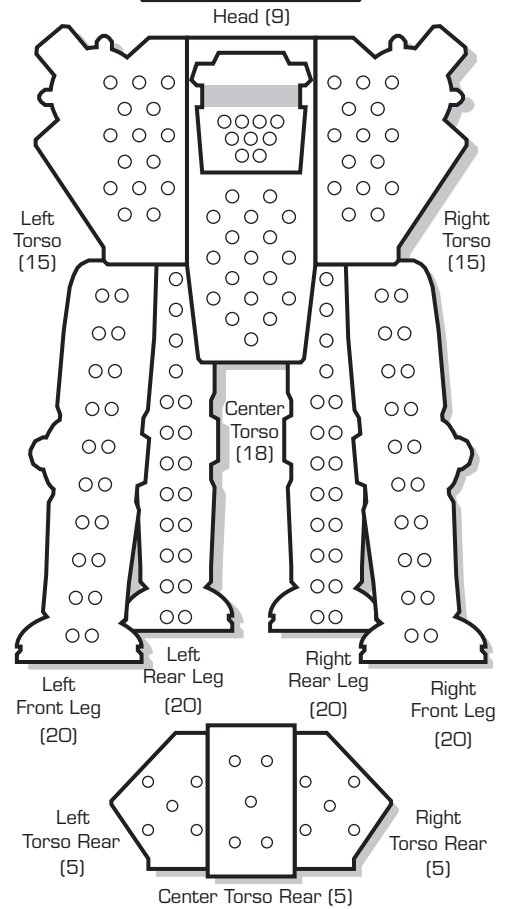
Name: _____

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Consciousness#	3	5	7	10	11	Dead



ARMOR DIAGRAM



CRITICAL HIT TABLE

Head

- Life Support
- Sensors
- Cockpit
- Ejection Seat
- Sensors
- Life Support

Left Front Leg

- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Heat Sink
- Roll Again

Right Front Leg

- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Heat Sink
- Roll Again

Center Torso

- Fusion Engine
- Fusion Engine
- Fusion Engine
- Gyro
- Gyro
- Gyro

1-3

4-6

Left Torso

- Heat Sink
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

1-3

4-6

Right Torso

- ER Medium Laser (T)
- ER Medium Laser (T)
- ER Medium Laser (T)
- Quad Turret
- Roll Again
- Roll Again

1-3

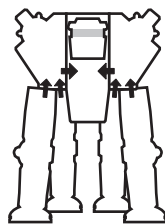
4-6

Engine Hits ○○○

Gyro Hits ○○

Sensor Hits ○○

Life Support ○



Damage Transfer Diagram

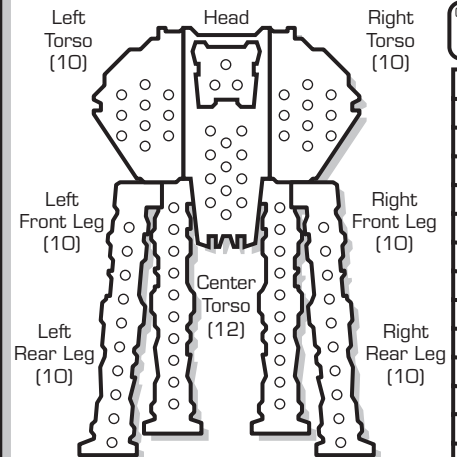
Left Rear Leg

- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Heat Sink
- Roll Again

Right Rear Leg

- Hip
- Upper Leg Actuator
- Lower Leg Actuator
- Foot Actuator
- Heat Sink
- Roll Again

INTERNAL STRUCTURE DIAGRAM



HEAT DATA

Heat Level*	Effects	Heat Sinks: 15
30	Shutdown	Single
28	Ammo Exp. avoid on 8+	○
26	Shutdown, avoid on 10+	○
25	-5 Movement Points	○
24	+4 Modifier to Fire	○
23	Ammo Exp. avoid on 6+	○
22	Shutdown, avoid on 8+	○
20	-4 Movement Points	○
19	Ammo Exp. avoid on 4+	○
18	Shutdown, avoid on 6+	○
17	+3 Modifier to Fire	○
15	-3 Movement Points	○
14	Shutdown, avoid on 4+	○
13	+2 Modifier to Fire	○
10	-2 Movement Points	○
8	+1 Modifier to Fire	○
5	-1 Movement Points	○

Heat Scale

Heat Level	Effects
30*	Shutdown
29	
28*	Ammo Exp. avoid on 8+
27	
26*	Shutdown, avoid on 10+
25*	-5 Movement Points
24*	+4 Modifier to Fire
23*	Ammo Exp. avoid on 6+
22*	Shutdown, avoid on 8+
21	
20*	-4 Movement Points
19*	Ammo Exp. avoid on 4+
18*	Shutdown, avoid on 6+
17*	+3 Modifier to Fire
16	
15*	-3 Movement Points
14*	Shutdown, avoid on 4+
13*	+2 Modifier to Fire
12	
11	
10*	-2 Movement Points
9	
8*	+1 Modifier to Fire
7	
6	
5*	-1 Movement Points
4	
3	
2	
1	
0	

BATTLETECH

WHEELED VEHICLE RECORD SHEET

VEHICLE DATA

Type: Shackleton AESV

Movement Points: **Tonnage:** 50
 Cruising: 4 **Tech Base:** Inner Sphere (Advanced)
 Flank: 6 **Jumping:** 4 **Era:** Dark Age
 Movement Type: Wheeled
 Engine Type: Fusion Engine

Weapons & Equipment Inventory (hexes)

Qty	Type	Loc	Dmg	Min	Sht	Med	Lng
1	Advanced Fire Control	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	Armored Motive System	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	Beagle Active Probe	BD [E]	—	—	—	4	—
1	Communications Equipment (1 ton)	BD	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	Lift Hoist	FR	[E]	—	—	—	—
1	Machine Gun	FR	2	—	1	2	3
1	Mining Drill	FR	4 [DB, AI]	—	—	—	—

Chassis Modifications: Armored Chassis, Environmental Sealing, Off-Road

Ammo: (Machine Gun) 100

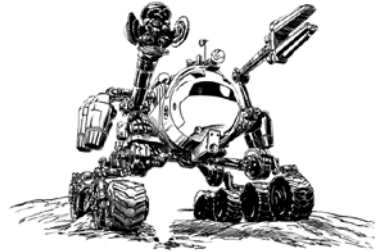
BV: 298

CREW DATA

Crew: _____
 Gunnery Skill: _____ Driving Skill: _____
 Commander Hit +1 Driver Hit +2
Modifier to all Skill rolls Modifier to Driving Skill rolls

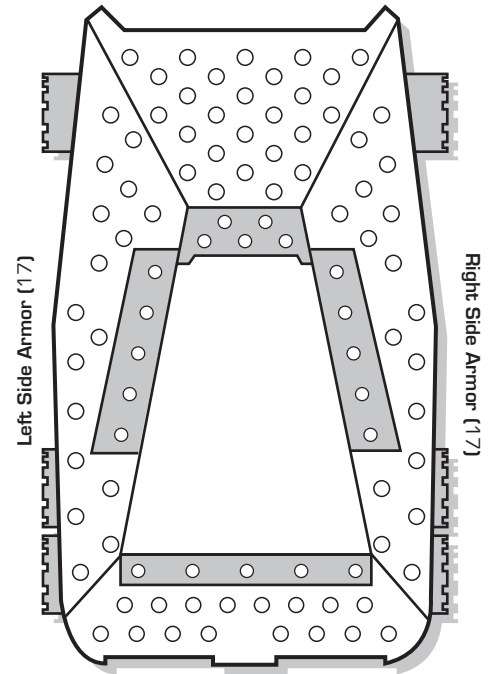
CRITICAL DAMAGE

Sensor Hits +1 +2 +3 D
 Motive System Hits +1 +2 +3
 Engine Hit
 Stabilizers
 Front Left Right
 Rear



ARMOR DIAGRAM

BAR: 10 **Front Armor** (26)



Rear Armor (16)



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BATTLETECH

SATELLITE RECORD SHEET

SATELLITE DATA

Type: QR 243 RELAY SATELLITE

Thrust: **Tonnage:** 65
 Station Keeping Only **Tech Base:** (Mixed) (Advanced)
Era: Succession Wars

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

Qty	Type	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
1	Communications Equipment (E)	BD	0	—	—	—	—
1	Ground-Mobile HPG (E)	BD	0	—	—	—	—
1	Light Sail (E)	R	0	—	—	—	—
1	Booby Trap (E)	BD	0	—	—	—	—

Fuel: 3 tons (.005/burn day. Not used when Light Sail is deployed.)

BV: 33

CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____
 Hits Taken

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

 Modifier

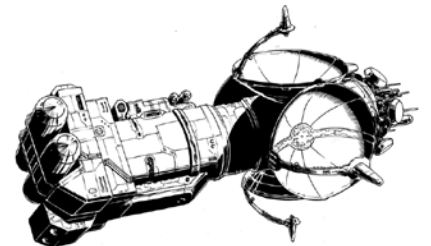
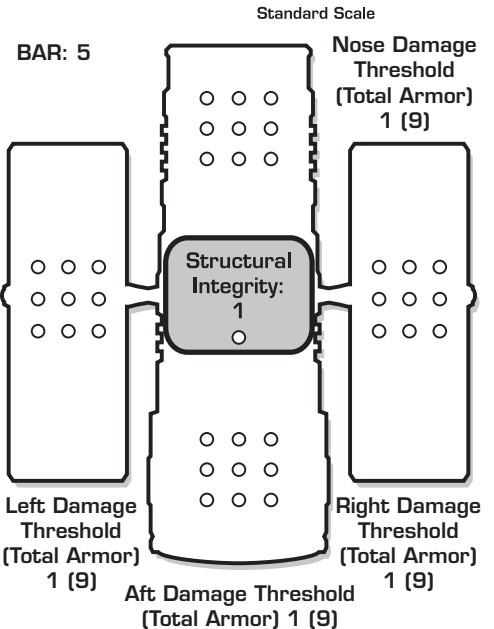
+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.
----	----	----	----	----	-------

 Crew: 0 Marines: 0
 Passengers: 0 Elementals: 0
 Other: 0 Battle Armor: 0
 Life Boats/Escape Pods: 0/0

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics +1 +2 +5
 CIC +2 +4 D
 Sensors +1 +2 +5
 Life Support +2
 Thrusters
 Left +1 +2 +3 D
 Right +1 +2 +3 D

ARMOR DIAGRAM



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BATTLETECH

WARSHIP RECORD SHEET

ARMOR DIAGRAM

Capital Scale



Nose Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
1 (2)



Fore-Right Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
1 (3)



Fore-Left Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
1 (3)



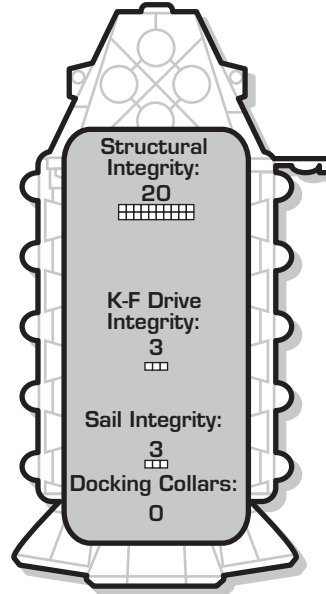
Aft-Left Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
1 (2)



Aft-Right Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
1 (2)



Aft Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
1 (2)



WARSHIP DATA

Type: **BUG-EYE**

Name: _____ Tonnage: 61,000
 Thrust: _____ Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 Safe Thrust: 5 (Experimental)
 Maximum Thrust: 8 Era: Star League
 DropShip Capacity: 0
 Fighters/Small Craft: 0 / 0 Launch Rate: 0/turn

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

Standard Scale	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
1 PPC	N	10	1(10)	1(10)	—	—
1 Lookdown Rader	N	—	—	—	—	—
1 Hyperspectral Imager	N	—	—	—	—	—
1 Large Laser	L/R BS	8	1(8)	1(8)	—	—
1 AC 20	A	7	2(20)	—	—	—

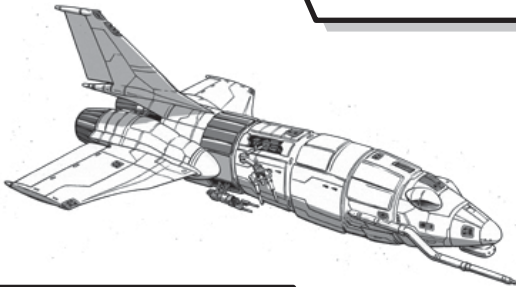
Notes:
Large NCSS

Grav Decks:
Grav Deck #0

Cargo:
Bay 1: Cargo (102 Tons) (1 door)

Fuel: 960

BV: 1,169



CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 48 Marines: 0
 Passengers: 12 Elementals: 0
 Other: 0 Battle Armor: 0
 Life Boats/Escapes Pods: 0 / 0

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics (+1) (+2) (+5) Life Support (+2)
 CIC (+2) (+4) (D)
 Sensors (+1) (+2) (+5)
 Thrusters
 Left (+1) (+2) (+3) (D)
 Right (+1) (+2) (+3) (D)
 Engine (-1) (-2) (-3) (-4) (-5) (D)

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks: 105
 Single
 Heat Generation Per Arc
 Nose: 10
 Left/Right Fore: 0 / 0
 Left/Right Broadside: 8 / 8
 Left/Right Aft: 0 / 0
 Aft: 7

BATTLETECH

ARMOR DIAGRAM

WARSHIP RECORD SHEET

Capital Scale



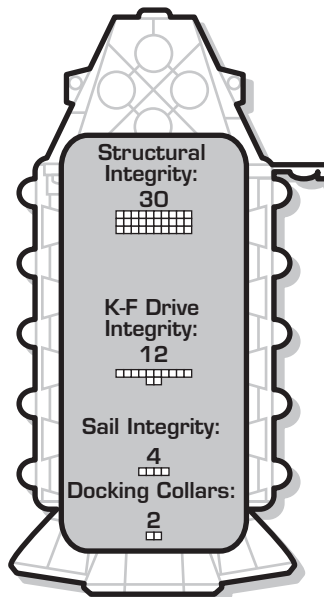
Nose Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
2 (16)



Fore-Right Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
2 (12)



Fore-Left Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
2 (12)



Aft-Right Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
1 (9)



Aft-Left Damage
Threshold (Total Armor)
1 (9)



Aft Damage Threshold
(Total Armor)
1 (8)



WARSHIP DATA

Type: FASLANE YARDSHIP

Name: _____ Tonnage: 550,000
 Thrust: _____ Tech Base: Inner Sphere
 (Advanced)
 Safe Thrust: 2
 Maximum Thrust: 3 Era: Succession Wars
 DropShip Capacity: 2
 Fighters/Small Craft: 0 / 2 Launch Rate: 4/turn

Weapons & Equipment Inventory

Capital Scale		(1-12)	(13-24)	(25-40)	(41-50)	
Bay	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
1 Medium NPPC	N	135	9	9	9	9
1 NAC/10 (100 rnds)	N	30	10	10	10	—
1 Medium NPPC	FL/FR	135	9	9	9	9
1 Medium NPPC	L/R BS	135	9	9	9	9
1 NAC 20 (166 rnds)	L/R BS	60	20	20	20	—
1 Medium NPPC	AL/AR	135	9	9	9	9
1 Medium NPPC	A	135	9	9	9	9
1 NAC/10 (100 rnds)	A	30	10	10	10	—

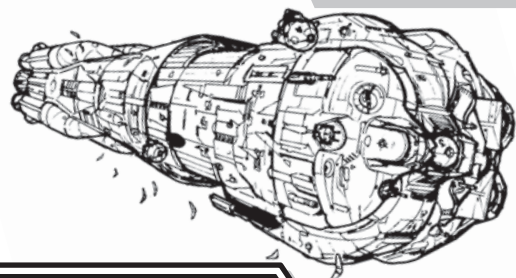
Standard Scale		(1-6)	(7-12)	(13-20)	(21-25)	
Bay	Loc	Ht	SRV	MRV	LRV	ERV
8 ER Large Lasers	N	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—
2 LRM 20+Artemis IV (48 salvos)	N	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—
8 ER Large Lasers	FL/FR	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—
2 LRM 20+Artemis IV (48 salvos)	FL/FR	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—
8 ER Large Lasers	L/R BS	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—
2 LRM 20+Artemis IV (48 salvos)	L/R BS	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—
8 ER Large Lasers	AL/AR	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—
2 LRM 20+Artemis IV (48 salvos)	AL/AR	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—
8 ER Large Lasers	A	96	6 (64)	6 (64)	6 (64)	—
2 LRM 20+Artemis IV (48 salvos)	A	12	3 (32)	3 (32)	3 (32)	—

Notes:
Mobile HPG
 Grav Decks:
Grav Deck #1-2: 110-meter

Cargo:
 Bay 1: Small Craft (2) (2 doors)
 Bay 2: Cargo (136,811 Tons) (2 doors)
 Bay 3: Unpressurized Repair Facility (1 door)
 2,000,000 ton capacity

Fuel: 2,500

BV: 22,659



CREW DATA

Gunnery Skill: _____ Piloting Skill: _____

Hits Taken	1	2	3	4	5	6
Modifier	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	Incp.

Crew: 201 Marines: 0
 Passengers: 90 Elementals: 0
 Other: 0 Battle Armor: 0
 Life Boats/Escapes Pods: 10/10

CRITICAL DAMAGE

Avionics	+1	+2	+5	Life Support	+2	
CIC	+2	+4	D			
Sensors	+1	+2	+5			
Thrusters						
Left	+1	+2	+3	D		
Right	+1	+2	+3	D		
Engine	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	D

VELOCITY RECORD

Turn #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										

Turn #	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Thrust										
Velocity										
Effective Velocity										

HEAT DATA

Heat Sinks: 817
 Single

Heat Generation Per Arc
 Nose: 273
 Left/Right Fore: 243/243
 Left/Right Broadside: 303/303
 Left/Right Aft: 243/243
 Aft: 273