

The Star Frontiers Article Collection

from Polyhedron Newszine (RPGA)



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New RPGA Logo



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STAR FRONTIERS™ Game

A STAR FRONTIERS Game Review

by Steve Winter

Polyhedron Magazine, #9, pg. 5

Hey, science fiction fans! Tired of traveling? Sick of the opera? Looking for a game that doesn't require the patience of the universe to play? Have I got a deal for you!

If you haven't checked out STAR FRONTIERS Science Fiction Role Playing Game from TSR, you owe yourself a favor. Before you even open the box, Larry Elmore's cover painting will knock your eyes out. Your gray matter is in for an even bigger treat when you check out what's inside. Your \$12 gets:

- 16 page Basic Game rule book
- 64 page Expanded Game rule book
- 16 page adventure module, "Crash on Voltarnus," with 2 full-color maps
 - 1 22 1/2" x 35" mapsheet with full color maps printed on both sides
- 285 die-cut color counters
- 2 10-sided dice

In the few months since its release at the GEN CON® XV Game Show, over 49,500 copies of the STAR FRONTIERS game have been sold. If you're not impressed, consider that according to a survey in GAME MERCHANDISING Magazine, SPACE OPERA* has sold 20,000 copies since its publication in 1980, and TRAVELLER** has sold 250,000 copies since its publication in 1977.***

The game was designed to be played by people who had no experience with role playing games. It has several pages of tips for referees, and very complete hints on designing adventures. This shouldn't discourage experienced gamers, however. The STAR FRONTIERS game offers a good compromise between simplicity and detail, and is fun for all types of role players.

Readers who are not among the 50,000 people already trying the game will find some of its interesting highlights following. People who are already have a copy should be glad to hear that TSR has several new STAR FRONTIERS products coming up.

The Races

STAR FRONTIERS game players can have characters from any of four races: Human, Dralasite, Vrusk or Yazirian.

Humans are the "standard" characters. They have no outstanding strengths, but they have no particular weaknesses, either. They are just like Earthlings, except they developed on a planet closer to the center of the galaxy.

Dralasites are short, soft, malleable aliens, sometimes called "blobs." They can change their shape at will, growing as many pseudo-limbs as needed. They are stronger than Humans, but also slower. Dralasites society is philosophical and thoughtful, but Dralasites also have a very strange sense of humor; they love retelling old jokes and bad puns they hear from Humans.

Vrusk look like large, 10-legged insects, and are sometimes called "bugs." Their society is structured around huge corporations, which serve as the individual's employer, family and government. They are excellent businessmen and merchants, and tend to be serious and humorless.

Yazirians are tall, light-boned humanoids with furry manes around their necks. Humans nicknamed them "monkeys" because they resemble chimpanzees. Thin membranes stretch between their arms, torso and legs which allowed them to glide from tree to tree on their native planet. Originally nocturnal, they wear dark goggles to protect their very sensitive eyes. Yazirian tribes were very warlike in the past, thus, other races still consider Yazirians to be pushy and aggressive.

There is also a fifth character race: the Sathar, a race of evil, worm-like aliens. Very little is known about them, other than their ferocious attacks on the colonies and cities of other races. No Sathar have ever been captured alive, and intercepted transmissions have proved impossible to translate.

The Frontier

STAR FRONTIERS game action is set in the Frontier Sector, a huge, largely unexplored area of space where the four races met. The Frontier contains 23 inhabited planets spread across 17 star systems. In addition to these are another 21 unexplored stars that could have planets. The area is ripe for bold adventures itching for riches or fame, or just itching for adventure. Interstellar corporations compete for control of the most profitable markets and trade lanes, and race to open new routes to unexplored worlds. Governments fight to control piracy and predatory corporations, and to protect their citizens from the fury of the Sathar.

Adventures

The first adventure, "Crash on Volturnus," is a typical "Golden Age of Science Fiction" scenario. A group of explorers on their way to a newly opened star system is attacked by pirates and marooned on the surface. The characters must fight their way across hostile terrain, battle strange creatures and befriend the natives in order to survive. If they can pick up the trail of the first survey team along the way, so much the better. Module SF 1, "Volturnus: Planet of Mystery", picks up where SF 0 left off. The characters have learned where the surviving members of the first survey are and, as those survivors are the key to leaving the planet, the characters must journey to find them. Along the way, they discover that Volturnus is actually inhabited by several intelligent races who are all being exploited by the pirates who marooned the characters. The destruction of the pirate outpost leads directly to . . .

Module SF 2, "Starspawn of Volturnus;" the characters learn of a sinister Sathar plot to crush and enslave the inhabitants of Volturnus and devastate the planet. The characters must unite the feuding races and revitalize lost technology to turn back the Sathar onslaught.

"Crash on Volturnus" is included in the STAR FRONTIERS boxed set. SF 1, "Volturnus: Planet of Mystery," is scheduled for release sometime early in 1983, and SF 2, "Starspawn of Volturnus," should be available by mid 1983.

Besides these and other adventure modules, a second boxed set will be finished in 1983. This will feature the much-requested starship rules, including a complete starship boardgame, starship design rules, deck plans, new character skills and equipment, guidelines for interstellar economics and trade, and a history of the first and second Sathar wars.

A separate book on frontier worlds, star system and planet creation, and adventures is also being planned.

**SPACE OPERA is a trademark owned by Fantasy Games, Unlimited.*

***TRAVELLER is a trademark owned by GDW, Inc.*

****Survey results published June, 1982*

ENCOUNTERS

BY

DAVE COOK



"Encounters" is a new addition to the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine feature columns. It is a one page encounter description of each issue's cover art depicting a TSR role playing game. It may be used by referees to interject something unusual into their games or playtest problems on their players, or by players who want to explore different character classes.

Level 1 Computer
Level 1 Environmental
Equipment: Laser
Pistol
Powerclip (18 SEU
remaining)
Poly-vox
Level 1 computer
Level 3 Information
Storage Program
Level 2 Language
Program

NOTHRU FARRIDER,
UI-mor — RW:5, M:45,
PS:2, IM: 6, RS:55,
STA:40

LOPER — MV:FAST;
IM:5; RS:4; STA:300;
ATT:40; DM:4d10;
SD:Immune to needlers

Raoul is a minor member of a team of experts sent to investigate the strange alien city. For several

weeks now, he has been doing minor busywork — running calculations, cataloging facts, proofing maps, etc. Raoul had originally joined the expedition for fame and excitement; the work as of late has caused him to be thoroughly bored and disgusted. Since work is light, he has taken the chance to slip away and explore the area beyond a ridge of hills to the west. None of the other members of the exploration team had ever crossed the ridge — satellite maps showed absolutely nothing of interest in this direction.

It is late in the afternoon and Raoul is hot, tired, hungry, thirsty and lost. He has been stumbling around for hours through the rock fields and dust pits, and has had to defend himself on two occasions from savage looking creatures.

Far too late, he realizes that he should have brought food, water, a communica-

tor and compass — he curses himself for the fool that he is.

Then, he sees it — before him, topping a rise is an octopus-like creature riding a big lizard. Nothru Far Rider is an outcast, exiled from his tribe. Captured by pirates on his home planet Voltornus, then taken off-planet to be sold as an oddity, he and his loper managed to escape when the pirates landed here. Its hot and barren conditions make Nothru feel at home. Nothru distrusts all non-UI-mor, but knows that they are the key to his getting home.

Actions

Nothru will slowly advance the loper towards Raoul, trying not to scare the Human, but not letting his guard down. He recognizes that this may be a chance for him to get home. Once close enough to Raoul, he will attempt some simple sign language and speak (in his own simple tongue) to show that he is friendly. If Raoul uses his *Empathy* sub-skill successfully, he will be able to tell that the creature is uncertain and not immediately hostile. If Raoul uses his *Communication* sub-skill successfully, the referee may allow the player to speak to the UI-mor in phrases of two words or less — nothing complicated. If Nothru can get close enough to Raoul, he will slowly withdraw his mind-link tentacle from the loper and extend it towards Raoul. The loper, out of contact with Nothru, has a 50% chance of panicking and attacking Raoul when this is done.

If Raoul checks his Information Storage program, he will learn that this creature is not native to Laco. It comes from a planet called Voltornus and is considered intelligent, but possibly dangerous. If he allows the mind-link to occur, he will understand that the UI-mor is not hostile and wants to go to some place it calls the "Place of Oneness." If attacked it will fight to the best of its ability.

The setting:

This encounter occurs on the dry, windswept planet of Laco, an extremely inhospitable planet, swept by great duststorms during long, dry days. The minimal amount of animal life on Laco lives around the edges of the small shallow seas that dot the planet. Poor in resources, the only feature of interest is a huge, deserted alien city built long past by a race known only as the Tetrarchs.

The Characters:

RAOUL DEBONHAM — member of the Pan-Galactic Corporation Artifact Research and Development Team, Assistant Xenopologist

Strength/Stamina: 55/40
Dexterity/Reaction Speed: 50/60
Intuition/Logic: 70/60
Personality/Leadership: 70/50
Skills: Level 3 Psycho-Social



Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: Is there a quick way to determine the Character Abilities of NPC's?

GWA: The game rewrite, which is coming out around June, will list each creature's abilities. I always give NPC's 12 in all of their abilities if these are not given in the creature lists.

GWQ: How do you destroy vehicles when they do not have armor class or hit points listed?

GWA: This is an obvious oversight that has been corrected in the revised edition. For now, arbitrarily assign hit points and armor classes to each vehicle. If a vehicle loses 50% of its hit points, it ceases to function and must be repaired.

GWQ: What do Serfs look like?

GWA: Grenadier Models, Inc. makes most of the creatures found in the GW rules booklet. The Serf figure is especially nice because it uses a huge ax — perfect for a creature with great strength. I always use them when I am running GAMMA WORLD game adventures.

GWQ: Does a force shield which takes over its hit point limit collapse and, if so, is it broken for good?

GWA: Technologically generated force fields regenerate themselves every melee turn. The force field will be maintained as long as the suit which generates the force field holds up. Further, the rules state that only one mutational force field can be created in a 24 hour period.

GWQ: If players can be mutated plants or animals can they be Yexils or Podogs?

GWA: A very good way for players to learn the game is for them to be creatures from the rules book. Players can have a lot of fun trying to cope with the restrictions that an Obb or an Ark character will place on them.



1920's
Role Playing
Adventure Game

GBQ: How does a player character acquire cronies?

GWA: Cronies are covered on page 49 of the GANGBUSTERS game rulebook. The rules leave the question of how cronies come into play up to the game judge. In my own campaigns, I always tell the players how many cronies they may have as soon as they roll up their characters. I recommend, however, that actual creation of cronies be postponed until they are needed in the course of play. This does two things: it gives low level players a little extra help when they most need it, and it helps me build the NPC's needed for the campaign.

When a player decides to build a cronie for a character, I quickly roll one up and let the player decide (with my guidance)

the background of the cronie. It is important to remember that cronies can never begin the game at a higher level than the player character! Thus, a first level reporter who would like to have a good friend in the police department can roll up a police cronie, but that cronie will be a Rookie beat cop.

Notice that the cronie system takes a lot of work off of the game judge's shoulders. In a campaign with only eight players, with an average Presence score of 6, there will eventually be 48 cronies. That's 48 NPC's that the player will be keeping track of, not the judge!

GBQ: What happens when two criminal syndicates are running a numbers racket in the same block?

GWA: Probably a gang war! If two syndicates are trying to run numbers in the same territory, neither will make any profits at all. The two syndicate bosses will have to decide which of them will control the territory.

STAR FRONTIERS™

Science Fiction Role
Playing Game

SFQ: I read through the rulebook and was surprised to see that there was nothing said about spaceships. Why were they left out? Can characters travel in space? Can they own spaceships? Will you be giving rules for spaceships soon?

SFA: When we started to write the rules for the STAR FRONTIERS game, we knew that there was a limited amount of room in the book. We felt it was better to focus on characters, combat, and adventures that take place on a planet in the rulebook instead of trying to cram everything in.

Characters can travel in space, although they are limited to commercial spacelines in the STAR FRONTIERS rulebook now. Eventually, they will be able to design and have their own spaceships. Work has just been finished on a complete boxed set that will be a game in itself. This set will cover spaceship combat design, and role playing in space. Part of it is a game that can be played without the STAR FRONTIERS game rules and the other part shows how STAR FRONTIERS game characters can use the same rules for role playing adventures. This set will be available in 1983.

SFQ: Can a Dralasite move if it is only a big, round ball with no arms or legs?

SFA: Yes, but it could go no faster than its walking speed. Also, it would be in trouble in combat since it would not be able to hold or fire any weapons.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Role
Playing Game

TSQ: In the TOP SECRET Rulebook 2nd Edition, are the correct prices for many of the Other Weapon Types on the

WEAPONS CHART or on the pricelist under EQUIPPING THE CHARACTER?

TSA: The correct prices for Other Weapon Types are listed on the WEAPONS CHART. A manual speargun costs \$50. A CO2 speargun costs \$100 and pressurized CO2 capsules cost \$1 each. A sword (\$30) and a swordcane (\$50) act much the same but are concealed differently. Dart guns can cost \$250. A boomerang that returns is only \$5. If it hits anything greater than its weight (½ pound) it will not return. Boxing gloves cost \$25 a pair and karate padding for both hands and feet costs \$50 a set.

TSQ: When a character's Life Level is reduced to 0 by drinking alcohol, is the character dead or unconscious?

TSA: Since alcohol is a depressant poison, the character has literally drank himself or herself to death.

TSQ: How can I run a campaign with multiple groups of investigators, confiscators, and assassins without the players finding out about each other's major objectives?

TSA: Have you considered handing everyone a note telling them their agent's true major objective? They could each also have a cover objective which they tell to the other players. Request that their Bureau section under Classified Information on their Agent's Dossier be left blank and only known by the Administrator. No one will be sure of anyone's true major objective since some will reveal it and others may lie.

TSQ: If four PC's set out on a mission and the Administrator's character was to be secretly blended in with the others by having a player run this character, can this character be a double agent?

TSA: Yes, this is a nice idea. By definition, an agent who is loyal to the opposition while pretending loyalty to those that employ him or her is an enemy agent. For example, agent Z is working for the KGB but is employed by the CIA. The Administrator can be aware of the enemy agent's purposes and can use the enemy agent against the other player characters. The enemy agent looks for any action which would weaken the team, protect his or her agency, and that doesn't jeopardize his or her cover. Discovered enemy agents are usually given the choice of becoming double agents or being prosecuted. An agent who is loyal to those that currently employ him/her while pretending loyalty to the opposition is a double agent. For example, enemy agent Z worked for the KGB, is loyal to the CIA, and pretends loyalty to the KGB.

TSQ: In DRAGON™ Magazine #49, the tracer bullet adds 10 and 5 to second and third following bullets, respectively. Does this bonus apply only to the agent that fired the tracer?

TSA: Yes. Agents not firing tracers do not get this advantage to hit.

DAWN PATROL™

WW I Aerial Combat Game

DPQ: If a pilot lands in enemy territory and is taxiing (say, to pick up a downed wingman), is he subject to the chance of capture each turn he is on the ground?

DPA: No. As long as he is taxiing, he cannot be captured because he can avoid enemy troops. He is, however, subject to rifle fire which could wound or kill him. Players should use their good judgment in these cases — obviously an enemy pilot couldn't be free from capture if he stayed on the ground behind the opposing lines for more than a few minutes.

DPQ: If an engine is on fire and the pilot puts it out, are any engine hits caused by the fire itself?

DPA: No.



Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: When creating mutated animals for the GAMMA WORLD® game, what should you do to make them balanced?

GWA: When I make creatures, I concentrate on what I want them to do for the environment I am putting them in. If I want to make creatures that have overrun a military base, I give them powers that allow them to get past doors without hands, to avoid security robots, and resist the dangers of the technological devices found in those areas. When making new creatures for the wilderness, I design them to be at least as tough or tougher than the monsters already in the rules booklet. This allows them to survive the action of players who have been gearing up to face the mutants they know about from reading the rules. I also try to key in on special abilities, for instance, if a creature has Pyrokinesis, its mutations will reflect things related to heat. It could resist lasers, or have double Pyrokinesis, or be deathly afraid of the cold.

GWQ: I know it says, "does not affect living matter," but if a Negation Bomb hit 2 meters from you, what would happen?

GWA: Since one does not really exist, we have only our imaginations to go on. I think it would be much like a flash bulb going off in front of your eyes. As written, the effect of this bomb causes power cells, batteries, and generators to lose all of their energy. It does not harm life, but it is a projectile. I imagine if one hit you in the chest it would do a 1d12 or so of damage.

GWQ: What happens when you use a laser pistol underwater?

GWA: I am not a laser physicist, but I do know that light, including laser light, refracts in water. I imagine that it would reduce the range of the weapon to about

1 foot (.3 meters to you metric fans). In that range I think the damage would still be as listed.



GBQ: All first level characters start out with just \$50 in cash. It costs a P.I. \$50 to get his license! How can a P.I. get other things at the start of the game?

GBA: Ah! You have hit the first problem faced by the P.I. Money should be a problem for a P.I. A good campaign judge will keep his P.I.'s "hungry" for those special cases. A beginning P.I. gets money for additional items from the advance he must negotiate for his first case. Remember, always give a beginning P.I. a special case his first night of play. This gives him a chance to get right into the action.

GBQ: Can a grenade cause a car to explode?

GBA: Yes, but the percent chance depends upon other conditions. Is there gasoline splashed around the area? Does the car have any special protection? As a general rule of thumb, use a base 10% chance and modify upward or downward for circumstances.

GBQ: When a character is using the Disguise skill, how often should the judge roll a skill check?

GBA: Roll a check when the character first puts on the disguise. Then roll again whenever the situation suggests that the disguise might be damaged or altered, for example: after a fist fight, chase on foot, gunfight, or other strenuous physical activity.



SFQ: Can a Dralasite divide into two or three characters?

SFA: No. A Dralasite is a single creature and cannot divide itself as it pleases. The only time it can divide is when it is giving birth. This obviously results in a baby Dralasite, not another character.

SFQ: Can a Dralasite slide under a door?

SFA: If the door has a gap that is 10 cm wide at the bottom, yes. It will take the Dralasite about an hour to make its entire body thin.

SFQ: Can a Vrusk carry another character on its back?

SFA: A Vrusk carrying another character on its back would be the same as if a Human were carrying someone on their back. Vrusk are not horses and cannot easily carry riders!

SFQ: On the equipment lists, what are the masses of unmarked items, such as grenades? Why are they not marked?

SFA: The masses of all unmarked items are less than .5k. They are not given exact masses because it would be too much bother to require every character

to keep track of every gram of equipment carried. The referee should allow the character to carry a reasonable amount of such equipment (20 grenades for example), he should either tell the character he can't carry more, or give the items a mass of a couple of kilograms.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Role Playing Game

TSQ: Who is James Pong and what are his Personal Trait Values?

TSA: James Pong is the character name of a good friend of mine that has played TOP SECRET game since it first began being written. His latest Personal Trait Values are: Physical Strength, 93; Charm, 33; Willpower, 95; Courage, 190; Knowledge, 31; Coordination, 195; 11th Level. **TSQ:** I have long wondered if an agent in TOP SECRET game can be a Mercenary, Bounty Hunter, or a combination of both. If so, could you print a Level Table in POLYHEDRON™ Newszine?

TSA: Allowing a Mercenary or a Bounty Hunter into the TOP SECRET game is an Administrator's choice. The Administrator should design his own Level Chart. Zero experience points should equal first level. Twenty thousand points are necessary for tenth level. Ten thousand experience points must be earned for every level above tenth.

TSQ: What countries is TOP SECRET game played in?

TSA: I have received letters concerning TOP SECRET game from all over the United States as well as Canada. I have also heard from gamers in Spain, Austria, Switzerland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. It has been reported that United States servicemen are playing TOP SECRET game in South Korea. I've also heard that the game is in Australia, Scandinavia, and somewhere in the Middle East. It would not surprise me to hear that the game was behind the Iron Curtain.

TSQ: I have written a TOP SECRET module. What is my first step to see if TSR Hobbies would want it?

TSA: First, do not send any manuscript until asked to. Second, write a letter requesting a Submission Form from:

Mike Price, Acquisitions
TSR Hobbies, Inc., P.O. Box 756,
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 53147.

Third, follow the instructions given with the Submission Form and be prepared to wait for an answer concerning your manuscript. TSR is currently flooded with submissions and employs ten full-time designers. This information is not meant to discourage outside authors but rather to inform would-be authors that the competition is tough — really tough. TSR will gladly look at well-written, imaginative ideas. ☺

1920's Role Playing Adventure Game

BQ: How do I handle the enormous sums of money that the criminals in my game are making? They have so much that they seem able to buy anything or anyone!

BA: It is certainly possible for criminal players to become millionaires. But even a millionaire has some headaches: Living expenses soar. To maintain oneself in style, any self-respecting high level criminal has to give lots of parties at his mansion. The mansion itself requires a full staff of servants, a lot of full time guards, cars, etc. Entertaining adds to this tab. If a criminal is making millions, he has to be dozens of other criminals who would like to be making millions. Bring in the NPC rival gangsters. Have them hit the breweries, kick the speakeasies, beat up the numbers runners, etc. Remember that 30% of all NPC's are dishonest. If the law enforcers in your campaign can't cope with the criminals, give them some professional assistance, preferably from the Fiction Bureau and the Internal Revenue Service.

Be certain that your criminals are being off heavily to the local politicians. Carefully watch their payroll — make sure that their hundreds of men are getting a good enough living to stay loyal. A few should be disloyal anyway, to make the game more interesting.

GAMMA WORLD®

Science Fantasy Game

Why does a laser gun need so much to hit Armor Class 1 and 2 and so less for all of the rest?

When the Attacker's Weapon Matrix was designed, Weapon Matrix was designed to handle all the weapons. I (Jim Ward) thought that the weapon would burn a rough skin or a shield, but when metal or furs or whatever, it would melt or burn those and have a chance of doing damage.

The GAMMA WORLD® game is so deadly, my players com-

plain that their characters get killed off almost before they have rolled them up! What can I do to help them last longer?

GWA: If your characters are constantly dying, they're probably not being very careful. The game was designed to test the intelligence and role-playing skill of everyone who tries their hand.

It is also possible that you are throwing a bit too much at them considering their beginning status. Your radiation areas should not all be 16, 17, and 18's. Your poison attacks should not all be at intensity 18. If your non-player characters are using lasers and grenades, make sure to start your players off with the same type of equipment, or at least make sure that they get it on their first few adventures. Give them subtle warnings of danger, and if they are still jumping in where Orlns fear to tread, they deserve their hard fate.

GWQ: Will a Mark V Blaster put a hole in anything?

GWA: The rules say "provided the target is killed, does not have a force shield, or is inanimate." This means that it will do damage to anything, but will put a hole only if the thing dies with the strike or the force field goes out with the strike. Things like walls and dirt merely take the damage but show no trace.

STAR FRONTIERS™

Science Fiction Role Playing Game

SFQ: Why can't I make my own races who have made contact with those listed in the rulebooks?

SEA: There is nothing given in the rules that says you cannot create new races. By all means, if you want to create something for your campaign that is not in the rules, do. Take a little time and do it right — look at the races already in the rules and create an equally balanced new race.

SFQ: Can I mount a machine gun on a vehicle like an explorer? The rules say that vehicle-mounted weapons are not covered in the rulebook.

SEA: The note about vehicle-mounted weapons actually refers to fixed and heavy weapons mounted on vehicles, such as turrets, ball-mounted machine guns and lasers, and missile launchers. If the referee allows it, the characters

may mount a machine gun or similar weapon on a simple ring or post mount. The cost of the mount and the modifications to the vehicle will be 150 Cr. A hovercycle and a glijet cannot be mounted with weapons.

Mounting a weapon does not change any of the modifiers given in the Vehicle Combat section. The advantage of the mounting is that it allows characters to use the heavier weapons on the equipment list while in a moving vehicle. However, there is one major drawback the referee should always remember — anyone driving through a civilized area with a machine gun sitting on their roof is almost certainly going to be arrested!

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Role Playing Game

TSQ: What is the difference between Fortune and Fame Points?

TSA: The definitions of Fortune and Fame Points are as follows:

Fortune Point - A factor of how lucky an agent is. When an agent is generated the Administrator secretly rolls a 10-sided die. The result is the number of Fortune Points the agent will have in his/her career. Fortune Points, once spent, can never be regained or replaced. The agent doesn't know how many Fortune Points he/she has. The agent only knows how many have been spent. An agent can spend one Fortune Point to reduce a fatal wound he/she has received to the point where the agent still has one Life Level point remaining. In hand-to-hand combat, an agent can spend one Fortune Point to remain one point above unconsciousness.

Fame Point - A factor of how successful an agent is. One Fame Point is received for each level the agent has obtained. Each agent knows how many Fame Points are available to him/her. An agent can spend one Fame Point to reduce a fatal wound he/she has received to the point where the agent still has one Life Level point remaining. In hand-to-hand Combat, an agent can spend one Fortune Point to remain one point above unconsciousness. ♣

Knight Hawks: A New Dimension

by Doug Niles

Polyhedron Magazine, #12, pg. 14

The courageous force had been trimmed to a few valiant characters: Humans, Dralasites, Vrusks, Yazirians, members of all of the four races. These warriors somehow kept their battered ships operational, flying two, three, or even more missions every day.

Against them was poised the might of a Sathar Attack Fleet. The nimble scout ships attacked the sinister battle cruisers and destroyers of the worm-like aliens, inflicting heavy losses and buying precious time for the helpless civilians on Fortress Kdikit. Although the great space station itself had absorbed countless onslaughts, morale was still high.

But how much longer could they hold out?

* * * * *

The release of STAR FRONTIERS Science Fiction Role Playing game introduced players to a clean, exciting game that allowed characters to adventure in a futuristic society known as the "Frontier." Although the game has met with considerable success, a recurring question has come up: "Where are the spaceship rules?"

TSR could have included an abbreviated set of spaceship rules in the STAR FRONTIERS game package, but it was felt that such scanty treatment would raise more questions than it would answer. For this reason, the spaceship and space station rules have been prepared as the first supplement to STAR FRONTIERS Game: Knight Hawks, due for release in the summer of 1983.

Knight Hawks is a value-packed set that includes a boardgame of ship-to-ship space combat, playable with no knowledge of the STAR FRONTIERS game system. The spaceship set will be most useful, however, as a supplement allowing characters to expand their STAR FRONTIERS campaigns into the vast reaches of space.

Your \$12 investment in Knight Hawks will net you:

- A 16 page boardgame rulebook, containing a basic and advanced boardgame, each with several scenarios.
- A 64 page book of rules for ship design, construction, and use, including many suggestions for the referee.
- A 16 page adventure module, designed to aid the referee in working spaceships into his campaign.
- A 22" x 35" full color mapsheet. A grid is printed on one side for ship combat, and on the

- other a space station and ship deck plans for role playing encounters.
- Color counters representing the scores of ship types used for the boardgame, as well as markers to aid in playing the game.
- 2 10-sided dice.

Foremost in this exciting package is the boardgame of spaceship combat. A fast and clean system is explained in the basic rules, allowing players to begin a game within a few minutes of opening the box. Advanced rules allow more detailed battles to be fought, adding types of ship damage and repair as well as new weapons and defenses.

The design emphasis on the boardgame was to allow players to make decisions that will effect the outcome of the battle, rather than simply participate in a dice-rolling exercise. Several scenarios, set during a war between the Sathar and the peoples of the Frontier, are included for each game.

Knight Hawks will be enjoyed most fully, however, as an addition to the STAR FRONTIERS Role Playing game system. New character skills relating to spaceships will allow PC's to design, pilot, navigate, repair, and fight with a wide variety of sleek star vessels.

This is not just a wargame, however. A detailed system on the economics of the Frontier is included, plus descriptions of items necessary for a character to begin a passenger or freight hauling line, a mining operation, or even an agricultural station in orbit around some remote outpost planet.

Spaceships are a focal point of Frontier society, and Knight Hawks includes information on how ships are used and how the cultures of the game worlds have developed around their ships. Many types of optional spaceship equipment are listed, so players may exercise much freedom in designing their ships.

An extensive referee's section provides background for many conflicts - economic, political, legal, military, and others - which can be used to spice up the lives of the PC's. More light is shed on the history of the Frontier and the depredations of the Sathar.

Space stations are not neglected. These vast structures, wheeling majestically above the Frontier worlds, contain all of the necessities of life for the four races. In fact, there is never any need for a true "spacer" to set foot on a planet. Maps of some space station decks areas are included to aid in resolving the many encounters that are likely to take place on stations.

A set of rules for playing out a massive Sathar assault on the Frontier is also included in the game. Ideally, this conflict (The Second Sathar War, or SWII) can be worked into a campaign so that players will have the opportunity to use their characters meaningfully, yet still feel that they are participating in a conflict with galaxy-wide implications.

the *Warriors of White Light* module included with the Knight Hawks game introduces the referee to role playing situations using spaceships. PC's are given the chance to join the space militia of the planet Clarion (Gollywog). They will be placed under the command of experienced officers at first, but will be allowed to use spaceship skills and demonstrate their abilities in a number of scenarios, pitting them against a variety of antagonists.

Whether the theme will be military, economic, exploration, crime, law enforcement, or anything else, the referee will have the rules he needs to set up a believable Science Fiction society.

RAID ON THESEUS

by Doug Niles

Polyhedron Magazine, #13, pg. 20

The peoples of the Frontier have been numbered by the savagery of the Sathar onslaught. The war is only ten days old and already the UPF Spacefleet has been driven from a half-dozen star systems. Courageously fighting against overwhelming odds, the Fleet has destroyed some Sathar ships, but seems unable to stem the tide of conquest.

A few small Spacefleet vessels, cut off from the main fleet, have fled to Theseus. Clarion (White Light system) is blockaded, so the star route from Theseus to the rest of the Frontier has been effectively cut.

Now these ships, repaired and rearmed, have joined with the militia vessels of Minotaur (Theseus system) to form the force that will have to defend the system against Sathar attacks . . . for there is no place left to run.

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The Ships

The militia of Minotaur possesses the following ships:

4 Assault Scouts: *Gnat, Mosquito, Dragonfly, Wasp*

HP: 15 ADF: 5 MR: 4 DCR: 50

Weapons: AR (x4) LF

Defenses: RH

1 Frigate: *Heroic*

HP: 40 ADF: 4 MR: 3 DCR: 70

Weapons: LC RB (x4) LB

T (x2)

Defenses: RH MS (x2) ICM (x4)

1 Destroyer:	<i>Republic</i>
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HP: 50 ADF: 3 MR: 3 DCR: 75

Weapons: LC RB (x4) LB
 T (x2) EB

Defenses: RH MS (x2) ICM (x5)

The following Spacefleet vessels have joined the militia:

3 Assault Scouts:	<i>Dirk, Blade, Needle</i>
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HP: 15 ADF: 5 MR: 4 DCR: 50

Weapons: AR (x4) LB
Defenses: RH

1 Frigate:	<i>Zz'Llikk'tt</i>
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HP: 40 ADF: 4 MR: 3 DCR: 70

Weapons: LC RB (x4) LB
 T (x2)

Defenses: RH MS (x2) ICM (x4)

1 Light Cruiser:	<i>Intrepid</i> - combined flagship
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HP: 70 ADF: 3 MR: 2 DCR: 100

Weapons: DC LB EB
 PB RB (x6) T (x4)

Defenses: RH ES SS
 ICM (x8)

This following station orbits the planet of Minotaur, providing a base for the combined fleet's ships:

Fortified Space Station:		<i>Minotaur Station</i>	
HP: 140	ADF: 0	MR: 0	DCR: 100
Weapons:	LB	LB	RB (x8)
Defenses:	RH	MS (x2)	ICM (x6)

Opposing the above vessels are the following Sathar ships:

3 Destroyers:		<i>Villainous, Maggot, Assassin</i>	
HP: 50	ADF: 3	MR: 3	DCR: 75
Weapons:	LC	RB (x4)	LB
	T (x2)	EB	
Defenses:	RH	MS (x2)	ICM (x5)

2 Light Cruisers:		<i>Hellion, Foul</i>	
HP: 70	ADF: 3	MR: 2	DCR: 120
Weapons:	DC	PB	EB
	LB	LB	T (x4)
	RB (x8)	S (x2)	
Defenses:	RH	ES	PS
	SS	ICM (x8)	

2 Heavy Cruisers:		<i>Ghoul, Spectre</i>	
HP: 80	ADF: 2	MR: 1	DCR: 120
Weapons:	DC	PB	EB

LB LB T (x4)

RB (x8) S (x2)

Defenses: RH ES PS

SS ICM (x8)

Setting Up

Ideally, the referee is the only player who should read the following description before the battle is fought. The referee should fill out a ship roster form for each of the ships listed above, and divide all players present into two teams. If the battle is being fought as part of a campaign, the Referee may wish to run all of the Sathar vessels, while the militia and Spacefleet ships are divided among the other players. Otherwise, roughly half of the players should be on each side.

The Spacefleet has been ordered to await the enemy in the vicinity of Minotaur, so place a counter in the middle of the map. Place a fortified station counter in orbit around the planet to represent Theseus Station.

The two fleets will enter the map from the opposite short map edges. The ships of each fleet may be spread among as many hexes as the owning team wishes or stacked together.

All of the Sathar ships enter with a previous speed of "12". The UPF and militia ships may be traveling at any speed from "1" to "20" as they come on the map. The UPF and militia ships do not all have to travel at the same speed.

If the UPF has at least one ship traveling faster than "12", it is the attacking side in the battle, otherwise the Sathar are the attackers.

Referee's Notes

At first, this scenario might seem a bit unbalanced since the Sathar ships are generally larger and possess more firepower than the UPF and militia vessels. In fact, in the hands of inexperienced players, the Frontier force may well be ignominiously wiped out.

The key to a UPF victory lies in utilizing the superior speed and maneuverability of its ships, particularly the assault scouts. The assault rocket may be the deadliest weapon in the game; if the scouts can get behind the cumbersome Sathar cruisers, these rockets can inflict great damage. Whenever possible, assault rockets should be launched at maximum range (4 hexes), so the scouts can avoid the rocket batteries of their opponents.

The UPF can fully capitalize on its advantage by entering the map with all ships traveling at the maximum allowable speed (20). This will allow all of the militia and Spacefleet ships to make close approaches to the enemy, while maintaining enough speed to flee out of range if a ship is badly damaged.



Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: Where did you get all of those weird names for the GAMMA WORLD game monsters and mutants?

GWA: The nature of the GAMMA WORLD game setting necessitated the development of many new, modified creatures, all of which had to be called *something*. Physically or mentally altered badgers couldn't be called badgers (because they were no longer badgers), thus, new names had to be created to describe the new creatures. Further, it was decided that easily identifiable names would not have survived down through the centuries of the Dark Years. Off-the-wall, strange names were given to the creatures in keeping with the strange world in which they exist. The revision takes steps to make sense of the names of the creatures by adding another name to the old one.

GWQ: Some of the Cryptic Alliances are pretty strange. What is the best way to use them in the game?

GWA: The Cryptic Alliances were designed to be the perfect all-around tool for the GAMMA WORLD game referee. The Alliances are useful to start player characters because they give the referee a logical reason for giving new player characters various materials.

The Cryptic Alliances can also act as a catalyst for adventures; they may create conflict between alliances; assignments can be given by the leader of a character's particular alliance; or characters may desire to rise in their alliance, requiring them to do something of benefit to the collective whole.

One of the first things that a good referee should do is create several hidden bases for Cryptic Alliances. These bases are good starting points for new characters; it will give them a place of origin *and* a home base for exploration of the surrounding countryside.



1920's Adventure Game

GBQ: How can player characters obtain a camera, and how much does one cost?

GBA: That is an omission from the price lists which should be filled in. Newspaper reporters can be issued cameras by their newspapers. These would be very expensive, large, bulky cameras and use the old-fashioned type

heavy photographic plates. Characters can purchase smaller lower quality cameras for prices ranging from \$50 to \$300, depending upon the circumstances of the purchase. Criminals, of course, can steal cameras.

GBQ: Some of my law enforcement characters have begun dragging in every seedy character they can find and using "persuasion" to obtain information. How can I limit the information they get?

GBA: Judges, consider that most average smalltime punks won't know anything very useful about the operations of bigtime gangsters. They may know, for example, where a warehouse or gambling joint is located, but won't know who runs it, and who gets the profits. Excessive use of violence by the police will result in political pressure to stop such practices as the mob uses its power at City Hall. Have the Police Commissioner or the Mayor call in some of these fellows and give them a stern warning. In extreme cases, the mob will hit back. A law officer's life is always on the line.



Science Fiction Game

SFQ: The rules say that a gas mask fits over the wearer's face. How does this work for a Vrusk who breathes through many small nostrils in its underside? And how does it work for a Dralasite who breathes through his skin?

SFA: This description was written from a Human point of view. A Vrusk gas mask is a harness arrangement that straps to the underside of the body. The filter is a thin sheet of plastic material that covers the nostril area.

The Dralasite gas mask is better called a gas suit; it completely covers the Dralasite. Again, the thin sheet of plastic material filters the harmful gases. Because this limits the amount of oxygen reaching the Dralasite, they may only wear these suits for a short period of time before they become too hot. The Dralasite gas mask may be worn with other defensive suits.

SFQ: The Expanded Rulebook gives two different costs for the Standard Equipment Pack. Which is correct?

SFA: The 150 Cr cost given on the Equipment List is correct. The 250 Cr cost given under Expanded Game Characters is incorrect.

SFQ: Would it be balanced to create a new PSA Jack-of-All-Trades? If so, how would this PSA work?

SFA: Yes, you could create such a PSA, although the skills system currently lets a character learn many different skills. If you created such a PSA, it would best use the doubled Technological PSA Skill Costs for all skills the character wanted to learn. Remember, that this PSA is not playtested, and it might be necessary to make changes in it once a campaign is underway.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

TSQ: One of my players recently tried to attack an enemy agent with an object on the Additional HTH Weapons Table on page 33 of the 2nd edition rules. However, this is not projectile combat, nor is it to be found on any of the HTH tables. So where in the name of Bond am I to find the outcome of this action?

TSA: When the offensive fighter is using a weapon found on the chart on page 33, combat is resolved in much the same way as usual. Which HTH table is consulted will depend upon how the weapon is being used. Blows with a long, roughly cylindrical object such as a flashlight or an oar will be resolved on the Knife Fighting table if the object is 0-30 cm in length, and on the Swordplay table if it is over 30 cm in length, since they can be blocked in the same way that one would block a knife or sword thrust. Combat with billy club is resolved on the Untrained table, as are blows with square objects such as suitcases, gas masks, and telephones. (Very few agents are trained in HTH telephone combat.) Long, flexible items such as piano wire or chains can be used for strangling or whipping. When they are used to strangle, combat is resolved on the Untrained table by applying one of the "holds" (Hands on Throat). If the victim is surprised, consult Appendix One, under Assassination (Garrotes). When they are used to whip, treat as swordplay.

When a hit is scored, damage is determined as follows. The HWV of the object is added to the Offensive Fighter's HTH Weapon Value modifier on the Injury Modifiers table. This total is then added to the combat result. **TSQ:** Do the die rolls for the Poison table mean the number of points lost from the abilities, or the percent of points lost?

TSA: The die rolls made when a character is poisoned give the percentage of points lost from the indicated abilities.



AMBUSH ON LOSSEND

by Steve Winter

Polyhedron Magazine, #14, pg. 22

Lossend, in the Timeon star system, is famous for its copper and diamond mines. LRM Enterprises is the largest mining interest on the planet, but several other large companies and many small operators and independent prospectors also have claims on the planet's surface. The sun shines for 40 hours during the day, pushing temperatures up to 55 degrees Celsius. During the 30 hour nights, the temperature drops to freezing.

While waiting for a connecting flight at Lossend's orbiting starport, Diamond Station, the player characters are approached by an LRM agent with a job offer. LRM needs beings from outside the company to drive supply trucks from LRM's main surface installation to one of its mining camps, a round-trip distance of about 2,600 km. The trip takes 50 to 55 hours. LRM Enterprises will pay the characters 1,000 credits apiece plus free passage out of the system on the next available company transport going their way.

If the characters accept the job, they are put aboard the next shuttle flight to the surface. The shuttle arrives during Lossend's long, cold night. The characters are driven by aircar to LRM's corporate headquarters for a briefing on the mission.

The briefing is conducted by LRM's chief of security, Col. Liif Ban-Nep, a Human veteran of the Star Law Rangers. The briefing can be read aloud to or paraphrased for the players.

"The transport cartel here on Lossend is striking the mining companies, demanding more compensatory time off for drivers who make long hauls. It's not that we don't want to honor their demands, but our markets are depressed right now and we can't afford to hire the extra drivers that would be needed. That means our camps have been living on emergency supplies for the past eight days. Camps are set up so they can last 60 days without resupply, but a fire at Northslope Camp 7 has destroyed most of the emergency stores. In two days those miners will be alternately roasting and freezing, and starving in between, unless we get several truckloads of food concentrates and parabatteries through to them. We'd fly these supplies up, but none of our air vehicles has the range or capacity to do much good, and the camp hasn't the facilities to land or launch a shuttle.

"The trucks are loaded and ready to go. You're scheduled to leave as soon as possible. The camp is about 1,300 klicks up the Northslope road. You can average about 50 klicks per hour, so you should reach the camp in less than 30 hours. Each of the transports has two extra parabatteries wired into the cargo compartment so you can make the round trip without refueling; the camp has no parabatteries to spare.

"I won't try to fool you people, this could be dangerous. We suspect that the fire was started by cartel sympathizers, and the same people may try to stop this shipment. You can draw weapons from the munitions master before you leave. Any questions?"



Ban-Nep will answer questions about the road conditions, directions, and preparations, but will downplay the dangers, and will not mention hijackers at all. He will stress that the best protection for the convoy is in leaving quickly, before any saboteurs find out about the trip.

The characters can draw one sidearm, one shoulder-fired weapon, and up to 20 clips of ammo for each from the munitions master. No heavy weapons or poison grenades are available, and none of the trucks carry any weapons.

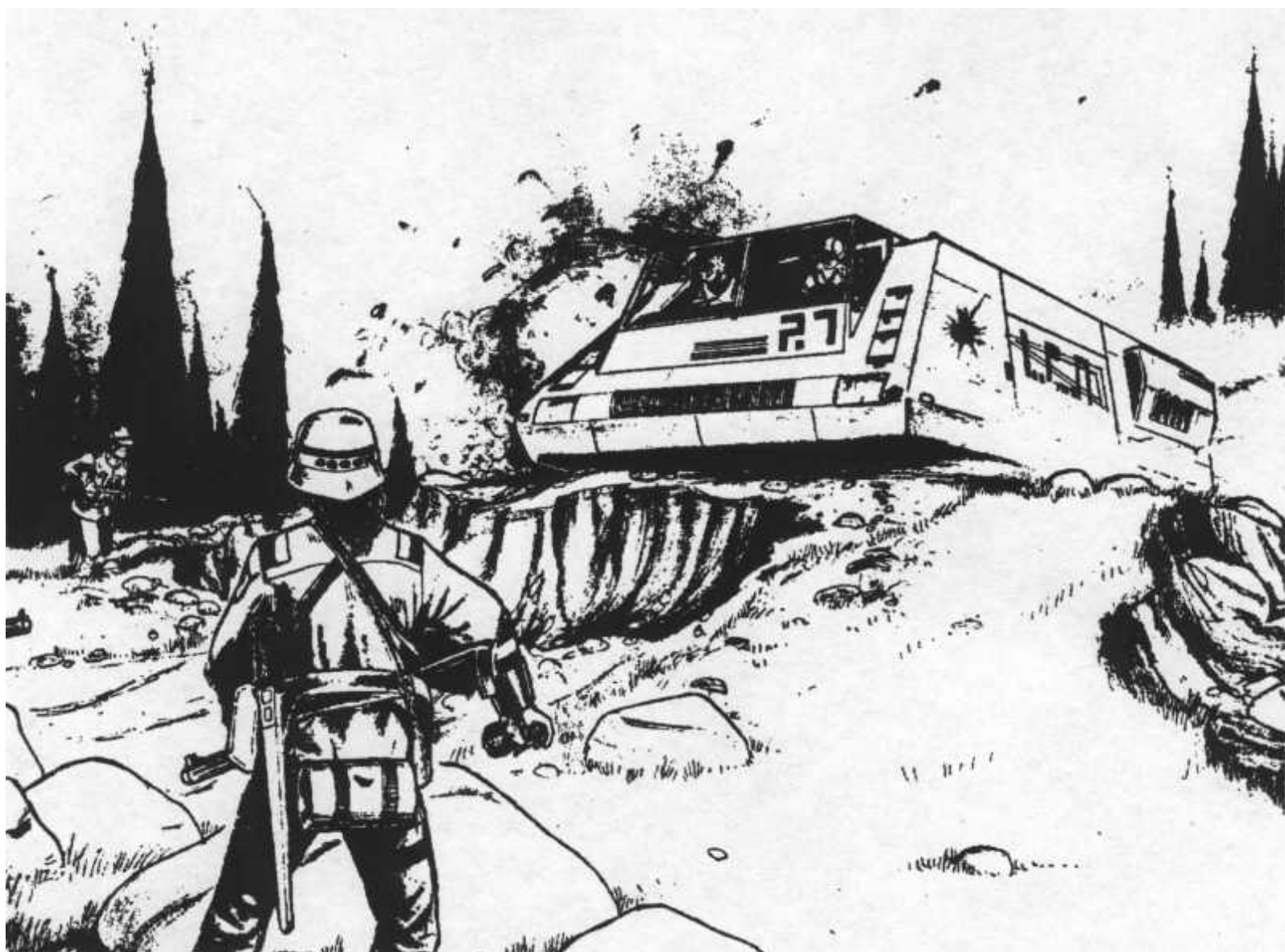
The supplies, in sealed standard reinforced cargo containers, are loaded into LRM hover transports. The number of transports equals the number of characters divided by two, so that each truck has at least two passengers. One character can rest or act as an observer while the other drives.

When the characters are ready to leave, roll 2d10; the result is the number of hours until sunrise.

The Northslope Road passes through several hundred kilometers of scrub brush and rolling, rocky hills before reaching the base of the Northslope, a rising plain covered with low woody plants and thousands of boulders. The smallest of these boulders are only a few meters across, while the largest tower hundreds of meters over the road. The road is surfaced with crushed rock, and is not in particularly good condition. The first few hundred kilometers are fairly straight and level, but the road becomes a twisting, serpentine track once it reaches the Northslope boulder fields and canyons.

Ban-Nep's briefing, of course, is almost entirely untrue. The transport driver's cartel is not on strike, and there is no emergency at Northslope Camp 7. LRM transports are disappearing along this road, and Ban-Nep is using the player characters as bait to find out what is happening. The cargo containers in the transports are filled with gravel and packing material. Suspecting hijackers, Ban-Nep has spread rumors through underworld contacts that the trucks are carrying upgraded computer programs, records on company procedures and installations, new prospecting equipment, and the monthly payroll for the camp.

Unknown to the players, a single aircar carrying extra parabatteries and computer-enhanced optical ground scanning equipment is tailing the convoy at high altitude, filming the convoy and trying to locate the suspected hijacker's hidden base.



Hijackers will attack the convoy as it passes through a narrow gorge on the Northslope. The attackers are armed with enough heavy weapons (heavy lasers, machine guns, recoilless rifles, and rocket launchers) that one heavy weapon can be fired at each of the first and last trucks, hoping to stop those trucks on the narrow road and trap any others between the two wrecks. The weapons are positioned 50 meters from the road on both sides, behind hard cover. The gunners have +20 skill bonuses to hit with the weapons, and the transports are large targets. The hijackers will use doze grenades fired from grenade rifles to capture any characters who abandon the trucks. If the characters refuse to surrender, the hijackers will try to fire doze grenades through the windows of the vehicles (shooting out the windows with small arms fire, if necessary). The hijackers outnumber the player characters in the convoy about 2 to 1.

Ten minutes after the convoy is captured, a heavy jetcopter with a cargo sling arrives and the hijackers begin transferring the cargo crates back to their base. Once the first crates are opened at the hijacker's base, the outlaws (and the characters) discover the trick. When the jetcopter returns to the road, the hijackers open all the crates immediately and find nothing but gravel and packing foam. The angry hijackers set off incendiary grenades in the cargo containers and empty vehicles and head

back to their camp, taking the captured characters along.

The hijackers live in prefabricated buildings stolen from LRM camps and trucks, and covered with camouflage netting. The characters will be kept under guard in one of these buildings.

After five hours, the camp is attacked by 20 LRM security police armed with needler rifles (firing anesthetic needles) and laser pistols, and 6 LRM police armed with grenade rifles (firing doze grenades) and automatic pistols. All LRM police wear skeinsuits and albedo screens. Unless the characters find some way to identify or protect themselves, they will be mistaken for outlaws, attacked, and captured.

If captured as outlaws, the characters will be in constant danger until released. The real hijackers think the characters were working with LRM, and will attack them at every opportunity while in jail. Ban-Nep will look for the characters if they are still in jail 15 hours after being captured.

Once released, the characters will be de-briefed and paid according to the agreement, plus 1,000 credits each as a bonus for hazardous duty.

STAR FRONTIERSSM

Science Fiction Game

SFQ: 1 kilogram is the mass given on the Equipment List for Tornadium D-19. Does this mean you get 1 kilogram of Tornadium for 50 Credits?

SFA: No. Tornadium D-19 should cost 50 Credits for 50 grams. This was unfortunately lost somewhere in the production of the game. The 1 kilogram mass a) helps restrict the amount of explosive a character would lug around, and b) assumes that some of that mass is taken up by careful packing of the explosive.

SFQ: Where can I get more ideas and information for new weapons? Where are the military weapons?

SFA: Most of the weapons we listed in the STAR FRONTIERS game are the standards of science fiction. There are guns and lasers, sonic weapons and electrical weapons. Other ideas for weapons may be found in science-fiction novels. Another good place to look for ideas is in science magazines. Pay attention to the latest breakthroughs and discoveries in physics and other fields. These can lead to ideas for weapons. For example, recent work in high-energy lasers has been towards an X-ray laser. This could be a very powerful STAR FRONTIERS game weapon.

Another really useful place to look is in today's military forces. There are many features and weapons being worked on today that can be used in a STAR FRONTIERS game campaign. These include laser range-finders, automatic loading systems for heavy weapons, missiles guided by TV cameras, etc.

Remember, the weapons given in the game are not full scale military weapons. Such weapons would be much more deadly than those listed in the rules.

SFQ: Can I have a Human/Yazirian character (the father was Human and mother Yazirian)?

SFA: Forget it. The STAR FRONTIERS game is not a fantasy game. Cross-breeding and the like must follow the laws of genetics. Humans and Yazirians are more than different races, they are different species. Furthermore, they developed on different planets where the whole course of evolution is different. The body chemistries of the two races are different. It cannot be done.

SFQ: Can I have a character who has been so altered by radiation and genetics as to make him/her a "super-character"?

SFA: No. It is likely that in the future it could be possible to adjust a person, improving him/her by manipulating genes, etc. However, there are serious questions as to whether it will ever be done.

SFQ: Why do the rules for swimming only allow a character to swim for a short period of time before drowning when people have actually stayed in the water for 24 hours and not drowned?

SFA: The longest period of time spent swimming was actually 168 hours. However, this overlooks some things. In most cases of long duration swims, the person swimming had trained and prepared for a long period of time. He/she was also usually well-rested. Further, all the person was trying to do was swim; he/she did not get out of the water, hike cross-country, get into a firefight or get wounded six times. He/she swam until he/she collapsed, at which point someone else fished them out. The rules are not the absolute limits that a person could actually swim, but represent an average, given the conditions, the activity of the character, the preparation, etc.

TOP SECRET[®]

Espionage Game

TSQ: Is an agent in any way trained by his/her bureau to perform his/her trade at a greater proficiency than agents of a different bureau?

TSA: In the TOP SECRET[®] game rule-book, there is no provision for agents of different bureaus to receive different training. The bureau in which the agent works is merely a matter of player choice. However, if you have access to copies of the January and July issues of DRAGON[®] Magazine (out of stock), the Rasmussen Files contain listings for various college courses that agents may take to acquire or improve certain abilities related to their specific bureau functions.

TSQ: If an assassin killed two arms bearers during the course of a mission, would he get a 100 point bureau bonus for each one?

TSA: The assassin would get a double bureau bonus only if the mission could not have succeeded without killing both arms bearers. Otherwise, agents will be gunning down local police for the purpose of gaining experience.

TSQ: If a character suffered from internal damage in any area except the head (there are already percentages for that), would he/she fall unconscious?

TSA: Internal damage resulting from weapon hits in locations usually considered non-lethal (hand, foot, arm, etc.) will not cause unconsciousness unless the character's Life Level drops to zero. If this occurs, the character is unconscious and will bleed to death in 5 minutes unless a trained person with a first aid kit gives immediate medical assistance.

Unconsciousness was included as a possible result of this type of wound in Issue #19 of DRAGON Magazine (also out of stock), where some optional rules for incapacitation due to damage were offered. These can be utilized if the Administrator wants to add extra touches of realism to his/her campaign.

Of course, in Hand-to-Hand combat, all damage applies toward unconsciousness rather than death (with the obvious exceptions of swordplay and knife fighting).

TSQ: Under "Fencing Purloined Goods," the rules say that characters may sell items to the Administrator. Does he/she pay full price or by the chart?

TSA: The price that the Agency is willing to pay for incidental stolen merchandise is entirely up to the Administrator. He must decide what the item is worth to the organization, and what it is worth to keep it out of the hands of the competition. Full price should never be paid for any item unless it has value unrelated to its physical worth (such as a politically sensitive document, a new weapon prototype, or incriminating evidence that could be used for blackmail, either by or against the agency). In such special circumstances, the price offered by the Administrator should slightly exceed what the agent could get selling the item elsewhere if at all possible. Note that this procedure only applies for merchandise acquired over and above normal mission requirements. An agent who is assigned to obtain a certain item and then tries to sell it to the highest bidder is, at the very least, a renegade and should be treated as such.

However, if the items in question do not have any particular value for espionage, chances are that the Administrator will not want to waste his time with them, and will send the agent to the Open or Black Market.

TSQ: The Power rating of a 10-gauge shotgun is 7, 1 point more than the maximum allowed by the Gun Design Rules. How should this be treated when designing this type of weapon? What would the PWV modifier be?

TSA: Your powers of observation are excellent. The Power rating of this weapon is inconsistent with what is covered by the rules. Power ratings for the items on the Weapons Chart were determined by comparing the sizes of the projectiles fired by each. Upon further calculation, it has been determined that on this basis, the Power rating for the 10-gauge shotgun should be 8. This has little meaning for the game outside of comparison value with the rest of the listed weapons.

For the time being, treat all Power ratings of 7 and above as 6 for purposes of gun design. Therefore, the PWV modifier would be +40.

TSQ: In the Administrator File 001, "Operation Sprechenhaltestelle," there is a Quick Reference Code under Personnel Information (p. 21) and Human Targets. I have looked throughout the 001 File and the rulebook and cannot locate the Quick Reference Code Chart which tells me what each letter mean. Please tell me how to do this or where to find it.

TSA: The Quick Reference Code tells how each of the listed personnel is armed. The key to the code is in the TOP SECRET Espionage Role-playing game rulebook (2nd Edition) on pages 21-23 (Weapons Chart). The QRC letters are in the extreme left column, followed by the names and statistics of the weapons they represent. 

GWQ: I have a mutated bear character and my referee maintains that since it hasn't any armor its armor class is 10. I say it should be 5, just like a Dabber or a Jeget.

GWA: The armor class of a species is not just based on the thickness of their fur or hide. It is also a function of the species' speed and size. The 10 for no armor applies to human types that are walking around in their skin and little else. I agree with you that a bear type rates better than a 10. It is still up to your referee to determine the actual number. I would say it rates anywhere from 7 to 4 depending on how fast the creatures of your referee's world are. I would place it at a 4 in mine.



1920s Adventure Game

GBQ: I like the fistfight system in the game, but I don't get to use it very often. Everyone is always carrying guns. This often leads to losing a lot of player characters. What can I do?

GBA: There are several ways to decrease the lethality of your game:

1. Remind your law enforcers that a live criminal full of information is more valuable than a dead one. Of course, you have to have done your homework as judge and worked out what the captured criminal will know!
2. There are many situations where characters begin hostilities 10' or less away from one another. Have NPCs you are running attempt to disarm and fistfight in such situations. Your player characters will quickly see the advantages of this type of procedure.
3. You can always have your law enforcement agencies issue warnings to officers about the use of firearms in crowded public places or the public streets. As judge, you could assign a percent chance that missed shots hit innocent bystanders, resulting in legal actions against the officers who fired.

GBQ: I have been playing in the **GANGBUSTERS™** game module *Murder in Harmony* for weeks now and finally believe I know who the killer was. Tell me if it was Frankie Sansotta? It must be him.

GBA: That module has received a great many good comments. I won't tell you if you are right or wrong, but that module is one of the best reasons why playing **GANGBUSTERS** game can be so much fun. There are few modules out right now that will make you work harder to solve your adventure.

STAR FRONTIERS™

Science-Fiction Game

SFQ: Can I have a planet with green sky?

SFA: Yes, but it will be a very rare thing. The color of the sky around most planets that have atmosphere will be either blue like Earth or reddish. The color has less to do with the color of the planet's sun than with what is in the atmosphere. The light from the sun is defracted by things that hang in the atmosphere. On Earth, water and dust diffract the "white" light of the Sun and create a blue sky. This will be the case on most planets. If there is a lot of dust in the air, the sky will have reddish color, much like the sunset on Earth.

A green sky could happen if there were photosynthetic algae or microplants floating in the atmosphere. The plants would absorb some of the sunlight to grow, creating clouds of green haze.

This in turn could lead to other problems. The heat coming from the surface of the planet would be bounced back by the cloud layer. This would raise the temperature of the planet. This is called a "greenhouse effect." Venus is an example of this. Also, with the increase in heat, more water would evaporate into the air, so it would rain more often. Also, the algae or micro-plants might make breathing the air dangerous since these plants would be drawn into the lungs. On such a planet, a gas mask or filter would be necessary. Such a planet would not be a very pleasant place to live.

SFQ: Is it possible to have a world entirely covered with water or a planet that has no water?

SFA: Yes, it is; either extreme wouldn't be places very suitable for human life. An all water planet would probably be nothing but a misty globe with the atmosphere almost as full of water as the surface itself. A totally dry planet has no water necessary for human life or to help protect the planet from harmful radiation emitted by its sun. Under current theories, neither planet would be considered suitable for human life.

SFQ: I played in **STAR FRONTIERS™** game Referee's Screen Mini-Module and had the misfortune to have my character release the spores in the Medical Lab during a combat with Sathar. I say that opening that section of the ship to the vacuum of space should have cleared out the spores. My referee insists that that wouldn't be enough.

SFA: If your referee maintains that outer space will not kill the spores, that is the final answer. Remember that the ship was found floating in space with its systems shut down. This would support the resistance to the effects of outer space vacuum on the spores. There was a cure in the lab area for the disease but when the ships areas are hit with vacuum this could easily destroy the more delicate equipment on board.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

TSQ: A sniper fires at his target and misses. The target runs, but another character shoots and kills the target. Would the assassination be clean or ultraclean?

TSA: Because the assassination took more than one shot, it is considered a clean assassination, not an ultraclean. If both agents missions were to assassinate the target they would share the 300 experience points equally. If either agent were an assassin, that agent would gain an additional 100 point bonus. If either character were an NPC, the experience points would still have to be shared.

TSQ: Some of those Areas of Knowledge are pretty useless. Why would anyone want to have knowledge in things like Religion or Home Economics and play the game?

TSA: One of the most interesting concepts in the **TOP SECRET** game is the fact that all bureaus must have a large knowledge pool to draw from in working out assignments. All of the areas listed can play an important part in working out a mission. A mission could take an agent to the Vatican where knowledge of Religion is essential for the agent to get around. A good administrator will make sure that their game uses the skills of all the player characters.

TSQ: My player character likes to use a crossbow in his assassinations. I question the 6 phases to reload one. The newer models break and are ready to go in 3 phases or less. If I can prove to my administrator that this is true can the reload time be lessened?

TSA: The time given for that weapon didn't take into consideration any unusual designs. If you present proof there is no reason why the reload time can't be changed. Give some thought to the environment at the time of reloading. If there is a need to stay hidden or the agent is trying to do something else, these factors will be important in the reloading time. 🎯

STAR FRONTIERS™ ALPHA DAWN and KNIGHT HAWKS Game Aids

Abbreviations

The following format is used to outline the most important statistics of an NPC:

- (NPC Name and rank or position)
- RW M PS IM RS STA
- List of Skills
- List of weapons and defenses
 - RW - ranged weapon attack score
 - M - melee attack score
 - PS - punching score
 - IM - initiative modifier
 - RS - reaction speed
 - STA - stamina score

The numbers following the above abbreviations are the NPC's ratings for these categories.

Skill Abbreviations

- Pilot - piloting skill
- Astro - astrogation skill
- Engin - engineering skill
- Rockt - rocket weaponry skill
- Energ - energy weaponry skill
- Medic - medical skill
- Robot - robotics skill
- Compr - computer skill
- Demol - demolitions skill
- 1-6 - skill level, when following above

Knight Hawks ship statistics

- ADF - acceleration/deceleration factor
- MR - maneuver rating
- HP - hull points
- DCR - damage control rating

Weapons

- LB - laser battery
- LC - laser cannon
- AR - assault rocket
- T - torpedo
- RB - rocket battery
- PB - proton beam battery
- EB - electron beam battery
- DC - disruptor cannon
- M - mines
- S - seeker missiles

Defenses

- RH - reflective hull
- MS - masking screen
- ICM - interceptor missiles
- ES - electron screen
- SS - stasis screen
- PS - proton screen

Typical Ship Statistics — Advanced Game

Fighter:	HP 8 ADF 5 MR 5 DCR 30 Weapons: AR (x3) Defenses: RH
Assault Scout:	HP 15 ADF 5 MR 4 DCR 50 Weapons: AR (x4) LB Defenses: RH
Frigate:	HP 40 ADF 4 MR 3 DCR 70 Weapons: LC RB (x4) LB T (x2) EB Defenses: RH MS (x2) ICM (x4)
Destroyer:	HP 50 ADF 3 MR 3 DCR 75 Weapons: LC RB (x4) LB T (x2) EB Defenses: RH MS (x2) ICM (x5)
Minelayer:	HP 50 ADF 1 MR2 DCR 75 Weapons: M (x20) S (x4) LB (x2) Defenses: RH ICM CM (x4)
Light Cruiser:	HP 70 ADF 3 MR 2 DCR 100 Weapons: DC LB EB PB RB (x6) T (x4) Defenses: RH ES SS ICM (x8)
Heavy Cruiser:	HP 80 ADF 2 MR 1 DCR 120 Weapons: LB (x2) PB EB DC S (x2) T(x4) RB (x8) Defenses: RH ES PS SS ICM (x8)
Assault Carrier:	HP 75 ADF 2 MR 1 DCR 150 Weapons: LB PB RB (x8) fighter (x10) Defenses: RH MS (x4) ICM (x10)
Battleship:	HP 120 ADF 2 MR 2 DCR 200 Weapons: DC LB (x3) PB EB (x2) S (x4) T (x8) RB (x10) Defenses: RH ES PB SS ICM (x12)
Space Station:	(Statistics for stations vary with the size and type of station.) HP 20-300 ADF 0 MR 0 DCR ½HP Weapons: 1 EB, LB, PB, or RB per 50 HP Defenses: RH All Screens ICM (x4-24)

Weapons vs. Armor

Weapon Type	Effect of Armor
Axe, Knife, Club, etc.	Cannot penetrate armor
Gas Grenades	Cannot penetrate armor
Needlers	Cannot penetrate armor
Sonic Weapons	Cannot penetrate armor
Spear, Sword	70% protection
Bullets	65% protection
Laser Weapons	50% protection
Fragmentation Grenade	35% protection
Gyrojet Rockets	35% protection
Electric Sword	30% protection
Vibroknife	25% protection
Electroshooter	Full penetration
Shock Gloves	Full penetration
Stunstick	Full penetration
Tangler Grenade	Full penetration

Puncture Diameter Chart

Weapon	Diam. of Puncture (cm)	Auto-seal%
Electroshooter	0	
Pistol bullet	1	100%
Needler weapon	1	100%
Fragmentation grenade	2 (- 1d10 holes)	75%
Gyrojet pistol	2	75%
Laser pistol	2	75%
Laser rifle	2	75%
Machine gun bullet	2	75%
Rifle bullet	2	75%
Gyrojet rifle	3	50%
Heavy laser	3	50%
Laser powertorch	3	50%
Knife	1d5	varies
Sword	1d5	varies
Spear	1d10	varies
Vibroknife	1d10	varies
Electric Sword	1d10-2	varies

Structural Points of Spaceship Systems

Ship System or Component	Structural Points
Hatch	200 - 1d100
Hull Sections	200 - 2d100
Control Panel	100 - 1d100
Battery Weapon	300 - 2d100
Cannon	500 - 2d100
Engine (size A)	2d10 x 100
Engine (size B)	5d10 x 100
Engine (size C)	5d10 x 200

ered an "atrocious" and looked down upon by all respectable airmen. It can logically be argued that any pilot would want to try to land his plane no matter how slim the chances were.

DPQ: I have a hard time believing some of the luck rolls other players claim they make. Sometimes I could swear that my character has hit a plane several times, but the other players still claim that their characters' plane is fine. Is there anything I can do to prove them wrong?

DPA: Not playing with them is the best idea, but if that's not a viable alternative for you, simply keep track of their hits and location. If they see you doing this it won't be long before you can be sure they are being honest in their record keeping.



Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: Why are pure strain humans given so many benefits over other player characters?

GWA: After the game had been out for awhile, we noticed a trend; players were playing mostly humanoid mutants. Players were creating characters which took all of the advantages of a human body and added the powers of mutation. Further, we felt that the concept of pure strain humans surviving after the war years was a vital one. To encourage the playing of pure strain humans, they were given benefits which would add to the chances of their survival — and in the GAMMA WORLD game, characters can use all of the help they can get!

GWQ: Why can't characters increase in hit points like they do in every other role-playing game?

GWA: The GAMMA WORLD game concept deals with a savage environment which requires that all beings start out as tough as possible. This forces the player character to start out strong. The emphasis is on material and intellectual development, as opposed to physical development.

GWQ: How many spines can the Horl Choos throw in a given melee turn?

GWA: The plant can throw 1d8 at any single target and 1d4 at up to five targets in its thirty meter range. When the plant is faced with over five targets it will refuse to fire, not wanting to get destroyed in some type of stampede.

GWQ: Are the creatures and plants listed in the booklet edible?

GWA: If you can catch them and can kill

them first, I think that you deserve to eat them. Just watch out for the many poison glands that most of them have in unusual parts of their bodies.

GBQ: I have a player character who died and was placed in a functional life chamber. She was brought back alive, but my referee tells me she has total amnesia and can't even speak the language. Is this the way a life chamber is supposed to work?

GWA: A function of the chamber is to strip away all of the technological knowledge of the character. The referee may determine that all knowledge has been taken away, but this seems a little extreme. On the other hand, your character has been granted life again. If the character was worth anything to begin with, you got a luck break.

GBQ: My mutated wolf character encountered and was killed by a general household robot. I don't believe these things are programmed to attack creatures. Am I wrong?

GWA: A general household robot could have a pest control program. It may have considered you a pest, and controlled you the best way it knew how.



1920s Adventure Game

GBQ: The price list does not give the price of a shotgun. How much is it?

GBA: A standard shotgun costs \$75. As always, the GM may adjust this value to fit special circumstances if desired.

GBQ: The diagram for shotgun fire at the bottom of page 11 in the rulebook says that all targets take 10 points damage for ranges of 26' - 75', but the rules and charts state that targets only receive 5 hit points. Which is correct?

GBA: The diagram is correct. Targets should receive 10 points of damage.

GBQ: My grandfather was a military policeman during the 1920s and it sounds like a fun thing to try, but my referee won't let me play a character like that because it isn't standard to the game. Am I out of line for asking to play this type of character?

GBA: There are problems with setting up a character like this one. This character isn't just a glorified cop. There is rank to consider, as well as the fact that such a character would mainly be concerned with military and not civilian situations in Lakefront City. Although you could probably talk your referee into letting you play one of these types, it probably wouldn't

be as much fun as you might think, because you would be constantly forced away from the action that everyone else is experiencing.

GBQ: My character fired a burst from a Thompson, and my referee said it hit a nearby friendly policeman. I say that my character could aim the burst towards the area I designated, but he says I couldn't.

GBA: The rules say "... If the dice roll indicates a hit, then all characters in the firing character's Field of Vision are hit." This means that the cop took one no matter how hard your character tried to direct it away.

STAR FRONTIERS™

Science-Fiction Game

SFQ: In the second paragraph of the section on "Administering Drugs" (page 16 of the Expanded Rules), it mentions 24 hours as the time limit after which a character whose stamina is at 0 or below cannot be revived. Shouldn't this be 20 hours as stated elsewhere in the section?

SFA: Yes. The time limit should be the standard 20 hours.

SFQ: On page 20 (Expanded Rules), it states: "For every tenth of a gravity (.1 G) less than 1.0 . . . the distance a character can leap and vault is increased 5 m." That seems rather large. Is this value correct?

SFA: No, the decimal point has been left out. The distance a character can leap and vault is increased .5 m for every .1 G less than 1.0.

SFQ: On page 34 of the Expanded Rules, it states that "MEDIUM movement is 16 to 75 meters/turn." Is this correct?

SFA: It should be 46 to 75 meters/turn.

SFQ: The Ranged Weapons Modifier Table on page 22 of the Expanded Rules and the text on page 32 disagree with what is printed on the centerfold and the Referee's Screen in reference to attackers and targets in vehicles.

SFA: All the correct information is in the book, but it isn't all in the same place.

The correct modifiers are as follows:

Attacker in fast vehicle: -20

Attacker in slow vehicle: -10

Target in fast vehicle: -20

Target in slow vehicle: -10

SFQ: In the defense table on page 40 of the Expanded Rules, the power used up by the albedo screen is stated to be 1

SEU/min. Shouldn't this be 1 SEU/(5 SEU ABSORBED), as it is in the text?

SFA: Not quite. It should be 1 SEU/(5 points of damage absorbed).

SFQ: In the *Crash on Voltumnus Module*, the "Hunt in the Air" section is very difficult for players. Being at a high altitude in a flying vehicle makes range and other modifiers overwhelming, giving negative chances to hit. Was this intentional?

SFA: Yes. The intention of this section was hilarity, not combat. If the player characters get close enough to be hit, the range modifiers will be reasonable.

SFQ: On page 21 of SF1, *Pirate Officers* are listed as having 3rd level Projectile Weapons skill, but they carry Gyrojet pistols. Was Gyrojet skill intended?

SFA: Yes. When this section was written, the rules system did not yet have "Gyrojet Skill" as a separate skill.

SFQ: On page 27 of SF1, the attack of Rogue Crystals is listed as follows: SA: Attack as (3 Ranged Weapons, DM 5d10). But the creature description lists the beam strength as 4 SEU or 4d10. (Also see page 28.)

SFA: The damage for the Rogue Crystals' attack should be 5d10. Change "4 SEU" to "5 SEU" in the creature description.

SFQ: On page 29 of Module SF1, it says that characters "will lose consciousness for d100 minutes." Should this be minutes or turns?

SFA: The duration of unconsciousness should be d100 turns.

SFQ: In the Frontier Map Example on page 49 of the Expanded Rules, Pale (Truane's Star), is said to have a population code of MRI, but the table on page 50 lists it as MIR.

SFA: It should be MRI.

SFQ: In Module SF0, the Ruins of Eleonea are mentioned in the "Ruins" section. Are these the same as the Ruins of Volkos in SF1?

SFA: Yes, they are all part of the same ruins. Why they were called two different things remains a mystery.

SFQ: On page 11 of the KNIGHT HAWKS™ Book (the Hull Specification Chart), it lists one engine for hull size 4, but two engines for hull size 3.

SFA: The entry in the "hull size 4" row is a misprint. It should have two engines.

Are the creatures and plants listed in the [GAMMA WORLD® game] booklet edible?

bullet are the same in the TOP SECRET® game rules. Is this possible?

TSA: The two bullets are effectively the same. The firearms terminology is misleading. The term "caliber" refers to the interior diameter of a gun barrel in inches (and to the size of the corresponding ammunition as well). A .30 caliber gun has a barrel whose interior diameter is three tenths of an inch. The size of gun barrels and ammunition can also be specified in millimeters. Comparing 7.62mm to .30 inches shows that they are nearly the same, and that's close enough for game purposes.

TSQ: Can the new Perception and Observation traits in Operation: Fast-pass be used to determine chances of success for seeing through a disguise, lying, smuggling, forging, etc.?

TSA: Yes. The chances of penetrating another's disguise are determined by subtracting the disguised character's Deception value from the Perception value of the observer. The result is the percentage chance that the observer will "see through" the disguise. Even if the Perception value of the observer is less than the agent's Deception value, a roll of 00 will still penetrate the disguise.

If an agent is attempting to conceal a weapon or other item on his person, the smuggler's Deception value is adjusted for the Deception modifier of the item before being compared to the Perception value of the observer. Thus, if an agent with a deception of 45 attempts to conceal a .45 U.S. Government revolver from a guard with a Perception of 69, the percentage chance of discovery is $69 - (45 - 8) = 32\%$.

Observation can be used in place of Deactivation for locating a concealed security system or trap. Subtract the system's Concealment value from the searcher's Observation value, and use the result as the percentage chance of initially locating the mechanism. Deactivation should still be used for manipulating the device once it has been located.

An item concealed in a room, hallway, desk, piece of luggage (as for a customs inspection), etc., should be given a Con-

cealment value of 1-50 as per security systems. To determine a searcher's chance to locate such an item, subtract the item's Concealment value from the searcher's Observation value. The result is the percentage chance of success per turn spent searching. Customs agents and other such officials will usually spend only one turn searching unless previously alerted that a more thorough search must be made.

Lying must be handled in one of two ways. One way is totally through role-playing. This suffices for agents who are attempting to gain information from a contact (played by the Admin.). But the reverse situation can be troublesome since the Admin. knows whether or not the agents are lying to the contact, and may have trouble deciding whether the NPC should believe the false information. The Admin. may opt to use Perception to decide the issue. Provided that the lie is at least plausible, the chances that the contact will perceive the lie are determined by subtracting the lying agent's Deception value from the Perception value of the contact; the result is the percentage chance that the falsehood will *not* be believed.

Forgeries, counterfeits, and falsified documents may be detected by means of the Observation trait as follows: the forger's AOK in the area in question (i.e. Economics/Finance for counterfeiting, Fine Arts for forged paintings, relevant scientific fields for falsified scientific documents, etc.) is subtracted from the examiner's Observation value, giving the percentage chance per turn of examination that the forgery will be discovered. For a forged signature, use the forger's Deception value. For copied art, forged signatures, and other attempts to duplicate a specific item, the examiner's Observation value may be modified by +5% for each time that he has closely examined the real item.

A roll of 00 will always detect any of the above false information, and a roll of 01 always indicates failure, regardless of how high or low the percentage chance of success. 

**TOP
SECRET®**

Espionage Game

TSQ: A .30 caliber bullet and a 7.62

turning.

ADQ: Can neutral clerics turn undead or paladins, and can they control them?

ADA: A lawful neutral cleric affects undead (or paladins) the same as a good cleric does; a chaotic neutral cleric affects them as an evil cleric would. (Note that if a character exhibits a marked tendency toward good or evil, the DM may allow this to overrule the normal result.)

ADQ: Are monks a subclass of clerics? Of thieves? Of both? Of neither?

ADA: The monk is a character class in and of itself, not a subclass.

ADQ: With the dual-classed human option, can a character switch from a class to a subclass (fighter to paladin, for example)?

ADA: No. A character may not switch to a subclass of the original class.

ADQ: If a dual-classed human character who is still operating only in the second class (i.e. not yet able to use the benefits of both classes) is hit by a vampire, from which class are the levels drained? If they are lost from the second class, are hit points lost as well (assuming the character has not yet gained any additional hit points from the second class)?

ADA: The levels come off the second class, since that is the one in which experience is currently being gained. If no new hit points were gained with those levels, none are lost in the level drain.

BOULDER

Wild West Game

BHQ: How could a derringer do as much damage as a repeating rifle?

BHA: As far as game mechanics are concerned, the extent of damage from a gun depends upon the size of the bullet. Although a derringer is a small gun, it can fire ammunition around the same size as that of the average repeating rifle, so the damage ratings are the same. The main difference between the weapons is the range, which is a function of barrel length. (The farther a bullet has to travel before emerging from the barrel, the longer the range it has.)

BHQ: If you draw two guns, there is a penalty of -3 to first shot determination. If you draw an FDR and an SAR, which speed do you use in comparing it to an opponent's speed? Which gun do you take the -3 off?

BHA: You take the -3 off both guns. Under normal circumstances, you compute the first shot determination using the fastest weapon.

BHQ: Under the weapons chart, when it says reload rate, does a reload rate of 3 mean that it takes 3 turns to reload?

When reloading, do you just stand out there being shot at while reloading your gun?

BHA: No. The reload rate number tells you how many rounds you can reload per turn. You can replace up to 3 rounds in one turn for a weapon with a reload rate of 3. (Reloading involves taking the spent casings out of the cylinder and putting in fresh cartridges.) While reloading you may walk, kneel, or drop prone, but you cannot run, evade, ride a horse, etc. It is recommended that you find cover while reloading.

BHQ: In the O.K. Corral example, I cannot understand why Morgan Earp has a 92% chance to hit. The way I figure it, the Base Accuracy is 82%, with a +10 modifier for short range and a -10 modifier for hipshooting, giving an overall 82% chance to hit. Could you please explain how you get 92% Base Accuracy on the first shot?

BHA: 82% is correct. The book is in error. Apparently the hipshooting modifier was added to the example as an afterthought and the totals were never changed to take it into account. The ratings should be 82/72/62 for Morgan's three successive shots.



Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: The turbine car is listed on the transport tables in the Revised GAMMA WORLD game but is not detailed in the Transport section in the details of vehicles. What happened?

GWA: The car is detailed in the old set but was missed in the new one. For those of you who do not have a set of the old rules, here's the car:

Turbine Car

These holdovers from the 23rd century were still in limited use. They are all wheeled, and powered by an efficient turbine which burns fossil fuels. A solar cell on the roof powers the lights, radar, and climate control systems.

GWQ: Are the 5 points of damage the portent can absorb cumulative over any melee rounds or is 5 a total from melee round to melee round?

GWA: It's 5 points of damage from each melee round.

GWQ: I have some plant player char-

acters in my campaign from the old GAMMA WORLD game rules. The new rules do not allow for this. Should I make them start over?

GWA: The GAMMA WORLD game is a very open system. Don't take everything from the new version and change what you are used to. Just fill in the gaps with what works best.

GWQ: How do the feathers of the terls warn it of radiation?

GWA: They change color to a deep red. The deeper the red the higher the radiation. These feathers will do this once after being detached from the mutant.

GWQ: My player characters want to use the disposable jet spray drugs as weapons. What should the Weapon Class of that spray be?

GWA: Make it Weapon Class 3 but keep track of things like wind or artificial protections on the body this spray strikes.

GWQ: Is it possible to use the Anti-grav Sled as a vehicle?

GWA: This sled was first designed to lift heavy weights and make them easy to carry. If an intelligent being wants to use it much like a modified skateboard it is perfectly acceptable. Double their normal walking and running rates.

GWQ: I like the GAMMA WORLD game a lot and can forgive some of its more amazing concepts, but how in the world can the poison of a fish change a something to stone?

GWA: Treat the chemical given off by the ert as a catalyst that takes minerals from the air and nearby environment and forces them into the body of the bitten creature. The effect appears to cause the creature to turn to stone. If this isn't believable enough treat the bite as magic and enjoy the effect on your player characters without understanding it.

STAR FRONTIERS

Science Fiction Game

SFQ: What is the limit to the number of skills a character can know?

SFA: The only limit to the number of skills a character can acquire is how many the character can "afford." Experience points accumulated during adventures can be spent to gain skills as described on page 11 of the Expanded Game Rulebook. The character may spend any or all of the accumulated points at a time. There is no upper limit.

SFQ: Can Dralasites use two weapons without getting a penalty? On page 4 it says they can, but on pages 6 and 23 it says they can't.

SFA: No. Dralasites take a penalty for using two weapons at once just as humans and Yazirians do. Although a Dralasite may have several "arms," the player must declare one of them to be "dominant." Thereafter, the Dralasite takes the normal "handedness" penalty when firing weapons with any other "arm."

If the Dralasite chooses to draw the dominant "arm" back into itself, another limb may be specified as the dominant "arm," but the designation cannot be changed instantaneously.

SFQ: How much damage will character weapons do to a starship (including weapons such as rockets)?

SFA: Structural damage for character weapons is given on page 24 of the Expanded Rulebook. Most of these will have little effect on a starship. Projectiles and most beams will simply bounce off the hull. However, rocket launchers will do 45 points of structural damage, and a 50 gram set charge of Tornadium D-19 (a plastic explosive described on page 48) will do 5d10 structural points. Each additional 50 grams in the same bomb will do 25 more points of damage. A thrown charge will do only half the normal damage. When explosives (bombs or rockets) are used against a starship, consider it to have 200+2d100 structural points.

SFQ: I figured out from the introduction to the **KNIGHT HAWKS Campaign Book** and the game star map scale that Jump Speed is equal to 200 hexes per turn on the star map. To accelerate to this speed would require 200 ADF points. So a ship with an ADF of 3, for instance, requires 66.6 turns (or about 11 hours) to accelerate to Jump Speed with maximum acceleration.

Normally, a journey takes 1 day/light year (if the astrogator does the calculations in flight, with the ship accelerating slowly). As far as I can tell, the trip could be made in 22 hours, slightly more (?) than 1 standard day. Is it possible for the astrogator to make his calculations while the crew is still on planet to eliminate the need for long stays aboard the ship, or are there other reasons that delay these interstellar voyages?

SFA: No, the astrogator cannot make the calculations while on planet. They must be made during flight to compensate for the constantly shifting variables (due to slight variations of mass and acceleration) which inevitably occur during a run. These cannot be predicted before the flight, but must be taken into account while it is in progress. This involves the

astrogator making constant readings and adjustments of the instruments to stay on course. There are rules for what will happen if the process is speeded up (risk jumping), but it isn't wise to risk jump except in emergencies.

SFQ: In regard to torpedoes, assault rockets, ICMs and rocket batteries, is it possible for a single launcher to fire more than once?

SFA: Yes, but each may fire only once per turn.

SFQ: Can a ship with ion drive lift off from a planet's surface?

SFA: No. Ion-driven ships may not land on a planet.

SFQ: Can ships with ion drives make jumps through the void?

SFA: Yes. All ion-driven ships have interstellar jump capability.

SFQ: How much fuel is needed to accelerate and decelerate an ion driven ship to jump speed?

SFA: It takes 180 ADF points (per engine) to reach jump speed. Each engine burns 1 unit of fuel per ADF point expended. So it takes 180 units to accelerate to jump speed and another 180 to decelerate afterwards, for a total of 360 units per engine per jump. Hydrogen fuel (the most efficient) can be purchased at all SCCs for 10 credits per unit. So a ship with 2 ion engines would require 7200 credits worth of fuel for one jump.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

TSQ: On the Weapons Chart (page 22), the bow and crossbow have a HWV of -15. How can a weapon have negative damage?

TSA: The negative values here do not represent negative damage. They indicate that unlike most hand-held objects which can give you a slight advantage in hand-to-hand combat, these particular items will actually hinder your HTH combat efforts as they can be used against you. Missile firing devices are quite bulky and cumbersome, and when engaging in hand-to-hand combat (or possession combat), they actually give the person holding them a disadvantage relative to a person who is holding nothing at all.

When fighting with a bow or crossbow in HTH combat, use the Swordplay Table to resolve the combat if the weapon is being swung by one end. If it is being used to strangle or club the opponent, resolve the conflict on the Untrained Table. Note that if a successful hit is scored with these weapons, there is a +1

injury modifier because the HWV to the items is less than 25.

TSQ: On page 28, it lists three situations which can be used as defenses in various circumstances. Situation One (S1) and Situation Two (S2) are listed on the Untrained Combat Table, but Situation Three (S3) is not listed here. Where is it?

TSA: You are a very observant agent. It is on page 30 of the old first edition rulebook. When the book was revised for the second edition Situation Three was taken out, but unfortunately the reference to it was not. Ignore all reference to Situation Three.

TSQ: What are air guns used for? What are their statistics (PWV, Range Modifier, etc.)?

TSA: Air guns (like dart guns) are intended to be used as non-lethal projectile weapons. All damage should be calculated as if they were regular weapons, and then halved to reflect the non-lethal nature of the attack. It is possible for a victim to receive a half-point of damage; persons with 1 point of life level may be unconscious, persons with 1/2 point are always unconscious, and persons with a life level of zero or less are mortally wounded and usually die within 5 minutes if left unaided.

Weapon statistics for an airgun are the same as those given for a dart gun in the Weapons Chart, except that ammunition varies from 1-100 (pellets only).

TSQ: How much does ammo for a speargun cost?

TSA: Pressurized CO2 capsules for firing cost \$1.00 each. Spears for the gun cost \$1.00 each.

TSQ: Is the Sneak Attack damage added to the regular damage?

TSA: No. The damage listings for Sneak Attack represent total damage for the attack. Granted the damage is somewhat less than normal, but there is a chance that the victim will be killed instantly (regardless of life level). Even if death does not occur instantly, a sneak attack gives the attacking character one "free shot" that would not have otherwise been available. This more than compensates for the low damage.

TSQ: What other items would you use for picking locks besides electrical and normal lockpicking sets?

TSA: Whether or not a specific item can be used to pick locks is up to the discretion of the individual Admin. Any implement (such as a hairpin) that the Admin feels is reasonable for the situation is acceptable. This is what the Deactivation score is for. ☹

LAYOVER AT LOSSEND

by Russ Horn

Polyhedron Magazine, #18, pg. 25

The Setting

You are a member of a Pan Galactic Corporation (PGC) Scout and Exploration Team returning to Port Loren from a mining expedition on Gollywog in the White Light system. During the return trip, you are forced to take a five-day layover at Lossend in the Timeon system and wait for another ship. Several members of the Scout and Exploration Team decide to look for temporary employment from local residents.



Characters

Dirk Manhak:

Human member of the PGC Scout and Exploration Team.

Strength/Stamina:

45/55

Dexterity/Reaction Speed:

60/60

Intuition/Logic:	65/75
Personality/Leadership:	55/45
Skills:	Level 2 Environmental Level 1 Technician Level 1 Robotics
Equipment:	Standard Survival Kit*

Sarvo "Lightfoot" Grun:	Yazirian member of the PGC Scout and Exploration Team.
--------------------------------	--

Strength/Stamina:	60/50
Dexterity/Reaction Speed:	70/70
Intuition/Logic:	60/50
Personality/Leadership:	45/45
Skills:	Level 2 Robotics Level 1 Computer Level 1 Beam Weapons
Special Abilities:	Battle Rage (5%) Gliding Night Vision
Equipment:	Standard Survival Kit*

Average Wypong:	RW:55 M:45 PS:3 IM:7 RS:65
Stamina:	65
Equipment:	Bow and eight arrows

Description: Wypongs are a race of semi-intelligent apemen. They inhabit remote forested regions far away from civilization. Their society is based upon small clans which rarely grow larger than twenty members. They are physically strong, and their hands and feet are well adapted to climbing trees. They are omnivorous in nature, and they use primitive weapons such as clubs and stones along with the bow and arrow. They speak their own rudimentary language.

When humans and other colonizers first started to fly over their remote territories, the Wypongs became frightened and superstitious. Over time they have come to look upon aircraft as gods.

Dirk and Sarvo, who are good friends, are among those seeking employment on Lossend. A large company has hired them to find the source of some mysterious radio emissions coming from some hills to the northwest. They are loaned a jetcopter and some additional equipment for the job.

Heading in the direction of their destination, they fly over a section of unexplored coniferous forest; the jetcopter's engine suddenly quits. Both members are able to ditch safely, using parawings, and eventually land some distance from where the jetcopter went down. Realizing that much of their equipment still remains on board the jetcopter, they start their hike back through the forest to where the wreck should be.

As they come within sight of the wreck, they see what appears to be three bipedal apelike creatures which are armed with bows and arrows and which are chanting around the downed jetcopter.

Referee's section

As soon as the Wypongs notice Dirk or Sarvo, they will stop their activities and wait for them to approach. One of the Wypongs will then come forward and kneel before the travelers in an act of submission and devotion. Because of their religious beliefs, they will see Dirk and Sarvo akin to gods. If Dirk or Sarvo establish communications through the use of the polyvox or by some other means, they will find that the Wypongs will help them in any way they can so long as they do not have to leave their territory. If either Dirk or Sarvo attack, the Wypongs will defend themselves with bow and arrow. Within five minutes of Dirk and Sarvo's arrival at the crash site, 1d10 additional Wypongs will arrive at the scene, armed in the same fashion as the others.

As a source of expanding this scenario, players may either play one of the provided characters, use them as NPCs, or eliminate them entirely, substituting already-existing player characters. If you use more than two player characters, increase the number of Wypongs encountered proportionately.

The [DM](#) may also wish to have the characters or party complete the adventure to the source of the unknown radio emissions, or may decide to develop adventures around the Wypongs.

Converted to .html by Timothy Norris

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I believe that these * were suppose to list the contents of the Std Survival Kit

Convertors note: I believe this was a typo and should read referee.

proper to ask for special consideration. Just take what is given to you with good grace, and don't complain if it isn't all you want.

GWQ: My character has Nyctophobia, and the GM says that the character will be frozen with fear even in the shadows of a forest. Doesn't this make the character pretty unplayable?

GWA: That interpretation of the rules is stronger than it should be. The defects are designed to help the characters as well as make them think of ways to get around the defects. Remember that the monsters you face with this or similar defects will be easier to conquer. Keep trying to think of ways to overcome the handicap. If it becomes too difficult, then start a new character.

GWQ: I have a player in my game who wants to use a dinosaur for the basic animal stock. What do you think?

GWA: With all the mutations running around the GAMMA WORLD game, it would be possible for big reptiles to return. Let them start out as anything they want unless you feel that it will radically alter the balance of your game. Feel free to give them some of the defects that the dinosaurs could have had, like being slowed down by cold climates, or having a nervous system that wouldn't let them know they had been bitten until ten minutes after the act.

GWQ: My character became a member of the Archivists Alliance, and now my GM won't let him use laser guns because she says they are considered special by the group and must be stored away. Is that the way it should work?

GWA: That is a perfect example of the kinds of things the Archivists would do. You have to accept this and roll with the punches.

STAR FRONTIERS™

Science-Fiction Game

SFQ: How many credits does a telescopic sight cost?

SFA: A good telescopic sight costs 50% of the cost of the weapon for which it is intended. For example, a laser rifle costs 800 credits, so a scope for it costs 400 credits. But a scope for an automatic rifle (300 credits) costs only 150 credits.

SFQ: Which weapons can telescopic sights be put on?

SFA: Telescopic sights are usually used on rifle-type weapons, since they are designed to help improve aim on long-range shots. Scopes can be used on pistols, but this is not common due to the

weapon's shorter range.

It is possible to mount a scope on any beam weapon except an electrostunner, any projectile weapon except a machine gun or recoilless rifle, and any gyrojet weapon except a grenade mortar or a rocket launcher. (Shoulder-firing weapons like the latter two come with sights already affixed. The adjustments for the sight are already figured into the weapon statistics. The additional benefit of dropping one range category only applies to detachable sights.) Sights cannot be used on grenades or archaic weapons.

SFQ: Sathar are reported to be unaffected by electrical shocks and doze grenades. Are they also unaffected by sonic stunners?

SFA: No, according to the latest reports, sonic stunners and other sonic attack forms have normal effects upon Sathar.

SFQ: Several illustrations depict Dralasites using their racial ability of elasticity to flatten down, peer over objects or around corners, or even form a semblance of facial features. The Expanded Rules (page 6) give some idea as to the number of limbs and fingers that a Dralasite can form, but do not help in determining what other elastic functions the Dralasite can perform. Is there a guideline, or should the moderator make spontaneous decisions?

SFA: There is no definitive set of rules on what a Dralasite can or cannot do with elasticity — it would be impossible to cover all the bases. But some guidelines do exist. The minimum diameter for the Dralasite's body is that of a limb — 10 cm. Conceivably, the Dralasite could thin its entire body to a cylinder of that thickness, but no thinner or the internal organs would be crushed. So it could not flatten enough to slide under doors, for example.

A Dralasite's skin is not self-adhering. That is, it cannot bend a finger around to the wrist and attach it like a piece of chewing gum to a desk. So, although it can wrap itself around to completely enclose an air pocket (for floating), the air is held in by muscular contraction — not absorbed into the creature's body. The Dralasite could conceal small objects this way too, by wrapping around them and holding them inside.

Assume that any function a Human or Yazirian could perform (such as leaning around a corner or peering over a barricade) can be performed by the Dralasite with a small stretch. Greater feats of elasticity can be performed within the stated limits, but they take time. The referee can determine how much given

time a given feat should take using the growing or withdrawal of a limb as a guideline.

SFQ: The *Sundown on Starmist* module makes several references to the "heavy weapons" skills of PCs in the game, while the *Advanced Rulebook* (page 11) indicates that these heavy weapons skills are germane to the regular weapons skills of the same name.

SFA: Heavy Weapons is not a separate skill. Chance of success is determined according to the category of the weapon in the usual manner, but a heavy weapons modifier is applied as well. See page 22 of the Expanded Rules for details.

SFQ: When a Yazirian enters battle rage and gains the "+20 to hit in melee," does this indicate that he hits better with beam weapons, gyrojet weapons, projectile weapons, thrown weapons, or just with melee weapons, martial arts, and bare hands?

SFA: The battle rage modifier applies only to *melee*, as stated. Use it when attacking hand-to-hand with melee weapons, bare hands, or martial arts, but not with ranged weapons.

SFQ: What is a robot's "to hit" in melee and with a ranged weapon?

SFA: A robot's basic chance to hit (for both ranged combat and *melee*) is 30% plus (ten times the robot's level). The Initiative Modifier for a robot is its level plus 3. All other combat modifiers apply just as they would for player characters.

SFQ: On page 59 of the Expanded Rules, you have included a table covering the average abilities of all the five races for help in creating NPCs. What does the "PS" stand for before the Initiative Modifier?

SFA: "PS" stands for "Punching Score."

SFQ: Since Vrusk have more than two legs, if they fall and sprain or break a leg, their other legs could make up for the loss, couldn't they?

SFA: To a certain extent. A Vrusk with a broken leg can move at 1/2 the normal rate rather than not at all. When the leg is splinted, the Vrusk can move at 3/4 of the normal rate.

SFQ: If a Dralasite should fall, could they flatten themselves or make themselves round enough to absorb any damage?

SFA: No. Dralasites cannot use their elasticity to avoid falling damage or to withdraw limbs so that they will not be sprained or broken in a fall. It takes ten minutes to withdraw a single limb. The falling Dralasite would hit the ground long before any limbs could be withdrawn

for protection, and its body would take the damage in any case. If limbs are injured in a fall, the Dralasite can subsequently spend time withdrawing and regrowing the injured limbs, which will remove the penalties but not heal any of the damage.

SFQ: How can I get money for my characters so that they can buy guns and ammo?

SFA: Most characters earn their money by hiring themselves out as mercenaries for special missions. They are professional adventurers who are paid for succeeding in their assignments (i.e. adventures). The employer pays them for an hourly or a daily rate for their services. The rate of pay for each mission is up to the referee because it depends on the character's skill and the nature of the mission.

SFQ: May any character drive a vehicle?

SFA: No. According to the rules, only a technician with the "Operating Machinery" skill may drive a vehicle. Remember that in a futuristic society transportation will probably be so sophisticated that people who can drive will be the exception instead of the rule. On a civilized planet there is no need to drive — you simply climb on a public transportation system and go where you please. Therefore, only technicians who work with those machines need to know how to drive vehicles. So if you plan to adventure on a planet without much technology, be sure to take along a driver!

Referees who feel this rule is too restrictive are free to modify it for their individual campaigns. For example, you might make a "house rule" that anyone can drive a ground car, but a technician is needed for any other vehicle.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

TSQ: What is a wired probe mike?

TSA: A wired probe mike is a microphone set into the end of a long, cylindrical metal probe. The shape of the probe allows the microphone to be inserted through cracks in interior walls or other small spaces to monitor conversations within.

TSQ: What is the chance that an agent can physically get past barbed wire? What kind of damage does barbed wire do to an agent who is caught in it?

TSA: Agents attempting to get through an area obstructed by barbed wire must roll against Coordination to avoid entanglement. The Admin is free to modify or ignore this roll as desired, depending

upon the circumstances involved. (For example, if an agent is traveling in the dark and fails to check for anything unusual at the top of a wall before going over, the Admin may choose not to allow a Coordination roll, and rule instead that the agent has simply blundered into the wire.)

Agents who fail the Coordination roll are caught on the barbs (by skin, equipment, or clothing) and take 1 point of damage per 10' section of wire or part thereof involved. For example, an agent caught by a single strand of wire stretched along the top of a wall takes 1 point of damage. An agent trying to crawl between 2 strands of barbed wire (such as a fence in a cow pasture) is caught by 2 different pieces of wire and takes 2 points. An agent trapped in a coiled mass of barbed wire is considered to be caught by at least 3 individual strands, and so will take at least three points of damage.

No further movement is possible until the agent is free of the wire. Each successive turn the agent may try to work free by making a new Coordination roll, but the damage equal to the initial amount is inflicted for each turn that the agent tries to work loose (successful or not). The agent may at any time choose to tear free instead of working the caught clothing, or whatever, loose, but this will do damage equal to double the initial amount in addition to tearing clothing and/or damaging equipment (Admin's direction).

TSQ: What is the damage for electrified barbed wire?

TSA: Electrified barbed wire will do double the normal amount of damage on the first turn, and normal damage thereafter.

TSQ: What are the rules for climbing?

TSA: Roll against Coordination for every 10' climbed vertically. If successful, the agent has climbed the 10' without incident. If unsuccessful at any time, the agent falls from the height reached up to this point. (This presupposes that the agent is either climbing a surface that a normal person could climb, such as a fence or rough stone wall, or is using proper equipment to scale a more difficult surface. No agent will be able to climb a sheer glass wall unaided.)

TSQ: How much do tear gas and mace grenades cost?

TSA: Both tear gas and mace grenades cost \$12.00 apiece.

TSQ: Are there carry-along magazines for regular rifles? If so, how much do they cost?

TSA: Yes. Magazines for regular rifles cost the same as those for assault rifles. ③

We know you're out there. You've sent us letters full of in-depth game questions, complaints about defective TSR merchandise, and requests for information of all types. You want your answers quickly (or at least before the third World War). We would love to respond — but there's one problem. We don't know where you are. Some of you haven't given us your correct address; others didn't give us any address at all. The office crystal ball blew up last week, so we can't find you by scrying — and we've used up our *Commune* spell for the month. If you see your name listed below, please write to Penny Petticord, c/o TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, 53147 and let us know where your hideout is.

Mr. Ivar Bundulis
Somewhere in Wales

Tim Scheetz
Sanford, Florida

Joe Tromblay
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Feel free to write in with your questions. We try to answer all of them, but when time pressures are heavy those with SASEs included come first. Make sure your correct return address is there — or your letter will find its way to "The Limbo File."

The Laser Pod

A new Knight Hawks weapons system

[Image from The Laser Pod](#)

written by Jon Pickens.

Article from *Polyhedron* Newszine #19

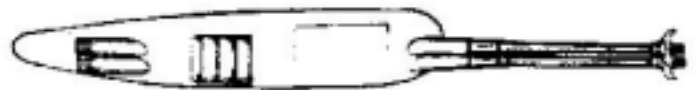
One item lacking from the Knight Hawks Ship-to-Ship Combat Rules is a beam weapon small enough for use on a fighter. Such a weapon would allow much more flexibility in the use of the smaller craft. Since fighters are cheaper and much more easy to come by in play than larger ships, the introduction of a cheap laser weapon for small ships allows the players to fight mini-fleet actions with smaller ships without having to worry about where all the large ships are coming from. (After all, the whole First Sathar War involved fleets of less than half a dozen ships per side!)

The general statistics of the laser pod are:

Description:

Cluster of 2-4 lasers of limited range and power. Usually employed as a fixed forward-firing weapon mounted on a fighter to replace the assault rocket battery.

MHS:	1
Availability:	1 (I, II)
Cost:	8000 credits
Program Level:	1
Function Points:	3
Type:	FF, RD
Reflective Hull:	50%
Masking Screen:	10% *
Range:	5
Damage:	d10



Tactically, laser-armed fighters give up the punch of assault rockets for the long-lasting

firepower needed for extended actions. Defensively, laser-armed fighters are best used to screen against enemy fighters carrying assault rockets; hopefully the enemy will expend his Sunday punch against the less valuable defensive fighters, and every assault rocket fighter destroyed could well save a major ship. In attack, laser-armed fighters should be committed against major enemy ships that have been crippled in previous actions, or used to harass and harry enemy fighters. They are less useful against more powerful enemy ships -- attacks can be pressed home successfully, but expect heavy losses when doing so.

Small, cheap fighters that do not need to rearm after every third shot are ideal for close-in system or station defense, almost enough to make the high losses they sustain in combat worthwhile. They make excellent short distance raiders and blockade patrols if properly supported by a mother ship. They would probably be encountered most often as patrol ships in systems too poor to support a permanent local squadron.

If you are a referee in an action involving fighters, try to discourage player characters from flying fighters. Fighter combat is extremely lethal, and combat with laser-armed fighters is doubly so. Remember that in many fighters the entire pilot compartment doubles as an escape pod. Player characters should be given a generous chance to escape if their luck goes bad. (I favor 90%, -1% per hull point under 0 hull points for player character survival. If players are to be penalized it should be because of sloppy play rather than bad luck.)

Finally, some thought should be given to the introduction of the laser pod into the campaign. Such marvels do not appear overnight, nor should something of this nature simply pop into play without some effort on the part of the referee. The game becomes much more interesting if the players are actually involved in the introduction of the laser pod into the STAR FRONTIERS(tm) game universe.

Some possible scenarios:

1. INDUSTRIAL ESPIONAGE. Pan Galactic has just perfected the first working module of the laser pod and has installed it in an experimental ship (large enough to accommodate the party). The ship is stolen by a rival firm (like Streel Corporation), and the characters are hired to get it back.

2. TEST RUN. The player characters are chosen to test the new pod. The belt pirates find out and arrange a hijacking. This could end in a traditional marooning if the characters blow it.

3. ALIEN ARTIFACT. The characters explore an alien hulk and find the technology to construct the laser pod (this works well if you have a high tech expert in the group). The characters develop the first working model themselves.

4. ALIEN CONTACT. The characters will contact an alien race that has the ability to construct the first pod. This is best staged under time pressure of an imminent enemy attack. An upcoming Knight Hawks module will feature a suitable race.

5. WAR SPOILS. The Sathar have perfected the pod first. After several encounters with the new Sathar fighters, the player characters are given the mission to capture one of these new machines -- if successful, the UPF can also develop the pod laser.

Remember that how you add new material to your campaign can be as much fun as what you put into it.

POLYHEDRON #19

RPGA Network Item Design contest results

by Frank Mentzer

[...] The First Runner-Up, receiving a 10-year membership extension, is Pierre Savoie of Kingston, Ontario. His item is "The Taser Rifle" for the STAR FRONTIERS game.

[...]

First Runner-Up: The Taser Rifle (for the STAR FRONTIERS game)

Rating: Usefulness #2; Originality #2; Rules Adherence #2.

SKILL BONUS USED: Projectile

DAMAGE: Stun (needle damage is negligible)

AVOIDANCE ROLL: Current STA or less (no effect)

AMMO: 20 SEU clip (or powerpack connection)

SEU USE: 2 per hit

RATE: 1 shot per turn

DEFENSE: Anti-Shock implant (suits and screens are ineffective)

RANGES: PB (0-2); Short (3-5); Medium (6-10); Long (11-20); no Extreme (20 m natural limit)

MASS: 5 kg

COST: 900 Cr (new disk-and-wire assemblies 50 Cr each)

This rifle has four disks mounted near the front, each connected to a 20 m coil of insulated wire. Each disk is 10 cm in diameter, with a short barbed needle in the center, a steel plate around it (3 cm diameter) and velcro (fasteners) on the remainder of the surface.

The user may fire one disk per turn. On a successful hit, the disk attaches to the target and a surge of electricity is delivered through the wire. The victim is stunned for the first turn (during the power surge) and remains helpless for d100 turns. A successful Stamina check means that the victim has resisted the stun.

After the initial turn of the power surge, the disk can be removed and reeled back to the rifle in one turn. As there are four disks, immediate recovery may not be needed. In addition, each reel may be set to recover automatically while the user continues to use others. Note that the wire may snag on obstructions in some terrain or may not easily be removed from certain creatures. The wire has high tensile strength but is easily cut

[using a set of built-in gun mechanisms], enabling the user to flee if necessary without losing the gun itself.

----- (c) 1984 POLYHEDRON Newszine and the RPGA Network -----

DPQ: If an aircraft armed only with a wing-mounted gun takes a forward fuselage critical hit which knocks out a deck gun, is the result a "no effect," or must another critical hit result be rolled for?

DPA: The result is "no effect," and no additional roll is needed.

GAMMA WORLD

Science Fantasy Game

GWQ: There are lots of differences in the revised version of the GAMMA WORLD® game rules. Is it necessary to use the second version or can the game master mix and match?

GWA: The rules should serve as guidelines and that is all. For instance, I like the old method for figuring out Ancient items, so that is what I use. I suggest that you pick up whatever pleases you the most.

GWQ: Several of the players in my game constantly role up characters and throw them away after getting a defect on the chart. I want them to at least try and play the characters. Can you tell me exactly what constitutes a hopeless character?

GWA: The problem of hopeless characters is common. Never force your players to role play a character that they do not like, but there are alternatives. Let them discard the characters they dislike — use them as NPCs yourself. When one or two of these NPCs do well it will encourage the regular players to give them a try before throwing them away. Also offer the chance to let players take two characters out on an adventure. One of these characters could be that supposedly hopeless character. Try to talk your players into trying them at least once. They might find they like the challenge of working around the defect.

GWQ: Concerning the mutation *Shorter*, how tall is the mutant to start?

GWA: When using any normal animal stock, take the average height of the beast to begin the process. With humanoids, begin at one meter and work down.

GWQ: My players want to constantly invent new weapons and have their characters take them into battle. Is there some sort of game balancing method that I can use to curtail the creation of hundreds of different weapons in my campaign?

GWA: Begin by determining if the characters are spending a great deal of time researching and experimenting with weapons or if they are adventuring. If they are adventuring then their chance of developing a new weapon is slim to none. Then determine how difficult it would be to make the weapons they want using their technological level. It could be possible to develop throwing stars that are just like little daggers if swords and armor are common in the area. It would not be possible in that same area to boost the power of a laser rifle. Developing a crossbow in a land that has never seen arrows is out of the question unless some old book from the Ancients is found or a crossbow is brought into the game environment. Unusual weapons can be fun in the game but they should be countered by unusual obstacles.

Pen & Paper

1920s Adventure Game

GBQ: Is there any way to adjust a character's hit point score after the character is rolled up?

GBA: No, hit point scores are always determined

with the following formula: $(Mu \cdot Ag) / 10 \cdot 5$ (round all fractions up). Mu = Muscle score and Ag = Agility score. Of course, you must recalculate the hit point score each time the character's Muscle or Agility score changes (i.e. when those scores are improved by spending experience points.)

GBQ: What is Robert Jackson's legal skill score in module GB4?

GBA: Robert Jackson is the lawyer for the bad guys. His legal skill score is 85, so use that as his percentage chance of getting his client acquitted.

STAR FRONTIERS

Science-Fiction Game

SFQ: Can robots have skills?

SFA: Robots have programs — characters have skills. But there is no reason that a technician with the proper skills could not develop a program to duplicate the effects of a character skill if desired. Program level, price, and time required for development are subject to referee's discretion since they depend on the skill to be duplicated and the facilities available.

SFQ: Can a character be trained in skills by another person without using experience points?

SFA: No. Experience points are used up in training regardless of its source. Terms and cash price are sometimes negotiable since the referee may allow characters to barter goods or services for the training instead of cash, but the spending of experience points is not.

SFQ: On page 41, there is a program called Security Lock on the Robotic Design Cost Table. There is no such program described on page 47. Please explain.

SFA: The program wasn't defined in the text. For all practical purposes it functions precisely as the Computer Security program on page 46, except that it is specifically for robots. The intention is to prevent unauthorized persons from tampering with the robot's programming or circuitry, so a technician must defeat the Security lock program before a robot's mission or function can be altered.

SFQ: Can a damaged robot be repaired to bring its STA back to maximum? If so, how?

SFA: Yes. A successful repair job brings a robot back to normal functioning capacity in all respects, including full STA. Robots do not have to "heal" like characters do — they either work or they don't. A robot which has taken damage equal to or greater than its STA rating simply stops functioning until repaired, at which point it functions normally in all respects unless of course the referee rules otherwise for a specific case.

Now if a robot is repaired under less than perfect circumstances (such as "in the field" instead of a regular repair shop), there is a chance it will break down again of its own accord with further use regardless of whether it takes any more damage. There is a 10% chance of breakdown per 20 hour period (cumulative) for field repairs made with a personal tool kit. A major, minor, or total repair (GM's option) may be required. Times required for repairs are listed on page 11 of the Expanded Rules.

SFQ: Can a parabattery or power generator recharge a power pack?

SFA: No. Powerpacks must be recharged at a weapons shop, hardware store, or fuel station — not in the field.

SFQ: Can infrared goggles see infrared beams or heat-sensitive security devices?

SFA: Infrared goggles are keyed for the infrared

portion of the electromagnetic spectrum, so they can detect infrared beams. But heat-sensitive devices are made to detect heat, not radiate it — so infrared goggles will not pick those up.

SFQ: Can level 1 maintenance robots carry backpacks and equipment overland? If so, about how many kg?

SFA: A level 1 maintenance robot salvaged from a ship or installation could probably follow a group or individual carrying some equipment, but it would have to be reprogrammed for those by a technician with the proper skills first. A standard body robot can carry 150 kg at normal movement rate, or double that at half normal movement.

SFQ: If a level 1 maintenance robot is attacked and doesn't have restrain, self-defense, or attack/defense programs, can it still use a melee weapon to defend itself?

SFA: No. Without those programs, the robot is incapable of defending itself at all. It would be like taking a hammer to your toaster — the machine would allow you to destroy it without making any effort to fight back.

SFQ: How far can the maintenance robot travel on 10 SEUs on rocky or average ground?

SFA: It could cover approximately 10 km.

SFQ: Do VitaSalt pills work exactly the same as salt pills?

SFA: No. Salt pills contain only salt for maintaining a character's electrolyte balance, thus reducing the need for water. VitaSalt pills contain necessary vitamins and minerals in addition to salt, so they help supplement nutrition.

SFQ: Is there any limit to the number of new languages a polyvox can learn?

SFA: There is no limit, but a new tape must be used for every language to learn.

TOP SECRET

Espionage Game

TSQ: Can characters "hot wire" cars, planes, helicopters, submarines, and other vehicles? What is the chance of success?

TSA: Characters with an AOK score of 75 or more in either electrical engineering or the appropriate engineering specialty (i.e. aeronautical engineering for planes and helicopter or transportation engineering for ground or water vehicles) may attempt to start a vehicle by "hot wiring." The chance of success is equal to the character's AOK score in the appropriate engineering field. Only one attempt may be made per minute.

TSQ: What is the minimum AOK needed to operate a vehicle?

TSA: Common vehicles such as cars, bicycles, etc., may be operated normally by a character. (Note that pivots, skids, high-speed driving and special maneuvers are not considered normal operation. See upcoming publications for more details.) For operating more unusual or complex vehicles such as planes, submarines, helicopters, snowmobiles, etc., use the character's AOK in the appropriate engineering field (as above) as the chance of success. The Admin may apply bonuses or penalties if desired. Failure means that the vehicle will crash.

TSQ: What is the chance that an agent could catch an object thrown at him by an opponent (such as a hunting knife)?

TSA: If the agent knows the object is coming, roll against coordination to catch it. No attempt may be made if the agent is unaware of the opportunity. Note that a character trying to catch a thrown weapon may not use the "running and dodging" bonus.



The Proton Beam

A new Star Frontiers® game technological item

by Kim Eastland

Polyhedron Magazine, #20, pg. 8



New developments in the field of proton emission devices by WarTech, Inc. (see the ARES section in issue #90 of DRAGON® Magazine) have opened up a whole new area of weapons and defenses. These weapons, armor, new power sources, and their costs are the subject of this article.

If your campaign's player characters are all Star Law agents, then a good way to introduce these new devices is to provide them on a lend/lease program for testing purposes between WarTech and Star Law. Other ideas for introducing the devices include: captured Sathar information reveals the existence of new technology; pirates are encountered who are equipped with proton weapons; a newly discovered ancient ruins has data which lead to these new items.

New Ammunition

SEU-micro-disc. This variable SEU disc is a smaller version of the standard powerclip. It is roughly the size of a nickel and is usually used in micro-circuited items. The normal SEU use differs with each item.

Mini-powerclip. A smaller version of the powerclip, this 10 SEU unit is about the size of a pack of gum. It is not normally used in items which take standard 20 SEU powerclips. The most common usage for the mini-powerclip is in rafflur weapons.

Weapons

Proton weapons. Proton weapons are usually referred to as "rafflurs" because of their development designation, Rapid Fluctuating Ray. All proton beams are opaque green and appear to send powerful energy waves streaking back and forth to the target. Rafflurs are unusual in that

most use only mini-powerclips and cannot be attached to powerpacks (they have a nasty habit of "backcharging" into any power source heavier than a mini-clip, thus blowing them up). Proton beams are attracted to and attack the molecular cohesion of atoms, which sometimes results in a "bending beam", as with the M-4.

Rafflur M-1. This personal defense device is the size of a cigar and contains a SEU micro-disc. Its damage is 4d10+5, and it only fires once. Its range is extremely limited. After it is fired, the micro-disc is disposed of and a fresh one inserted.

Rafflur M-2. The proton pistol is a handgun roughly the size of a laser pistol. Its damage is 2d10 per SEU, and it has a dial that can fire from 1 to 5 SEUs per shot.

Rafflur M-3. This extremely limited production model's damage and SEU usage are identical to the M-2 pistol, but it has esign modifications, such as a folding stock and energy modulator, which increases its range and accuracy (+5 to hit modifier).

Rafflur M-4. The official weapon of the Yazirian Elite Forces, the main advantage of these 75-cm-long weapons is their ability to unleash all 10 SEUs at once in an area effect (like ancient scatterguns). Their beam is cone-shaped, with the point at the gun's muzzle. Since proton beams are attracted to cohesive atomic strcuture, the first targets in their blast-path usually absorb the damage (if they're lined up perpendicular to the attacker.) To figure out the blast area for targets, take half of the beams distance between muzzle and the closest target. For instance, a blast striking a target at 16 meters would have a diameter of 8 meters, and anyone within approximately 3.5 meters would also receive the blast, but all individuals behind the first target would be safe. Because of this powerful energy surge, the weapon's circuits superheat, requiring the weapon to cool three turns before reloading with a new mini-powerclip. If the target is wearing a synthvelope, only the first 6 SEUs will be halved, with the remaining 4 SEUs blasting through at normal damage (for easier calculating, just consider 7 SEUs worth of full damage).

Rafflur M-6. The proton rifle is a larger version of the pistol, with a selection of up to 10 SEUs per shot and a longer range.

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Rafflur M-10. The M-10 is the medium ordnance piece of the rafflur series and the counterpart of the heavy laser. It comes standard equipped with a folding quadpod mount which will safely hold the parabattery used in its operation. The parabattery needs to be held safely because of its unusual feedback prevention circuits and filters. This is the *only* rafflur type which does not use a 10 SEU mini-powerclip. Two humans or one large bio-form are used to transport it. Optional mounting equipment for vehicles, fortifications, etc., can also be purchased.

Helmetic rafflurs. These double projections (one on each side) from the helmet are actually two rafflur M-1s activated by a jaw-tension mechanism. The range is 12 meters maximum, but normal modifiers are used. Two SEU micro-discs are used, one in each unit; damage is identical to two rafflur M-1s. It takes four turns to replace both micro-discs in the helmetic rafflurs. These rafflurs can only be fired where the wearer is looking, and there is a -10 to hit modifier. This action is so simple that it can be completed in addition to other normal actions that turn.

The rafflur series. Please note that the development model numbers are not in the series - M-7, M-9, etc. are missing so you can create your own rafflur models.

Power screens

The following power screen adheres to all of the basic conditions (shape, size, etc.), as laid down in the DEFENSES, power screens section of the STAR FRONTIERS® Alpha Dawn role-playing game.

Simp-Screen. A simp screen performs in similar fashion to an albedo screen and even has a similar silvery aura about it, but it is energized to protect against proton beam fire. For every 6 points (or fraction of 6 points) absorbed, 1 SEU is drained from the power source. For example, absorbing 21 points of damage drains 4 SEU. Any weapon can be fired out of the simp screen. As long as the power holds out, the wearer will take no damage from a rafflur weapon.

Defensive suits

Synthvelope. A synthvelope suit is like a synthetic one-piece envelope that absorbs the damage from proton beam weapons (rafflurs). Like an aldebo suit for lasers, each point of damage reflected wears away 1 point of the suit's reflective properies. When it has accumulated 100 points of damage or more, the suit becomes useless. The suit must be stepped into from the back and zipped up, completely encasing the wearer's body except for the head. It is flexible enough for a Dralasite to use.

New Item Costs

Ammunition				Weapons			Defenses			
Type of Ammunition	Cost (Cr)	Mass (kg)	Energy/Rounds	Weapon	Cost (Cr)	Mass (kg)	Type of Defenses	Cost (Cr)	Mass (kg)	Energy Def. vs.
SEU Micro-disc	10	-	Variable	<i>Proton Weapons</i>			<i>Power Screens</i>	2000	2	1 SEU/Min.
Mini-Powerclip	50	-	10 SEU	Rafflur M-1	300	-	Simp Screen			proton
				Rafflur M-2	650	1				
				Rafflur M-3	825	2	<i>Defense Suits</i>	500	3	80 points
				Rafflur M-4	1000	3	Synthvelope			proton
				Rafflur M-6	900	4				
				Rafflur M-8	1200	5				
				Rafflur M-10	5000	20				
				Helmetic Rafflurs	625	0.5				

Weapons Table

Weapon Type	Damage	Ammo	SEU	Rate	Defense	PB	Short	Medium	Long	Extreme
<i>Proton Weapons</i>										
Rafflur M-1	4d10+5 per SEU	SEU-Microdisc	All	1	Synth	0-1	2-6	7-10	-	-
Rafflur M-2	2d10 per SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-5	2	Synth	0-5	6-15	16-35	36-70	71-150
Rafflur M-3	2d10 per SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-5	2	Synth	0-6	7-20	21-40	41-80	81-160
Rafflur M-4	Special	10 SEU Clip	10	1	Synth	0-7	8-25	-	-	-
Rafflur M-6	4d10 per SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-10	1	Synth	0-9	10-35	36-75	76-180	181-375
Rafflur M-8	4d10 per SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-10	1	Synth	500-401	400-201	200-51	50-16	15-0
Rafflur M-10	5d10 per SEU	Parabattery	5-25	1	Synth	-	0-120	121-550	551-1100	1101-2200

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by Kim Eastland

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New Item Costs

AMMUNITION

Type of Ammunition	Cost (Cr)	Mass (kg)	Energy/Rounds
SEU Micro-disc	10	-	Variable
Mini-Powerclip	50	-	10 SEU

WEAPONS

Weapon	Cost(Cr)	Mass(kg)
<i>Proton Weapons</i>		
Rafflur M-1	300	-
Rafflur M-2	650	1
Rafflur M-3	825	2
Rafflur M-4	1000	3
Rafflur M-6	900	4
Rafflur M-8	1200	5

Rafflur M-10	5000	20
Helmetic Rafflurs	625	.5

DEFENSES

Type of Defenses	Cost (Cr)	Mass (kg)	Energy/Pts.
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Power Screens

Simp Screen	2000	2	1 SEU/Min.
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Defense Suits

Synthvelope	500	3	100 pts.
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WEAPONS TABLE

Weapon type	Damage	Ammo	SEU	Rate	Defense	PB/S/M/L/E
<i>Proton Weapons</i>						
Rafflur M-1	4d10+5	SEU Microdisc	All	1	Synth	1/6/10/-/-
Rafflur M-2	2d10/SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-5	2	Synth	5/15/35/70/150
Rafflur M-3	2d10/SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-5	2	Synth	6/20/40/80/160
Rafflur M-4	4d10/SEU	10 SEU Clip	10	1/5	Synth	7/25/-/-/-
Rafflur M-6	4d10/SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-10	1	Synth	9/35/75/180/375
Rafflur M-8	4d10/SEU	10 SEU Clip	1-10	1	Synth	-/15-50/200/400/500
Rafflur M-10	5d10/SEU	Parabattery	5-25	1	Synth	-/120/550/1100/2200

the character makes from illegal activities (as per racketeering). The character's income from his policeman's salary may *not* be counted toward criminal experience points.

Be aware, however, that your character is attempting something very dangerous by trying to walk on both sides of the law at once, and could find himself in some rather uncomfortable situations. In a well-run campaign, the game judge will use the character's unique position to create encounters. For example, the city where the character is operating doubtlessly already has an organized crime syndicate operating within its bounds. The syndicate also runs protection rackets and will hear of the character's activities when it sends representatives to threaten the same store owners who are paying off your character. The syndicate will not appreciate the competition from an independent, so your character will be confronted and forced either to stop his protection racket or join the organized crime syndicate. If he opts for the latter, the syndicate will then have a member on the police force and will expect to gain advantages from this. They will force the character to cover up their criminal activities, arrange for the escape of syndicate members from police custody, inform the organization of impending raids on their operations, misdirect investigations, and so forth.

As time goes on, it will become increasingly more difficult to keep the law enforcement agencies from finding out about your character's involvement with organized crime, especially if the F.B.I. is called in to investigate the incidents. If your character is caught by the police or F.B.I., your character will almost certainly go to prison for a very long time and will lose all law enforcement rank previously gained (the police will not protect a fellow officer involved with racketeering or organized crime). If your character fails to protect the syndicate's activities, they will take appropriate vengeance on your character for his failure. You will have to play extremely well to avoid being caught.

STAR FRONTIERS™

Science-Fiction Game

SFQ: What is a "deranged maintenance robot"? Does it have damage to its interior, exterior, or neither?

SFA: The robot might have become "deranged" from a malfunction caused by improper removal of a security lock or an unsuccessful attempt to alter its function or mission, which caused it to go "haywire." (See Malfunction Table on page 15.)

Alternatively, the robot could have become deranged because of damage to its programming, circuits, or memory at the referee's option.

SFQ: Can you attach a laser rifle, laser pistol, or any beam weapon to a parabat-

tery or power generator to fire?

SFA: A technician could conceivably juryrig a connection to drain power for a weapon from a parabattery or other power source temporarily, but weapons are not made to handle that kind of power input. After a turn or two, the "feedback" from the power source would certainly overload the circuits and damage the weapon beyond repair. Such a desperate measure should be attempted only in a case of dire emergency.

SFQ: If an animal has 150 STA points (reduced to 90 through combat), can a tangler grenade hold it still? If so, could it still fight back?

Ability to break loose from tangler treads depends on the creature's current stamina rating. A creature of which its STA has been reduced from 150 to 90 through wounds will be held if it fails its avoidance roll just as a creature of which its STA was originally 90 would. As for fighting back, a creature held in a tangler grenade cannot use a ranged weapon at all. However, if you are foolish enough to close with it before knocking it out, there is no reason it could not try to hit you back in melee combat — which would probably entangle you in the threads as well.

SFQ: Can you fire a pistol with shock gloves on?

SFA: Yes, provided you turn the gloves off first.

SFQ: My character captured a maintenance robot, and I would like to know what it can or can't do.

SFA: It can't do anything except perform the functions for which it was programmed until a technician successfully alters its mission and functions. At that point, you have a device with all the intelligence of a large toaster-oven, but it can move and carry things. You will have to negotiate what it can be programmed to do with your referee, but do try not to give it functions which require making decisions or responding to changing circumstances.

TOP SECRET®

Espionage Game

TSQ: If you suffer a permanent loss, can it be made up by using experience points to restore the trait to normal?

TSA: Permanent blindness or deafness cannot be cured with experience points, but character traits that are permanently reduced by damage can be raised by spending experience just as any other trait can. Such losses are called "permanent" because they will not repair themselves with time or healing the way other damage will; but they can be rebuilt, just like the strength in a damaged limb can be rebuilt with physical therapy.

TSQ: Does the Charm score reflect the character's looks?

TSA: Looks are part of it, but the Charm score is a measure of how favorably other

people will react to the character, so it covers much more than just appearance. A given individual could be rather homely but still have more charm than an attractive person due to a good sense of humor, elegant manner, good taste, and so forth. Looks aren't everything — your actions are part of your overall charm, too.

TSQ: Why does a 5th-level agent get less experience than a 1st-level agent for the same job?

TSA: Experience values for jobs decrease as agent level increases. A 1st-level agent is very "green." When he accomplishes a mission successfully, he is awarded a large amount of experience because he is considered to have "learned" a great deal. But by the time the agent is 5th-level, he has carried out that same type of mission many times. Theoretically, he does not learn as much from doing it anymore, so it is worth less experience. The 5th level agent gets paid more for the mission than does the 1st-level agent, though, because the employers know that he is experienced and can do it right.

A character can go from first level to second level after only a few missions, but it takes longer to make the next level jump, and longer still to make the next. With each new level the agent's personal trait scores will improve, so the character fights more effectively. In short, it becomes easier to accomplish missions, so you have to accomplish more of them to get the same reward.

TSQ: If a character had martial arts skill and used a knife to attack someone, which table should be used?

TSA: Knife fighting. The player must choose whether to attack with the knife or to throw it away and use martial arts — you can't do both at once. A character wishing to use a weapon in HTH combat is limited to attacking on the table corresponding to that weapon. For example, a character attacking with a knife *must* use the Knife Fighting Table, regardless of whether or not he is capable of using other types of combat.

TSQ: In Untrained Combat, could an agent make a blow and hold in the same phase?

TSA: Yes, but that takes both allowable actions for the phase, so the agent could not use any defenses.

TSQ: Why weren't heavy weapons (such as rocket launchers) included in the rules?

TSA: Those are military weapons. Most secret agents don't carry rocket launchers around in their pockets — at least not if they care about being subtle. Even rifles are hard to explain to the local authorities, let alone rockets! Remember: this is not a military role-playing game, but rather one of spies and espionage that emphasizes action on a personal level. A few heavy weapons may be included in future products as the need arises, but their usefulness for espionage is limited.



Take Command of a Titan!

"Big Ship" campaigns in the STAR FRONTIERS® game

by Roger E. Moore

Polyhedron Magazine, #21, pg. 10

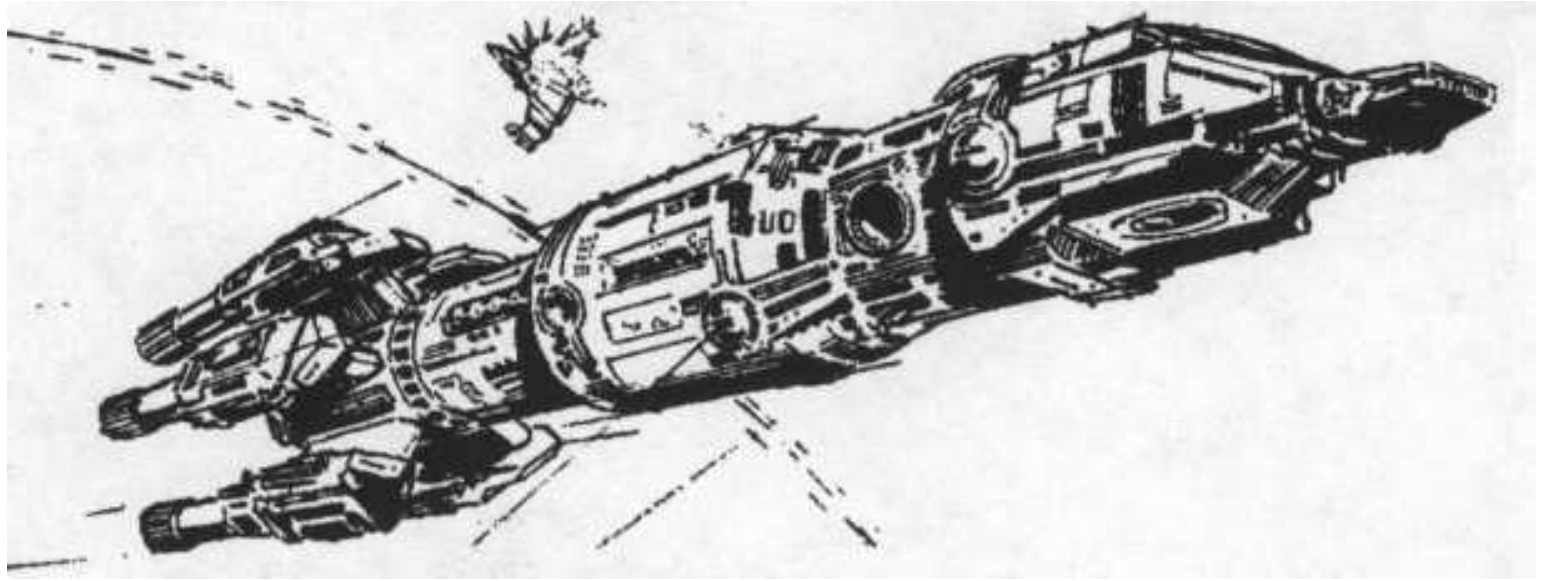
Even though this is a STAR FRONTIERS® game article, it will start with some thoughts about the TRAVELLER® game, by Game Designers' Workshop. One of the oldest science-fiction RPGs on the market, the TRAVELLER system developed some fascinating game concepts that can be applied to virtually any other science-fiction campaign. One of its most interesting adventure settings was that of the Big Ship campaign.

Those who have been involved in a TRAVELLER campaign may recall the *Leviathan* and *Azhanti High Lightning* starship supplements, in which a large merchant craft and a titanic-sized warship, respectively, were drawn out and detailed to the *n*th degree. Entire campaigns could be organized around these mighty ships, with players taking the roles of the numerous crewmen manning the bridge, gun turrets, computer stations, small craft, exploration teams, repair crews, and so on. If characters die in combat or disaster, new characters may be drawn from the ship's crew or by recruiting at any nearby planet. The starship itself is the core of the campaign; men come and go, but the ship lives on. . . .

The thrill of having a Big Ship is hard to match. No longer wilt pirates get away with ripping off your puny merchant ship; instead, they'll get a taste of laser fire-power that can peel the rock off an asteroid. You have the advantage of a large crew and many supplies, and you can often get a few other smaller ships to serve as backup scouts and escorts. A Big Ship campaign is a unique experience.

Choosing a Big Ship

Having decided to try a Big Ship campaign, the first (and most important) question is, which sort of Big Ship will be used in the adventures? This decision will require input from all of the players, as they will be the ones to suffer through the scenarios. Some of the possible campaign options that may be taken include:



Merchant ships. Large-sized merchant craft that pick up and offload hundreds or thousands of tons of merchandise with each planetfall are fascinating to run, particularly for players who like to calculate profits on their pocket calculator. Anyone with a bend toward accounting (or greed) will like this set up; it's nice to be rich.

Interestingly, many science-fiction games are organized so that it is difficult to make a loss on a run, no matter what cargo the ship is carrying. The referee may wish to adjust this to give players a little trouble now and then, but making money is the major reason that most players will take this campaign route.

Merchant starships in STAR FRONTIERS gaming are generally of two types, either spaceliners (passenger haulers) or freighters; some notes on them appear on p.6 of the Campaign Book that comes with the Knight Hawks set. Spaceliners are great if the players and referee want lots of action as well as lots of money. All sorts of weird and dangerous characters can be picked up (including hijackers and assassins).

Note that freighters might prove somewhat boring, since they involve low crew sizes and (sadly) freighters are not well armed and aren't very maneuverable. However, a heavily-armed freighter that makes specialized runs (possibly during a Sathar war) could prove enjoyable to base a campaign around.

Smaller merchant ships could venture into unexplored star systems to open up trade with new cultures or colonies, thus doubling as scouts (see below). This sort of adventure was the major purpose of the *Leviathan* adventure mentioned above, and interested players and referees should examine a copy of that booklet for more information.

Exploration and scout ships. Exciting, long running adventures can be organized around scouting crews who are sent out to new star systems to search for habitable (or inhabited) worlds. The players will have thousands of adventures open up for them as they explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilizations - you know the rest.

The demand on the game referee, however, could be immense. Whole work's would have to be invented with each adventure, and the creative demand to put together unique and enjoyable scenarios would be enormous. It would help for the referee to have access to set entire journals and texts on other planets and solar systems, and a good supply of science-fiction novels describing unusual new worlds that could be adapted into the campaign would also be of value.

One interesting variant on this theme might be to have a giant starship become lost in the galaxy by some means. Perhaps a Big Ship passed too close to a black hole or other space-warping phenomenon in the Void; when it exited the Void, it wasn't where it was supposed to be (by several thousand light years!) In this situation, the lost ship's crew will know they will not be able to return home again in their lifetimes. But - they can explore and settle the area they are in, and begin a new

human civilization in a remote part of the galaxy. What alien worlds and dangers will they encounter? The possibilities are endless.

A final thought: Referees are referred to module SFKH 2, *Mutiny on the Eleanor Moraes*, for some thoughts on major complications that could develop on long-range scouting missions.

Warships and privateer. The Second Sathar War has started, and you and your friends are in command of the battleship UPFS *Admiral Morgaine*, the heart and soul of Task Force Prenglar. All that lies between you and victory is the entire Sathar fleet, and the Sathar feel the same way about you as you feel about them. . . .

Using details from the STAR FRONTIERS Campaign Book (pgs. 55-60), the referee can create a major campaign in which the players role-play their way through the planning, preparations, fighting, and adventure of the Sathar wars. If the Sathar are too "tame," then there are Mechanons and other hostile aliens to battle, pirate bases to locate and destroy, and convoys to escort and protect. Perhaps some smaller Big Ships of assault scout, frigate, or light cruiser size will receive special missions to scout enemy forces, run blockades, and conduct surprise attacks on enemy positions.

Other campaign backgrounds are suggested by the information in SFKH 1, *Dramune Run*, in which the tension between Inner Reach and Outer Reach explodes in the Dramune War, and by *The Warriors of White Light*, the mission brief included with the Knight Hawks game. The latter is further described below and includes a series of adventures for small Big Ships.

The possibility of inter-corporate rivalries exploding into warfare must also be considered; after all, there was "Laco's War." Some interesting information on corporate conflicts in space may be found in module SF 4, *Mission to Alcazzar*, and in DRAGON® Magazine #88 ("Yachts and Privateers Return," p. 82), both sources by Doug Niles. A two-part series on corporations and their wars in the Frontier Sector will appear in DRAGON Magazine issues #89-90, written by Kim Eastland, and will provide valuable background information on the "company wars."

Private ships and others. The least "confining" of all Big Ship adventure campaigns would be, of course, ones centered around privately owned ships that can go anywhere the crew wants. One or more of the player characters should be rich enough (from previous adventuring or by the referee's ruling) to have a giant starship constructed for a select crew to go wandering in. The ship's crew may then dabble in military, mercantile, or exploratory affairs, as they choose.

The "Yachts and Privateers Return" article from DRAGON® Magazine #89, mentioned above, has information on the larger private yachts that sail the Frontier Sector's stars. Developing a suitable adventuring background for the campaign would prove easier in this instance than in the above ones, as the player characters themselves have control over their future plans. It could prove difficult at times to get everyone to agree with the same plans, however, but generally there should be little problem in coordinating the group's interstellar activities.

References and aids

A list of game aids that may prove helpful for running or gaming in a Big Ship campaign follows. Some of these products were designed for game systems other than the STAR FRONTIERS game, but the organizational material and gaming hints they have can be invaluable.

STAR FRONTIERS® game aids

Knight Hawks - The starship expansion rules (for the STAR FRONTIERS game.) Obviously essential for any Big Ship campaigns in this system. The mini-module that comes with this set, *The Warriors of White Light*, is required reading for the scenario ideas and organization it gives to starship campaigns.

SFKH1: *Dramune Run* - The first Knight Hawks module, this adventure lays much groundwork for running starships as the core of the campaign. The merchant ship provided in the adventure is only hull size 6, but a good referee can extrapolate from the information provided, particularly the excellent Ship Log layout on p.13, when designing larger ships and the adventures to go with them.

TRAVELLER® game aids

Book 5, *High Guard* - Though only those who are familiar with this game system will understand most of the material here, this booklet does provide some interesting detail on crewing and operating major starships. The shipbuilding system used here is of little use in STAR FRONTIERS gaming, but the list of things that ships can be outfitted with might make interesting reading.

Supplement 9, *FightingShips* - A fascinating look at what the TRAVELLER game calls *big*. This booklet can give players some wonderful ideas on how to construct their own Big Ship, if allowed to do so by the referee. Beware of the half-million ton monsters, though. . . .

Adventure 1, *The Kinunir* - On the "small" side of the Big Ship scale, the military starship described here has numerous adventures centering around it that could be adopted into other game systems with ease. The idea of gaining a Big Ship by salvage (with the associated dangers) is explored, and a crew roster is given that details where the crewmen might be found at any particular time (useful for NPCs).

Adventure 4, *Leviathan* - Absolutely required reading, even if you don't play TRAVELLER games. Superb detailing of a major starship (though still on the "medium small" end of the scale), its crew, and a selection of adventures that will last through many games.

Game 3, *Azhanti High Lightning* - To my knowledge, this is the most expansive set of starship deckplans ever done. A BIG ship, the *Azhanti High Lightning* class cruiser masses 60,000 tons and is satisfyingly huge enough to please anyone. This game is also required reading for anyone who thinks that running a Big Ship campaign might be easy. It isn't, but the payoff can be enormous. The enclosed booklet (Supplement 5, *Lightning Class Cruisers*) is worth the cost of the game itself and presents much useable information on crewing major starships and keeping them going. The adventuring possibilities described are outstanding and far-reaching.

STAR TREK® The Role-Playing Game

The best known of all Big Ships in science fiction may be the U.S.S. *Enterprise*. Though the game has little to do with the STAR FRONTIERS system, the "Starship Combat" section of the rulebook presents what is probably the best starship command system for gaming purposes there is. *All* of the players can take roles as important ship's officers and have an effect on combat. All too often it seems that only the one or two players controlling the guns have anything to do while firing away at the enemy; STAR FRONTIERS game players can adopt the STAR TREK combat system or some variant of it into their campaigns to give players more of a chance to work together.

The next issue of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine will present more information on Big Ship campaigns, as well as a Big Ship that can be used as the foundation for STAR FRONTIERS game adventures - the frigate PiniPedikord, the terror of the spacelanes.

Of Great Ships and Captains

"Big ships" in the STAR FRONTIERS® game, Part 2

by Roger E. Moore

Polyhedron Magazine, #22, pg. 26

In the last issue of POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, some of the basics of starting a Big Ship campaign in a Star Frontiers® game were described.

The *referee* and players must decide what sort of Big Ship the group will be using; campaigns based upon military, merchant, and scouting missions will each require a different type of ship, each having different type of ship, each having different abilities, crew sizes, and so forth.

As the cover of this issue points out, having a Big Ship is no guarantee that star-faring characters will be invincible. The bigger the ship, the harder it crashes. A careful and dedicated crew (and referee) will keep their ship flying for many sessions of play.

Details, details

The first hurdle to overcome in running a Big Ship campaign (after you've chosen which ship to use) is to map out the ship's interior. Eventually someone will want to know where the staterooms are, what the bridge looks like, how far away the lifeboats are from the cafeteria, and where the bathrooms are. A large amount of graph paper and patience is required to get this job done.

Numerous ship maps are scattered throughout the STAR FRONTIERS game rules, and it only takes a few minutes of study to get a feel for how the mapping system works. Based on 2-meter squares, the maps detail the interiors of various smaller ships used by the UPF Spacefleet (such as the assault scout and frigate). The notes on designing deck plans given in the Campaign Book (p. 23) are required reading for this sort of work.

If you like extra detail, 1-meter squares can be used. This is extra-nice in figuring out exactly where everyone is standing in melee, and those who like filling in details of crew seating, equipment appearance, and so forth may prefer the enlarged scale.

Some of the most commonly seen areas on starship maps are given below. Players and referees may use this as a checklist to determine what parts of the Big Ship they're using need to be included in the maps. Most of the areas named are self-explanatory.

- **Bridge** (main bridge and emergency bridge) including pilot's, co-pilot's, astrogator's, and communications stations;
- **Computer Room**, possibly with computerized library;

- **Engineering section**, including spare parts storage, main and emergency power systems, maintenance shafts to engines, spacesuit storage lockers, backup engineering systems, emergency life support systems, workpods, machine and electronics shops, and tools and equipment storage;
- **Gunnery decks**, including firing controls for main ship's guns and defense systems, major man-portable weapons storage, weapons maintenance rooms and repair shops, ammunitions storage, and armored (military) spacesuit storage;
- **Crew quarters**, with rec center, galley, food storage, life-support system, offices, small weapons storage, and other areas required by the ship's crew (like bathrooms);
- **Passenger decks**, with accommodations similar to those on the crew deck (only more expansive and probably more expensive as well);
- **Cargo decks**, including freight handling machinery, major airlocks, cargo space, security station, and cargo handling "arms" (for deep-space work); and,
- **Other areas**: observation domes, airlocks, passenger and crew lifeboats, robot storage areas, hydroponics areas, freight and crew elevators running throughout ship, and internal defense points (heavy weapon mounts for repelling boarders).

A partial layout of a frigate is given in the Campaign Book which displays some of the above areas rather nicely. Other ship maps in the STAR FRONTIERS books are also helpful.

Aside from the internal maps of the ship, the referee should generate ship's papers similar to those found in SFKH1, *Dramune Run* (p. 13, Ship Log for the *Gullwind*). Various expenses involved in running the Big Ship should be carefully detailed. How much does refueling cost? How often should maintenance be performed? How much are crew salaries?

One last thought about designing your ship. If you choose a ship type that's been previously described in the rules (such as the frigate, which is detailed below), don't worry about whether your ship design is going to be "official". Given the wide variations between the different types of frigates in the rules, one supposes that different races and different shipbuilding contractors have different ideas of how to build the same starships. After all, a Volkswagen Beetle, a Corvette Stingray, and a Lincoln Continental were all designed with four wheels and the ability to get you from one place to another at 55 mph; no one said all cars had to look alike.

Player characters & crewmen

Most crew positions on a starship are self-explanatory. Everyone knows what a pilot or gunnery officer does. The problem comes in figuring out exactly which crew positions aboardship should be filled. If you have a Big Ship with a crew of 400, you may have trouble deciding how many cooks and internal security personnel will be needed.

If there was an easy answer to this, it would be included here in this article. The TRAVELLER[®] game system has some helpful comments and rules of thumb for crewing major warships in Book 5, *High Guard*, that are certainly worth reading. For the most part, you will be on your own in building crew positions for the player characters to fill. Note that there is no reason why players cannot each control a number of separate characters on the ship, though a good supply of referee-controlled NPCs is recommended for ease of play.

If you have access to a local library, you might try to discover what sorts of crews major ships like aircraft carriers, submarines, and destroyers have on them. This could be very

helpful in laying out starship crew positions.

Some of the most commonly used crew positions on a starship are given below, with a few brief notes on each.

- **Captain**, who is often the ship's main pilot;
- **Executive officer**, a lieutenant who handles matters when the captain is absent and performs some of the captain's paperwork;
- **Pilot or helmsman** (often several pilots, copilots, and backup pilots are kept aboardship, all of officer grade and usually lieutenants);
- **Gunnery officers**, usually junior lieutenants (each officer is specialized in one form of weapons or defense system, such as rockets or energy weapons);
- **Chief medical officer/surgeon** and any medical assistants required;
- **Astrogator/navigator**, a lieutenant who operates the guidance and stellar location systems and (to a lesser extent) the detection/radar equipment;
- **Communications/detection officer** and crewmen;
- **Chief engineer** (usually a lieutenant) and engineering crewmen, responsible for the ship's power and propulsion systems, life support, damage control, and other engineering systems;
- **Computer officers** (on larger ships with big computer systems);
- **Maintenance and repair crewmen**;
- **Boarding party personnel, shipboard marines, internal security forces**, and other armed military personnel, usually commanded by a junior lieutenant (other personnel, such as squad leaders, a first sergeant, and platoon sergeants are optional); and,
- **Other personnel** as needed (robot techs, food service and agricultural specialists, scientists, passenger stewards, etc.)

In the *Warriors of White Light* adventure, some additional notes on the crewing of the smaller starships (frigates and assault scouts) are given. Enlisted ranks are referred to under the general title of Midshipmen, though other ranks and titles may be adopted if the referee desires. Other space navies aside from the Clarion Royal Marines would probably have new designations for officers and crew.

Opponents & adventures

Designing adventures for a Big Ship campaign should not be overly difficult. The ship can often play a background role in getting players from one planet to another so they can take part in "regular" sorts of adventures in which PCs seem to immerse themselves so regularly. The Big Ship shouldn't always have to serve as the group's taxicab, however.

In military campaigns, life aboard a large warship could be played out in detail. Obviously there is a lot of boring time even in a major war, but there are certain moments when danger might creep up on the characters as well.

Adventures occurring aboardship would include saboteur and spy activity (especially in anti-pirate and Sathar campaigns), boarding actions, and crew mutinies. It must be strongly stated that crew mutinies should be VERY rare. The United States Navy has never had a large mutiny, though several times small numbers of crewmen, dissatisfied with their lot and often

mistreated by their officers, have rebelled. Criminal activities among crewmen involved in drug dealing, loan sharking, gambling, and other pursuits might prove to be long-standing problems that characters will have trouble laying to rest.

Special passengers bring their own troubles, as crewmen try to protect alien ambassadors, locate terrorist-implanted bombs, deal with hijackers and stowaways, or take on disaster victims from shipwrecks or wartime activities. Animals in cargo bays can escape by accident or on purpose. Pets brought aboardship might prove to have thief-like talents.

Players should be able to develop other shipboard adventures that keep things rolling in the game. Of course, there are adventures that keep things rolling outside the ship as well. Major space battles can be played out with the PCs' ship involved, using the Knight Hawks rules, though everyone should be forewarned that the fastest way to totally wreck a starship is to get into a shooting war with another ship. Diplomacy, trickery, and careful tactical planning should be explored beforehand to eliminate the chances of having the Big Ship become a **BFLH** (Big Floating Lifeless Hulk).

The referee should keep the first rule of managing a Big Ship campaign in mind: *avoid destroying the ship*. This doesn't mean that if the player characters decide to dive the ship into a local star that they should get away with it. But the referee should avoid putting the ship itself in critical danger of being destroyed, especially early in the campaign. The *threat* of having the ship be destroyed is one thing, but doing it is another.

A good case in point was a campaign I participated in a few years ago, in which the players controlled a *Leviathan*-class merchant ship in a TRAVELLER game. Within a month of gaming, the ship had sustained extreme internal damage from fighting and was in danger of being gunned apart by hostile starships. This was not conducive to a secure feeling on the players' part. It may happen that more than one ship bites the Asteroid of Doom before the players and referee figure out how to keep the ship alive longer.

BUT - if it happens that the player characters wind up stranded on an alien planet with their Big Ship crashed and seriously damaged, all is not lost. There are repair crews and construction firms willing to put the ship into working order again, for a hefty price. The shuttle-type starship on the cover, though it obviously isn't going anywhere for a while, could be salvaged, carried back to a spaceport or well-equipped industrial center, and sent back into space only a little worse for the wear.

Frigates in general

One example of a Big Ship that could be adopted into campaign play is the frigate. A frigate is comfortably small and manageable for a beginning Big Ship group, though it's still of respectable size. The crew size is more than adequate, and lots of NPCs can fill out the crew roster and serve as replacement player characters if the originals die or retire.

Despite last issue's promise of a view of the *Pini Pedikord* ("the terror of the spacelanes"), deck plans for a sample frigate will have to wait until a later date. However, some basic information can be culled from the various STAR FRONTIERS game books, deduced from the above, and invented on the spot. Any group interested in creating a campaign based around a different Big Ship should follow the same procedure: look up every scrap of information you can find on that ship type, add implied material, and then fill in the gaps with your imagination.

Frigates are the smallest major warships in common use. Built around a size 5 hull, frigates

are well-armed and fast. They are most often used by planetary navies, marines, and militias, interstellar navies (such as Spacefleet), and captured or "junked" frigates might be employed by pirates or private concerns. In the STAR FRONTIERS game, frigates form the mainstay of the UPF fleet.

Because of their speed and firepower, frigates are often sent on high-speed patrols and pirate suppression, anti-smuggling, or blockade assignments. They work well with smaller craft such as fighters and assault scouts, lending firepower support when necessary and serving as "headquarters" ships for small military operations.

Frigates are equipped with high-quality detection gear. Interplanetary radar, high-powered cameras, energy sensors, and hull skin sensors allow the ship's crew to monitor activity in, on, or around the ship at any time. Normal radio and subspace radio systems are installed, along with a videocom system for "face-to-face" communications and a white-noise broadcaster of normal size for use in combat. A standard intercom system is installed for communication between crewmen in different parts of the ship.

Frigates are heavily armed when compared to smaller ships like assault scouts and fighters, and they have a variety of weapons systems that may be used during combat. Some weapons systems may be replaced by others, as noted below.

One large laser cannon (range: 100,000 km) is set on the bow in a fixed mount that only allows the cannon to fire forward. A laser beam battery is mounted to one side of the ship, consisting of a cluster of small laser cannons set in a rotating turret with an unlimited field of fire. (The frigate may be rotated to allow the laser battery to reach targets initially on the other side of the ship from the battery.) The laser battery has a 90,000 km range. Both types of laser weapons have their "punching power" reduced by great distances.

Frigates also commonly carry two nuclear missiles called "torpedos", which are used as ship-to-ship weapons with homing devices. Each torpedo has a fission-drive engine to send it to its target. Torpedos can sometimes be used for space-to-ground attacks against planetary fortresses, military bases, missile silos, spaceports, etc.

Four rocker batteries are mounted on the hull as well. Each battery may fire a cluster of small and extremely fast missiles propelled by fusion drives. No homing systems are placed on these missiles because of their extremely fast movement; targets cannot dodge them.

Some weapons may be exchanged for others. The two torpedos may be eliminated and replaced by another four rocket batteries or by another laser beam battery; other combinations of these systems are possible (such as exchanging the four rockets for a laser beam battery, etc.)

Frigates have a good array of defenses, too. A reflective surface may be applied to the hull to defend against laser attacks. A masking screen device good for two uses is installed (complete with water tanks), and four interceptor missiles useful against incoming missiles and torpedos are carried as well. The entire masking screen system may be replaced by installing another interceptor missile, or a smaller masking screen system good for only one use could be installed with on decoy system. A large masking screen system good for two uses could, of course, be broken down into two smaller one-shot systems.

For a "small" starship, a frigate packs a nice wallop. A long-playing military campaign could be developed with little trouble around a UPF frigate or a similar ship in a planetary navy, of the solar system it hails from has a large number of planets to visit.

Deck plans, a crew roster, and more information on running a frigate in a Big Ship campaign will wing their way to you in a future issue of POLYHEDRONTM Newszine.

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humans or character types before contracting lycanthropy? If so, will the creature's hit points be the same as it had as a human, or do you roll new hit points according to the hit dice given in the *Monster Manual* for the particular weretype? What about other shape changers, such as bronze dragons?

ADA: Any creature, regardless of *shape-changing* or *polymorphing* abilities, retains the same hit points and saving throws in all forms. The statistics given in the *Monster Manuals* are nice and convenient, but are not binding; nearly anything can be found in a form larger, smaller, dumber, smarter, (et al.) than those described.

ADQ: Rakshasas, as described in *Monster Manual*, can be slain by crossbow bolts *blessed* by a cleric. This is a very unusual use of the *bless* spell. Does the usual 6 round duration apply, or can characters get some bolts *blessed* and then kill a rakshasa with them a week later? How many bolts can be *blessed* with one spell?

ADA: Similar to the options given for a *dispel magic* spell, a *bless* spell may be directed at either an area or an item. If cast at an item, no creatures can be affected at the same time. In this mode, the spell is an Enchantment (rather than a Conjunction, the typical use). The cleric may *bless* an object weighing up to 1 pound per level of the caster. If the item is of sufficient quality (in the case of a crossbow bolt, of at least 50 gp value), the enchantment will function in a manner similar to normally (magic-user) enchanted missiles — permanent until fired — with the added vulnerability that the magic can be removed by a *dispel magic* spell (at standard chances of success).

ADQ: Do druids get bonus spells for high wisdom as clerics do?

ADA: Druids ARE clerics, and of course gain the bonuses. Non-cleric casters of cleric spells (such as paladins) do not gain the bonus spells.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®

DQ: The table of thieving abilities on page 27 of the *Players Companion* book confuses me. The given chances for success are lower than those given in the *Expert* rules! Why can a 14th level thief open a lock better than a 25th level thief?

DA: The percentages given in the revised *Expert* rulebook are incorrect; the unrevised chart was published. (Most sets include an errata sheet with the correct percentages). The unrevised percentages may be used if you (as DM) run occasional games, rather than a campaign. But if characters are played enough to earn higher levels (say, 20 or more), use the revised figures. The correct chart, complete for all characters (levels

1-36), will be in the D&D® MASTER Set. DQ: When I recently went to my local hobby shop to purchase the D&D® Companion Set, I was quite disturbed to see that it was designed go with the new D&D® Basic and Expert Sets. I have flipped through my friend's new Basic and Expert sets and found them very incompatible with my second edition sets. It follows that the new D&D® Companion set will also be incompatible with my edition of the rules systems. So in order to upgrade my rules, I would have to buy two new boxes and the higher priced D&D® Companion Set. Needless to say I feel that this is quite redundant and absurd. I don't feel that I should have to buy revised editions of what I already have to get the Companion Set promised years ago. What are your opinions on this?

DA: There are very few rules that have been changed in the revised editions; the new sets ARE compatible with the old (that is, the "old red box"; the "blue book" edition is primitive in comparison). I closed some loopholes, and added more detail on some subjects, but was careful to change very little of the existing rules—providing more guidelines instead.

—You asked for my opinions. Personally, I think you should (a) not buy revised BASIC; it's designed for beginners, and you have the old editions; (b) do buy the revised EXPERT; I put a lot of new things into it, and I don't think you'll be disappointed (and the reviews agree); and (c) do buy the COMPANION set; it's not a rehashing of old stuff. I made it the best I could, combining my ten years of role playing experience (egad, has it really been that long?) with the spirit and foundation of the original game.

DQ: What are the prices for the new armor types in the Companion Set (scale and banded)?

DA: Scale mail (AC 6) costs 30 gp, and banded (AC 3) costs 50 gp. And if you're a DM, note the chart on page 55 (DM Companion book), which gives encumbrances of all types and sizes, including the slightly smaller demi-human armors and even giant-sized. You may modify costs for those proportionately.

DQ: My 14th level magic-user got killed in a battle with a scorpion when he was out of spells and had lost his dagger. Could he have picked up a sword and used it in a life and death situation?

DQ: Sure! Don't get hung up on abstractions; anyone can use any weapon, regardless of class, in emergencies. BUT this does NOT mean that the character knows how to use it properly. If I were DM in such a situation, I'd first roll 1d6; on a 1-2, he hits himself; 3-5, the weapon is jarred out of his hand (even with a technical miss, probably hitting armor or a wall or something); 6, make a standard Hit Roll, but with a pen-

alty (at least -2 but not more than -12, depending on the weapon, situation, etc.).

Note that the situation is a bit different for clerics. Their abhorrence of edged weaponry might require a saving throw (for PCs) and/or morale check (for NPCs); if failed, the character would be unable to force himself even to try such a thing, and even success would still involve severe penalties to the Hit Roll. If a successful hit occurs, another check should be made immediately, with failure indicating that the cleric drops the forbidden weapon in disgust.

But in any event, retreat is a preferred option; big dumb creatures (like the scorpion you mentioned) would probably stop to munch on something appetizingly convenient, rather than chasing your possibly dangerous magic-user. Against more intelligent monsters — have you ever tried a bluff?

STAR FRONTIERS®

SFQ: Can a Dralasite with enough limbs make five melee attacks per round?

SFA: Yes, but the character would need a dexterity score of at least 100 to make enough limbs for five melee attacks per round.

SFQ: Why do Yazirians walk more slowly over long distances than Humans?

SFA: The Yazirian musculature is built for the lower gravity of their homeworld. As a result, their muscles are not heavy enough to sustain prolonged motion at the same rate as humans and it takes them longer to cover a sizable distance on foot.

SFQ: Can an anti-shock implant be removed from one's own body using only strength?

SFA: Yes, but not without injury. Anti-shock implants are placed surgically, and can only be safely removed by surgery.

SFQ: What special seating arrangements do Vrusk require in vehicles?

SFA: The standard Vrusk seat resembles a freestanding padded table supported by a single leg. When seated, the Vrusk folds its remaining legs around the underside of the seat.



DISPEL CONFUSION

STAR FRONTIERS®

Game Questions

SFQ: Is there a chance that the Eorna might be brought back to the spotlight for future modules?

SFA: Since the ancient spacecraft full of Eorna eggs was found floating in orbit around Voltumnus at the end of the *Star-spawn of Voltumnus* module, the Eorna are no longer doomed to die out as a race.

Though there are no concrete plans at the moment to publish further adventures set on Voltumnus, there is plenty of material in the original module series from which to develop further adventures.

SFQ: What are the stats for the K'tsa-Kar star system? Though it was listed in the Alpha Dawn set, no details were given.

SFA: The statistics for the K'tsa-Kar system were accidentally omitted from the Alpha Dawn set, but they are included in the new *Zebulon's Guide to Frontier Space* accessory. For those of you who haven't yet picked that up, here are the long-awaited stats. K'tsa-Kar is a hot orange star (K0). The system's single major inhabited planet, known as Kawdl-Kit, is the UPF outpost charged with scanning for Sathar in the direction of the White Light Nebulae.

Vrusk are the prevalent race there, and the planet is lightly populated. Education and scientific study are its chief industries. Kawdl-Kit's gravity is 0.7 Earth normal, and its day is 30 Earth hours long. Though it has no natural moons, Kawdl-Kit does have two artificial satellites — one an armed space station and the other a rest and relaxation area.

SFQ: Does a character wearing a space-suit with a rocket pack gain an advantage in regaining control during weightless combat?

SFA: No, the rocket pack is simply a means of propulsion. It does no more than any other propulsion device to help the user gain or maintain a desired orientation.

SFQ: Can characters with computer skill create the spaceship programs from the Knight Hawks campaign book? If so, would a related skill be required? For example, would astrogation skill be required to write or manipulate the astrogation program?

SFA: Although expertise with other fields of study is not specifically required to write programs, it seems reasonable to stipulate that some specific knowledge of the subject matter is required to write a workable program. For example, if characters trying to write astrogation programs do not have astrogation skill themselves, they would need to work with others who do. Either way, the price of the final product should

reflect the additional skill needed.

SFQ: The Knight Hawks campaign book gives both 25% and 35% as the chance for the Sathar to replace ships ("Sathar Replacements," page 60). Which figure is correct?

SFA: Designer Doug Niles says that 35% is the correct figure. Thanks for catching the typo.

SFQ: Could you provide a rough timeline for the history of the Frontier? The *Dramune Run* module includes information on the date system in use, but does not provide many other points of reference. For example, when did/does/will Sathar War II take place? When did/do/will the various module adventures take place?

SFA: A complete timeline for Frontier events is given in the new STAR FRONTIERS® Game Accessory, *Zebulon's Guide to Frontier Space*. Although not every module is specifically placed in the sequence, several points of reference are given that should help.

The Pan-Galactic Corporation was founded in 230 PF (pre-Frontier), and the First Sathar War occurred in 3 PF. The United Planetary Federation was established in 1 FY (Federation Year) as a mutual defense organization, mostly due to the disastrous results of the First Sathar War and the certainty that the enemy would return. Star Law was established in 5 FY.

In 14 FY, the Sundown system was discovered, and just a few years later the Blue Plague decimated four star systems.

Research showed that the disease had been brought to Starmist by an alien vessel, and carried into other star systems by travelers. In 25 FY, the UPF became aware of the Mechanon menace on Voltumnus, but was unable to take action due to the Blue Plague. In 27 FY the Blue Plague was eradicated from the Frontier, enabling Star Law to deal effectively with the Mechanon revolt on Voltumnus in 54 FY.

In 57 FY, the Waller Nexus system was discovered, and its only habitable planet, Mahg Mar, was the site of the first UPF mutiny (*Mutiny on the Eleanor Moreas*). Later in that same year, the Liberty system was discovered and its planet Snowball was liberated from Sathar Tyranny (*The War Machine*).

The Rhianna system was discovered in 60 FY by the Cassidine Development Corporation, but kept secret until 63 FY, when the Streel corporation attacked the CDC operations there (*Mission to Alcazzar*).

The third Dramune War was fought in 61 FY (*Dramune Run*), and the Second Sathar War began in 80 FY with an attack on Voltumnus launched through the Xaggy Nebula, while another Sathar Fleet entered the Frontier unnoticed through the White Light Nebulae.

The above events are only excerpts from the full timeline given in *Zebulon's Guide to Frontier Space*. If you want further details, new character races, revised combat rules, and other neat stuff, run to your hobby shop and grab the book. (Be sure to pay for it, though!)

SFQ: Do characters with spaceship skills get paid extra for non-spaceship skills they possess (+10 Credits/level) as per AD page 60? Do spacers get paid more if they possess two or more spaceship skills?

SFA: Yes, all skills count for total pay rate as given in Alpha Dawn, unless the referee stipulates otherwise for a given scenario.

SFQ: Is it possible to upgrade a computer program? If so, what is the price? For example, suppose a character decides that his Level 1 Information Storage program is not sufficient for his needs. Would he have to pay full price for a Level 2 Information Storage program, or could he merely pay the difference between the two?

SFA: Most computer programs come in commercially available, prepackaged units called maxiprogs or progit. Since they are mass produced as preformed units, it is not possible to upgrade one for any less than it would cost to buy a new one of the desired level. However, it might be possible to get a discount on a more advanced model by trading in the old unit, since used units in good condition could doubtless be resold by dealers.

Of course, programs written by characters can always be rewritten and upgraded by the original creators if desired. In that case, the judge must decide how much time it will take and what it will cost.

SFQ: Why does the Frontier seem to exist on a plane? All distances take only two dimensions into account. I propose that all distances on the Interstellar Distance Table (KH page 26) be rounded up rather than rounded to the nearest integer. This would show that not all stars in the Frontier lie exactly on the plane of the galaxy.

SFA: Go ahead and try that variation if you like; it shouldn't cause any major problems with the game mechanics. But remember, the game is set up for maximum playability, not absolute realism. As long as you are playing a game on a flat map, it makes sense to specify your distances in two-dimensional terms.



Game Advice

DISPEL CONFUSION

STAR FRONTIERS™

SCIENCE FICTION ROLE-PLAYING GAME

SFQ: Why can't Level 1 Pilots fly starships within a system? According to the Pilot Certification Table (KH page 24), a Level 1 Pilot can fly system ships of all sizes. Is there a difference between flying a system ship and flying a starship within a system?

SFA: Yes. Starships are radically different in design, propulsion, and equipment from system ships. They do not suddenly shed all their complex machinery when they enter a star system. Whether the starship is going on an intergalactic voyage or just a spin around the solar system, it still takes an experienced pilot to get it out of the docking bay.

SFQ: Does an Engineer's Toolbox (KH page 30) come with a Techkit?

SFA: Yes, the basic Techkit is included in addition to the other specialized equipment.

SFQ: With a sick bay, a medic gains +20% on all Success Rates (AD, page 90). How much does a spaceship sick bay cost?

SFA: For basic medical facilities capable of treating most wounds, infections, common diseases and poisons, the sick bay will require 6 square meters of space and 8,000 Credits per patient to be accommodated. This includes bed, monitoring devices, and 10 times the amount of each drug found in a standard medkit, plus computer facilities able to accommodate a level 3 medical treatment job maxiprogram. A basic sick bay allows the medic to gain the bonus for treating wounds and infections, but not for other specialized medical skills.

More elaborate facilities may include a separate laboratory for analyzing new disease organisms and developing new drugs and anti-toxins. A laboratory costs 100,000 Credits and includes equipment and maxiprograms for analysis, diagnosis, and testing. A sick bay with a laboratory allows the medic to gain the bonus for diagnosis and for treatment of disease, poison, and radiation.

Larger starships and space stations are normally equipped with a surgical unit as well. Surgical facilities cost an additional 100,000 credits and include surgical equipment, plus specialized level 6 life support and medical treatment maxiprograms. The surgical unit will allow the medic to gain the stated bonus for surgery and forensic medicine.

SFQ: How is the pay/day determined for a character with two skills that pay an equal amount? For example, according to the pay/day table (AD, page 60) a Level 3 Roboticist/Level 2 Medic could be paid

100 Cr (80 + 20) or 110 Cr (30 + 80), depending upon which skill was considered full rate.

SFA: If the character is hired for a job where one of the skills is critical, that skill should be paid at full rate. Otherwise, the higher level skill is paid at full rate, and the lower level one at an additional +10/level/day, as given. Therefore, your example character would receive (80 + 20) = 100 Credits/day.

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

ROLE-PLAYING GAME

ADQ: When a thief successfully sneaks up to a victim and backstabs, should there not also be a surprise roll? As the thief truly did surprise the opponent, and other character classes in this situation would have the chance to attack in each surprise segment gained, why not the thief? Or is maximum surprise assumed — modified by dexterity?

ADA: The degree of surprise is not assumed. At the first confrontation, the thief gains the backstab bonuses (+4 "to hit" and multiplied damage) only if a standard roll indicates surprise. If the victim is not surprised, only the +2 bonus "to hit" from behind applies to the backstab attempt, and multiple damage is disallowed, since it is contingent on surprise. Assuming surprise, multiple attacks may be possible (as per normal surprise rules); if so, the +4 "to hit" bonus applies for all such attacks, but only the first gains the multiplier, as the victim who has been hit once does not remain surprised per se. Another backstab attempt against the same victim may be made by a different thief, or by the same thief if he or she disengages, departs, and successfully gains surprise upon returning. Surprise is not possible if the victim is aware of the thief's presence and position.

ADQ: If a half-orc with a dexterity of 12-14 is limited to 8th-level as a thief, why can that same character advance up to 15th-level in the assassin class and thereby gain the same abilities as a 13th-level thief? It seems that no evil half-orc should bother being a thief, since he can get more complete thief training as an assassin, plus the assassin abilities as well.

ADA: That assessment is correct; a smart evil half-orc will nearly always choose the assassin path over straight thievery. The orcish race is vicious by nature, and that

tendency is reflected in the career paths available to half-orcs.

But life's a lot tougher for an assassin than for a thief. The latter class is respected and tolerated (or even encouraged) by adventurers, and possibly even rulers; the former, however, is usually despised by all.

ADQ: Why do magic-users seem to be more attuned to the elements (at a medium level) than druids? Magic-users as low as 9th-level can conjure any of the four "most common" elementals, assuming that they have the spell, whereas druids must wait until they reach 11th-level to conjure fire elementals, and 12th-level to conjure earth elementals. Even though the druid may control the summoned elemental with basically no chance of failure, it seems that the druid should have more power over elemental-summoning than the magic-user. The magic-user is, in my opinion, one of the strongest of the player character classes, and mages do not need any druidical powers.

ADA: Druids are attuned to nature, which is the perfect blending of all four elements. It is against their basic nature to bring one element into dominance over the others; that creates imbalance. Magic-users, on the other hand, may be adept at conjuring. Those who are make careful studies of other planes, including elemental planes, whereas druids study only the Prime Material Plane.

Note also that druids gain the cooperation of elementals, but magic-users must coerce the poor creatures, and thus run the ever-present risk of losing control and being attacked by their conjurations.

ADQ: The description of the 9th-level magic-user spell *prismatic sphere* in the *Players Handbook* specifies that the seventh sphere confers force field protection. Is this protection akin to a wall of force? If so, the seventh sphere is equal to all six former spheres put together, and the magic-user could not cast spells out of it. This makes the *prismatic sphere* spell an expensive delay only for the magic-user, and leaves the mage's comrades out in the cold.

ADA: No, the force field is NOT a wall of force. It is exactly as the spell description states — a barrier which sends anyone trying to penetrate it to another plane unless a save vs. spells is made. If the save is successful, the attacker may pass through it to the mage. Note, however, that said attacker is once again subject to all the effects on his way out, and must make a new save vs. that effect and each of the others for which one is required to escape.

There is nothing in the spell description to indicate that the creator of the *sphere* cannot cast spells out of it. Indeed, the caster may pass through the sphere with no ill effects, and his or her spells can as well.