

The background of the cover is a detailed illustration of a vast Arachnid Empire. In the foreground, several large, metallic, insect-like creatures with multiple eyes and sharp mandibles are shown. They are wearing golden, segmented armor. In the background, a massive, multi-legged Arachnid war machine is visible against a hazy, orange-brown sky. The title 'STARSHIP TROOPERS' is written in a large, stylized, red and blue font with a yellow outline. The subtitle 'THE ROLEPLAYING GAME' is in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

STARSHIP TROOPERS™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

THE ARACHNID EMPIRE

STARSHIP TROOPERS™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

RETINAL SCAN: COMPLETE
IDENTIFICATION: CONFIRMED
PERMISSION TO PROCEED:
GRANTED

THE ARACHNID EMPIRE

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INTRODUCTION

THE ARACHNIDS ARE the greatest threat the United Citizens' Federation has ever faced. The bugs are no simple crude menace but an invader seeking to annihilate the human species and take worlds to expand their empire. Across the light years, the Arachnids threaten the survival of all species in a war of technology against engineered evolution.

Up to now, the Arachnids have remained a faceless, omnipresent enemy, spearheaded by millions of vicious warrior bugs as they spread in waves across each new world. For the first time, the secrets of the Arachnids are revealed. This book will serve Games Masters wanting to present the Arachnids in the most terrifying way possible, as well as players seeking an edge that will allow their Mobile Infantry trooper to survive just a little longer in battle.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

The information contained in this book is divided into the following chapters.

The Arachnid War

A complete update to the *Starship Troopers* timeline, looking beyond Pluto at the Road to Victory, Klendathu Invasion and its aftermath. You will learn the true nature of the threat posed to humanity by the Arachnids and what the Federation must do to survive. This section updates the *Starship Troopers Roleplaying Game* to the same timeline as the *Starship Troopers Miniatures Game*.



Planets

This chapter details some of the known worlds of Arachnid space, their surface characteristics and the level of Arachnid infestation upon them. It also includes a guide to Arachnid colonisation, how it begins and how it spreads until a world has become what the Mobile Infantry call a 'Bug Central'.

Warfare

An account of Arachnid tactics, from their basic rules of engagement to the specific tactics they employ in direct battle. Included are detailed rules and strategies that clearly demonstrate the basic tenets behind the Arachnids' strategy. With this chapter, a Games Master can run entire scenarios based on large-scale battles!

Society and Physiology

For those wanting to know just how the Arachnids function, this chapter will prove invaluable. From the physical characteristics of a warrior bug to the method of communication and co-ordination between the stars, this information has been hard won by Military Intelligence and troopers of the Mobile Infantry.

Sub-Species

The main rulebook merely gives a smattering of the most common sub-species of Arachnid, such as tankers, workers and warriors. This chapter presents every major Arachnid sub-species yet seen in battle, including the dreaded king tanker, guard bug and tiger warrior bug. Many of the common sub-species have also been updated to reflect abilities only just discovered by SICON.

Bug Central Charlie Victor

This chapter not only contains all the information required for Games Masters to begin constructing their own Arachnid colonies – it also details, chamber by chamber, Bug Central Charlie Victor, a complete colony that can be used in your own scenarios if your players are ever brave enough to assault an Arachnid stronghold.

New Missions

While detailed scenarios and characters are the lifeblood of any good *Starship Troopers* campaigns, nothing can beat a quick one-shot mission to give the impression there is a war going on – and provide an instant evening's gaming for very little preparation time! This chapter provides several new missions, ready for the Games Master to insert in his campaign.

THE ARACHNID WAR

IT HAS NEVER been determined how long the Arachnids have existed in their present form or how long their empire has dominated their region of the galaxy. Indeed, the term 'empire' is a purely human designation, a suitable word to describe the evils of the Arachnid's ruthless taking of worlds which harkens back to Earth's own imperialistic history. Though the Federation already spans light years, Mankind is only just setting foot outside of his own tiny realm in the galaxy. It is perhaps unfortunate that the Arachnids were so close.

It is therefore left to speculation as to how many other alien races and intelligent civilisations there are in the entire galaxy. The Arachnids and Skinnies have both been identified but what lies beyond their far borders can only be guessed at. Are there ever greater wonders left in the galaxy or will Mankind one day discover the Arachnids have already spread from rim to rim and now humanity is fighting for the liberty of the last free corner of the stars?

It cannot be doubted that the Arachnids are already responsible for the extermination of entire races, perhaps even other empires, but Mankind is wrapped in its own desperate struggle for survival. The universe has revealed itself to be an unfriendly place and a battle of the species is taking place that only one race will walk away from.

THE PLUTO CAMPAIGNS

The shock on Earth of discovery of a hostile alien species in its own Solar System cannot be underestimated. In one moment, the Federation went from a glorious government ready to span the stars to one under siege, with enemies knocking on the front door.

The first Pluto Campaign was relatively short. A small Mobile Infantry detachment, dispatched to investigate the loss of communication from Pluto's small mining colonies quickly found Arachnid warrior bugs boiling out of the ground from hidden lairs. Though the troopers of the Mobile Infantry had yet to fight in any real war, let alone be pitched against the most vicious alien race yet discovered in the galaxy, they deserved all the credit received from a grateful Earth. Within a few short weeks, Sky Marshal Smithson declared a victory, announcing that the alien threat was vanquished.

DIPLOMACY

Though not a popular topic in SICON Command, even today there are those who speculate just how the costly Arachnid War might have been avoided. Could diplomacy have ever worked? Could the Arachnids ever have responded to reason?

The official answer is that the Arachnids are an essentially mindless race with whom reason is impossible. Even communication, aside from haunting and decidedly one-sided telepathy with Special Talents, cannot be achieved.

However, there are all too many who believe that Mankind brought disaster to itself. The Federation had been expanding long before the Arachnids had been detected, with more planets being brought into the fold and then colonised. Had one of these worlds once belonged to the Arachnids? Had humanity unintentionally invaded their territory long before they arrived on Pluto?

And what of Pluto itself? Had the Arachnid presence there been a simple scouting mission or even a first contact party?

Ultimately all these questions can be boiled down to one very simple query: when man initially came face to face with Arachnids on Pluto, in that first meeting between human and alien, who fired first?

The answer to that question is not recorded in any Federation files, public or classified. It may never be known, even assuming humanity survives its war with the Arachnids.

Despite having faced the Arachnids in battle, no one yet appreciated just how tenacious the aliens could be. Only three months after victory had been declared, the monitors on Pluto went silent once more. The transfer station on Pluto's moon, Charon, reported that enemy activity had again begun on the planet, in greater strength than before.

Sky Marshal Smithson was retired from his position, the first high-ranking official to become a political casualty of the Arachnid War, and Sky Marshal Wood took his place. Judging the mining colonies on Pluto's surface to be still intact and recoverable, Wood deployed the Mobile Infantry in force. A full division was landed on the tiny planet with one clear mission – to end the infestation of Arachnids on Pluto at any cost.

The second Pluto Campaign, as it came to be called, was conducted under the eyes of the entire Federation. The general population, informed that diplomatic efforts with the Arachnids had gone poorly, were in full favour of reclaiming their Solar System and FedNet made a great deal of noise about the brave troopers of the Mobile Infantry, fighting to defend humanity from a true menace. No one expected the campaign to go on for long and Wood was under pressure to deliver a complete victory, avoiding the mistakes of his predecessor. The Mobile Infantry learned a great deal about their enemy in the battles that swept across the entire surface of Pluto but this was paid for in the lives of many troopers. In the end though, it became clear that the enemy was too numerous. Ground would be taken, held and then lost when the Mobile Infantry moved on to take another Arachnid position. A single division of even the Mobile Infantry was simply not enough.

Finally, Wood ordered the withdrawal of all Mobile Infantry and then commanded the Fleet to pound Pluto from orbit. Within hours, the planet's surface was reduced to a blasted wasteland that nothing could survive.

BUENOS AIRES

Up to this point, no one on Earth suspected that the Arachnids were anything more than a previously undiscovered and unintelligent species indigenous to Pluto. Comments from troopers within the Mobile Infantry about the seemingly co-ordinated actions of the Arachnids were brushed aside, as was a report from one squad who claimed to have witnessed a huge Arachnid 'space ship' taking off from Pluto just before they were ordered to withdraw. A later investigation proved that a report from Charon's transfer station that monitored the path of the Arachnid's space craft was simply ignored by Sky Marshal Wood, who thought the idea too fanciful at the time.

That changed two weeks later when a huge asteroid entered the Solar System on a direct collision course with Earth. Travelling at over 50 miles per second, the spinning rock was not detected



until it had already passed the orbit of Earth's moon. With no time to react, SICON could only watch as the asteroid plummeted through the atmosphere towards South America. Slamming into Buenos Aires with the power of innumerable nuclear warheads, the city and a huge surrounding area were simply wiped off the map in seconds. The number of dead ran into millions and everywhere people asked how such a thing could have been allowed to happen.

It was only now that the reports of an Arachnid ship began to be taken more seriously and Sky Marshal Wood answered for his past decisions by being relieved of his position. The conclusion was now inescapable. If the Arachnids possessed space travel

YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER
THE GLOBE ARE JOINING UP TO
FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE. THEY ARE
DOING THEIR PART – ARE YOU?

JOIN THE MOBILE INFANTRY
AND SAVE THE WORLD. SERVICE
GUARANTEES CITIZENSHIP!

FEDERATION TODAY

Eye On: Praxis

FedNet: First, thank you for granting this interview, Sky Marshal. It is a rare honour to speak with you, especially with an engagement about to take place.

SM Collins: Not at all. One of my favourite duties is to speak to the press. As for this upcoming Praxis Campaign, it just makes it all the more important to make sure every civilian and citizen in the Federation knows exactly what is going on.

FedNet: Then, if we might jump straight into the interview, what *is* going on with Praxis?

SM Collins: Absolutely. As your viewers are no doubt aware, Bugs have once again been seen on Praxis. They have overrun a minor research station and seem to be massing on the surface for an undetermined reason.

FedNet: Wasn't it the official position of SICON just eighty one days ago that the Bugs, and by Bugs I assume to mean Arachnids, were all exterminated during Operation Righteous Extermination?

SM Collins: Yes, that is true. But as you no doubt know from reporting news in the UCF, things are not always as simple as they first appear. We did destroy all of the Arachnids we could locate and even set off tailored respiratory arrest gas charges in their tunnels. After two weeks of searching, we did not find a single living Arachnid above or below ground.

FedNet: Fair enough, but how can SICON explain the renewed presence of Arachnids on Praxis now? Could some underground egg chambers have been missed?

SM Collins: That is precisely what our Intelligence division believes occurred. RESP-X is not a persistent substance and because generations of insects on Terra have shown an ability to mutate in response to whatever chemical killed their forebears, it is quite possible this new batch of Bugs will be resistant to the gas in any case.

FedNet: Does that mean you will be opening with a ground drop as opposed to gassing the planet's surface again?

SM Collins: Not exactly, but an astute question. We will drop RESP-X A-Type gas on the largest concentration we can find during our troop carrier's first orbital pass. However, since we want a complete response to this new threat, we have no intention of just passively dealing with the Arachnids. We will be simultaneously dropping Mobile Infantry in another part of the infested area to act as 'shepherds'.

FedNet: Shepherds? I am afraid I don't follow you there.

SM Collins: Let me explain. One of the possible reasons the Bugs were not eradicated during our first encounter with them may have been that partially poisoned individuals may have gotten out of the termination zone and worked their way to the suspected egg chamber before expiring. We do not want that to happen this time.

FedNet: Of course. So the Mobile Infantry will be deployed as border defence then? Their job will be to ensure the Arachnids stay in their current area and get eliminated by the RESP-X gas?

SM Collins: Exactly right. This new formulation of gas, named RESP-X A2, should have a three second kill rate, substantially reducing the amount of time it will take to wipe Bugs off the face of Praxis permanently.

FedNet: Sounds like a strong strategy, Sky Marshal, but if this is effectively only a two part plan with the Infantry as line keepers and orbital gas bombardment, why call this a campaign?

SM Collins: Another good question. There are several strategic reasons for sending troops to Praxis this time. They are classified at the current time but suffice to say, the Mobile Infantry will have quite a bit to do once it arrives.

FedNet: Would it be possible to let us know which ship has been selected for this Campaign?

SM Collins: Unfortunately no. That is also classified. Let me just say that the ship, her crew and the platoons of Mobile Infantry involved are among the finest SICON has to offer. We are taking this infestation of Praxis very seriously.

For those interested in the full interview and reaction commentary by FedNet's military advisor Paulo Reide, select the Expanded Coverage button below.

then the chances were they had not been indigenous to Pluto at all. At this point, speculation spiralled – had Pluto been but a prelude to invasion, a lucky escape from the complete annihilation of the entire human species? After all, if the Arachnids could destroy an entire city in seconds, take over a planet in days and retreat relatively unharmed, what else could they do? Was the Federation already surrounded on all sides by an alien empire?

Sky Marshal Collins, Wood's replacement, began to compile the answers. Charon's transfer station had already plotted the trajectory of the departing Arachnid ship to a far off star system known as Alpha Hydrae. The anger of Mankind now, at least, had a target.

THE ROAD TO VICTORY

Taking much advice from Admiral Dienes, the man who would later replace him as Sky Marshal, Collins proposed a new campaign, the so called Road to Victory. Unable to directly strike at so distant a target as Alpha Hydrae, the Mobile Infantry would instead leap from star system to star system, eradicating any Arachnid presence they found before moving on. Colonies would be created along the Road to Victory to support this military thrust into Arachnid territory until, at last, a final strike could be made against the Arachnid homeworld and the aliens finally wiped out – a fitting end to a race that had caused so much pain to the peoples of Earth. The fact that this gargantuan effort would also leave the Federation with many new colonies and a huge amount of the galaxy's real estate was not lost on the government.

There were opponents of this strategy but Dienes, as much as Collins himself, did not succumb easily to political opposition. He dismissed opponents who said this headlong streak through the galaxy was foolhardy, potentially leaving supply links and flanks exposed to counterattack. In spite of their spread throughout this region of the galaxy, he maintained that Arachnids were utterly lacking in strategic sophistication and could fairly be treated as animals, a galactic pest that it was his duty to wipe out.

In a little over a year, Collins had been replaced as Sky Marshal by Dienes after the Arachnids resurfaced at Praxis, a world previously thought to be pacified. This setback had cost the Mobile Infantry nearly an entire division and the Road to Victory was temporarily suspended for two months until Praxis was retaken. There were dark mutterings from some quarters about Dienes and his willingness to let Collins become the scapegoat for the disaster but the new Sky Marshal quickly accelerated the Road to Victory and put it back onto its original timetable, silencing his political critics. The Road to Victory was now paved with success after success as the Mobile Infantry, supported by the Fleet, hopped from planet to planet. Dropping in force and smashing any Arachnid

infestation apart, entire planetary systems were secured in rapid succession, allowing the Sky Marshal's forces to spread across this region of the galaxy as they raced on towards their final target, Alpha Hydrae.

Quiet whispers that spoke of Arachnid infestations left almost entirely intact and planets scanned so quickly they could not possibly be certain an alien presence was absent were ignored. The Federation was destined for greatness and the Road to Victory was living proof of Mankind's ascendance in the galaxy. Once again, people began to talk of a Manifest Destiny. The ships of the Fleet jumped from system to system, dropping Mobile Infantry squads and then transporting them to the next target with well-practised ease. Alpha Hydrae loomed ever closer and, for the first time, probes could be launched to scan the alien system. The Arachnid's home planet was soon identified. Now the general population had a new name to target with their vengeance and dreams of galactic conquest.

Klendathu.

During this period of time, Dienes was hard at work on the Homefront as well as the ever expanding frontline. Even as the line of human control in the galaxy was redrawn almost every day, the Sky Marshal collected the resources of the Federation and funnelled them into the greatest military machine Mankind had ever created. New warships were launched from Earth orbit every week while factories on all the colony worlds began churning out weapons, equipment and vehicles. Most importantly, vast recruiting drives for all three arms of SICON military service were initiated, boosting the manpower available and permitting the creation of the now infamous light armour troopers of the Invasion Companies.

This drive, that effectively placed the entire Federation on a war footing, had just one aim – Sky Marshal Dienes realised that if he wanted the invasion of Klendathu to end the entire conflict, he would need to deliver a force so powerful, so overwhelming, that the Arachnids would be eradicated within hours. What was surprising was that so few civilians and citizens realised just how much money was being spent and how many people were being recruited. Regular FedNet broadcasts continued to paint the Road to Victory as a foregone conclusion.

Dienes was no fool and was at least somewhat aware of the risks he was taking with the Road to Victory. While he was confident that the Fleet could protect supply lines as the Mobile Infantry raced across the galaxy, he was less sure of their stability if the fighting on Klendathu became a protracted battle rather than quick extermination. Thus, it was essential that enough firepower was massed in Klendathu orbit at zero hour to ensure a holocaust on the alien world that no bug could escape. Dienes believed the entire operation could be completed in less than twenty four hours from the first drop to the last bug dead.

THE KLENDATHU INVASION

The arrival of the *Jutland* in the Alpha Hydrae system heralded the beginning of what would be the greatest battle yet fought between human and Arachnid. Within moments, dozens more spatial anomalies resolved themselves into the rest of the Federation Fleet, bringing the vast host of ships and their precious cargo of troopers into the vicinity of Klendathu. This armada was ready for any eventuality – space superiority assured by the might of dreadnoughts and frigates while landing boats were fully capable of dropping thousands of troopers to the planet surface within minutes. The *Bannockburn* and *Antioch* were specifically outfitted with command and communications equipment while the *Antietam* and *Shiloh* had been reconfigured to provide fire support to the planetary surface from orbit. The proud flagship of the flotilla was the *Cold Harbor*, serving as a supervising command hub and the personal transport for Sky Marshal Dienes.

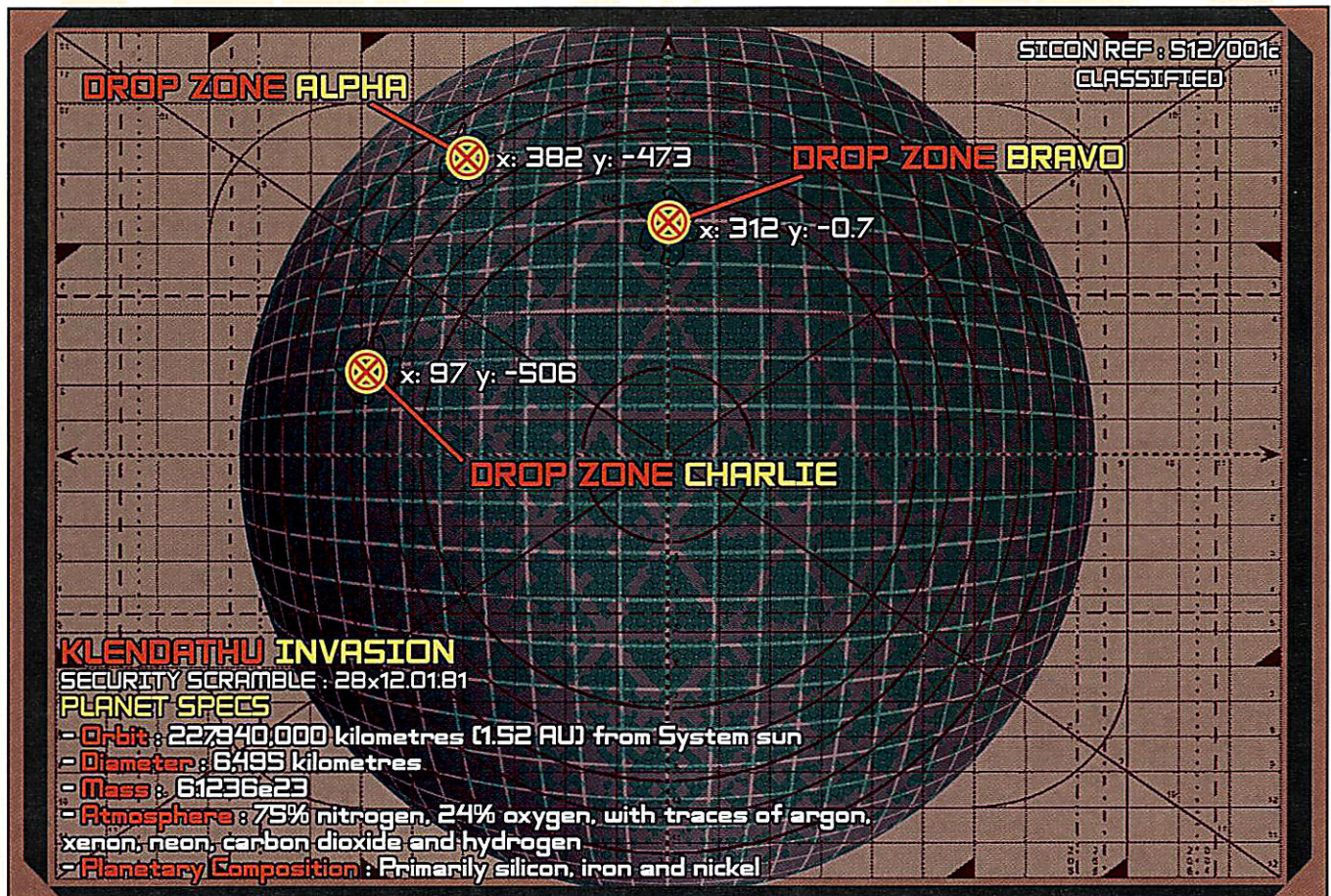
On board landing boats, Mobile Infantry were hurriedly mobilising and preparing for the drop. The inexperience of the Invasion Companies was telling next to veteran Marauder and power suit platoons – recruits rushed onto their landing boats in a state of barely suppressed nerves and excitement while veterans entered drop capsules with practised ease. Morale was high as the light armour troopers of the Invasion Companies

realised that in mere moments, they would be facing real combat and real enemies for the first time.

Reaction to the Fleet entering low orbit around Klendathu was immediate. As Military Intelligence had predicted, Arachnid planetary defences responded with glowing arcs of bug plasma. Hurlled from the surface by plasma bugs, the emissions carved distinctive blue trails of energy through the atmosphere as they climbed toward the Fleet.

While the bulk of the first wave would be made up of the Invasion Companies aboard landing boats, drop capsules were launched to carry elite power armour troopers toward the planet surface at incredible velocity with the aim of securing initial beachheads. Exhilarated light armour troopers were now experiencing their first actual drop into a live combat zone as they plummeted through the atmosphere, morale buoyed up by an unshakeable belief that the battle before them would be over quickly with decisive victory.

The first Mobile Infantry casualties of the invasion were suffered as their forces dropped towards the surface of Klendathu, before a single trooper had touched the ground. Under increasingly intensive fire from the plasma bugs below, one Marauder company was annihilated as it descended in drop capsules and several platoons of light armour troopers were vaporised



BRIEFING 12-20-02-HLN, MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, COLONEL MAHINSSON

WELCOME, GENTLEMEN. THIS BRIEFING IS INTENDED TO FAMILIARISE YOU WITH ALL ASPECTS OF THE INVASION. FOR MANY OF YOU THIS IS THE FIRST TIME YOU HAVE BEEN PRESENTED WITH THE BIG PICTURE, AS IT WERE. I'LL PROVIDE THE OVERVIEW NOW AND MEET WITH YOU ALL INDIVIDUALLY TO DISCUSS THE ROLES OF YOUR OWN DEPARTMENTS WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

DUE TO THE EXCELLENT TURNAROUND OF ANALYSIS, MILITARY INTELLIGENCE HAS BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN THE PROGRESS OF THE ROAD TO VICTORY CAMPAIGN. INDEED, WE CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT OUR RAPID EVALUATION OF PLANETARY SYSTEMS AND POTENTIAL INFESTATION SITES HAS ALLOWED BOTH FLEET AND MI TO CONCENTRATE ON HIGH VALUE TARGETS AND AVOID THOSE WITH LITTLE OR NO INTEREST TO US. IN TURN, THIS HAS SHAVED OFF NEARLY TWO MONTHS FROM THE SKY MARSHAL'S ORIGINAL TIMETABLE FOR THE ROAD TO VICTORY. NOW WE ARE IN A POSITION TO STRIKE AT THE HEART OF THE ARACHNIDS BEFORE THEY CAN MAKE ANY SERIOUS DEFENCE PREPARATIONS - LOGISTICS AND PROCUREMENT HAVE HAD TO WORK HARD TO COMPLETE THEIR QUOTAS! NEVERTHELESS, WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED ALL ASSETS WILL BE IN PLACE WHEN THE FLEET REACHES KLENDATHU ORBIT. SO, LET US LOOK AT THE PRIMARY TARGETS.

KLENDATHU'S SUN IS SIMILAR TO TERRA'S SOL, THOUGH LARGER AND OLDER. ORBITED BY SEVEN PLANETS, IT GIVES OFF AN EXTREME AMOUNT OF RADIATION FOR A YELLOW STAR, THOUGH WE PROJECT ITS MORE HARMFUL EMISSIONS ARE WEAK ENOUGH BY THE TIME THEY REACH KLENDATHU

ITSELF TO CAUSE LITTLE OR NO HARM TO EXPOSED HUMANS. KLENDATHU ITSELF HAS TWO MOONS, DUBBED CENTIPAE AND MILLIAPAE. THESE SATELLITES ARE NATURAL IN ORIGIN AND UNINHABITED.

THE SURFACE OF KLENDATHU IS DRY AND BARREN FROM POLE TO POLE ACCORDING TO REMOTE SENSORS AND OBSERVATION. XENO-STUDIES HAS PROPOSED THE POSSIBILITY OF A CONSIDERABLE UNDERGROUND ECOSYSTEM PRESENT BENEATH KLENDATHU'S SURFACE, NEEDED TO SUPPORT A SPECIES AS RAVENOUS AS THE ARACHNIDS. REPEATED PROBES INTO THE SYSTEM HAVE REVEALED NO SUCH ECOLOGY AND I AM THUS HAPPY TO REPORT THAT THERE IS IN FACT A VERY SMALL POPULATION OF ARACHNIDS PRESENT ON KLENDATHU. YES, THERE MAY BE A LARGER CONTINGENT OF STORED, DORMANT EGGS BUT THOSE WILL BE EASILY DESTROYED AFTER THE INITIAL ASSAULT WHEN WE CLEAR THE WAY FOR A NERVE GAS STRIKE AGAINST THE ARACHNID'S UNDERGROUND NESTS.

AS AN ASIDE, AN INTERESTING POSSIBILITY WAS RAISED DURING OUR CLOSING INTERVIEW WITH XENO-STUDIES ON THIS MATTER. WE HAVE IN THE PAST DISCUSSED THE POTENTIAL TO CAPTURE ADVANCED ARACHNID FORMS FOR STUDY AND IT MIGHT WELL BE POSSIBLE TO SELECT AN ATTACK REGION FOR ISOLATION. WE CAN ENSURE THE CHOSEN ZONE IS CONTAINED AND INDIGENOUS INHABITANTS QUARANTINED FOR TRANSPORT BEFORE THE GAS PHASE OF OPERATION RIGHTEOUS EXTERMINATION. THIS MAY RESULT IN HIGH CASUALTIES WITHIN THE UNIT ASSIGNED TO THIS MISSION BUT GIVEN THE OTHERWISE LIGHT LOSSES EXPECTED ON KLENDATHU, WE FEEL THE

NUMBERS ARE WELL WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS.

MOVING ON, THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE IS QUITE SIMILAR TO TERRAN NORM. KLENDATHU'S ATMOSPHERE IS MORE STABLE THAN EARTH'S, WHICH IS LIKELY DUE TO A GREATER MIX OF NOBLE GASES AND A MUCH WIDER IONOSPHERE SPREAD BUFFERING LOWER LEVELS OF AIR CLOSER TO THE SURFACE. INITIAL RESEARCH INTO KLENDATHU SUGGESTED TURBULENT WEATHER DUE TO THE EXISTENCE OF TWO MOONS. A CLOSER EXAMINATION BY MILITARY INTELLIGENCE, HEADED BY MYSELF, HAS SHOWN THIS SUPPOSITION TO BE UNTRUE.

FAR FROM BEING A PLANET-WIDE RACE, THE ARACHNIDS ARE CONCENTRATED IN A RELATIVELY SMALL AREA, PROBABLY BECAUSE THE SOFTER ROCK HERE ALLOWS EASIER TUNNELLING. THIS, OF COURSE, PLAYS RIGHT INTO OUR HANDS. WE WILL LAND OUR FORCES IN DROP ZONES ALPHA, BRAVO AND CHARLIE, EFFECTIVELY RINGING THE ARACHNIDS AND ALLOWING US TO METHODICALLY WIPE THEM OUT IN A MATTER OF HOURS. THIS WILL BE ACHIEVED PRIMARILY BY THE INVASION COMPANIES. INDIVIDUAL POWER SUIT AND MARAUDER UNITS WILL BE USED IN A PURELY SUPPORTING ROLE OR BE OTHERWISE TASKED TO ERADICATE SMALLER NESTS LOCATED OUTSIDE THE MAIN DROP ZONE AREAS.

I HAVE NOTED THAT MORE THAN ONE OF YOU SITTING AROUND THIS TABLE HAS QUESTIONED THE SKY MARSHAL'S CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INVASION COMPANIES. ALLOW ME TO TAKE A MOMENT TO ALLAY YOUR FEARS. IT IS TRUE OUR PROJECTIONS DO REPORT THAT FAR FEWER MI CAN BE LANDED ON KLENDATHU

WITH A FAIR EXPECTATION OF SUCCESS IN ALL MISSION OBJECTIVES. HOWEVER, IT IS A FOOLISH INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVE WHO DOES NOT EXPECT A FEW SURPRISES WHEN BATTLE BEGINS! WE MUST THEREFORE ATTACK KLENDATHU IN OVERWHELMING FORCE, REGARDLESS OF HOW WEAK THE PRIMARY TARGETS MAY APPEAR. WE MUST EXPECT SOME VARIANCE IN OUR PROJECTIONS - WHY, THERE COULD BE DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF EXPECTED BUGS IN EACH DROP ZONE! WHILE WE COULD POTENTIALLY LEAVE THIS TO THE POWER SUIT COMPANIES, CONSIDER THE INVASION COMPANIES TO BE A LITTLE ADDED INSURANCE.

BY REMOVING POWER SUITS AND OTHER ADVANCED EQUIPMENT FROM THESE TROOPERS' STANDARD ISSUE, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GAIN MASSIVE SAVINGS IN BOTH SUPPLY AND TRAINING. WITH INCREASED RECRUITMENT PROCEEDING ACCORDING TO OUR ORIGINAL PROJECTIONS, THE RESOURCES WE HAVE SAVED HAVE ALLOWED US TO ABSORB THE HUGE NUMBER OF NEW RECRUITS WITH LITTLE TROUBLE. THE DOUBLE-EDGED SAVING IS THAT BY REMOVING THE POWER SUITS, WE HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO DRASTICALLY CUT THE AMOUNT OF TIME NEEDED TO TRAIN AN MI TROOPER. ONE-FOR-ONE IT TAKES ABOUT HALF THE TIME AND RESOURCES TO TRAIN A LIGHT ARMOUR TROOPER AS IT DOES A CAP TROOPER. HOWEVER, THE ECONOMIES OF SCALE HAVE ALLOWED US TO REALISE FAR GREATER GAINS THAN THIS AND I AM PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT OVER THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND FULLY-TRAINED TROOPERS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO DEPLOY INTO THE DROP ZONES IN THE FIRST PHASE OF INVASION.

THE OBJECTIONS RAISED AGAINST THE INVASION COMPANIES TEND TO FOLLOW ONE OF TWO LINES. FIRST, IT

HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE ENTIRE CONCEPT OF THE INVASION COMPANIES TAKES THE MOBILE OUT OF MOBILE INFANTRY. SECOND, THE LIFE EXPECTANCY OF A LIGHT ARMOUR TROOPER WHEN DIRECTLY FACED WITH ARACHNIDS IS EXPONENTIALLY LOWER THAN THAT OF A CAP TROOPER. BOTH OF THESE ARE, IN FACT, FALSE.

THE INVASION COMPANIES ARE INDEED MOBILE - NOTHING HAS FUNDAMENTALLY CHANGED, AS IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO ALTER THIS MOST BASIC OF TENETS OF OUR MILITARY. WHAT WE HAVE DONE IS CHANGED THE EMPHASIS. POWER SUIT AND MARAUDER PLATOONS ALL FEATURE PERSONNEL TRAINED AND EQUIPPED WITH INDIVIDUAL JUMP PACKS. WITH THE INVASION COMPANIES, WE INTRODUCE A NEW CONCEPT. THE INCREASED RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR THIS INVASION HAVE ALLOWED US TO CREATE A SOPHISTICATED TRANSPORT NETWORK UTILISING STANDARD VIKINGS AND SKYHOOKS. IN THIS WAY WE HAVE CHANGED THE FOCUS OF MOBILITY FROM A SINGLE PLATOON ABLE TO JUMP SEVERAL MILES IN MINUTES TO BEING ABLE TO DEPLOY AND RE-DEPLOY AN ENTIRE SUPER-SIZED COMPANY - TO ANY SINGLE POINT ON THE ENTIRE PLANET! THIS ALLOWS US TO POSITION A CRUSHING WEIGHT OF FIREPOWER IN PRECISE LOCATIONS IN REACTION TO ANYTHING THE ENEMY ATTEMPTS. COUNTERATTACKS ON THEIR PART WILL SIMPLY BECOME A NEW BATTLE LINE WITHIN MINUTES.

AS FOR CRITICISMS OF THE INVASION COMPANIES' EQUIPMENT, I FIRST HAVE TO POINT OUT THAT THESE TROOPERS ARE USING THE SAME MORITA ASSAULT RIFLE AS THE POWER SUIT PLATOONS - THEY THUS HAVE EXACTLY THE SAME BASIC FIREPOWER. IT IS TRUE THAT THE FLAK ARMOUR WORN BY THE INVASION COMPANIES CAN NEVER EQUAL THE PROTECTION OF A POWER

SUIT BUT THE LARGER SQUAD SIZES OF THE NEW TROOPERS, AS WELL AS THE INCREASED NUMBER OF SQUADS THAT WILL TYPICALLY BE DEPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF ONE ANOTHER, MEANS THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT ANY ARACHNID ATTACK WILL GET CLOSE ENOUGH FOR THIS TO BE A FACTOR. PUT SIMPLY, EACH SQUAD WILL HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF KICKING OUT SO MUCH MORITA FIRE THAT NO BUG SWARM WILL BE CAPABLE OF REACHING IT. ADDED TO THIS WILL BE INCREASED ACCESS TO ATOMICS AND OTHER ADVANCED SUPPORTING WEAPONRY. GIVEN PREPARATION AND ENOUGH DISTANCE, WE PROJECT THAT A SINGLE INVASION COMPANY CAN ACTIVELY ATTACK A BUG SWARM OF ANY SIZE WITH A CERTAINTY OF SUCCESS.

THROUGHOUT THE OPERATION, THE FLEET WILL BE KEPT IN LOW ORBIT IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE TRANSPORT NETWORK OF THE INVASION COMPANIES, AS WELL AS ENSURE ACCURATE LANDINGS IN ALL THREE DROP ZONES. THOUGH THERE IS A MINOR ELEMENT OF RISK FROM LAUNCHED BUG PLASMA, I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT IT WILL BE RANDOM AND LIGHT.

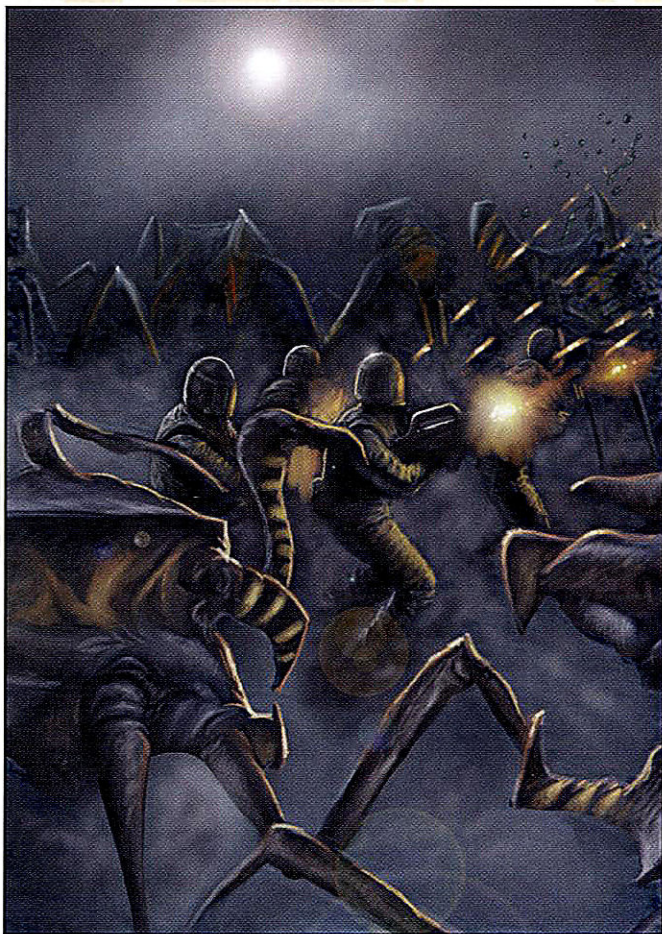
I WISH TO PASS ON THE SKY MARSHAL'S CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL DEPARTMENT HEADS. IT IS MILITARY INTELLIGENCE THAT HAS MADE THE SUCCESSFUL PLANNING OF THIS INVASION POSSIBLE. TRUE, IT WILL BE THE MOBILE INFANTRY AND FLEET WHO GET ALL THE GLORY ON THE DAY BUT WE ALL KNOW WHERE THE REAL HEROES OF THE FEDERATION WORK, EH? IT IS SOLELY BECAUSE OF US THAT THIS BATTLE HAS BEEN WON BEFORE A SINGLE TROOPER LANDS ON KLENDATHU.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION. I'LL BE SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS WITH ALL OF YOU OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS, STARTING WITH STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND THEN FLEET INTEGRATION.

along with their landing boats. Though tragic, these minor losses were almost irrelevant in the grand scale of the invasion and it was an unfortunate fact that even random fire from the surface would eventually hit something. Military Intelligence remained confident that planetary defences were incapable of any co-ordinated attack on the Fleet.

Minutes later, the plasma attacks claimed their first victim amongst the orbiting Fleet craft. Surging up from Klendathu, a blast of scintillating blue plasma hit the *Lionheart* amidships, melting straight through the hull and burning into the interior structure of the craft. Those few crewmen who survived the plasma onslaught were killed by decompression as the remaining atmosphere vented into space. Twisted and fused pieces of metal from the shattered ship began to impact on nearby craft in the densely-packed flight order and Fleet captains were forced into breaking formation to avoid further harm to their own vessels. Though a surprising loss, Military Intelligence officers judged it as acceptable at this point, even as the plasma continued to intensify and become more accurate.

As the last elements of the first wave left orbit, the *Manchuria* became the second vessel to be lost. The direct hit that struck it was not enough to cripple or destroy the vessel but it did succeed in reducing the starboard engine to slag. As the vast ship



careened out of control, it rammed the *Yom Kippur*, destroying both ships and losing all hands on board to the burning heat of the explosions or the cold void of space. With more and more plasma blasts arcing up from the surface to gouge great furrows across Federation ships, leaving trails glowing with red-hot metal and clouds of escaping atmosphere, many Fleet captains did not wait for orders but took evasive action on their own initiative. The carefully arranged formation broke down completely.

Marauder and power suit platoons were the first to hit dirt, scything through token resistance present in the landing areas. By the time the Vikings touched down, veteran troopers were already on the bounce towards Drop Zone perimeters, scouting and securing the outlying regions. Using plasma charges and demolition gear, power suit troopers collapsed what tunnel entrances they encountered but in Drop Zone Bravo the Hellfire Marauder platoon reported such an unexpectedly large number of tunnels that Military Intelligence concluded the area must be riddled with a natural cave network, as the previously estimated numbers of bugs present would have no need of such an extensive arrangement.

At the secure landing sites, Invasion Company troopers poured out of their landing boats like a tidal wave of humanity. As well as the mass of recruits, specialist platoons had also landed in this wave – power suited platoons of combat engineers set about constructing ammunition dumps and basic fortifications at Drop Zone Charlie while ‘bug hunter’ SICON agents blessed with mental powers of perception moved out with the Invasion Companies to track down and eliminate elusive concentrations of Arachnids. Modified Marauder suits with specialist communications equipment came down on board Slingshots rather than being risked in drop capsules, providing mobile command posts and information relays for company commanders. Capture teams were also brought down, small bands of troopers and SICON scientists armed with chemical and non-lethal weaponry to hunt and capture any Arachnid stragglers they could catch for later examination in SICON labs.

Supremely confident of victory, the Invasion Companies paused only for cursory organisation before beginning the real offensive onto Arachnid-held soil. Showing little real battlefield discipline, troopers banded together into dense mobs and rushed forth to secure the areas surrounding the drop sites, immediately encountering fierce but erratic resistance from warrior bugs that had been missed by the outbound veteran platoons. Charging from hiding places among rock formations or out of gulches in the broken landscape, warrior bugs threw themselves recklessly at troopers. Faced for the first time with an angry warrior, many green recruits simply froze in fear or panicked and ran. As a result, these rogue Arachnids managed to both cause casualties and hamper the advance before they were put down by overwhelming firepower. In Drop Zone

Arachnid tunnel networks on Klendathu stretched far deeper than Military Intelligence had suspected. Although no living human has seen what might lie in these deep tunnel systems, scientists theorised in the wake of the Klendathu disaster that on planets the bugs have inhabited for long periods of time, 'tunnel highways' might be excavated – immense tunnels stretching across entire continents, within which even huge creatures like plasma bugs could be moved rapidly from location to location without struggling through the labyrinthine smaller networks created by worker bugs.

Charlie, Werfel's Wolves lost their captain to the savage assault of a loitering warrior bug, throwing his subordinates into confusion for minutes and stalling the entire company from making serious progress. Events like this were repeated across all three Drop Zones as troopers pushed forwards but the seemingly random and uncoordinated Arachnid presence was confirming Military Intelligence's analysis of the bugs' defences and giving no real cause for concern.

Deploying their atomic assets with abandon, the Invasion Companies still advancing now began to engage and destroy their priority targets – plasma bugs hammering the Fleet. The lumbering, living artillery pieces and their protective swarms of warriors were easy targets for Pee-wee munitions and all orbital attacks from the Drop Zones were rapidly quelled in nuclear flame. In Drop Zone Bravo, the few plasma bugs not annihilated in this first wave of attacks were sighted being hustled into yawning cave mouths by their warrior minders, apparently aware of the impending danger to their charges, and Military Intelligence issued wide-scale orders to collapse the tunnel mouths with demolition charges.

Despite this success, strategic analysis by the command ships above was revealing a worrying twist – even with the defences in the three Drop Zones nullified, the bulk of the fire from the planet surface continued unabated. Not only were the surviving plasma bugs from those regions being redeployed by the Arachnids with remarkable speed, other concentrations were being detected further out. Attempts to eliminate these distant clusters with fire support from orbit was proving equally difficult as the broken terrain of the planet surface hid a myriad of valleys and ravines for the bugs to take shelter in.

As the dust settled around the charred corpses of plasma bugs in all three Drop Zones, SICON special talents in charge of

monitoring subterranean bug movements began to report what looked to be a mass retreat by swarms in the tunnel networks below. Morale rose as troopers on the ground saw the contrails from the secondary wave of Vikings descending through the atmosphere and Military Intelligence judged the situation to be safe enough for specialist capture teams to be deployed into Drop Zone Charlie.

With sporadic fighting still evident around the perimeters of Federation-held ground, the capture teams entered the tunnel networks to flush out potential prey. As the teams progressed deeper into the deserted tunnels, the quality of communications to the surface rapidly degraded until only garbled reports were reaching company commanders above. In the dark and alien world they found stretching for miles down, far beyond even the enhanced senses of the bughunter special talents, the capture teams realised they were on their own and running virtually blind with their inadequate sensor equipment.

Within a minute of the specialist teams dropping out of contact, evidence of what fate befell them was made starkly clear. Special talents reported a huge resurgence of bug activity in the tunnel networks. A sudden rush of warrior bugs began to boil out of tunnel entrances in all three Drop Zones. Even as the secondary wave touched down at the ad-hoc base camps around the landing sites, the Invasion Companies of the first wave were finding themselves engaged by swarms from multiple directions simultaneously and some outlying platoons were overrun almost immediately.

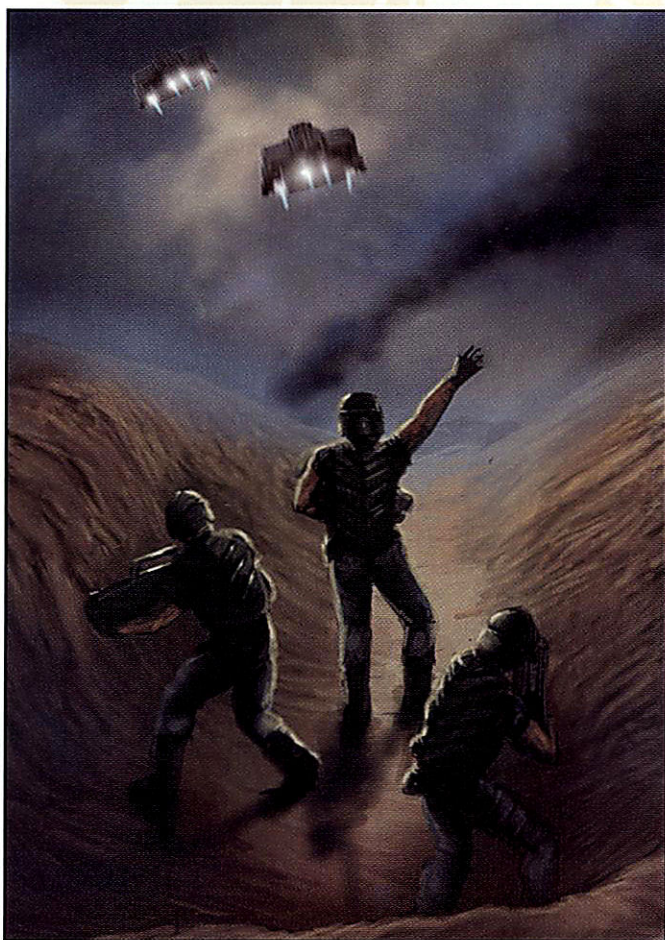
Even as the new wave hurried over the arid landscape to reinforce the embattled troopers, warrior bug swarms continued to escalate to far larger numbers than Military Intelligence had calculated. Warrior bugs were now emerging in the outlying regions of the Drop Zones and gathering into huge swarms before moving in toward the landing areas, with the obvious intention of blitzing their way through the confused Invasion Companies to the landing boats. The veteran platoons deployed to the perimeters of Drop Zone Alpha were the first to report this activity but initially the information was ignored by Invasion Company captains who found themselves too busy dealing with the enemy currently facing them. Some Military Intelligence officers actually refuted the information outright as it conflicted with their predictions about Arachnid numbers on the planet. Though lacking numbers and resources, the veteran platoons began to engage oncoming bug swarms to whittle down their numbers but the vast waves proved single-

MI DOES THE DYING, FLEET
JUST DOES THE FLYING.

mindless and unstoppable in their purpose. Entire platoons simply disappeared in the space of minutes.

The Arachnid hordes ploughed into the densely packed and unprepared Invasion Company troopers of Drop Zone Alpha with horrific results. Suddenly outnumbered and outmanoeuvred by an enemy that knew the terrain far better than they did, troopers often responded with panic, spraying fire at their assailants with no thought of ammunition conservation or accuracy. This wasteful behaviour, combined with a lack of any appreciable training in where to hit a warrior, resulted in vast amounts of wasted firepower and thousands of lives being lost. In many cases, troopers tried to advance directly over the 'corpses' of warrior bugs they had brought down with fire only to be torn apart by the crippled aliens.

Drop Zone Bravo was faring even worse. The surrounding terrain was particularly rugged and difficult for humans to traverse and the sheer weight of warrior reinforcements was breaking the Invasion Companies into fragments forced apart by ravines and ridges. These natural barriers funnelled the Mobile Infantry into dead ends and Arachnids pouring out from tunnels and scuttling down canyon walls easily overran isolated pockets of troopers.



A Close Shave

Posthumous honours were awarded to the valiant crew of the *Vogel*, a command and control frigate that positioned itself between incoming plasma fire and the Sky Marshal's own vessel, the *Cold Harbor*. Although not immediately destroyed by the superheated emission, the *Vogel* was vindictively blasted apart by further fire from the Arachnids as the *Cold Harbor* quickly retreated to a safe distance.

Up to this point, Drop Zone Charlie had suffered the least of the three regions as the Invasion Companies took advantage of more favourable terrain to set up kill zones. An entire flood of warrior bug reinforcements was abruptly cut off when a bughunter talent located one of the major tunnel routes they were using and Kleiner's Jackals platoon used demolition charges to collapse it, killing dozens of aliens below and stalling the endless tide. However, even as the Arachnid tunnelling assault faltered, the skies began to fill with the flitting forms of hoppers and soon swarms of the flying bugs had been sighted in all three drop zones, mainly harrying power suit and Marauder platoons on the bounce to force the veterans to stay on the ground.

Even with the third wave of troopers, the mounting death toll was daunting. The primary invasion force of over three hundred thousand troopers had been transported from orbit directly into contested regions within twenty minutes, which would have been an astounding validation of the Sky Marshal's planning had not those men been suffering casualties at an equally extraordinary rate. From just this initial assault some Invasion Companies had been reduced to half strength or worse, mostly in Drop Zones Alpha and Bravo, while power suit and Marauder platoons found themselves under heavy suppression as they tried to move further out from the perimeter.

Engaged in bitter combat with swarms of hoppers, Marauder platoons pushed free of the Arachnid containment in Drop Zone Bravo only to transmit reports of something even worse to the company commanders. Yet more massed swarms of warrior bugs were streaming toward the Drop Zones, with Fleet assets confirming fresh and unexpected hotspots of Arachnid activity appearing across the planet surface to converge on Federation forces. With so many incoming hostiles, the zones became entirely encircled and within each noose the endless streams of warriors from below continued to butcher Invasion Companies. In Drop Zone Alpha the situation was so dire that Marauder and power suit platoons still in contact were being

called back to support their light armour comrades from the overwhelming hordes. The officers on the ground knew the landing sites were their lifeline to the Fleet – if those fell, they would be entirely isolated.

The battle line faltered further in Drop Zone Alpha as a spearhead of warrior bugs drove through a gap in the defensive coverage left by the loss of a company in the initial drop. The swarming Bugs nearly split the Mobile Infantry presence in two, halted only by Loewe's Lions who successfully broke the assault through their sheer determination and heroism, using grenades and flamers to hold the enemy off. In Drop Zone Bravo, large numbers of Tanker Bugs began to emerge from the tunnels riddling the rock to assault isolated bands of Mobile Infantry corralled in the treacherous terrain, burning them out of their hiding places with searing flame. Tankers also began to emerge from *under* Mobile Infantry positions in Drop Zone Charlie, collapsing tunnels to drag infantrymen from the surface into the subterranean network. Invasion Company captains across all three zones could no longer dispute the sheer overwhelming enemy presence they now faced.

Twenty-six minutes from the first drop, the command staff came to a decision that was becoming increasingly hard to delay any further. Undeniably, Arachnid resistance was not just heavier in terms of numbers and troop strength than expected but they were acting with alarming co-ordination and an uncanny knack for exploiting tactical conditions on the ground before the Mobile Infantry were even aware of them. With no end to Arachnid reinforcements in sight, the Invasion Companies could not conceivably survive as a fighting force

for much longer. With a heavy heart, Sky Marshal Dienes now ordered the General Retreat. It was too little, too late – on the ground, many company commanders found that whatever the Sky Marshal's orders might be, there was no way to implement them and no way back to the landing boats. The Arachnids had encircled them, cut them off, outwitted and outfought them. The complete destruction of Sky Marshal Dienes's grand war machine had come.

CRISIS FOR MANKIND

Even as the Mobile Infantry on Klendathu began the desperate struggle back to their landing boats, the battered Fleet was also suffering heavy losses. With burning plasma still vomiting forth from the planetary surface, over a dozen capital ships had already been completely destroyed. A significant number of vessels had suffered heavy crew losses and crippling structural damage with only a few surviving completely unscathed. Engineering teams fought frantically to keep the raging fires and failing systems under control but so long as the Fleet remained in low orbit, they were merely delaying the inevitable.

Under this assault the determination of the Fleet captains began to crumble, above all as they realised that the Sky Marshal had ordered the General Retreat. Many vessels retreated out of low orbit to a prudent distance from the planetary surface, breaking what vague formation still existed in a rush to reach sanctuary from the burning plasma. A number of captains did hold their ground rather than desert the Mobile Infantry below but after the *Metzger* and *Torres* were reduced to slag, only the bravest and most foolhardy continued to hold orbit.

ARACHNID BROADCASTING

AS ARACHNID CONCENTRATIONS INCREASED ON THE SURFACE OF KLENDATHU, MI COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSMISSIONS CONTINUED TO DEGRADE WITH FRIGHTENING SPEED AND WITH NO DISCERNIBLE CAUSE. IT WAS LATER SUSPECTED THAT THE ARACHNID'S OWN COMMUNICATIONS WERE THE CAUSE OF THIS AND THE INTERFERENCE COMMS TROOPERS WERE PICKING UP ON THE GROUND WAS ACTUALLY ARACHNID BATTLE CHATTER OR BRAIN BUG TRANSMISSIONS OF SOME KIND. OTHER HYPOTHESES CLAIMED THE DEGRADATION WAS CAUSED BY MASSIVE SUBSPACE DISRUPTION FROM THE MENTAL ACTIVITY OF A QUEEN BUG, PERHAPS IN OPENING A PSYCHIC LINK TO OTHER ARACHNID COLONIES TO REQUEST AID OR SEND WARNINGS.

The remaining Fleet assets in place above Klendathu now attempted to lend aid to the beleaguered Invasion Companies with fire support but encountered serious obstacles. There were no discernible battle lines any more and no real way for Fleet officers to tell which side held which region as the two forces became intermingled. Attempts to co-ordinate with the troops on the ground to bring down pinpoint fire met with failure as transmission and signal quality began to degrade. Though the situation was getting desperate, fire control officers still balked at the idea of indiscriminate bombardment onto the Mobile Infantry below. All this time, the planetary defences continued their barrage and no respite from the withering hail of plasma seemed imminent.

The last of the Vikings were already departing the surface, fully loaded with demoralised Invasion Company troopers. The speed of their evacuation was down to the later deployment of the secondary and tertiary waves of the drop – these troopers simply had not had time to move far from the landing zone before the General Retreat was called. The primary wave had ceased to exist as a fighting force by this point and what few Invasion Companies remained were desperately battling their way towards the landing zones only to see Vikings take off in plumes of dust. As the craft ascended into the skies, pulsing plasma soared up after them and many were lost.

Further out, the remaining power suit and Marauder platoons were completely cut off from any hope of retrieval. The removal of the last Mobile Infantry concentrations by landing boat only served to further condemn the remaining troops on the ground, as the Arachnids were able to focus their forces on surviving pockets of resistance. The ravines of Drop Zone Bravo were systematically burned clean by tanker bugs as Invasion Companies were forced into predictable movements easily countered by the tunnelling aliens.

Fifty-seven minutes after the first drop, the General Retreat had been completed and yet thousands of Mobile Infantry were still on the planet surface. Over a hundred thousand men and women had died already, butchered by warrior and hoppers or incinerated by tanker bugs. Reports on the failed invasion later noted the lack of injured and wounded survivors – those who encountered the bugs either survived or died, a powerful testament to the ferocious efficiency of the enemy.

The Fleet had now pulled back to Klendathu's moon, Centipae, to regroup and prepare, safe from plasma fire. With the existing strategic plan in tatters, patchy communications coming from the planet's surface and Fleet officers clamouring for orders and direction, Sky Marshal Dienes had no choice other than to convene an emergency meeting with command staff and Military Intelligence officers to determine what steps they would take next. Processing all the information coming back from the assault confirmed horrifying statistics – not only were well over one hundred thousand men certified dead but



there were still approximately forty thousand Mobile Infantry troopers on the planet surface, facing overwhelming odds without outside support.

As the meeting progressed and the information was analysed by Military Intelligence and the Sky Marshal, Fleet communications officers were reporting increasing numbers of distress calls and emergency evac requests from the Mobile Infantry left behind. Again, the presence of communications disruption or interception capability on the part of the Arachnids was evident with many distress signals being garbled or entirely indecipherable and any attempts to pinpoint and track the positions of the survivors were largely futile. Despite the dire situation on the ground, the command staff continued to procrastinate and stall from making a decision. In these critical moments, the Sky Marshal and Military Intelligence advisors were simply out of contact and the entire Fleet was locked into inaction.

It took over an hour before Dienes' council finally came to a resolution and the Federation's finest finally began to carry out rescue operations, even as attrition rates on the ground continued to soar. The Sky Marshal emerged to order reconnaissance orbits of Klendathu to analyse the current situation on the surface and locate surviving Mobile Infantry

platoons without relying on the corrupted transmissions the Fleet was receiving. With morale low, Fleet captains were eager to seize any opportunity to get their crews back into action to do something positive and, in contrast to the headlong flight from Klendathu, they willingly turned back towards the planet to save the Mobile Infantry from certain death.

The surviving Invasion Companies were those that had moved quickly to take advantage of the terrain, ensconcing themselves in vantage points and setting up killing zones and bottlenecks for the approaching Arachnids. Pinned down by hostile attacks, they were unable to move and join other platoons for fear of making themselves vulnerable. At the same time, they could not afford to remain in one place for too long before the enemy amassed an overwhelming force against them or they simply ran out of ammunition. Equipped for a battle that was supposed to have been met with minimal resistance over a short timeframe, the Invasion Companies were simply not prepared for digging in and they lacked many essential fortifications and supplies.

The power suit and Marauder platoons were fairing somewhat better, their mobility allowing them to evade and harry the Arachnid forces over the broken terrain as they gathered to attack Invasion Company firebases. Lychenko's Lancers and the Hellfire Marauder platoon successfully banded together and broke numerous Arachnid cordons in Drop Zone Bravo, freeing hundreds of light armour troopers from the bugs' trap and establishing the strongest Mobile Infantry presence remaining on Klendathu. However, some of the more experienced and less altruistic captains realised at this point that the Invasion Companies had become more of a liability than an asset and they knew that Military Intelligence had likely forsaken any hope of getting all remaining light armour troopers off the surface. It would be the more valuable power suit and Marauder assets that would get lifted out, not green recruits. With this in mind, several platoons completely disengaged from battle and concentrated on total retreat, hoping to evade any further attack until retrieval.

This deadly game of cat and mouse continued over the course of another ninety minutes, with the Invasion Companies being slowly whittled down and the power suit platoons engaged in a guerrilla war they had never expected to fight. Patchy communications claimed more victims as several light armour trooper platoons stumbled obliviously over minefields while trying to pull back to the landing zones. In Drop Zone Alpha, a desperate Captain Vance ordered his platoon commanders to use their few remaining atomic warheads on their own troops as positions were overrun by a fresh resurgence of Warrior Bugs, assessing the sacrifice of a few troopers who were as good as dead anyway against the benefit of holding the enemy back for every vital minute they could gain.

SOMEONE MADE A BIG GODDAMN MISTAKE.

Watching the total chaos below, Military Intelligence finally processed the reconnaissance data being broadcast by the Fleet destroyers and TAC fighters orbiting Klendathu. The assessment concluded that the Sky Marshal should initiate fresh drops into specific areas where the Arachnid presence had proven least intense. The Mobile Infantry could fall back to these fresh recovery points with confidence that their objective would not be overrun by the time they got there. Priority was to be given to those Marauder and power suit platoons with whom Fleet comms officers had managed to maintain some level of communication with and who could be guided to the recovery points. The Invasion Companies would prove too unwieldy to evacuate with the few remaining Vikings while anyone out of communications was assumed to be dead already. Though no-one in the upper echelons outright stated it, this plan accepted that large numbers of the troopers still on the surface were beyond any chance of recovery.

Refuelled and rearmed, the Viking landing boats plummeted once more through the atmosphere of Klendathu, with a heavy curtain of chaff and other countermeasures protecting their descent. This tactic paid off as most of the small, fast-moving craft landed successfully at their designated locations which were rapidly secured. Yet the drop points proved to be *too* safe, so far away from the primary combat zones that many of the roving power suit and Marauder platoons were unable to reach them. The few units that could make their way for retrieval rapidly built up very strong firebases around the Vikings but this was of no help to platoons encircled by warriors or unwilling to move for fear of walking into further surprise attacks and Arachnid cave-ins.

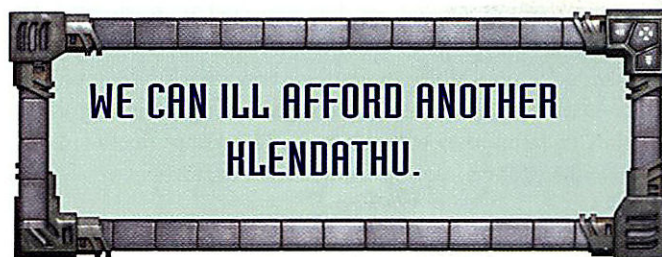
Sky Marshal Dienes was desperately grasping for any sort of victory or breakthrough he could get and though only some five thousand troopers had been able to reach the retrieval points, the comparative success of the new beachheads was just what he was looking for. Encouraged by this minor win, Military Intelligence boldly began to plan for renewed drops to the surface to reinforce and expand the beachheads. The command staff even went so far with their optimism as to prepare for a fresh offensive sweep across the surface of Klendathu, plotting the perimeters and paths that the recovered Invasion Companies from the secondary and tertiary waves would need to follow in order to turn this defeat into the victory that Dienes had originally predicted.

Supplies and fortifications brought down by the Vikings had provided the new landing zones with a secure perimeter of defences ringed by anti-personnel mines and Reliant gun platforms. Even as many of the light armour troopers that had been rescued from the General Retreat were being prepared for Dienes' new grand plan of attack, these defences were put to the test. Arachnid swarms began to appear under and around the retrieval points, held back only by the sheer volume of fire from weapons platforms, Marauders and power suit platoons. As with Drop Zone Charlie, the Arachnids tried to crack open these resilient firebases by tunnelling under and then up but engineer squads with flamers and plasma charges were waiting, littering the uppermost tunnels with mines and blasting key intersections into rubble. Thwarted, the bugs then brought their own artillery to bear, raining comets of fiery blue plasma onto the Mobile Infantry. Pinned down and with Arachnid numbers continuing to escalate again, the fresh assault was stymied before it had even truly begun and troopers on the ground were demoralised by yet another costly failure. Combat efficiency was dropping and officers began to request retrieval before the enemy threat overwhelmed their units.

Despite poor morale among the platoons pitted against the bugs, Sky Marshal Dienes resolutely ordered probing attacks against the Arachnid cordon to try and break through but every such endeavour met with tragedy. Once outside the secured area, troopers could not even rely on the ground staying stable beneath their feet and became the focus of heavy fire from plasma bugs nearby. Seeing that absolutely no progress was being made, the Sky Marshal finally relented and ordered the second retreat of the invasion, ordering the remaining Mobile Infantry at retrieval points to board their landing boats and head for orbit. Behind them, they left empty bases with explosives rigged to detonate as the Arachnid swarms finally overran the defences.

The faster ships of the Fleet were scrambled to collect the shuttles as they rose out of Klendathu's upper atmosphere, shielding the escaping craft with curtains of fresh countermeasures. As the transports scooped up Vikings and Slingshots from their holding formation, communications officers were alerted to numerous ships that were in completely the wrong location. Either interference or incompetence had resulted in their receiving incorrect co-ordinates and before anything could be done to reverse the mistake, plasma from the surface burned them to floating wreckage. Once all those who could be saved were retrieved, the Fleet pulled back once more to avoid further losses to plasma bugs.

It was evident enough that no further retrieval attempts could be made into such a concentration of hostile forces. Most of the Mobile Infantry not yet recovered were almost certainly dead and if they were not, nothing could be done for them anyway. Faced with having to return home with nothing to show for his plans than thousands of dead men and women,



Sky Marshal Dienes took the difficult decision to begin orbital bombardment of Klendathu, in a final bid to inflict some sort of damage on the aliens and make the sacrifice of so many troopers worthwhile. Fleet assets began to rain down a torrent of missiles, munitions and energy discharges in such weight that even with defensive fire destroying dozens of projectiles, enough got through to pound the surface. While the barrage likely claimed the lives of human stragglers still marooned on Klendathu, it also finally suppressed the plasma bugs that had caused so much ruin and disruption. Arachnid casualties were light but in the face of such firepower they were forced to retreat back underground.

With the constant stream of plasma from the surface faltering and finally evaporating, Fleet captains were able to ease up on the bombardment and return to orbit, launching TAC fighters into the atmosphere to fly over the surface on recon patrols. Even after the blistering fire they had dropped on Klendathu, some were still hopeful that they might locate and recover more Mobile Infantry survivors but reports soon came back that Arachnid swarms were once again emerging from their tunnel networks, massing in preparation for any further drops the Fleet might attempt. Without hesitation, the bombardment was restarted, annihilating those bugs caught on the surface but still leaving the swarms underground largely untouched. The futility of such activity was rapidly becoming clear.

Many of the damaged vessels in the Fleet requested leave to return to battle station Ticonderoga for maintenance and refuelling, as there was no apparent need for their continued presence. With permission granted by the Sky Marshal, along with priority status for the attention of the engineering crews at Ticonderoga, these ships began to jump out of the system. Unfortunately, damage sustained during action, or possibly subspace disruption from Klendathu, resulted in four ships never arriving at their destination, lost somewhere in transit. This additional disaster, overshadowed by the defeat at Klendathu, was only discovered once the rest of the Fleet had retreated from Klendathu to find some ships had not reported at Ticonderoga.

Those vessels of the Fleet not suffering critical damage or systems failures were able to reform and regroup under the cover of the orbital barrage, re-establishing communications and beginning the long, painful process of registering the surviving Mobile Infantry. With no urgent requirement for decisions pressing

OPERATION ANACONDA

DURING THE ARACHNID ASSAULT ON JANUS VII, SEVERAL PATHFINDER PLATOONS WERE USED IN SPECIAL OPERATIONS, TYPICALLY ARMED RECONNAISSANCE SWEEPS USED TO LOCATE HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF BUG SWARMS FOR ATTACK BY MASSES FLEET ASSETS. MUCH OF THIS WAS INITIALLY DONE BY ILLUMINATING KEY ARACHNID SWARMS WITH PULSING INFRARED MARKER BEAMS WHICH WERE INVISIBLE TO THE NAKED EYE BUT DETECTABLE BY TAC FIGHTERS AND BOMBERS. HOWEVER, REPEATED ATTACKS UPON PATHFINDER POSITIONS SOON REVEALED THAT THE BUGS HAD THEIR OWN METHODS OF DETECTION.

LATER MISSIONS INVOLVED PATHFINDER SQUADS PASSING ON CO-ORDINATES TO FLEET CRAFT AND THEN REMAINING IN THE AREA TO MAKE CORRECTIONS AS THE ARACHNIDS MOVED. THIS WAS A DECIDEDLY LOW-TECH APPROACH BUT IT PROVED SUCCESSFUL, WITH THE PATHFINDERS OFTEN SWEEPING THE AREA AFTER ATTACK TO MOP UP ANY SURVIVING BUGS. ONE SQUAD OFTEN PROVED THE EQUAL TO A WHOLE PLATOON OF REGULAR MOBILE INFANTRY IN THESE AD HOC MISSIONS AND ENABLED MILITARY INTELLIGENCE TO GENUINELY DECLARE SECTORS CLEAR AFTER ATTACK.

THE OPERATION PROVED REMARKABLY SUCCESSFUL UNTIL THE RECONNAISSANCE SWEEPS MOVED INTO MORE MOUNTAINOUS SECTORS WHERE EXTENSIVE TUNNEL NETWORKS ALLOWED THE ARACHNIDS TO AVOID FLEET BOMBARDMENT AND AIR ATTACK WITH VIRTUAL IMPUNITY. AT THIS POINT, THE ENTIRE CAMPAIGN CHANGED IN NATURE WITH THE MOBILE INFANTRY MASSING ITS STRENGTH AND DIGGING IN FOR A PROTRACTED BATTLE. THE PATHFINDERS STILL HAD A ROLE TO PLAY AND MANY WERE TASKED WITH HIGHLY DANGEROUS MISSIONS TO SEEK OUT AND DESTROY BRAIN BUGS WITHIN THE TUNNELS. CASUALTIES WERE HIGH BUT AFTER TWO MONTHS OF CONSTANT FIGHTING, THE ARACHNID COMMAND STRUCTURE HAD BEEN SUFFICIENTLY WEAKENED TO ALLOW THE MOBILE INFANTRY TO BEGIN HAVING AN IMPACT ON THE SWARMS. IT WOULD TAKE ANOTHER SIX MONTHS FOR THE ARACHNID INFESTATION TO BE COMPLETELY WIPED OUT BUT, BY THIS TIME, THE BUGS WERE EFFECTIVELY NEUTRALISED AS A FIGHTING FORCE CAPABLE OF HINDERING THE COLONY BUILDING ON JANUS VII.

on him, Sky Marshal Dienes left his command staff with basic instructions for rotating ship assignments to the bombardment and for the gradual retreat of the Federation presence from the system, retiring to his personal quarters. He remained in solitude until he returned to Ticonderoga, personally reporting the outcome of the invasion.

One by one, the defeated ships of the Federation slunk out of the system, many bearing the scars of plasma fire and carrying thousands of grim-faced troopers. The last few specialist bombardment vessels finally let up on their barrage and left orbit to follow the rest of their comrades, the surface of Klendathu remaining quiet as if the Arachnids realised their enemy was gone for good. The last straggler to leave was *Dogger Bank* and, in the wake of its departure, Sky Marshal Dienes' defeat was complete.

A NEW BATTLE PLAN

The lessons of the Klendathu Invasion were apparent for all to see. The incompetence and sheer arrogance of Military Intelligence and the upper echelons of SICON command were laid bare and many were certain that if things continued in this vein then the entire war would be lost. Sky Marshal Dienes was left with no choice but to resign. His successor, Sky Marshal Maru, studied the failures hard in order to formulate her battle plan, even as Federation scientists debated to explain the seemingly intelligent military actions of the Arachnids.

The utter failure of Military Intelligence was clear and for a short time a witch hunt was conducted during a series of enquiries designed to lay unequivocal blame on several high-ranking officers. Intelligence had woefully miscalculated on a number of key issues.

- ⊕ Arachnids were present on Klendathu in far greater numbers (by at least two orders of magnitude) than had been guessed.
- ⊕ The assumption that Arachnids possessed no communications jamming capability had been proved false though whether this was down to a new species of bug or unique atmospherics on Klendathu had yet to be ascertained.
- ⊕ There had been those in SICON that had suspected the Arachnids were capable of using their antennae to track communications transmissions. After Klendathu, few doubted it.
- ⊕ The utilisation of the light armour troopers as a strategic-based infantry force was possibly the single greatest error in terms of loss of life. In addition, the lack of equipment and training proved critical when battle began.
- ⊕ The use of plasma bugs gave the Arachnids a formidable anti-orbital response, fully capable of breaking up a fleet in tight formation.

- ⊕ Standard orbital bombardment was useful for temporary suppression but could fulfil no definite strategic purpose.
- ⊕ With a total of nearly two hundred thousand dead and very few wounded from the invasion attempt, it was clear that Arachnids did not take prisoners.
- ⊕ Arachnids might be bugs but they were much smarter than anyone had given them credit for. The tactical and strategic co-ordination of the Arachnids could easily put even experienced Mobile Infantry commanders on the back foot.

Sky Marshal Maru therefore instituted many new directives of engagement for both the Fleet and Mobile Infantry as well as new policies for Military Intelligence. There was a general belief that SICON as a whole had become lazy after a series of easy successes during the Road to Victory, with commanders presuming they were facing a primitive or 'dumb' enemy. That was to change immediately, so many standard procedures were reactivated. This included communications protocols – while the Arachnids were not likely to intercept and decipher SICON traffic, they could certainly home in on transmissions, putting Mobile Infantry in the field at great risk.

The Sky Marshal's central philosophy was to begin understanding the Arachnids. From now on, Federation scientists would no longer simply explore new ways of killing Arachnids. They would also begin study into how Arachnid society functioned and why the bugs did the things they were observed doing. Military Intelligence was instructed to begin thinking like the Arachnids when planning a response to their actions. Though these steps would inevitably take time to come to fruition, Sky Marshal Maru was left in the unenviable position of having a battered force close to enemy territory and a government screaming for a victory, any kind of victory, in order to justify the incredible loss of life.

The decision was therefore made to press the offensive home in Alpha Hydrae but instead of attacking Klendathu immediately, the Mobile Infantry would start on the outlying planets of the system. Taking one world at a time, attacks would start with TAC Fighter sweeps to hunt down and bomb Arachnid swarms on the surface that would otherwise retreat underground from massed orbital firepower. Only then would Troopers be sent in.

The aim was to keep the Arachnids under pressure (and thus, hopefully, divert their attention from Earth and another Buenos Aires) but also to use these smaller engagements to begin studying the bugs during 'controlled' battle scenarios. However, there was another goal Sky Marshal Maru was keen on pursuing and this was to be a reawakening of an old Military Intelligence operation. For the first time, missions would be endorsed to capture, alive and intact, one of the rare brain bugs. With this creature to study, SICON could surely learn a lot

more about the Arachnids and so develop effective counters that would prove decisive.

It was Sky Marshal Maru's intention to completely disband the Invasion Companies after the first invasion but as they still represented a sizeable portion of her overall military strength, this was simply not feasible. Instead, she began to integrate power suit platoons as supporting forces to the Invasion Companies, allowing them to counter fast moving Arachnid swarms before they gained a position of advantage.

ANOTHER NEW SKY MARSHAL

Unfortunately for Sky Marshal Maru, her strategy was to eventually fail though she managed to retain her position for five months. While SICON learned a great deal about fighting the Arachnids and even managed to capture a brain bug, she was unable to successfully clear even a single planet in the system of its bug infestation. The hammer finally dropped on her career when Arachnid activity began to spring up all along what had once been the Road to Victory.

Soon after the capture of the brain bug on Planet P, Arachnids began to appear in huge numbers on many worlds, some previously deemed clear of infestation. Lightly garrisoned planets were soon overrun and those with a stronger SICON military presence were soon hard-pressed to stem the Arachnid hordes. In less than a month, the entire Klendathu operation was under threat of being cut off from the Federation completely. Sky Marshal Maru had no choice but to withdraw from the campaign and tender her resignation.

She was replaced by Sky Marshal Keats who, under tremendous political pressure, instituted a complete reversal of the strategy first laid out by Sky Marshal Dienes. With the Arachnids literally erupting from dozens of worlds, the Federation was running a very real risk of being forced to fight a war on multiple fronts. This was something the Arachnids could clearly afford to do, as they seemed to possess limitless numbers. Mankind had no such luxury and the Federation had already dropped the age of personal consent (the age at which a civilian could apply for Federal Service) from 21 to 18. Rumours began to spread that an age of personal consent of 16 was being considered for the future.

**FRANKLY I FIND THE IDEA
OF A BUG THAT THINKS
OFFENSIVE.**

The Arachnid threat was a very real danger to humanity and it was understood throughout the Federation that this was a battle of the species – any possibility of a live and let live policy had long since vanished and there could now be only one victor to claim dominance of the galaxy.

Sky Marshal Keats therefore proposed an almost complete withdrawal. Until the losses in both equipment and manpower suffered at Klendathu could be recovered, SICON would be hard stretched to protect Earth and the colony worlds. Both the Fleet and Mobile Infantry would be recalled to Federation space, abandoning the countless staging posts constructed during the Road to Victory. Only then would they begin to take the offensive to the Arachnids once more. More importantly, they would only attack Arachnid-held territory one or two systems at a time, ensuring the infestation had been completely wiped out before moving onto the next.

The Road to Victory would be set among the stars once more but this would be a slow and methodical process rather than the blazing trail it had once been under Sky Marshal Dienes. This policy would effectively lock Mankind into a struggle against the Arachnids for many years but would also serve to expand the Federation, one system at a time. As more worlds came under human control, the Federation would grow and gain more resources. With each newly commissioned colony world, the SICON military would become a little stronger. In return, the forces of the Arachnids would slowly diminish.

In the end, it was believed, this new battle plan would not only ensure Mankind's survival against the Arachnids but also guarantee its ascendance throughout the entire galaxy. That, at least, was something many in the Mobile Infantry felt was worth fighting for.

THE ARACHNID WAR

From the point of view of the Arachnids, humans have proven to be unusually aggressive and dangerous, yet still remain vulnerable. Even now, after the Federation reached Klendathu and fought Arachnids on dozens of worlds, none of their attacks have taken them inside a hive deep enough to threaten a queen bug and humans remain unfamiliar with Arachnid colonies. The bugs are afraid, though, all too aware that the Mobile Infantry may get lucky during any campaign, entering a colony and capturing a queen bug alive. The Arachnids would simply not know how to respond to that.

Human and Arachnid are now locked in a battle of the species that can only result in the death of one or the other – or perhaps both. Both sides have committed too many resources to the war to walk away now in search of greener pastures and both believe the other to be the greatest threat they face. It is possible that Arachnids and humans have more in common with each other than they will ever admit.

PLANETS

THE ARACHNID QUARANTINE Zone designated by SICON extends across dozens of light years, containing all systems deemed permanently in possession of the bugs. Even so, Arachnid colonies can be found far beyond these borders, even within systems in the territory of other races, including the Federation and Skinnie Hegemony. Within the Quarantine Zone itself, there are countless worlds under Arachnid control though SICON suspects it has yet to record them all. Once the border has been crossed, daring explorer fleets may encounter system after system that have been ignored by the Arachnids. In other areas, bug systems may be clustered close together.

ARACHNID INFESTATION INDEX

The presence of Arachnids on a planet is classified by SICON with the Arachnid Infestation Index (AII). There are three levels of Arachnid planetary infestation, which defines how long the Arachnid presence has been expanding across the planet – they are divided into Infected, Compromised and Bug Central. The Skinnies are known to have their own version of the AII and it has become a useful tool when planning strategy against the Arachnids on an interstellar scale.

Infected

A planet is considered 'Infected' when there are one or more Arachnid colonies on its surface and they are just starting to expand. Native species, if any, are still dominant on the world and the presence of Arachnids may still be undetected.

Phase One: Arachnid infestation of a planet begins here. Spore capsules or a transport bug arrives on the planet's surface and the Arachnids begin to expand their areas of control. A detailed analysis of the planet's surface can detect the presence of bugs by discovering small patches of devastation near their landing site. However, it can be quite hard to find the Arachnid presence and much harder to locate their small colonies.

Phase Two: The first couple of colonies have matured and begun to spread their influence, aiming to expand quickly before the world is alerted to their presence. The first Arachnid warriors and workers are already making increasingly daring raids on the environment, identifying the dangers in the ecosystem, including rivals among indigenous life. The first brain bugs appear, their individual growth closely linked to everything they learn and assimilate from the surrounding environment. If a dangerous life form is identified, its habits, strength and weaknesses are assessed and studied by the brain bugs, so measures can be taken to reduce their power (such

as attacking their food sources or giving specialised abilities to future warrior bug swarms).

Phase Three: The presence of the Arachnids becomes more perceptible. The most dangerous native species has been identified and systematically slaughtered. Wholly devastated ecosystems become more evident in small areas, which is primarily what makes the presence of Arachnids more obvious.

Compromised

A planet is considered 'Compromised' when several colonies are present, to the point the Arachnid presence cannot be ignored any longer. The colonies have begun to breed specialised or evolved sub-species and environmental damage can be seen from space. All of the Arachnids' main contenders in the food chain have become a target for constant harassment, to the point of extermination.

Phase One: At this point, colonies are capable of expanding very rapidly. Attacks on other life forms have multiplied and the planet's ecosystem has been irreparably altered.

Phase Two: Now comes the last onslaught on the planet's strongest species, after which the Arachnids can proliferate freely without interference. Devastated areas have extended so much that entrances to Arachnid colonies can be found with relatively little effort.

Bug Central

'Bug Central' is a planet completely dominated by Arachnids, its natural ecosystems virtually eliminated and its landmasses occupied by colonies.

Phase One: Most other life forms have been eliminated from the planet's surfaces. Devastated zones are becoming larger than non-infested areas.

Phase Two: The majority of the planet's surface is devastated, merging into a single ever-growing Arachnid colony, resembling Klendathu more as time passes.

Phase Three: The surface of the planet is a wasteland. Nothing remains of the original ecology and the only organic landscape features are Arachnid colonies and swarms of bugs on the land and in the sky. By the end of phase three, there is effectively just one giant colony, all others having merged into this one. This colony is a single, immense network of underground

passages connecting the entire planet. At least one queen bug will almost certainly have been bred by this time.

After phase three has been achieved, spores and transport bugs are sent to nearby planets, which continues the process of Arachnid expansion across space.

A GUIDE TO ARACHNID SPACE

This section collects what little is known about Arachnid-dominated planets within the Quarantine Zone. The listed worlds have all been identified as zones of infestation, though the true extent of Arachnid domination on each has yet to be rigorously tested.

Reading the Planet Guide

The entry for each Arachnid planet contains the following data:

World Name: The name the Federation has given to the planet.

Planet Type: The type of environment the planet has, classified as follows:

Dead World: Such a world has no atmosphere, no water and no life. Arachnids stationed here maintain their colonies via directly processed minerals, feed on each other or (rarely) subsist by periodical supplies from transport bugs.

Ravaged World: Arachnids or some natural disaster has devastated this world to its core, causing a world-wide environmental catastrophe. Ravaged worlds are often not only barren but also unstable, with high radioactivity levels and tectonic activity.

Gas Giant: These immense, surfaceless worlds offer no territory or resources for the Arachnids, except for their moons. Bug colonies spread throughout the moons of a gas giant are often considered a single extended colony and tend to expand quickly through spores.

Deadly World: These worlds are naturally hostile to life, with acidic atmospheres, particularly inclement weather, geological instability or a combination of these factors. Only the toughest bugs survive on such planets, though they become the most dangerous predators and build the strongest colonies.

Life World: A life world is similar to Earth, with an atmosphere, significant landmasses, a large supply of water and prolific animal and plant species. Arachnids prefer these worlds for their variety of resources, though they are left barren and devastated in a few decades.

Water World: Water worlds are life worlds with few land-based life forms and water covering the majority of surface.

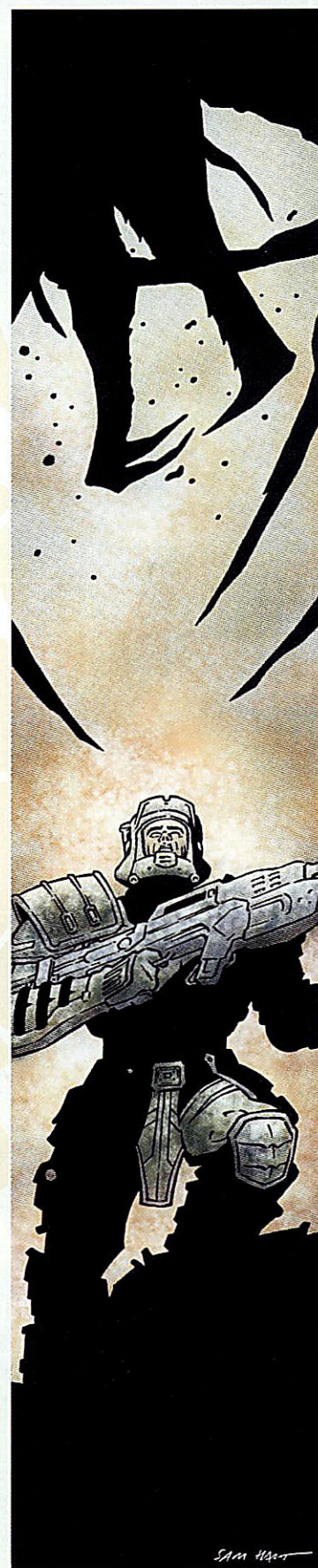
Infestation Index: Indicates whether the planet is infected, compromised or a bug central.

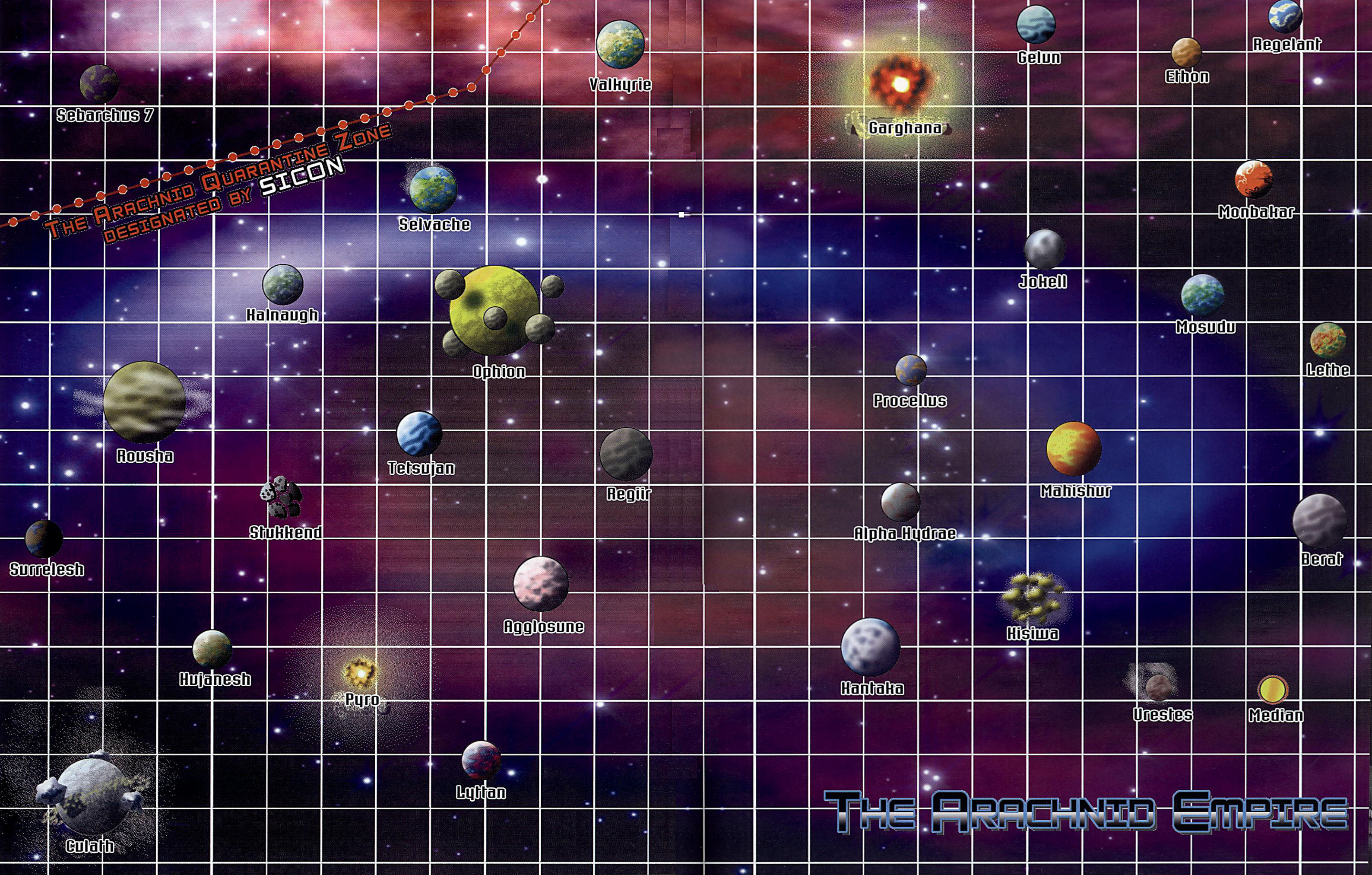
Location: The distance between the planet and the galactic core, measured in kiloparsecs (1 kpc = 3,262 light years).

Population: The estimated number of Arachnids living on the planet, measured in millions of individuals. Other living beings, sentient or not, are not counted in this figure.

Orbit: The time it takes for the planet to make a full revolution around its star, measured in Earth years.

Day: The time it takes for the planet to revolve on its own axis, measured in Earth days.





Sebachus 7

Valkyrie

Gelun

Eihon

Regelant

Garghana

Monbakar

Selvache

Jokell

Mosudu

Lethe

Ophion

Procellus

Rousha

Tetsujan

Regir

Mahishur

Berat

Stukkend

Agglosune

Alpha Hydrae

Hishwa

Urestes

Median

Hujanesh

Pyro

Hantaka

Lufan

Culath

THE ARACHNID EMPIRE

THE ARACHNID QUARANTINE ZONE
DESIGNATED BY SICON

BERAT

LIFE WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 7.9 KPC

POPULATION: 1,151

ORBIT: 1.3

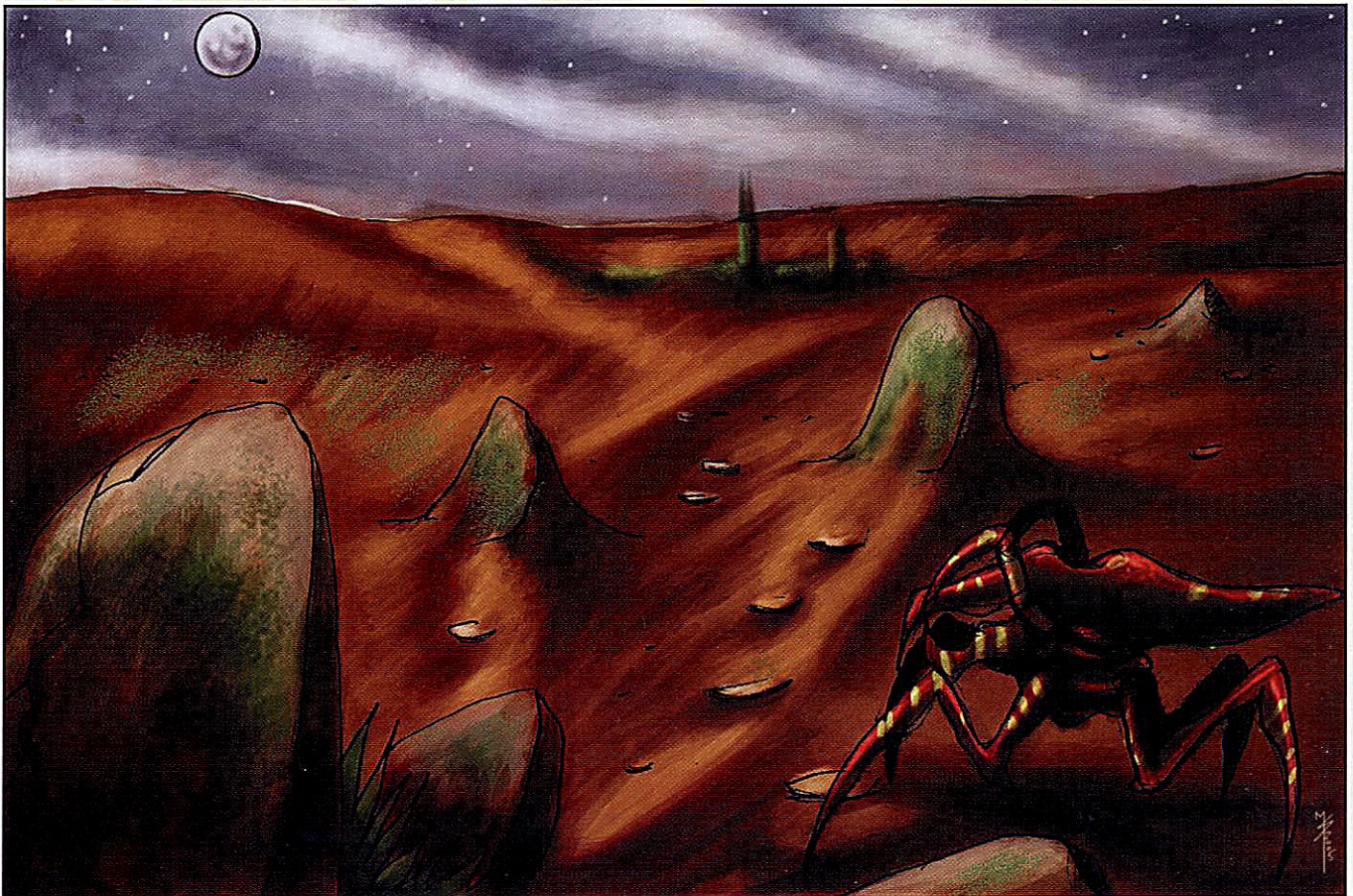
DAY: 1.1

Whatever ecosystem Berat may have once supported is long gone now, destroyed by the Arachnids infesting the planet. It is a desolate place of sand and stone, with only a few patches of vegetation clinging doggedly to what little space the Arachnids are not using.

Berat is a large world, generating a gravitational field approximately three times that of Earth. Simply stated, a creature or object that weighs 100 pounds on Earth will weigh 300 pounds on Berat. This in turn has had a significant impact on the Arachnids bred in the massive colony of Berat, granting them even greater strength than the Arachnids normally enjoy.

The increased strength of Arachnids native to Berat makes their genetic material highly prized for breeding purposes, and many of the deadliest swarms of Arachnids sent against the Federation are thought to have come from the immense Berat colony, making this planet one of SICON's primary targets.

FOR EVERY TWO SIZE CATEGORIES OF AN ARACHNID NATIVE TO BERAT, THE CREATURE'S STRENGTH SCORE SHOULD BE INCREASED BY ONE POINT (ROUNDING UP). FOR EXAMPLE, A BLASTER BUG WOULD GAIN +3 TO ITS STRENGTH SCORE, WHILE A PLASMA BUG WOULD GAIN +4.



CULATH

GAS GIANT

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 6.5 KPC

POPULATION: 858

ORBIT: 8.3

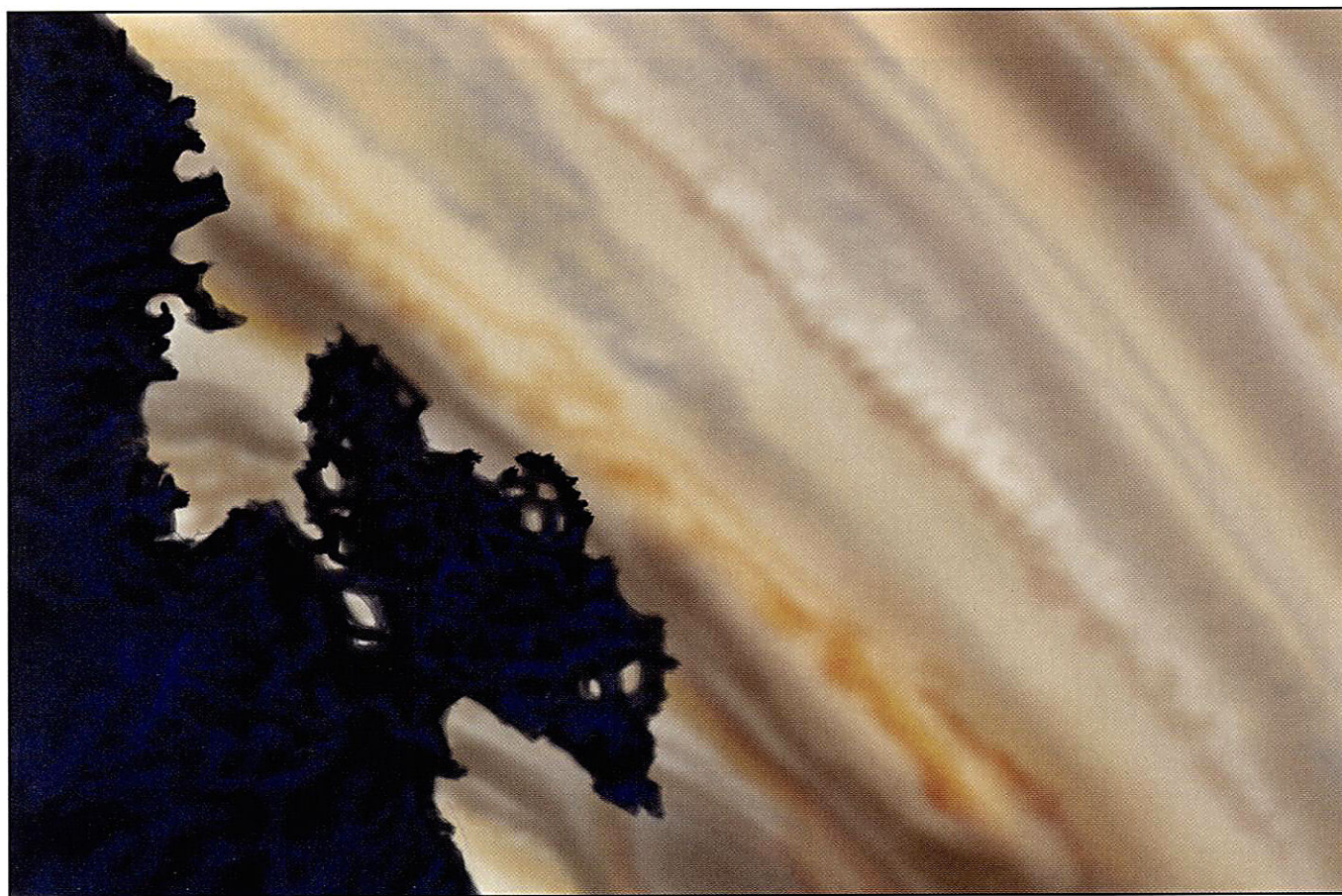
DAY: 13

Culath itself is utterly uninhabited; it is a gas giant of immense size. However, it is orbited by three large moons, where the Arachnids make their home.

Culath's moons are roughly the same size as Earth, though they are little more than enormous chunks of rock and ice with atmospheres comprised primarily of carbon dioxide. Each of these moons is home to an enormous colony of Arachnids, and has literally been honeycombed with tunnels, chambers and passageways dug by the industrious inhabitants.

In addition to the three moons, Culath is orbited by a complex ring system and a dense asteroid field, uninhabited even by Arachnids. Primarily rough bits of stone and ice floating around the mighty gas giant, all of these objects are too inconsequential to generate a measurable amount of gravity, let alone maintain an atmosphere. However, the millions of asteroids provide the Arachnids with a nearly limitless supply of ammunition for launching spores and devastation meteors.

The density of the asteroid field surrounding Culath makes the three moons a dangerous locale even for the Arachnids. Meteor impacts are commonplace, and the thin atmosphere of the moons is insufficient to burn them into dust before striking home.



GARGAHNA

RAVAGED WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 9.4 KPC

POPULATION: 907

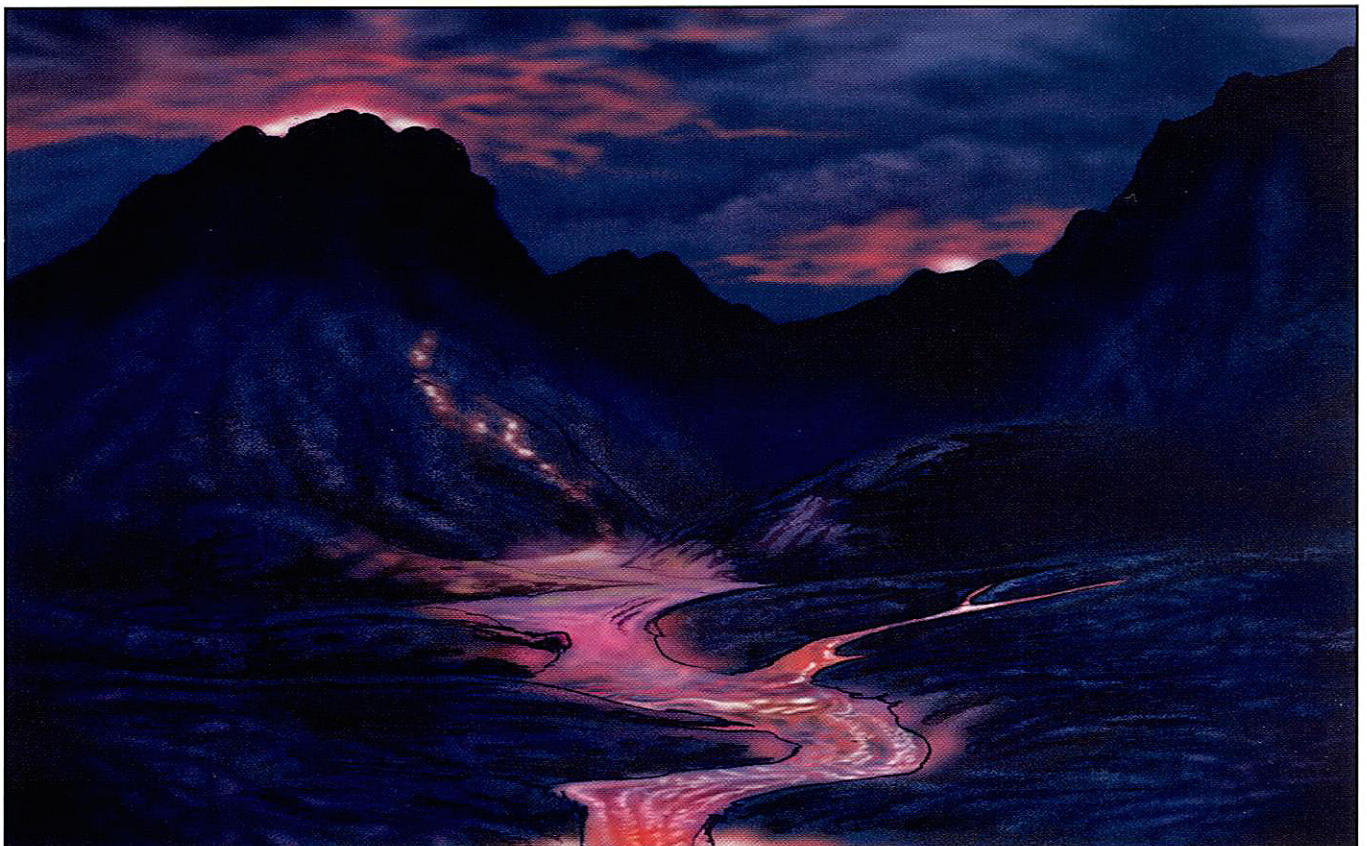
ORBIT: 4.2

DAY: 3

Gargahna is a gigantic sphere of molten plasma, cracking geological plates, bursting volcanoes and smoke clouds. The world's heavy atmosphere is enough to make most living creatures implode, while the high concentration of gases are extremely flammable.

It is thought that Gargahna was once a water world, primitive but teeming with life. When the Arachnids landed, they not only massacred all life and ravaged its ecosystem but also dug so deep into the crust that they made the world itself unstable, causing a geological catastrophe that gave the final blow to all remaining life on the planet, almost destroying the Arachnids as well.

The few colonies that have survived in this apocalyptic environment are among the mightiest of the Arachnid Empire and their members the hardest of all bugs, as they have adapted to survive on what is one of the deadliest planets in the galaxy. Every bug in Gargahna has been bred to resist high temperatures and noxious atmospheres, which makes their genetic material invaluable for space exploration and colonisation, though other colonies still find it costly to breed sub-species with all these characteristics. It is believed that behemoths such as the king tanker were first bred at Gargahna.



JOKELL

DEADLY WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: COMPROMISED (PHASE TWO)

LOCATION: 7.1 KPC

POPULATION: 87

ORBIT: 43

DAY: 6.8

The brutal conditions on Jokell are considered to be the only reason the Arachnids have not utterly consumed the world. Jokell boasts an environment much like that of Titan – a bitterly cold sphere so far from its sun it receives little more energy from it than any other star. The average surface temperature on Jokell is -295°F .

Jokell is entirely encased in ice, from the water ice 'continents' to the three enormous oceans of liquid methane. Ice of one form or another covers the entire planet to a depth of more than 100 miles. Even the Arachnids would have difficulty surviving on this world were it not for Jokell's molten core.

The three Arachnid colonies on Jokell are located deep beneath the ice, in the comparatively warmer regions of the planet's rocky crust (average temperature -15°F). Massive tunnels, wide enough for five plasma bugs to walk abreast, wind their way up through the rock and the ice to the hoary surface of the world.

Only a few Arachnid species are found on Jokell. The smallest species, such as cliff mites and control bugs, cannot endure the cold of this world, and no attempt has been made to breed a hardier version of either. None of the flying species can be found here either, as the brutal cold of the surface would destroy the wings of a hopper or rippler bug almost immediately. Additionally, because of the large amount of methane and ethane present in the planet's atmosphere, none of the fire-based Arachnids, like the blaster bug or the tanker, are present anywhere on the planet as a single small use of either bug's flame could incinerate half a colony.

SICON believes Jokell was colonised relatively recently, and that the Arachnids intend to use it as a staging area to move farther toward the galactic core.



KALNAUGH

LIFE WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: COMPROMISED (PHASE ONE)

LOCATION: 8.3 KPC

POPULATION: 94

ORBIT: 1.1

DAY: 1.2

Only recently discovered by SICON, Kalnaugh is currently the object of intense speculation, as evidence gleaned from distant scans of the planet indicates the Arachnid presence on the world may actually be encountering some form of organised resistance.

Kalnaugh shares many similarities with Earth, though the cocktail of gasses in its atmosphere would make breathing difficult (though not impossible) for a human. Further, long-range scans of the world have detected levels of pollutants in the atmosphere consistent with a culture in the midst of the Industrial Revolution, as well as what appear to be ruined cities dotting the surface. Whether this evidence indicates an intelligent race native to Kalnaugh which is still fighting the Arachnid invasion, or whether it indicates a now-extinct species displaced by the Arachnids is currently unknown. Considering the presumed primitive level of technology on the planet, SICON believes any remaining elements of pre-Arachnid life on Kalnaugh would be too backward to make effective allies, and has chosen not to expend the resources required to confront the Arachnids here.

Kalnaugh is currently home to two medium-sized colonies of Arachnids. The world was colonised only very recently, but because of its abundant food supply and temperate weather, the colonies have managed to expand very rapidly. Whether Kalnaugh could ever fully recover from the invasion, even with its robust ecosystem, remains unknown.



KISIWA

DEAD WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 6.9 KPC

POPULATION: 418

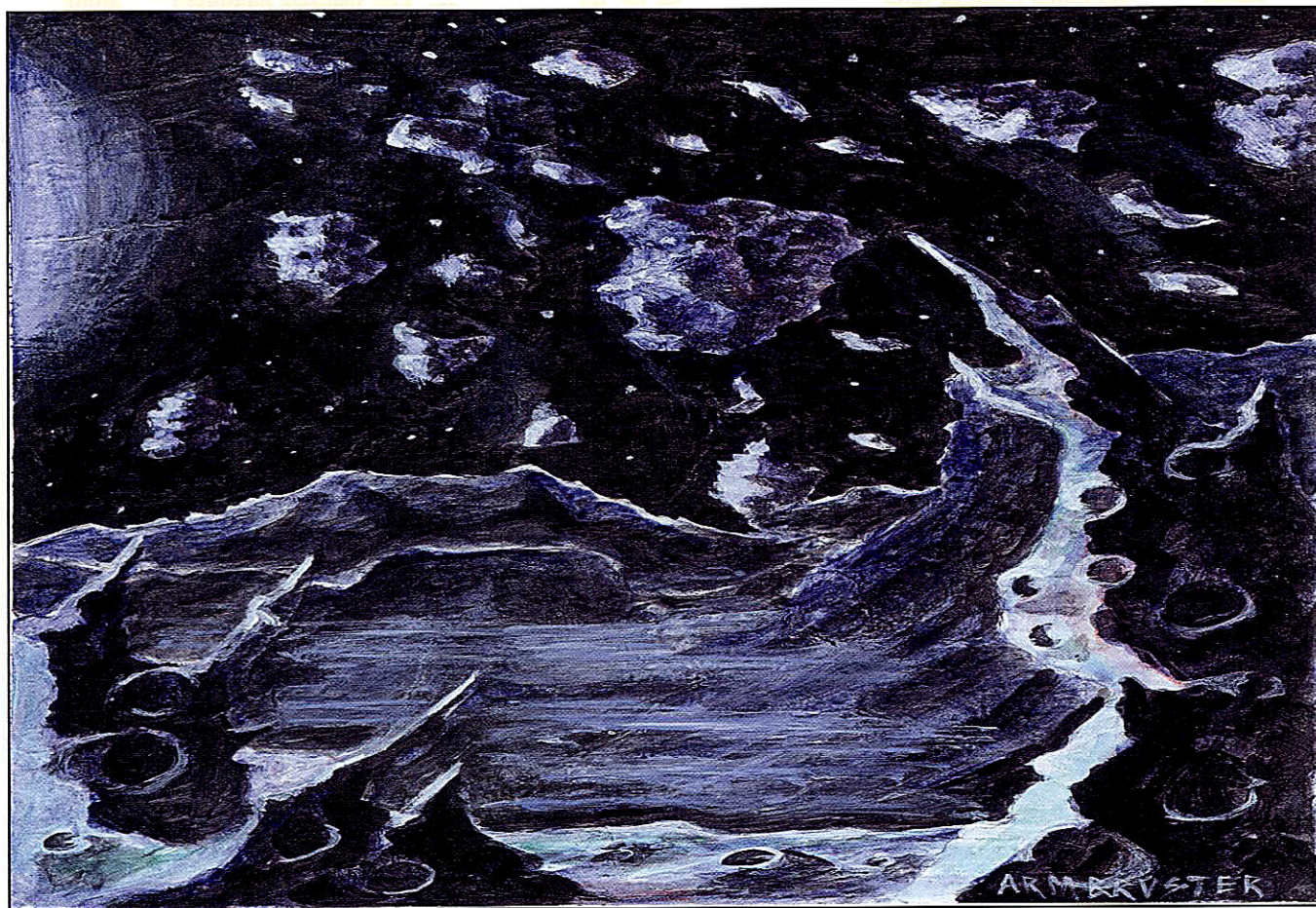
ORBIT: 15.6

DAY: 3.7

Kisiwa is not truly a world at all, rather, it is a conglomeration of large asteroids in a distant orbit around a planetless star. The actual asteroid field is massive, a belt girdling the star at the outer reaches of its gravity. The name Kisiwa is given to the field's most striking feature – a group comprised of the three largest asteroids in the entire field, separated from one another by only a few miles. Though the Kisiwa asteroids are quite large (nearly twice the size of Ceres in Earth's Solar System), they do not have the mass to generate a meaningful gravitational field, meaning all three are effectively zero-gravity environments. SICON believes this enormous asteroid field may be the corpse of one or more actual planets, destroyed by some ancient cataclysm. Taken as a whole, the asteroid field contains as much mass as two Jupiters.

The reason the Arachnids have colonised Kisiwa is relatively clear. The remaining asteroids provide them with a truly inexhaustible supply of meteors for launching spores and devastation meteors against the Federation. Of all the discovered Arachnid colonies, Kisiwa is among the closest to Earth, and SICON fears the Arachnids may use these shards of dead worlds as a staging point to launch another, much larger assault against the home of humanity.

The asteroids of Kisiwa are utterly airless and brutally cold. Far from their sun, the average temperature on the surface is -450°F at night and -175°F during the day. The Arachnids have buried their colonies deep beneath the surface of these asteroids, relying on the scant geothermal energy within to keep themselves from freezing solid in the fierce cold.



KLENDATHU [WITHIN THE ALPHA HYDRAE SYSTEM]

RAVAGED WORLD

ALSO KNOWN AS: BUG NEST PRIME, TANGO URILLA, THE HIVE

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 10 KPC

POPULATION: 6,000

ORBIT: 1.4

DAY: 3.6

Klendathu's is nothing but a vast desert where sand and rocks sprawl over the few patches of vegetation. The surface of Klendathu is dominated by steep, rocky mountain chains. It is also rich in craters, chasms and pits. The planet is surrounded by an asteroid chain, which may have been a whole planet – perhaps Klendathu's twin – many millennia ago. This asteroid ring has functioned as a platform for launching spores and devastation meteors since the Arachnids matured as a species.

To land on Klendathu in anything other than regimental-strength is to invite immediate death and it should be remembered that even Sky Marshal Dienes' great invasion was repulsed within hours. Humans have no business on this world's surface – no business at all.

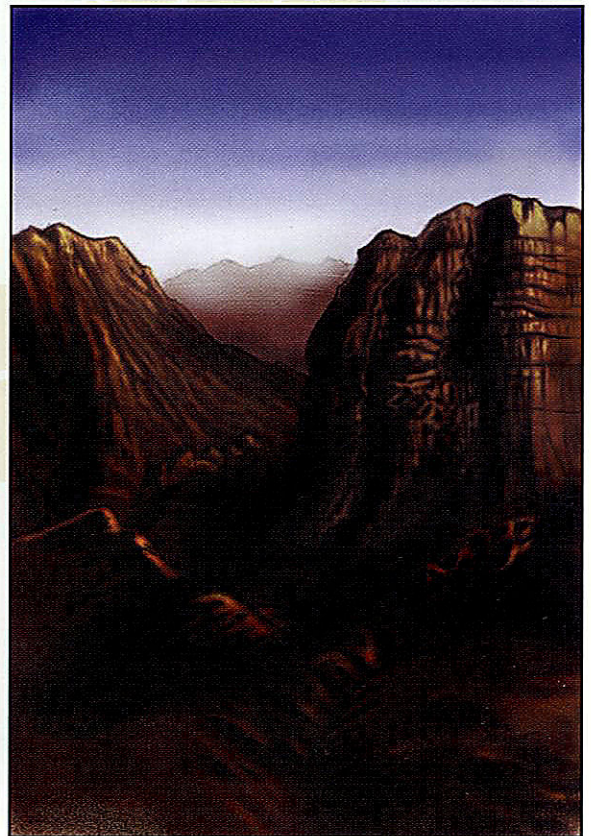
The Aries Range mountain range is known for the ferocious radioactive winds that endlessly hit its peaks. It is also home to a great colony specialised in breeding flying bugs with swarms of ripplers, hoppers and kamikazes. The Aries' Southeast range ends in the rock known as Bug Peak, an awesomely tall mountain, which is in fact the planet's largest colony, housing millions upon millions of Arachnids. This massive mountain chain covers about 40% of Klendathu's circumference and may be the largest mountain range in the galaxy.

Klendathu's weather is quite a challenge for humans, with equatorial temperatures ranging from 150°F during the day to -15°F at night. The lack of humidity in the area makes it a hostile wasteland for most life forms. Polar temperatures range from 80°F to -100°F. These abysmal differences in temperature breed violent winds, sandstorms and hurricanes from one end of the planet to the other; causing dunes to shift wildly all over its surface. Arachnids have adapted wonderfully to these cruel environmental conditions, having grown used to the climate with little or no genetic modifications.

The Black Wind is a terrible storm, created by climactic conditions unique to Klendathu. It sweeps over Klendathu once or twice a year, at which time it causes the sky and horizon to darken completely. The razor-sharp silicates and irradiated winds carried by this storm blow with such strength and fury that they can peel the shell right off an Arachnid, stripping even warrior bugs to shreds if it catches them in the open.

The Black Wind [Environmental Hazard]

ANY CREATURE OUT IN THE OPEN DURING THE BLACK WIND SUFFERS 1D10 POINTS OF SLASHING DAMAGE EVERY ROUND FROM THE BURNING WINDS AND SAND. IN ADDITION, IT MUST MAKE A FORTITUDE SAVE (DC 30) EACH ROUND OR SUFFER 1 POINT OF CONSTITUTION DAMAGE. CREATURES THAT HAVE SUFFERED CONSTITUTION DAMAGE FROM THE BLACK WIND WILL BECOME FATIGUED.



MEDIAN

DEAD WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 7.3 KPC

POPULATION: 692

ORBIT: -

DAY: -

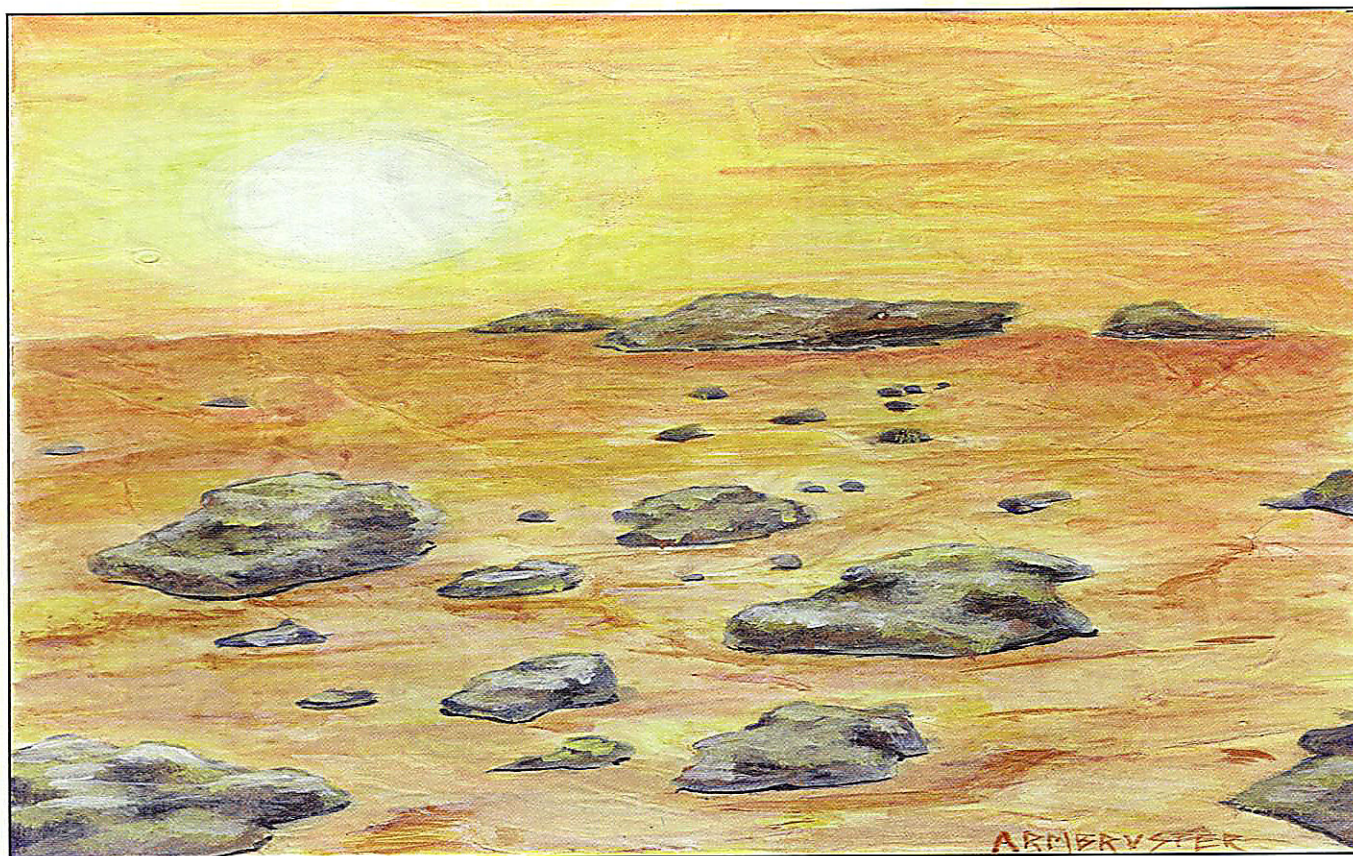
Suspended in space between the twin stars of a binary system, Median is a world of eternal day. It does not orbit its suns; its suns orbit one another with Median stuck between them, trembling in the competing gravitation fields.

Median is approximately four times the size of Earth, creating a high-gravity environment that doubles the normal penalties for high gravity. Like Berat, the Arachnids of Median are amazingly strong, a fact that makes their genetic material highly prized for use in breeding other swarms.

The suns never set on Median. Baked in their constant glare, the planet's airless, rocky surface is gummy with heat, maintaining an average surface temperature of 425°F. Bred to withstand this intense heat, Arachnids native to Median take only half damage from flamers and similar weapons.

Deep beneath the planet's crust, the temperatures are much lower, averaging only about 175°F in the majority of the Arachnid colonies.

SICON would doubtless be willing to ignore this planet entirely, were it not for the results of the long range scans taken of Median's composition, indicating the planet is home to the largest concentration of gold ever discovered anywhere in the universe. Even more compelling, the Arachnids seem to be actively mining this gold, though what their purpose might be is unknown.



PROCELLUS

DEADLY WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: COMPROMISED (PHASE ONE)

LOCATION: 9.3 KPC

POPULATION: 109

ORBIT: 5.1

DAY: 3.5

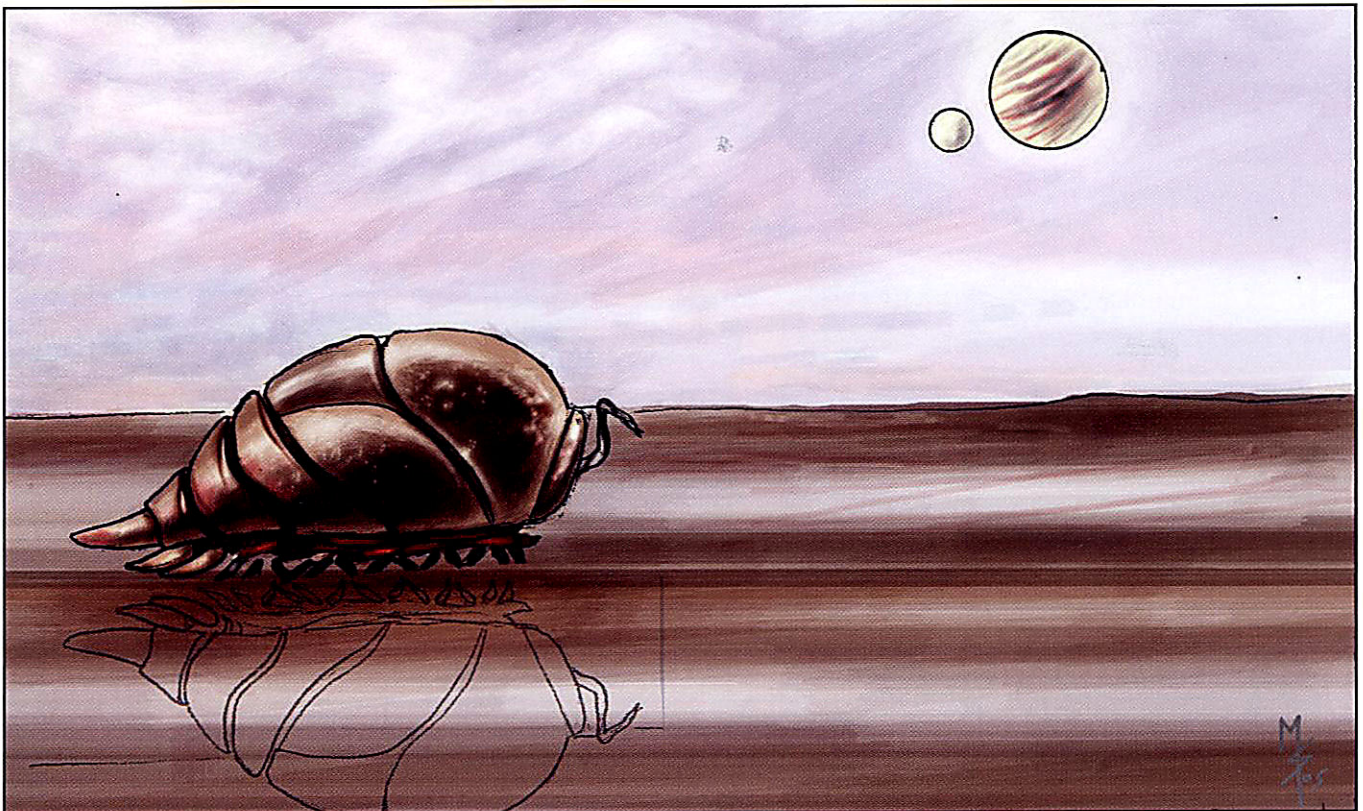
Approximately the same size and composition as Earth, SICON initially considered Procellus as a potential location for a distant colony. Upon taking a closer look, however, those plans were quickly abandoned. Even without the Arachnid infestation, Procellus would almost certainly prove fatal to any human being foolish enough to set foot on it.

Procellus is a very old world, and has the dubious distinction of being home to the highest wind speeds ever detected on a non-gas giant planet. These winds are constant and unceasing, varying only in their intensity. Travelling at speeds of 600 to 900 miles per hour, the winds of Procellus have long since swept the surface of the planet clean, leaving it as smooth and featureless as a billiard ball. The difference between the highest and lowest elevations on the world is best measured in inches, not feet.

Procellus is also remarkable for its unusual rotation, as it spins on its horizontal axis rather than vertical, meaning the planet has an east and west pole rather than a north and south. The planet's winds flow constantly with the rotation, moving from south to north and back again in a never-ending gale.

The winds make travel on the surface of Procellus all but impossible. A creature or object must weigh at least one ton to avoid being swept up by the winds, meaning only Arachnids such as brain bugs, plasma bugs and tankers can move about on the surface. Moving against or perpendicular to the wind's direction reduces movement to 25% of normal, while moving with the wind doubles it. All range increments for weapon fire are reduced to 10% of normal, and items such as flamers or jump jets may not be used at all. Anything exposed to the Procellus winds will take 1d8 damage every round from the constant pummelling.

There are four distinct Arachnid colonies on Procellus. Though only the largest species may move about on the surface, the subterranean colonies are home to virtually every species, save those that rely on flight.



PYRO

DEADLY WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 8.7 KPC

POPULATION: 446

ORBIT: 0.7

DAY: 0.6

The actual name given this planet by SICON is XT-15 but it was quickly dubbed Pyro, and there are few places in the universe that are more hellish in nature.

Pyro is a small planet, less than one quarter the size of Earth, and is one of the most volcanically active bodies ever discovered. Eruptions are a nearly constant occurrence on the surface, massive explosions of magma that consistently reshape the planet's features. The world generates only a slight gravitational field, insufficient to retain the largest eruptions, which are known to reach hundreds of miles above the surface, breaching the planet's orbit and posing a deadly risk to any ship in orbit. It is believed Pyro was once a larger world, but that it has shrunk as it has spewed more and more of its matter out into space. Any craft or capsule attempting to land on Pyro has a 5% chance of being struck by one of the random eruptions and destroyed.

The atmosphere of Pyro is corrosive and very thin, offering little protection to the planet against the radiation of the nearby sun. The light side of the planet commonly reaches 275°F, while the night side plunges to -200°F. The intense radiation combines with the powerful electrical field generated by Pyro to play havoc with electronic devices, particularly communications equipment, which has its range reduced to one-quarter while on the planet.

Pyro has fewer Arachnids on it than practically any other planet qualifying as 'Bug Central'. This is for the simple reason that the world is very nearly as deadly to Arachnids as it is to humans, and the three colonies on Pyro suffer constant and enormous casualties.



REGELANT

WATER WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: COMPROMISED (PHASE TWO)

LOCATION: 7.8 KPC

POPULATION: 346

ORBIT: 1.3

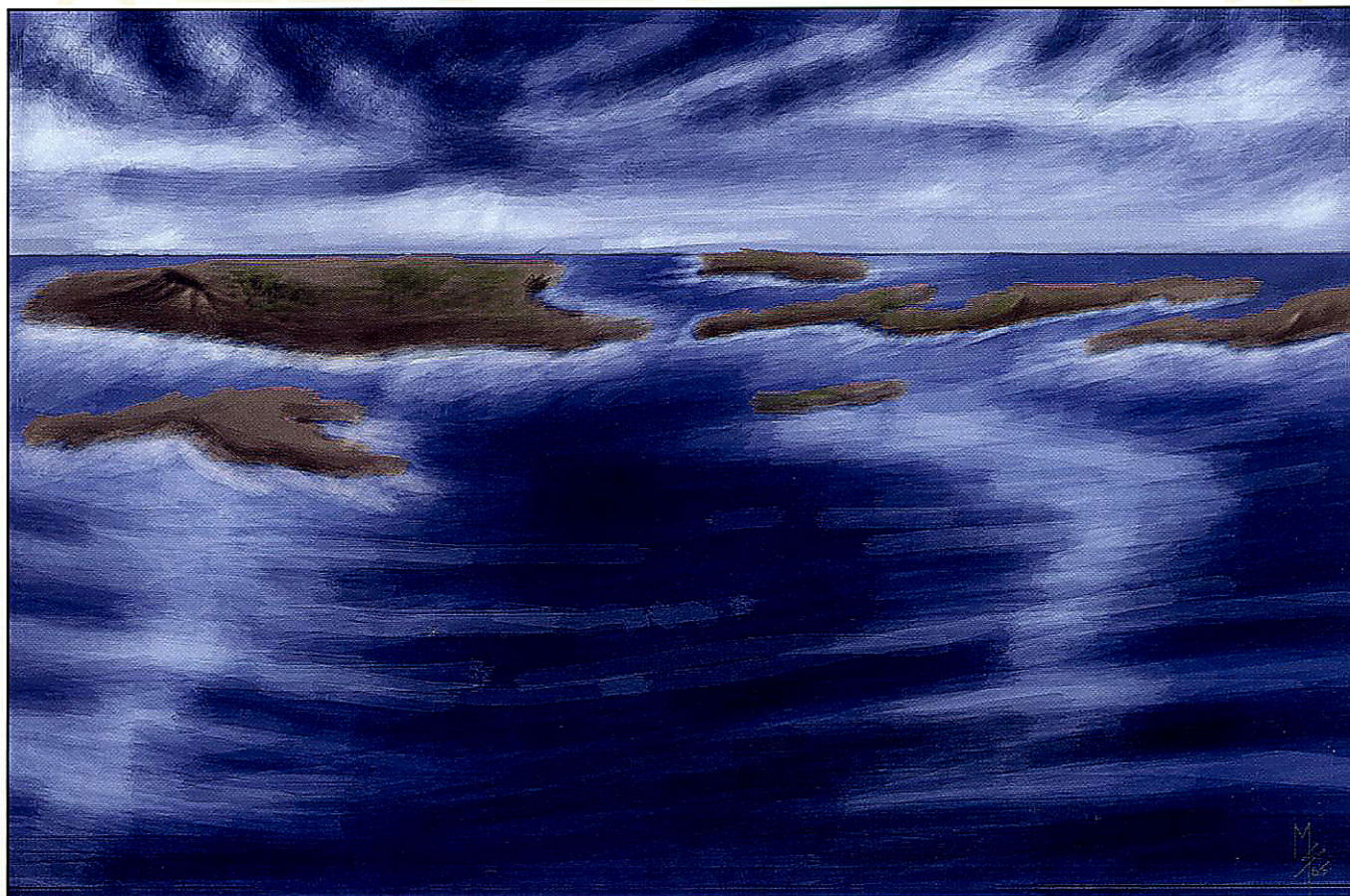
DAY: 0.9

Though technically a water world, Regelant provides the Arachnids infesting it with a comfortable home. The planet's only land masses are two long archipelagos in the northern hemisphere, comprising less than five percent of the total surface area of the planet.

What makes Regelant so useful to the Arachnids is not the surface of the planet, however, but what lies beneath it. The oceans covering so much of the world's surface are extremely shallow (rarely more than half a mile in depth, with a very few notable exceptions), and the Arachnids have had no trouble delving deep beneath them to find abundant room for their colonies.

The fact that almost all life on this world makes its home in the ocean has significantly hampered the Arachnid's efforts to displace other life forms, even with the large number of water tigers that the colonies are producing. However, in so far as SICON can determine, there is no intelligent species native to the planet, which essentially makes the complete Arachnid takeover of this world a foregone conclusion – the only remaining question is how long it will take.

Regelant is habitable to humans, though its distance from its star makes it somewhat colder than Earth, with polar ice caps extending nearly one-third the distance from the pole to the equator, and an average equatorial temperature of only 63°F.



STUKKEND

DEAD WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 8.7 KPC

POPULATION: 287

ORBIT: 3.2

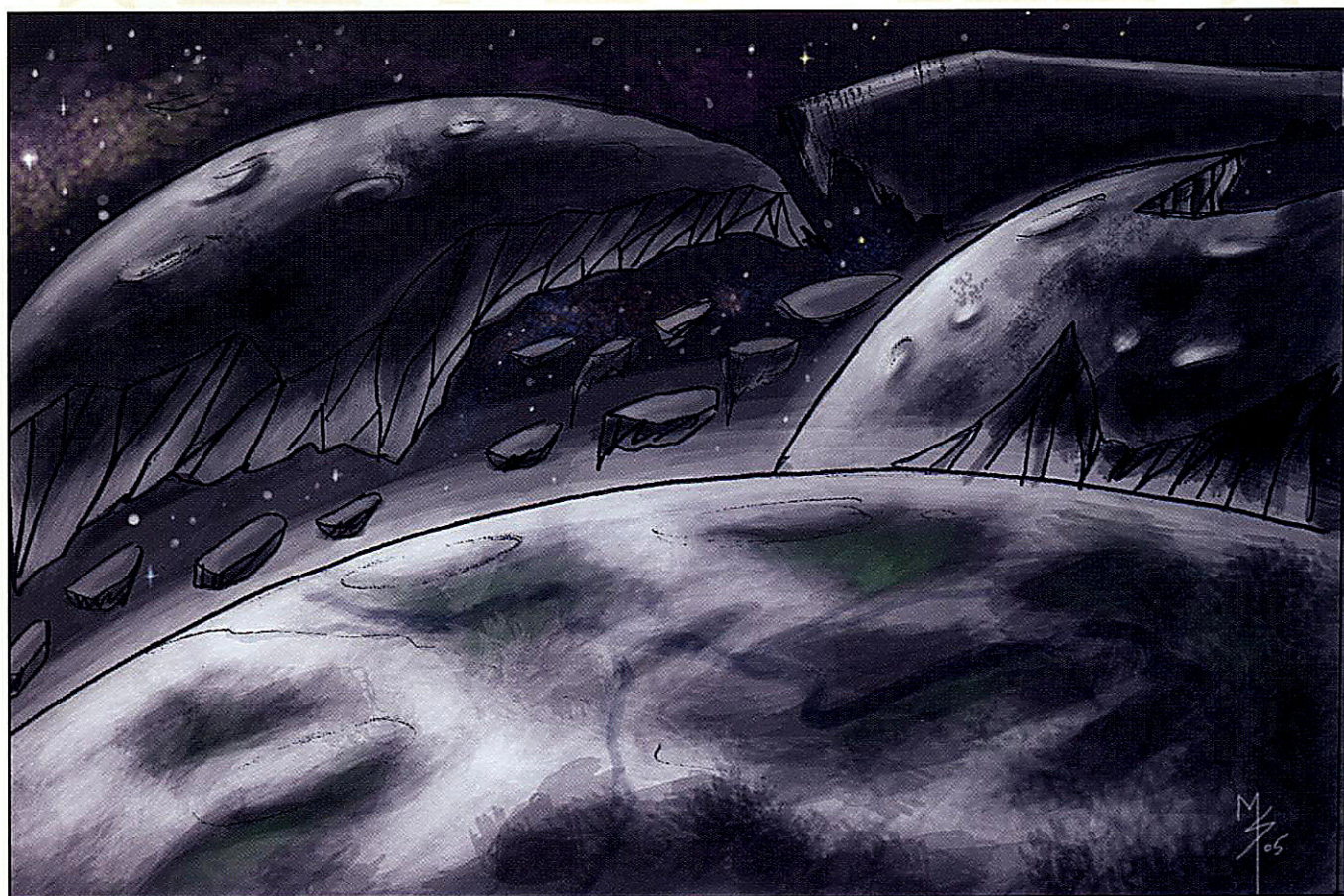
DAY: 106

Stukkend scarcely qualifies as a planet any more. At some point in the recent past, the world was literally broken into five separate shards.

The shards of Stukkend remain tenuously connected for now by their collective gravitational fields, but are expected to continue drifting apart until the planet is reduced to nothing more than an asteroid field. Several theories to explain the breaking of an entire world have been put forth by Federation scientists, but there is no way for them to be certain. In fact, Stukkend was destroyed by the very Arachnids that colonised it.

Stukkend was always geologically unstable, and as the Arachnid presence grew larger and larger, their nests more and more complex, they weakened the integrity of the planet to the point it simply fractured. Long since stripped of all other life by the Arachnid infestation, Stukkend became a truly dead planet, its molten core now exposed and frozen. As for the Arachnids themselves, only some 10% of the planet's inhabitants survived the apocalyptic sundering of the world.

The vast majority of the remaining Arachnids (approximately 85%) live on the largest shard of Stukkend, which retains enough atmosphere for a human to survive without a pressure suit (though the atmosphere itself is toxic) and has a gravitational pull roughly equal to that of Earth. The other four shards have little or no atmosphere, and are all either low gravity or zero gravity environments.



SURRELESH

LIFE WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: INFECTED (PHASE TWO)

LOCATION: 7.7 KPC

POPULATION: 71

ORBIT: 1.3

DAY: 1.2

Surrelesh is a strange world. It could have become a cradle of life; it has temperate weather, an oxygen-rich atmosphere, even abundant water oceans. Yet despite all these advantages, life never took root on this world – until the Arachnids arrived.

Surrelesh is thought to be the most recent addition to the Arachnid empire, simply because there are so few Arachnids present on a world that is proving to be most hospitable to them. Except for the lack of any available food source (save other Arachnids), there is nothing to prevent the Arachnids living here from turning this planet into another Klendathu.

Virtually every species of Arachnid ever discovered or theorised can be found on Surrelesh, living in the planet's two great hodge-podge colonies, one located at either side of the planet's equator. Why there are so many species of Arachnid on this world, which does not seem to require any specialisation to thrive, remains a mystery to SICON.

Aside from the Arachnids and the lack of any form of ecosystem, Surrelesh is a pleasant place. Equatorial temperatures rarely exceed 110°F, and even the poles of the planet are not uninhabitable, maintaining a temperature that averages 15°F.



URESTES

DEADLY WORLD

INFESTATION LEVEL: BUG CENTRAL

LOCATION: 8.3 KPC

POPULATION: 981

ORBIT: 0.8

DAY: 2.3

There is some compelling evidence that Urestes was once a bountiful, life-giving world, but that changed long ago, long before even the Arachnids arrived. Ten times per Urestes year, the planet swings through one of the dense asteroid fields surrounding its star, exposing itself to a deadly shower of meteors that pummel the world's surface for three local days.

The origin of these asteroid fields is unknown, but as their primary composition is nickel and iron, SICON believes they are remnants of one or more destroyed planets. The frequent bombardments have rendered the planet's surface a barren, cratered wasteland and dispersed a great deal of the atmosphere into space. Humans can breathe on Urestes with difficulty (the atmosphere is considered 'thin').

During one of the meteor showers, moving about on the surface of Urestes is like playing a game of Russian roulette. For every round a character remains on the surface, there is a 5% (non-cumulative) chance he will be struck by a meteoroid for 20d6 damage. Even the Arachnids keep their heads down during Urestes' meteor showers, hunkering in their warrens miles beneath the surface of the planet.

The frequent meteoroid strikes play havoc with the upper levels of the Arachnid hives, frequently collapsing hundreds of yards of passageways that must then be rebuilt.





WARFARE

COMBAT BY AIR, land, sea and space is the central tool of the Arachnid expansion across the galaxy. Races that find themselves victim to this encroachment have no recourse to diplomacy, reason or alliance. Civilised worlds must fight or die.

Combat is therefore as important to Arachnids as digestion or respiration. It is also wise for civilisations bordering Arachnid space to study and comprehend their battle tactics as quickly as possible and formulate an effective response. Failure to do so will result in them being added to the long list of sentient races that have already fallen to the Arachnid advance throughout the stars.

Arachnids learn from defeat. It has been turned into an effective tool and, perhaps, defines them as a species. A species that fails is doomed to extinction – therefore defeat must be turned into success instead. By instinctively studying their own flaws the Arachnids have perfected not only their strategy but their genetic structure as well. Arachnid tactics in battle have a tendency to seem unpredictable, but they are purposeful and always effective. Arachnids never leave anything to chance nor stray from their purpose in the slightest, planning every battle not with the analytical mind of a strategist but with the flawless survival instinct of an entire species honed for conquest and domination. When conducting combat with Arachnids, a Games Master must be ruthless, flawless and relentless. For the Arachnids there is no other way.

STANDARD TACTICS

The following describe the basic battlefield tactics used by the Arachnids.

Numbers

The strength of the Arachnids as a species is rooted in their numbers. In no sense is this more true than in battle, where Arachnids gain victory by sending more warriors toward the enemy, then more and more until there are none left to send. Regardless of an enemy's superiority, if indeed they face a superior enemy, Arachnids will attempt to gain the upper hand by swarming upon them. Even massed twin-fifty autocannon emplacements can be overwhelmed if enough warriors are available. Encircling a foe then attacking from all directions presents more targets than even the most modern weapon systems can cope with.

Quick Kills

Arachnids aim to dispose of enemies in the quickest, most efficient way possible. The whole physiology of the combatant sub-species is geared towards this and Arachnids have a canny ability to discover an enemy's weak point, be it a blind spot in the defences of a fortification or a weak link in power armour. Arachnids learned long ago that a human's head and torso are particularly vulnerable, so they attempt to target these first, followed by limbs.

Terrain

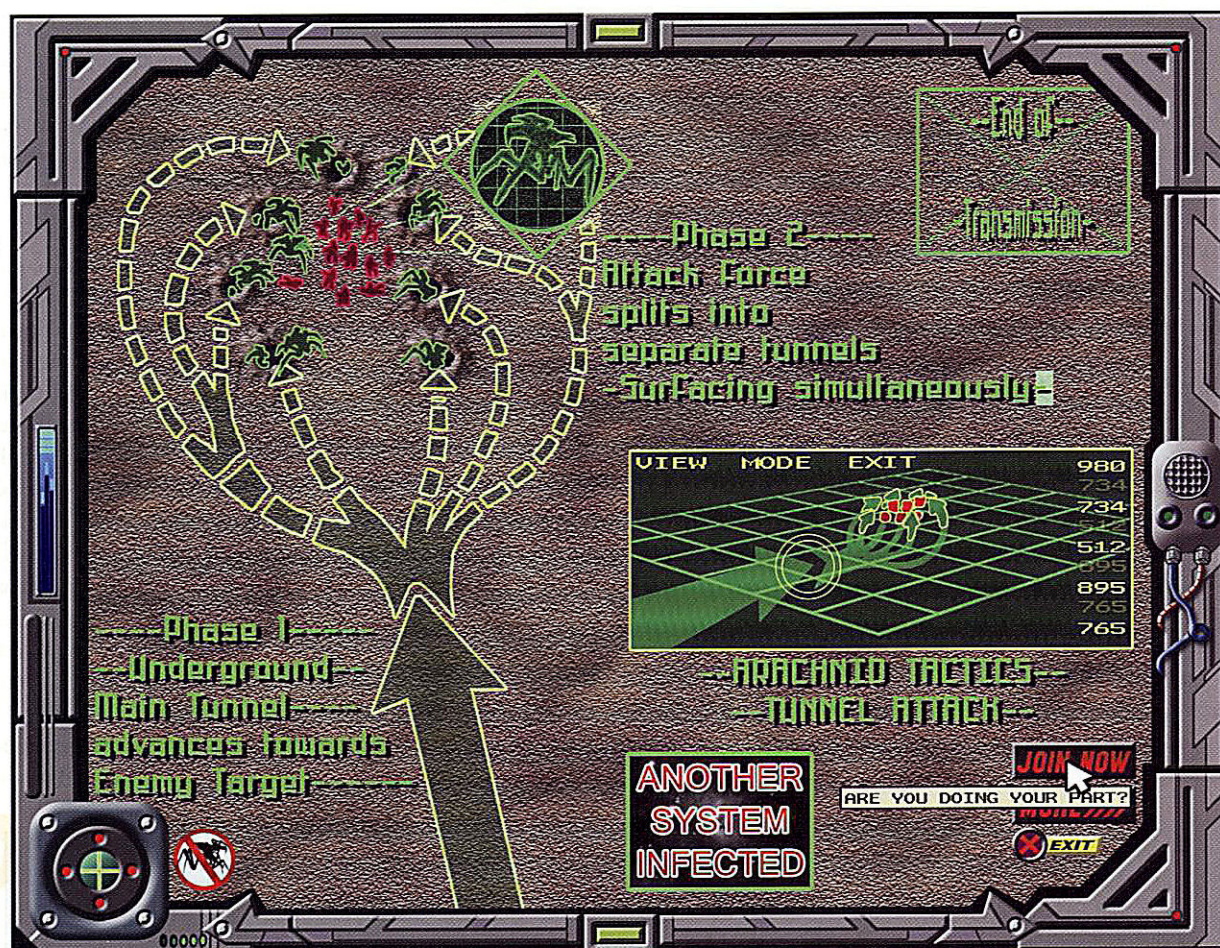
The tactics of Arachnids change according to terrain and they use the advantages and characteristics of the environment to aid offensives. Twisting caverns will be used to cover the advance of swarms where the ground is too hard to tunnel through, tunnelling units will weaken areas prone to avalanches and rockslides to crush enemy forces and a bug-infested jungle is a nightmare best destroyed from orbit.

Tunnelling

Only a foolish or over-confident enemy will intentionally enter an Arachnid tunnel network. It is in the subterranean battlefield that the bugs hold all the advantages. Here, they use their natural blindsight, stealth and knowledge of the network to launch constant surprise attacks and counterattacks, funnel enemies into bottlenecks and collapse pre-weakened tunnels. Fast tunnelling Arachnids will bypass enemy-held positions already engaged with other swarms to spring attacks on the flank, literally coming through the walls and making a mockery of any previous reconnaissance the enemy may have tried.

One of the best known Arachnid tactics is to dig tunnels below their enemies and then burst out in a rain of dirt, claws and death. This allows an Arachnid attack force to dig behind an enemy's defences, past a reconnaissance perimeter or any artificial barrier to strike where it will hurt the most.

These tunnels are crowded with workers and warriors ready for the surprise attack, which is usually commanded by a brain bug far behind the assault force. If heavy resistance is expected, one or more tanker bugs will also be present. A single wide tunnel will be dug from the Arachnid colony or other staging post to the target. Once within a hundred metres or so from the intended exit point, the tunnel will be split into half a dozen or more smaller passages that extend to the surface, allowing the Arachnids to burst outwards in several locations to surround and confuse the enemy. As an additional effect, the sudden



rush of an Arachnid strike force in a small area can cause the surrounding ground to become unstable and a veritable death-trap for all nearby enemies.

A tunnel attack of this nature will grant the Arachnids a +2 bonus to all attack rolls against enemies in the first round of combat – it is also likely to cause surprise unless the tunnel was detected beforehand. In addition, all enemies within 10 feet of a tunnel exit must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 16) or drop 10 feet into the tunnel. Such a fall is not usually fatal in itself but the life expectancy of any unfortunate victim will be drastically reduced as they will find themselves amidst the entire Arachnid strike force.

This tactic is nicknamed 'frying bacon' by the Mobile Infantry, due to the very distinctive sound registered by experimental sensor equipment when hundreds of bugs are digging at full speed.

Surface Warfare

Arachnids will happily engage an enemy on the surface where their full weight of numbers can be brought to bear. However, they are also wary of the destructive qualities that artillery, orbital bombardments and air strikes possess – properly used, these assets can wipe out hundreds of warrior bugs in

seconds. They will therefore tend to bide their time, creating extensive tunnel networks that the majority of bugs can flee to if an airborne danger threatens. Once past or neutralised by plasma or hopper bugs, the main warrior force will re-emerge to continue their attack. The only real response to this tactic is to destroy each Arachnid and close every bug hole for miles in every direction, a dangerous and time-consuming task.

Warriors and Workers

It did not take brain and queen bugs long to realise that other races were prone to confusing workers with warriors. This opened up a whole new variety of tactics as feints that looked like main assaults could be performed with the easy-to-breed workers or the two sub-species could be combined into giant swarms that would be as lethal as a swarm consisting purely of warriors. Veteran troopers have learned to tell the difference between the two at short range but in chaotic battle conditions, there is no way to determine which bug is which until the attack has already begun.

AIR AND SPACE

Though generally viewed primarily as a ground force, the Arachnids are fully capable of fighting in the atmosphere of the worlds they infest and beyond into space. This is a result of

simple engineered evolution and survival for, as humans found in the 20th Century, handing air and space superiority to an enemy is to accept defeat in a war. Though they have no direct equivalents to the Fleet's TAC Fighters or massive warships, the Arachnids are able to dominate the air above their colonies and worlds, given sufficient preparation.

Layered Defence

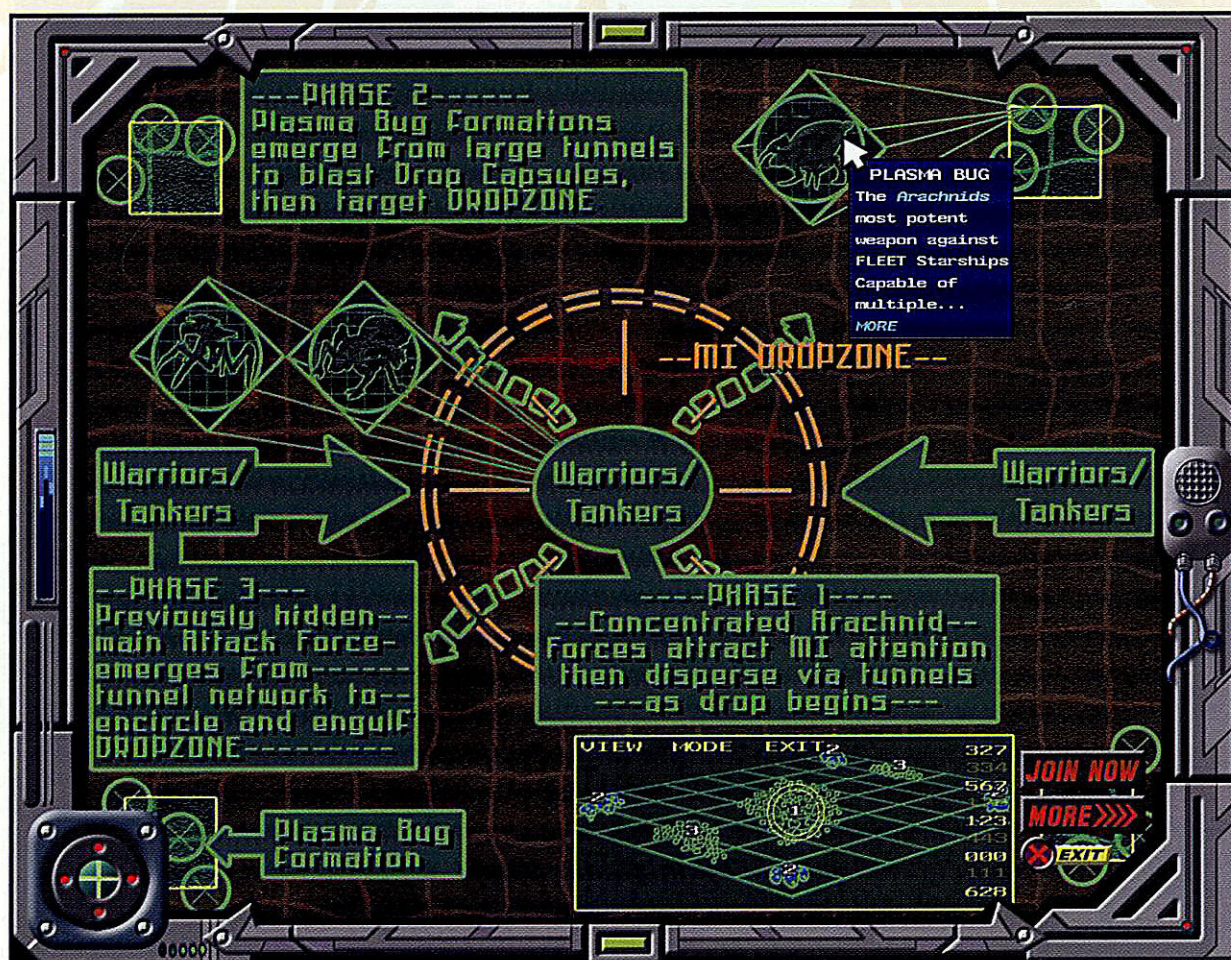
The defence of a well-established colony begins in low orbit. The invasion of Klendathu highlighted the Arachnids' ability to pound a tight formation of warships in orbit with massed fire from plasma bugs. Directed by the psychic probes of brain and queen bugs, plasma bugs are able to target not only single ships but even descending shuttles and drop capsules. They have even been known to channel plasma fire to form corridors, forcing landing craft to land in areas reinforced with swarms of warrior bugs. The defensive measures used by Mobile Infantry to defeat the anti-aircraft systems of technological races during drops have proven somewhat effective in at least providing the Arachnids with multiple targets. However, even a single plasma bug can prove fatal to a warship or descending shuttle and when hundreds are present, the result can be catastrophic.

The second line of defence will be a cloud of aerial Arachnids, either rippers or hoppers depending on the colony. These will specifically target slow flying shuttles at low altitudes and troopers exiting from drop capsules, though they have been known to make kamikaze ram attacks against support missiles or TAC fighters. Arachnids at this level are quite reckless with their own lives if they think they can save their colony.

Tunnels

The final defence Arachnids have against aerial attacks lies in their tunnel networks. A colony that has been established for any great length of time will have an extensive network stretching for miles in every direction, allowing bugs to literally scuttle for cover whenever a TAC fighter or Slingshot flies overhead. Neither the Mobile Infantry nor the Fleet have yet developed an effective air-launched weapon that can successfully engage large swarms of Arachnids that are underground, though SICON weapon engineers continue to refine potential technologies.

Even when an existing tunnel network is not available, warrior bugs are capable of burrowing underground and creating their own small tunnel systems in a very short space of time. Given a few minutes, even large swarms can effectively disappear by



the time a shuttle flies overhead, especially if a brain bug is close enough to detect the aircraft at range.

Deep Space

The Arachnids are still profoundly limited once they move beyond planetary orbits and have yet to develop the sophisticated craft enjoyed by the Fleet and other advanced races. Though plasma bugs are capable of shooting spores to other planets in a star system, the chances of them striking a warship at this range are remote.

The use of transport bugs to cross the void of space is beginning to increase as the Arachnid Empire grows larger. Only one has been successfully engaged by a Fleet vessel (the *Valley Forge*) and intelligence on their true capabilities is somewhat limited. The sheer mass and thick armoured carapace of a transport bug makes dealing serious damage to it a daunting prospect. Indeed, Military Intelligence has classed most colony orbital defences as inadequate to even slow down an incoming transport bug, making Fleet presence around these worlds all the more important.

Offensively, transport bugs are a lot less terrifying, as the only weapon seen used by them are lines of plasma bugs temporarily

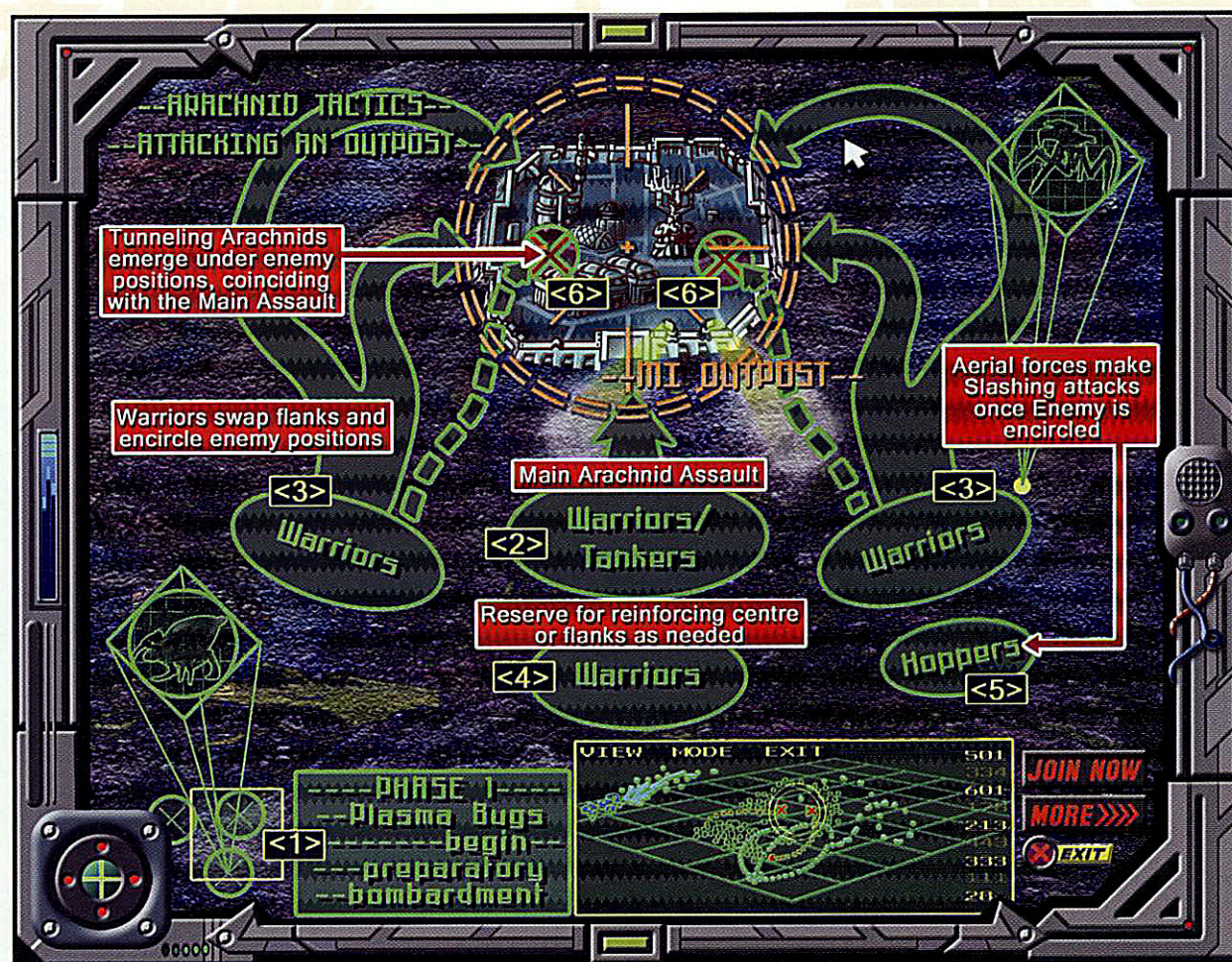
braving the void to hurl fire at nearby enemy vessels, though they seem to lack the co-ordination of those firing from the surface of a planet.

The two major gaps in the Arachnids' arsenal seem to be a dedicated warship and fast strike fighter equivalent. Despite the damage a kamikaze rippler can do to a speeding shuttle, there is still nothing in the known galaxy that can match a TAC fighter in a dogfight, in the atmosphere or out. The additional lack of transport bug-mounted heavy weaponry that has a serious chance of destroying a cruiser or other large military vessel, is something of a relief for the Fleet and has led to a cavalier attitude towards the threat Arachnids pose in space.

Even so, the transport bug is a biological wonder and there can be little doubt that if the Arachnids decide they have a critical need for creatures based on the roles Fleet vehicles perform in battle, they will indeed appear.

Asteroids

After the destruction of Buenos Aires, no citizen on Earth or the colonies was left in any doubt as to the threat the Arachnids posed. Consequently, the most infamous of Arachnid attacks has become the most feared, even though it is plain to SICON



that the gradual infestation of system after system by spore or transport bug is of far greater relevance.

Still, death by hundreds of tons of spinning rock thrown onto an inhabited world remains a potent weapon that the Fleet must be ever watchful for. Buenos Aires is the only human target to have succumbed to this kind of attack but the Arachnids have tried this tactic many, many times, against Earth and the colony worlds.

Every system has billions of rocks or icebergs slowly orbiting its sun, travelling for eternity unless a gravitational tug from a nearby star disturbs them, sending them inward to become comets. The Arachnids, naturally, have a more direct approach.

A transport bug at the edge of the system will ensnare a suitable asteroid (solid rocks are preferred, as ice-based projectiles have a tendency to melt before they strike the surface of a planet) before accelerating towards its target. The rock is then released and follows a pre-calculated ballistic trajectory to strike an inhabited world. The course of the asteroid is calculated by

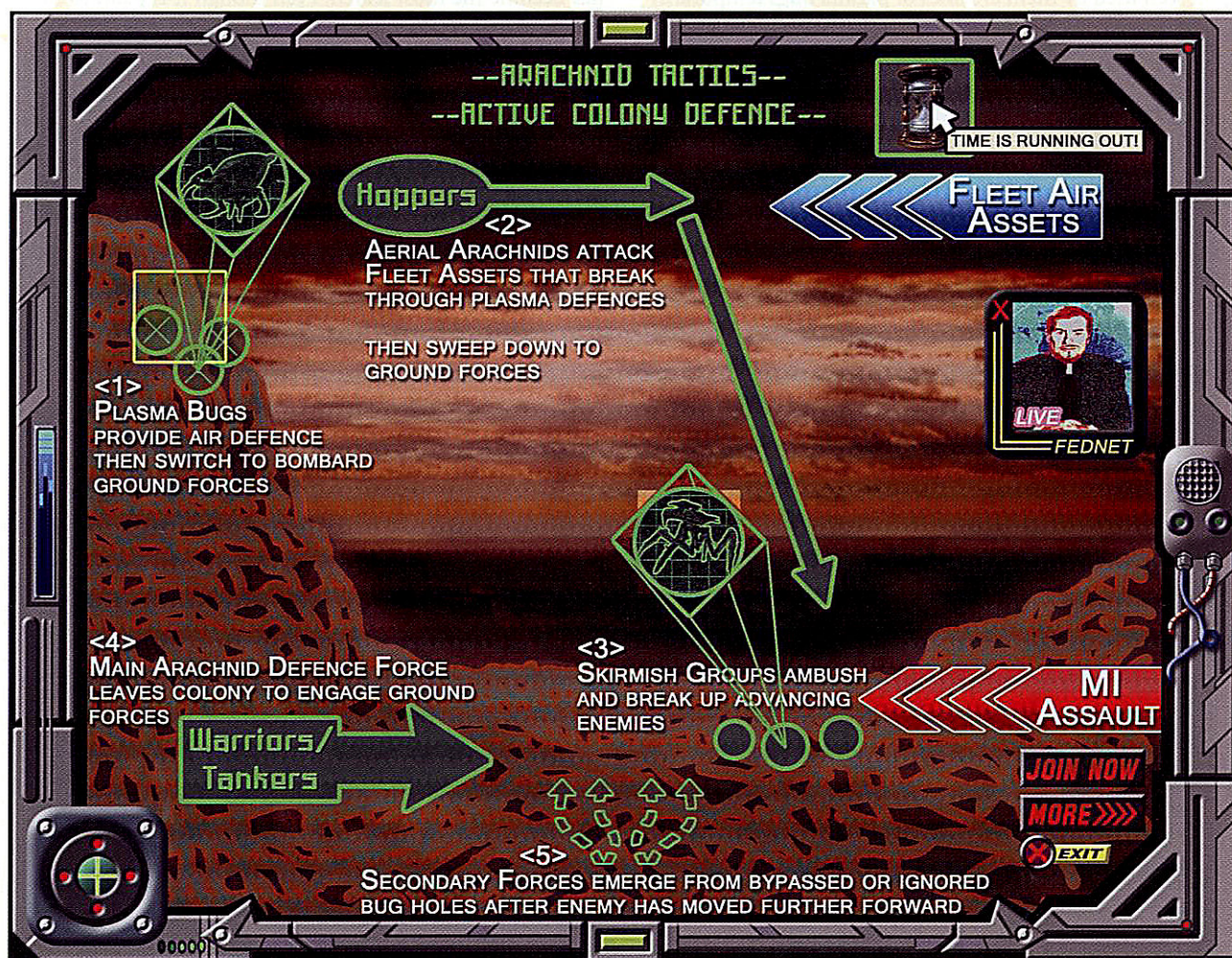
brain bugs on board the transport and the accuracy can be phenomenal, even from the edge of the system.

There are three classifications of asteroid used by Arachnids, as determined by their mass and the damage they are capable of dealing upon impact.

Type I: These vary in size from a stadium to a large warship. These asteroids will destroy everything on the surface within a radius of 1d6 x 10 miles from the impact point.

Type II: The size of a small island. These asteroids will destroy everything on the surface within a radius of 2d6 x 100 miles from the impact point.

Type III: The size of a small country. These asteroids will cause a catastrophe on an entire planet – an extinction level event that will wipe out all but the simplest life forms present on the world. So far, this remains theoretical as there has been no intelligence of Arachnids using asteroids of this mass. Indeed, many within SICON remain doubtful that a transport bug could even begin to influence the course of one. It may, however, just be a matter of time. . .



SOCIETY & PHYSIOLOGY

THE KNOWN GOALS of the Arachnids are simple and, when considered in a philosophical light, are no different to those of the Federation or any other race – to survive and dominate. Whereas most species of the galaxy have a naturally slow and measured rate of expansion however, the Arachnids are a highly developed race that seem to be geared towards the most efficient method of expansion yet encountered. This makes them seem soulless, rapacious and evil as they spread inexorably across the galaxy.

In truth, the Arachnids have identical ambitions to all other species. They are simply better at them than most and are already responsible for the extinction of untold numbers of sentient races.

HISTORY OF THE SPECIES

It is possible that the 'original' Arachnid species is the warrior or it may be the queens. No Federation scientist has yet fully mapped their evolutionary path and, given their remarkable ability to engineer sub-species for specific roles within their society, it is likely the original race no longer exists, replaced by far more efficient designs. Their ultimate ancestors might have been very similar to Earth cockroaches or spiders but the Arachnids of today are as advanced beyond that point as man stands above fish.

It can be speculated that Klendathu was a verdant and ecologically diverse world until the Arachnids gained ascendance, likely in an age roughly equivalent to Earth's own Triassic era. Once it is appreciated that Earth had yet to evolve mammals by this time, let alone humans, the perfection of the Arachnids is clear. It has been said that this quick development resulted in Klendathu lacking the sheer biological diversity of Earth, thus ultimately limiting the Arachnids but the results speak for themselves. While the descendants of humans were still debating whether they should come down from the trees, the Arachnids were experimenting with space travel. By the time humanity began to reach for the stars, the Arachnids were already beginning to expand their vast interstellar empire, wiping out sentient species wherever they made contact.

Arachnids started off as mindless predators and, for all their power and primal ferocity, they were quite simple creatures,

potentially incapable of long-term survival as a species, constantly threatened by more complex and flexible organisms. Arachnids were simply wandering predators, attacking each other as often as any other creature on their world, with no purpose and no sense of species.

The first great breakthrough of Arachnid evolution was the development of a collective consciousness, which replaced an increased intelligence found in the evolution of other advanced species such as humans. By gathering around a slightly smarter bug, such as a proto-queen or brain, Arachnids developed access to new levels of perception and organisation. They remained big, simple predators but a hive mind gave them an edge unmatched by any other species in the galaxy. By swarming on larger predators and feeding on the smaller ones, Arachnids gradually eliminated all the competition on their planet, rising to the top of the food chain after only a few generations. Once natural selection stopped being a problem, the Arachnids turned their attention to their own artificial development, adapting new generations to fulfil gaps in their natural evolutionary structure.

Once Klendathu was dominated, space was the last evolutionary route left open to the Arachnids if the entire race was to avoid stagnation (once the so-called 'hive brain' had been developed, the internecine warfare common among other races was impossible). Without new territory and new resources to incorporate into their genetic structure, the Arachnids would literally wither and die, though this might take several million years. With space travel achieved, first by hurling spores across the void to other planets in the Alpha Hydrae system and then using transport bugs to cross the light years between stars, the Arachnids had an evolutionary scalability unmatched by any other species. Perhaps, aeons from now, the Arachnids will span the entire galaxy and face the same dilemma of genetic stagnation, though on an unimaginable scale. Then, they will have to develop the technology to span intergalactic space, bringing their war of domination to worlds that are vast distances away.

The Arachnids are thus the ultimate expression of evolutionary progress both in the speed in which they gained their sentience and by taking direct control of their species' evolution.

First Contact

The Arachnids knew they were not the only sentient species on the galaxy for they had encountered, and slaughtered, several non-starfaring alien civilisations during their expansion. Up to that time, the Arachnids' long evolutionary struggle had been focused only on the expansion of their species through the galaxy. The discovery of other species subtly changed their domination from expansion to conquest. Queen bugs had already sensed the presence of greater races, such as humans and Skinnies, along their borders and gradually the Arachnids geared their progress to face these threats.

The Tophet Reign

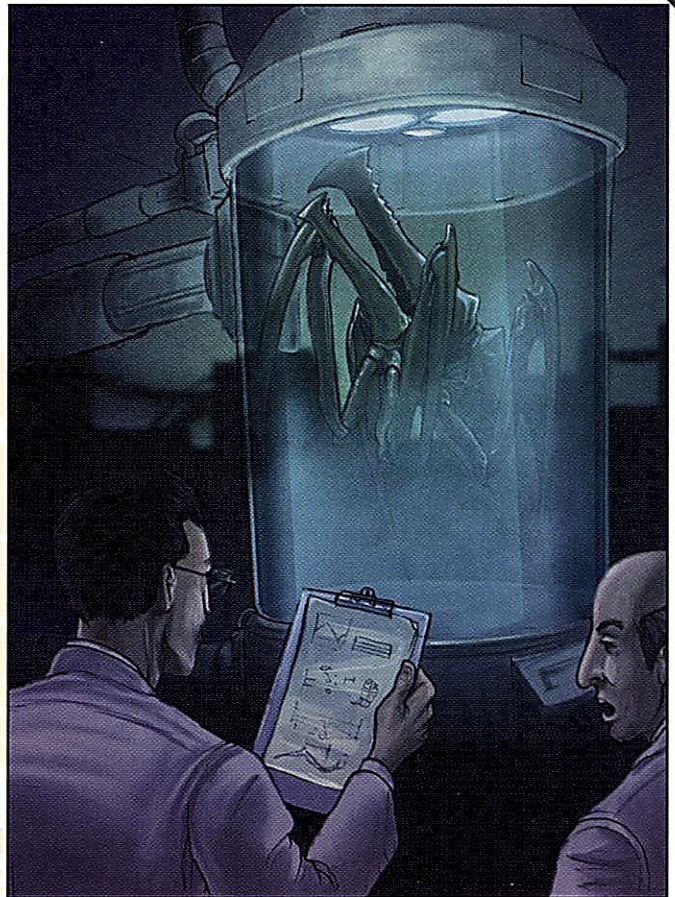
The Arachnids' first contact with an interstellar alien civilisation was when an explorer ship, belonging to the alien species known to humans as the Skinnies, stumbled into the Arachnid Empire. Having developed no form of space warfare, the Arachnids might have let the ship go. However, the Skinnies made the decision to land on an Arachnid world to observe this new race more closely. It was a tragic mistake for the Skinnies, the consequences of which they could have never imagined. The Arachnids slaughtered the explorers and, through interrogation by brain bugs, tracked their journey back to the Skinnie world of Tophet.

With ruthless efficiency, the Arachnids barraged Tophet with spore capsules and transport bugs full of warriors. The result was that Tophet was quickly conquered, the surprised Skinnie forces having no defence against the onslaught of the unknown and ruthless invaders. Thus Arachnids achieved their first true victory against an established military force – Tophet was infested and its inhabitants slaughtered or given to newly evolved control bugs, designed to take over the minds and nervous systems of other species. Skinnies were the first living beings the control bugs were used on, though they would later prove to be equally useful against humans. With so many Skinnies under the direct command of the Arachnids, their military across all colonies was seriously hampered which in turn caused more losses as the Arachnids continued to rampage through their territory. It was a setback that almost wiped out another species and took the Skinnies many years to even begin to reverse.

The next race to face invasion would be humanity.

BASIC ANATOMY

The following materials can be found in any Federation High School xeno-biology textbook. It illustrates the physical make up of the most commonly encountered Arachnid, the warrior bug. Most sub-species follow a similar physiology though great departures are possible in the more advanced species such as brain bugs.



Main/Upper Body

The warrior bug's upper body counts for around one-half its total mass. It is a conical shell of dry, crusty flesh, protected by a chitinous exoskeleton which contains most of the warrior's important organs.

1. CHITINOUS SHELL

A warrior's carapace covers its entire body, from the point of its mandibles to the tips of its legs. It is thin enough to allow easy movement, while retaining enough hardness as to withstand heavy kinetic attacks, particularly against the upper shell (1a) and the sharp knobs protecting articulation centres (1b), where the chitinous covering is three or four times thicker than in the rest of the body. The shell can deflect stray Morita shells and only concerted attacks have a chance of penetration.

2. MANDIBLES

A warrior's massive jaws occupy more than one-third of its total body mass, possibly revealing an early physiological trait designed for close combat. The upper jaw ends in a single, sharp 'beak' or fang, curved downward while the lower jaw has two such fangs, curving upward to form a perfect 'V' section. When the jaws close, they function as highly advanced scissors, cutting tough matter and pushing it back to the inner mandibles. These are lined with sharp ridges for breaking down food after it has been torn off with the front fangs.

3. CLAWS

A warrior bug's claws are articulated and positioned like a Terran mantis', ending in a single sharp spike. These claws allow a bug to make downward piercing attacks, with a strength that belies their relatively small size. It has been theorised that a warrior bug's claws are actually their fifth and sixth legs, atrophied and adapted for combat instead of walking. Such a development may have been due to repeated encounters with smaller prey, requiring primitive Arachnids to have alternative attack forms besides their oversized jaws though it is just as likely that warrior bugs were engineered without regard for previous evolutionary designs.

4. ANTENNA

The tripartite bony crest above a warrior bug's head serves as a receptor for auditory and electromagnetic signals on multiple wave lengths, directing them into the aural cavity connected to the nerve centre. It is believed that the crest may also be a channel for psychic reactions and impulses, the conduit by which brains and queens communicate with warrior bugs.

5. TAIL FINS

These protrusions monitor the warrior bug's sense of smell, by which it identifies the chemical auras that represent approximately half of the Arachnid language.

6. NERVE STEM

This relatively thin, sinewy trunk separates the Arachnid's upper and lower bodies. The stem is the central node of the bug's nervous system, its centre for retrieval and analysis of commands and other signals. It is the closest thing a warrior bug has to a brain. Severing a warrior's nerve stem kills it immediately.

7. CIRCULATORY NODE

In place of a true heart, warrior bugs have a simple knot of veins and muscles, pumping blood to the rest of their bodies. Contrary to the nerve stem, this node is hidden safely inside an Arachnid's main body.

9. THROAT PASSAGE/CRAW

All food that comes through a warrior bug's mandibles passes through the creature's oesophagus and then to the mass of crushing sphincters that comprise its crawl. From there, all food is directed to the creature's stomach sac for digestion.

10. STOMACH SAC

This relatively small pod is where the warrior bug's digestion takes place. From here, all chewed food is bathed in bile acids and squeezed off through special membranes, dropping the remaining chunks into appendal cysts.

11. AURAL CAVITY

This empty space inside a bug's body serves as a resonance box to amplify and interpret sounds and electromagnetic pulses.

Lower Body

This section comprises less than one-third of a warrior bug's total body mass. Besides the small lower body pod itself, this section contains the warrior's ambulatory system.

12. JUNCTION

This is a small flesh pod, connected to the upper body and lower limbs through stiffly moving joints. The joints at this node are clumsier and jerkier than those in the legs and mandibles, due to the chitinous protections that hinder movement.

13. LEGS

Each of a warrior bug's legs is divided in three jointed segments, almost four feet long apiece. The leg joints are protected by bony ridges, which mesh perfectly with each other to facilitate quick movement.

14. LOWER DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

This cluster of organs contains the Arachnid's sub-stomachs, known as appendal cysts. Here, digested food is broken down further into its basic nutrients and diverted to the Arachnid's circulatory system. Whatever remains after this falls into the glottal chamber and is subjected to the last, strongest acid before being expelled through the creature's anus.

REPRODUCTION

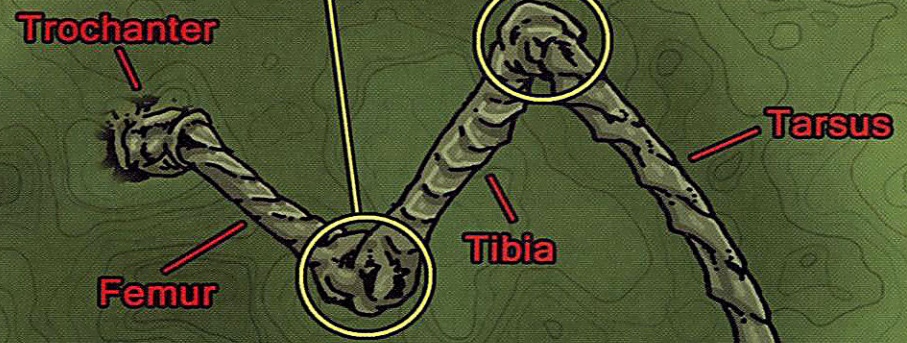
The Arachnids have developed a biologically-based technology that has proved to be their most effective evolutionary weapon. They are capable of mutating entirely new strains of their species within the space of a single generation, rather than developing genetic traits requiring millions of years. As a result, an Arachnid colony is a complete evolutionary laboratory within itself, fulfilling the requirements of an entire ecosystem. Therefore, instead of birds, amphibians, fishes and mammals, Arachnid worlds feature flying, aquatic and ground bugs, each adapted for a distinct evolutionary need. Furthermore, for every new circumstance, environment or ecosystem to which current Arachnid sub-species cannot adapt, a new response is bred in the form of an entirely new subspecies. Where other species gradually evolve for a single, specialised environment or lifestyle, Arachnids can fairly be said to be several species within one larger whole, each adapted to a different task.

The reproduction of the Arachnids is performed solely by the combined legions of breeder and nurser bugs, though always at the behest of brains and queens. Breeder bugs produce eggs in huge quantities and most colonies will have vast chambers dedicated to the support mechanisms needed to protect and nurture breeders and their eggs. The rate of egg production is based primarily by the number of breeder bugs the colony can support, the resources available and the needs of the colony's leader, be it brain or queen. When a colony is in need of rapid reinforcement, usually while the colony is first building up to strength on a new world or after war, brains and queens

Anatomy of the Arachnid Warrior

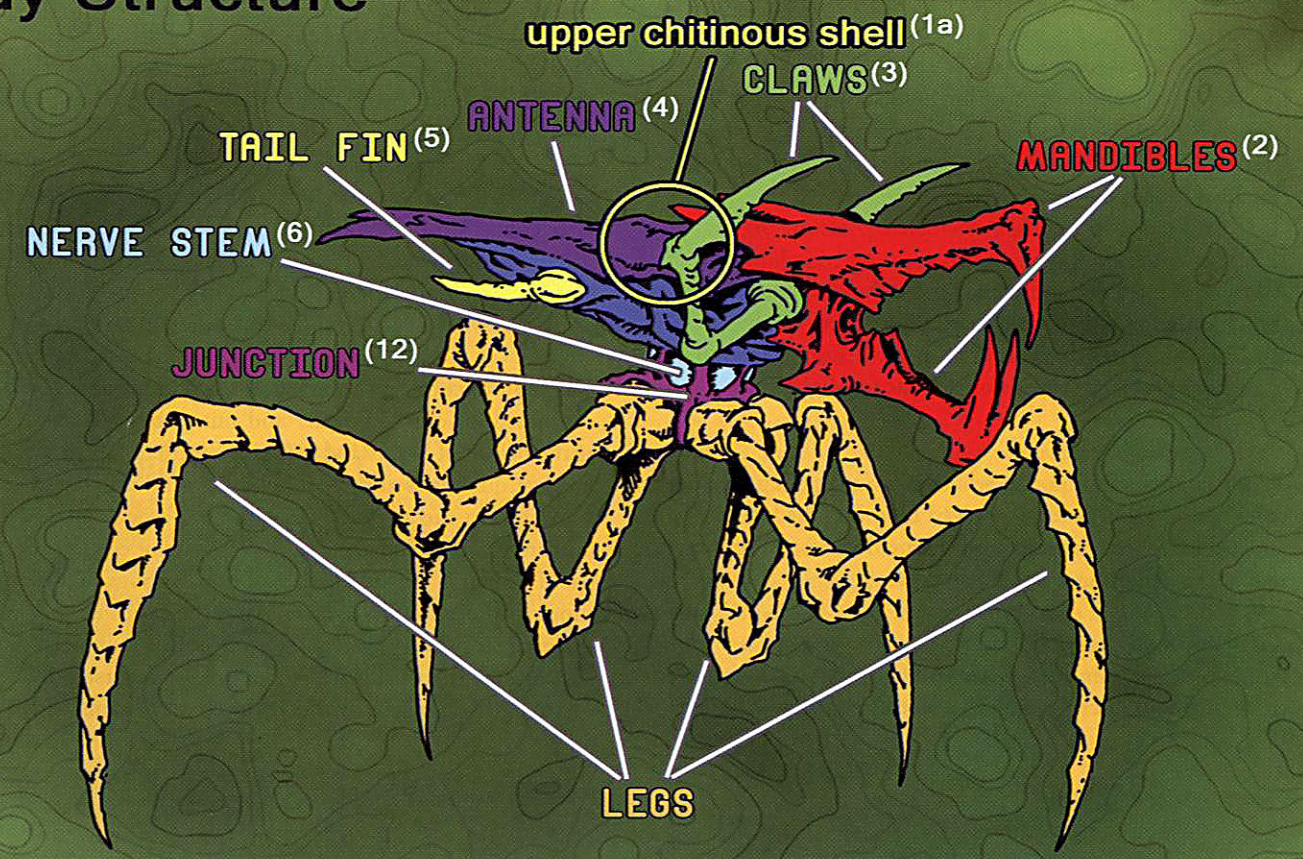
by Dr P W Schneider

sharp knobs protecting articulation centres (1b)

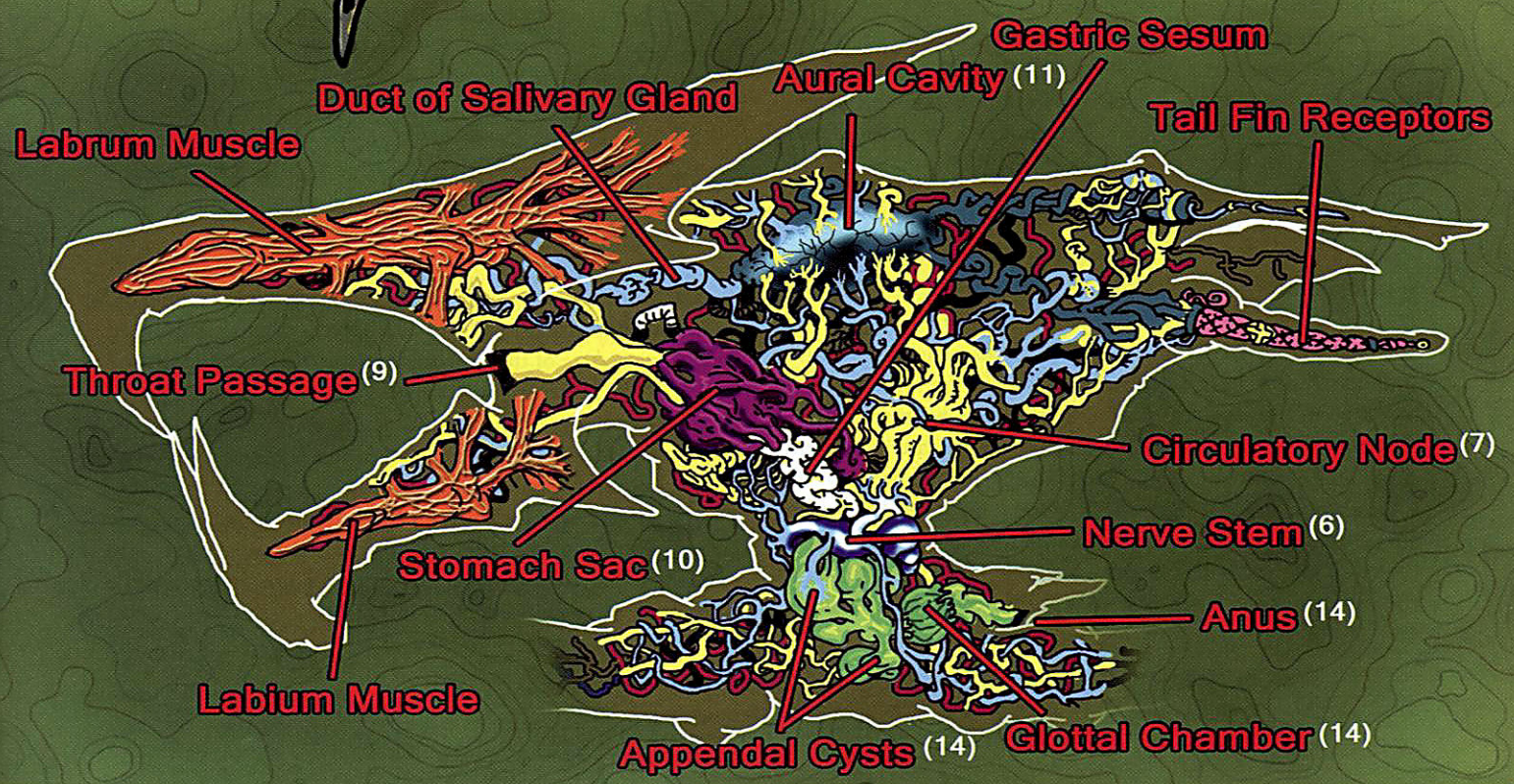


The leg of the Warrior is long and lean, made for running - as anyone who has watched them scamper across the battlefield knows. It also features the characteristic bony ridge pattern of *chitinous shell* (1)

Body Structure



Internal Anatomy



use chemical impulses to stimulate the breeder bugs, greatly increasing egg production. This is a risky strategy however, as breeder bugs can soon exhaust themselves and die.

All Arachnid eggs are fundamentally the same, containing within them the potential to produce a minion bug or a queen. They can also remain inert for years, even decades, until passed to the nurser bugs. These spidery creatures will move eggs from the breeding chambers of a colony to nurture the larvae growing inside. Using a combination of mutagenic chemical injections and minor psychic probes, the larvae within the eggs will be manipulated at a genetic level to grow into the sub-species required by the colony. The nurser bugs themselves are subject to the colony's ruler who regulates the production of new Arachnids in both number and type. So, a colony that has recently faced battle with the Mobile Infantry is likely to need many new warrior bugs – the nurser bugs will be instructed to concentrate on growing warrior larvae until the colony is sufficiently well-protected again.

As the larvae hatch, the nurser bugs continue to monitor their progress, ensuring the nursing chambers remain at the correct temperature for optimal growth and that the larvae have enough food to grow at their usual rate. Bug larvae consume food at an amazing rate and are able to process 150 to 250 pounds of any organic matter in a day. Once the larvae develop into the full grown sub-species they have been engineered into, a process rarely taking more than a fortnight for even the most advanced Arachnids (warrior bugs take just six days), the nurser bugs take a new batch of eggs to raise the next generation of bugs.

This process seems, at first glance, unnecessarily complicated but it holds several advantages that have served the Arachnids throughout their history. The eggs produced by breeder bugs are inert until attention is received by nurser bugs. This means they can be stored within the depths of a colony during times of plenty, ready to be awakened to produce vast numbers of Arachnids of any required type with extreme rapidity. It also allows eggs to survive crossing vast distances through space, be it within a transport bug or a spore packet shot across a Solar System to infect other planets.

The system of breeder and nurser bugs also allows a relative simplicity, at a genetic level, in the reproduction system. Both breeders and nursers are simple organisms, as Arachnids go, allowing them to be produced quickly and with a minimum of resources. Once created, a small number of them can go on to produce legions of warriors, blasters, hoppers and brains in a frighteningly short time. Any complexity in reproduction is therefore reserved solely in the manipulation of eggs, through the use of genetic templates passed onto the nurser bugs by



brains and queens. The nurser bug has no more free will than a warrior bug, mindlessly performing its duties to the colony over and over again until it dies. It has no comprehension of the genetic templates it uses, which are defined solely by more advanced sub-species.

It is this ability to convert inert eggs to any sub-species, combined with the Arachnids' rapid growth to maturity, that has enabled the bugs to dominate any world they land on. Once a colony takes root, only direct and immediate military action has a chance of destroying it without devastating the planet itself.

The issue of gender division among the Arachnids has caused great controversy among the Federation's scientific community in the past, though the argument has been rendered largely moot. Some scientists still persist in speculation, however, believing that there is no specific gender division among Arachnids and that any single bug can exhibit male or female characteristics as required. This naturally leads to further speculation about the breeding possibilities of Arachnids who have no eggs, breeders or nursers. Can a group of warrior bugs, left completely to their own devices, begin creating a new colony?

To date, this has never been witnessed in any combat zone the Arachnids have been fought in. However, given the advanced evolutionary state of the Arachnids, not to mention the control they have over their main technology, it would seem a rather large vulnerability for them to be effectively dead-ended by the loss of one or more sub-species. It is this theory that has had Federation scientists working on targeted genetic pathogens that can infect warrior bugs but leave them unharmed, only becoming potent when the warrior returns to its colony and passes a lethal toxin to the breeders and nursers before the colony can genetically adapt an immunity.

LIFECYCLE

Arachnids develop from larvae to fully grown bug with remarkable speed. Games Masters can use the following formula to determine the average time in days a sub-species will take to fully mature.

2 x the sub-species' Hit Dice + 1 per special attack

This formula should just be used as a rule of thumb, as some species can vary greatly. Brain bugs, for example, take a month to grow into a mature form and will continue to develop intellectually for years. The incredible maturing speed of Arachnids makes it impossible to fully destroy a colony unless its breeding and nursing capacity is truly annihilated. Otherwise, even the most battered colony can soon re-grow to hundreds of warriors and workers in little more than a week.

Most Arachnid sub-species have some form of organic armour or exoskeleton, which increases their defences but hinders physical development. In order to grow fully, Arachnids must periodically shed this exoskeleton, which simply falls off as dead plates several times during the Arachnid's lifetime. This varies from one sub-species to another but most Arachnids shed their exoskeleton three times during their life – once as a larva and the other two when it is at 50% and 75% of its full growth. Discarded exoskeletons are immediately carried off by minion and worker bugs, the dried shells used as prime matter for farming and building.

After reaching adulthood, an Arachnid's natural life expectancy is roughly one year per Hit Die, with some bugs averaging almost twice that much. Brains and queens can live for decades (in fact, there is no known life expectancy for queen bugs and it has been theorised that they have no age gene in their make up). As soon as this time is up, the bug simply dies of old age and its body is immediately subsumed as organic matter into the rest of the colony.

NUTRITION

Arachnids are designed to take nourishment from any organic matter they encounter, be it living creatures, vegetal matter or even some raw minerals. Contrary to what most humans believe, the Arachnids are not primarily carnivorous, although the bugs are perfectly equipped to hunt and devour other creatures. Colonies will encourage the growth of a particular humus, composed mostly of fungi and yeasts, which Arachnids have learned to grow from decomposing matter. This is grown in special chambers, filled with rotting organic matter from various sources (including the dead bodies and excretions of other Arachnids), which worker bugs collect and nurture until it has produced their prized, putrid delicacy. This allows the colony a degree of self-sufficiency to guard against an over reliance on potentially hostile territory outside.

Cannibalism is a common practice among Arachnids and stronger larvae are routinely fed their weaker brethren, while grown Arachnids of all kinds often prey on their own kind when no other food sources are available. In great times of famine, Arachnid colonies develop a significant increase in weaker or defective larvae, which are promptly devoured by stronger members. This practice helps the hive to survive and become stronger from adversity; proof of the efficiency of the Arachnid species – in order to survive, it is capable of breeding nourishment from itself, for at least short periods of time.

The species' optimal plan of survival requires the colony to use everything, leaving no potential resource wasted. Even Arachnids killed in battle are eventually carried back to the colony, where they are processed into food, fertiliser or even mortar, serving the needs of the species even in death.

ULTIMATE EXPANSION

Throughout the history of the Arachnid species, their survival has depended chiefly on one factor – more than evolution, more than power, more than skill. Sheer numbers. It is often assumed that the fact the Arachnids survived and became such a mighty evolutionary dreadnought is due mostly to the bugs' astounding ability to expand, multiply and reproduce.

An Arachnid colony is pre-programmed to expand and conquer the environment at any cost. Should the growth of the community find specific challenges, such as extreme cold, unsuitable terrain or other inherent dangers, the colony immediately adapts to breed the sub-species required to overcome adversity. After the problem has been dealt with, the colony continues its advance over the planet's surface, until it has taken over the entire world.

The Arachnids continue to spread through the galaxy via the scattering of colonies. Typically, a small colony is created from the eggs and bugs carried on spore or within a transport bug. The colony grows and spawns more colonies. When several colonies have been created, the strongest will grow and absorb the others, turning the entire planet into what is effectively a single Arachnid colony, though it will have several nodes and strong points made from former colonies. This colony will then emit spores to create new colonies among other planets in the system before finally developing one or more transport bugs to carry the Arachnids to new stars.

SICON measures the power and influence Arachnids have on any given planet via levels of infestation. Arachnids depend on numbers and expansion for survival, so the larger and more populated a colony, the greater the level of infestation and the stronger the Arachnids' dominance over the planet. There are three levels of Arachnid planetary infestation (Infected, Compromised and Bug Central), which is known as the Arachnid Infestation Index (AII code).

Space Travel

As far as other species are concerned, it is the ability to traverse the light years between stars that gives the Arachnids a terrible strategic advantage. If space travel were closed to them, the bugs would not be the galactic threat they have become.

The technique of throwing organic spores into the air or using water to help scatter the species' seed is perhaps the oldest method of Arachnid expansion, though it has not been observed officially on any world. Infestation by spores has now become a lot more advanced.

Utilising plasma bugs, spore packets are gathered by worker bugs. Containing engineered eggs and organic matter, they are implanted into plasma bugs which then fire them out of a planet's orbit on a trajectory, carefully determined by brain or queen bugs, which will land it on another planet in the same Solar System. On entering the target world's atmosphere, few eggs will survive entry and crash landing but enough will quickly hatch to produce a variety of bugs (usually a mixture of breeders, nursers, workers and warriors) that will form the basis of a colony. Construction will begin on a rudimentary tunnel network while one brain and more warriors will be bred by the combined attentions of breeders and nursers. The colony will keep a relatively low profile during this process but once a brain bug is in place and the tunnel network expanded into a fully fledged colony, nothing short of a full scale war will remove the Arachnid presence from the planet.

This process of expansion can seem a little random, leaving a great deal to chance. However, it requires few resources and so can be attempted many times. Indeed, if a target world is known to be occupied by an enemy race, dozens of spores may be sent to not only beat any planetary defences but also to create as many colonies as possible in a short period of time, eventually overwhelming the defenders.

In the distant past, it is possible spores were thrown across the light years to other star systems. Certainly, the eggs within spores can survive many years in space but the precision targeting required to strike a planet orbiting another star is phenomenal and a great deal of trial and error must have been involved. The logical evolutionary step for the Arachnids was to develop the immense transport bugs now seen across the galaxy. Though lumbering, floating behemoths, transport bugs are incredibly resilient to attack and are capable of carrying vast numbers of fully developed bugs between worlds. This enables the Arachnids to effectively place fully developed colonies on any world they choose – all they need is for a transport bug to penetrate defending fleets and orbital defences. Once it settles on a new world, the bugs inside flood outwards, carving out a new colony from the bare rock if needed. Within just a few days, a colony will be created, as fully functional as one that might have taken six months to grow from a single spore.

A transport bug requires a huge amount of resources from a colony but their use allows Arachnids to spread through the galaxy much faster, attacking planets that might otherwise be too heavily defended for spore-based infestations to prosper.

Communication

Despite their seemingly primitive behaviour, Arachnids have a complex communication system, which can be divided into three basic forms - chemical, aural and psychic.

By clicking their mandibles and claws or emitting vibrations with wings or antennae, Arachnids are able to send and receive very complex auditory messages, in a 'language' comprising billions of combinations of sounds. Furthermore, Arachnids are capable of modulating the frequency of these sounds, which gives them the ability to send and receive messages at immense distances, even from one continent to another. This gives the Arachnids the ability to intercept, if not understand, radio transmissions from other species, an ability many in the Mobile Infantry suspected during the Pluto Campaign and confirmed after the Klendathu Invasion.

Certain substances and odours secreted by Arachnids also allow them to convey limited messages among themselves. This 'language' works by spraying chemicals on a surface, scattering them through the air or delivering them to other bugs by direct touch. The chemicals cause a reaction in certain internal organs of the receiving bug, causing it to behave in a specific way. There are chemical messages to distinguish colony members, to entice warrior bugs into a frenzy, to give simple commands for workers, to request a specific sub-species type from a nurser or to mobilise an entire colony for defence. Chemical messages can consist of a single reagent or a 'cocktail', allowing for a surprisingly complex messaging system.

In some cases, the specific substances emitted by Arachnids affect only bugs from the same colony, due to a small, distinct element in the chemicals secreted by a particular community. This works as a type of 'language division', so a single colony is able to send messages understood only by its own members. These colony-specific chemicals are addictive to the bugs, which constantly return to the brain or queen to consume more. In addition to their command properties, the chemicals enhance the bugs' psychic reception and make them more compliant to transmitted orders.

The telepathic stage of Arachnid communication rounds out their already complex language, by directly broadcasting and receiving raw emotional states. Telepathy is probably an inadequate term to refer to the collective consciousness of the Arachnids but it is the closest human analogy. This telepathic link allows bugs to identify danger, food and other primal directives automatically. It is also the best medium for a queen to communicate orders from one planet to another.

SICON used to believe an Arachnid colony was utterly isolated from others on distant worlds and star systems but it was soon realised newly developed Arachnid tactics were being reproduced from one world to another, with no other explanation of how the colony could acquire the specific knowledge. Furthermore, a specific state of colony alert could be witnessed extending across several Arachnid-infested planets simultaneously. It was this phenomena that started SICON speculation on a collective consciousness or telepathic link among all Arachnids. So far, it is presumed interstellar communication of this nature is exclusive to queen bugs, while brain bugs are limited to interplanetary ranges. Whatever the truth, the fact remains that an Arachnid colony can acquire and reproduce knowledge from any other colony within the Arachnid Empire, regardless of distance.

A Structured Society

Arachnid society is a great engine, powered by countless individuals, most of whom work to simple directives and goals. A single bug has a very simple, straightforward task and billions of such tasks make up the complex and delicate machinery of Arachnid society, operating with clockwork precision. Each bug works utterly and completely for the good of the whole, with no sense of self whatsoever. With each and every bug doing its best for the colony and each and every colony doing its best for the entire species, the Arachnids have become the most efficient species in the galaxy.

All Arachnids, regardless of sub-species or age, follow three directives instinctively, as part of their genetic make up.

1. Species Survival

Arachnids are, first and foremost, programmed to help the survival of their species at all times, in all circumstances, under any condition. As an individual will sacrifice for its colony, a colony will sacrifice for its species. Ultimately, the long-term survival of the Arachnid race is ensured.

2. Assigned Task

Every Arachnid is bred for a specific task and unless species survival is compromised, an Arachnid does its best to fulfil the directives of its personal genetic programming. Therefore, a worker will work and a warrior will fight, doing nothing else unless the need for colony or species survival overrides this directive. A direct order from a brain bug or queen can also override an Arachnid's assigned task.

3. Personal Survival

Finally, a bug will seek its own welfare and survival, according to the basic preservation instinct of every living organism, though only if the other two directives have been fulfilled.



Therefore, a bug will unhesitatingly sacrifice itself to carry out its natural task or otherwise save the colony.

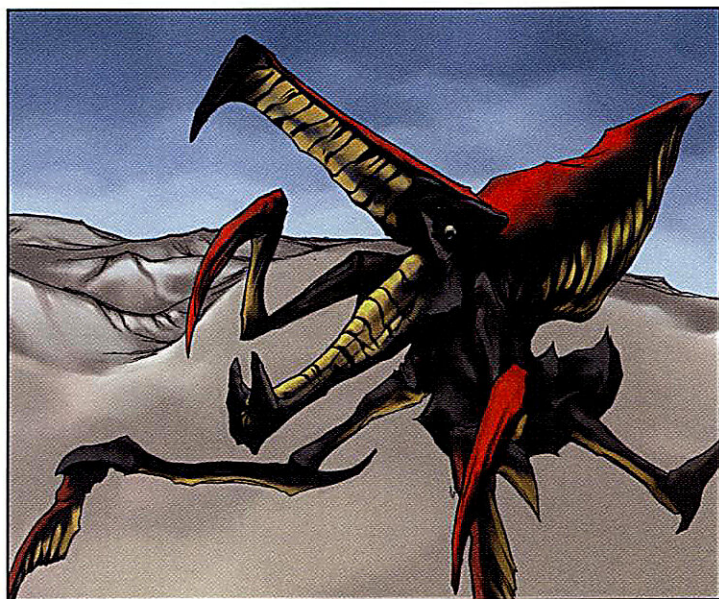
As a colony, Arachnids only have one social tool – the command structure. For bugs, this is no simple master-slave relationship but a very complex, efficient and ultimately co-operative chain of interlocking direct orders, programmed tasks and improvised psychic commands. It is by the delicate hierarchy of a colony that the entire Arachnid machine functions. Each bug sees others as part of the great engine it works for, except for 'hierarchy' bugs. Brains, queens and overseers are constantly in telepathic touch with thousands or even millions of bugs simultaneously, perceiving the social machine as an all-encompassing net of thoughts, impulses and needs. Though sentient, intelligent and self-aware, there are no individual relations for them, no individual needs. The colony is a single entity and other species are merely an environmental threat to expansion and survival.

The Ritual

Among the activities of an Arachnid colony, the nearest to some kind of actual social event is the queen's 'ritual'. Daily, thousands of Arachnids line up outside the queen's chambers to receive the chemical spray that identifies them as members of the colony. This chemical shot is a necessary part of Arachnid behaviour, as the chemicals imparted by the queen bug enhances her psychic communication.

Colony Strata

Arachnid society is one of the most stratified and specialised in the galaxy, with specific bug sub-species for every task



within a colony. Above all Arachnids sits the queen bug, the absolute ruler of the colony. Just below her are the brain bugs, charged with command and organisation of swarms and specific areas of the colony. Below these stand a wide array of specialised soldiers and workers, bred for very specific tasks. This stratified system breaks down as follows.

Queen Bugs: The supreme commander of the largest colonies and probably the rulers of the entire Arachnid race, a queen is surrounded by breeders, guards and overseer bugs, rarely leaving the heart of the colony. The queen remains in contact with the entire colony, which may span an entire planet or even, in theory, a star system, giving orders, organising forces and analysing telepathically-transmitted data on the life forms and worlds encountered by its minions. The queen maintains its contact via a psychic link with brains and overseers all through the colony, who function as representatives and help with the direct control of lesser bugs.

A queen bug is also charged with producing specific chemicals by which the Arachnids of its colony communicate and identify one another. These chemicals also make the bugs more receptive to psychic commands and keep their more savage impulses in check. Without a queen or brain bug in control, Arachnids are usually thrown into chaos, each becoming an isolated, confused individual with little idea of what to do beyond its basest instincts.

When a queen bug feels its death is approaching, it transmits a psychic command, lasting just a few seconds, for the nurser bugs of the colony to allow a new queen to mature. This ensures that even the largest colony can survive almost unhindered in its progress, even when suffering the ultimate tragedy of losing its queen bug.

Brain Bugs: Brains are the de facto rulers of most colonies, taking most of the administrative decisions and giving direct commands to other bugs. The influence of brain bugs was so clear and pervasive that they were long thought to be the only authority of hives, with queens being nothing but a reasonable theory until their existence was finally proved.

A single brain bug is capable of controlling a small colony and several brains are able to link their abilities to command much larger colonies. Given enough brain bugs, any size of colony can be run effectively, as if a queen was present. Once a colony grows large enough to support a queen, existing brains will move into a more subservient role, filtering the administrative needs of the colony and taking command of individual swarms in battle. Without brain bugs, the queen would be overloaded with the neural feedback of the millions of bugs depending directly on her control. SICON scientists believe this would cause the queen to go mad or die, which would in turn throw the colony into disarray.

Overseer Bugs: If brain bugs are the administrators and generals of the Arachnids, overseer bugs are its lieutenants and taskmasters. An overseer is often found in the midst of large warrior or worker swarms, giving direct orders not possible for remote brains. Without overseers, practical and direct command of warrior and worker swarms would bring unnecessary risk to brain bugs, forcing them into the gun sights of enemies. A colony can spare several overseer bugs far more than it can sustain the loss of a single mature brain.

The presence of overseer bugs allows for much larger colonies, as their co-ordination of tasks is invaluable in reducing the workload for brain bugs. Without the hierarchy of queen, brains and overseers, a 'Bug Central' sized colony would simply not be possible.

Soldier Bugs: The soldier bugs category comprises all sub-species designed mainly for combat, including warrior bugs and all known variations. Soldier bugs are those charged with attack and vigilance tasks. They have the ability to recognise enemies of the hive through their chemical odour, warning the colony so the brains become aware of the threat and begin issuing orders to counter it. During long periods without war, most soldier bugs undertake hunting or scouting roles, though some of the more specialised breeds (such as plasma or blister bugs) have literally no use at all beyond warfare – this is one reason why they are comparatively rare compared to warriors.

Worker Bugs: These include not only worker bugs proper, but also all 'task' breeds with specific abilities, suited for a single role, such as minions, breeders and nursers. Workers are charged with building and maintaining the colony, as well as labours of transport, foraging, storage and harvest.

SUB-SPECIES

SINCE THE DAWN of life, evolution has followed the same pattern. Organic matter coalesced into simple strands of genetic material which, quite by accident, developed the ability to replicate itself. Those strands that replicated better produced more copies of themselves, driving forward natural selection. Growing ever larger and more complicated, organisms formed into one-celled creatures and then joined to become multi-celled colonies. From here, it was a relatively short step to eyes, a backbone, movement on the land and sentience. At each level, the strongest and best adapted creatures prospered while the weak fell by the wayside. Each new species represented an extraordinary evolutionary leap.

Then came the Arachnids.

The Arachnids destroyed the evolutionary process of other life forms. Already far more adaptable and capable than the other organisms of their original world, the Arachnids avoided specialisation as a racial trait and instead turned towards diversification. With the ability to mould each new generation of bugs to fulfil a specific requirement of the environment, the older generations of Arachnids could survive and prosper as the entire race grew into a bewildering range of sub-species. The sheer number of sub-species now known, some found only on certain worlds, has lead SICON scientists to regard the Arachnids as an entirely new arthropod genus rather than a single species.

The defining trait of the Arachnids is their ability to manipulate the genetic material of their offspring, to a fine degree, allowing them to create new sub-species as their environment and situation demand. The best parallel for a human to comprehend this ability is with technology. SICON constantly develops new weapons and other devices with which to combat the Arachnid threat – this is easy to understand, as it is what humans have, in one way or another, always done throughout history.

What makes the Arachnids such a deadly enemy for Mankind is that they are essentially no different. SICON develops a new weapon designed to destroy all bug life it comes into contact with – the Mobile Infantry are one such weapon, as are the various nerve toxins that have been created. However, once the weapon has been used, the Arachnids will immediately begin working on a counter, be it a warrior bug more efficient at destroying armoured foot troops or making all sub-species

immune to the toxin. The ability to tweak and change new breeds of bug is essentially the Arachnids' version of technology and it is now matched against that of Mankind.

What the galaxy is now witnessing is the same battle of survival between species that has raged on countless worlds for billions of years. Now, however, the stage is far grander, the stakes far higher and evolution has been replaced by technology as the primary tool for success.

This chapter looks at the various sub-species of Arachnid so far identified by SICON, updating those covered in the main rulebook and introducing some brand new bugs that have started appearing in battles with the Citizens' Federation. These pages replace those listing Arachnid sub-species in the main rulebook.

THE ALIEN BEAST TYPE

The following traits should be added to the alien beast type featured on pages 207-208 of the *Starship Troopers Roleplaying Game*.

Connection: Any alien beast with the Importance feat (see page 207 of the *Starship Troopers Roleplaying Game*) may share its Action Points with other alien beasts. As a standard action, the alien beast can spend an Action Point to choose another single alien beast within 60 feet. The target then gains the Action Point to use as if it were its own. The target alien beast must use the Action Point immediately or it will be wasted.

Hibernation: Alien beasts have the ability to enter a state of hibernation at will. While in this state, the Arachnid is considered helpless and unconscious, though it is also immune to damage associated with fatigue, hunger or temperature extremes. An alien beast can remain in hibernation for a number of days equal to double its total hit points, after which it wakes up and becomes fatigued. Once hibernation has ended, the alien beast cannot hibernate again until it has fed and rested properly.

ACID RIPPLER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10 + 4 (26 HP)

INITIATIVE: +5

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES), FLY 80 FT. (16 SQUARES) (GOOD)

DEFENCE: 17 (-1 SIZE, +5 DEX, +3 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+12

ATTACK: CLAW +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20) OR SPIKE +8 RANGED (1D6+4, 120 FT./24 SQUARES)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20) OR SPIKE BURST +8 RANGED (120 FT./24 SPACES RANGE, 3D6+4)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: ACID, DEADLY PASS

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 90 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 2, FEAR (16)

SAVES: FORT +5, REF +9, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 18, DEX 20, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ACROBATICS +7, PERCEPTION +5

FEATS: FLYING TACKLE, LIGHTNING REFLEXES

A common variation of the rippler bug, the acid rippler marries its light frame and agility to a lethal ranged attack that can surprise Troopers who are used to fighting hopper bugs. Armed with internal acid sacs, the acid rippler bug can easily cripple any target it does not kill outright.

Arachnid colonies tend to concentrate on producing just one type of hopper or rippler bug, depending on their requirements and environment. This means quick thinking Mobile Infantry commanders can assess the threat posed to their Troopers by the Arachnids' airborne assets and devise the best counter. Acid ripplers tend to appear in well-established colonies or those that are forced by terrain to concentrate most of their martial power in the air.

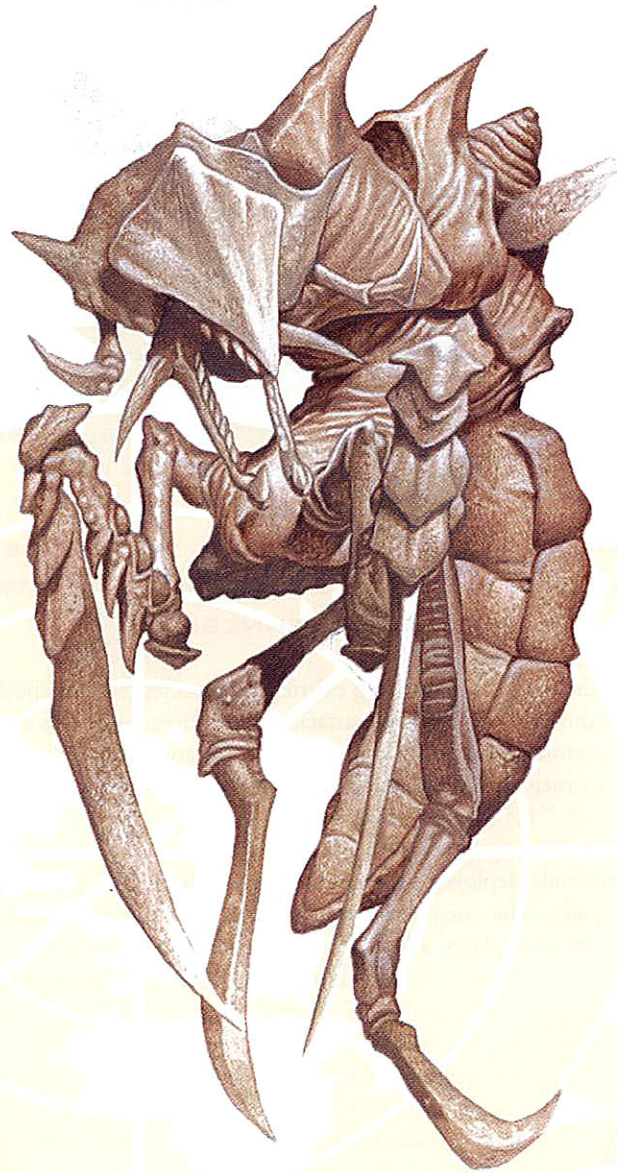


Combat

Acid ripplers use similar tactics to other rippler bugs, swarming in large numbers before descending on a beleaguered foe. They will mix their deadly passes with shooting attacks, forcing an enemy to keep his head down while other members in the swarm manoeuvre to swoop down once more.

Acid: Each spike fired by an acid rippler will introduce a corrosive acid into its target, making the Spike Burst attack particularly fearsome. Targets struck by a spike suffer an additional 1 point of acid damage each round for 1d6 rounds.

Deadly Pass: Acid rippler bugs can move their full aerial speed (a x4 move, 320 feet/64 squares) and gain a single attack action. To do this, they must fly in a straight line during the round in which they make their Deadly Pass. The target of this attack suffers a claw attack, which takes place when the bug sweeps past it on its flight path. This does not offer a free attack. If the claw attack hits during a Deadly Pass, it inflicts double damage due to the speed and force of the blow.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

LEARN THE
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
THESE AND HOPPERS.
THESE GUYS WILL
GENERALLY HANG
BACK AND PEPPER
YOU WITH ACID DARTS.
TAKE COVER AND
RESPOND WITH HEAVY
RETURN FIRE.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 450 KG
WEAPONS: CLAWS AND
CORROSIVE SPIKE BURST

* Combat Danger Rating

BLASTER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 5D10 + 12 (39 HP)

INITIATIVE: +3

SPEED: 50 FT. (10 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 16 (-1 SIZE, +3 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +5/+14

ATTACK: CLAW +9 MELEE (1D6+5/19-20) OR FIERY BLAST (SEE BELOW)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +9 MELEE (1D6+2/19-20) OR FIERY BLAST (SEE BELOW)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: FIERY BLAST

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 60 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 3, FEAR (15)

SAVES: FORT +8, REF +6, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 20, DEX 16, CON 14, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

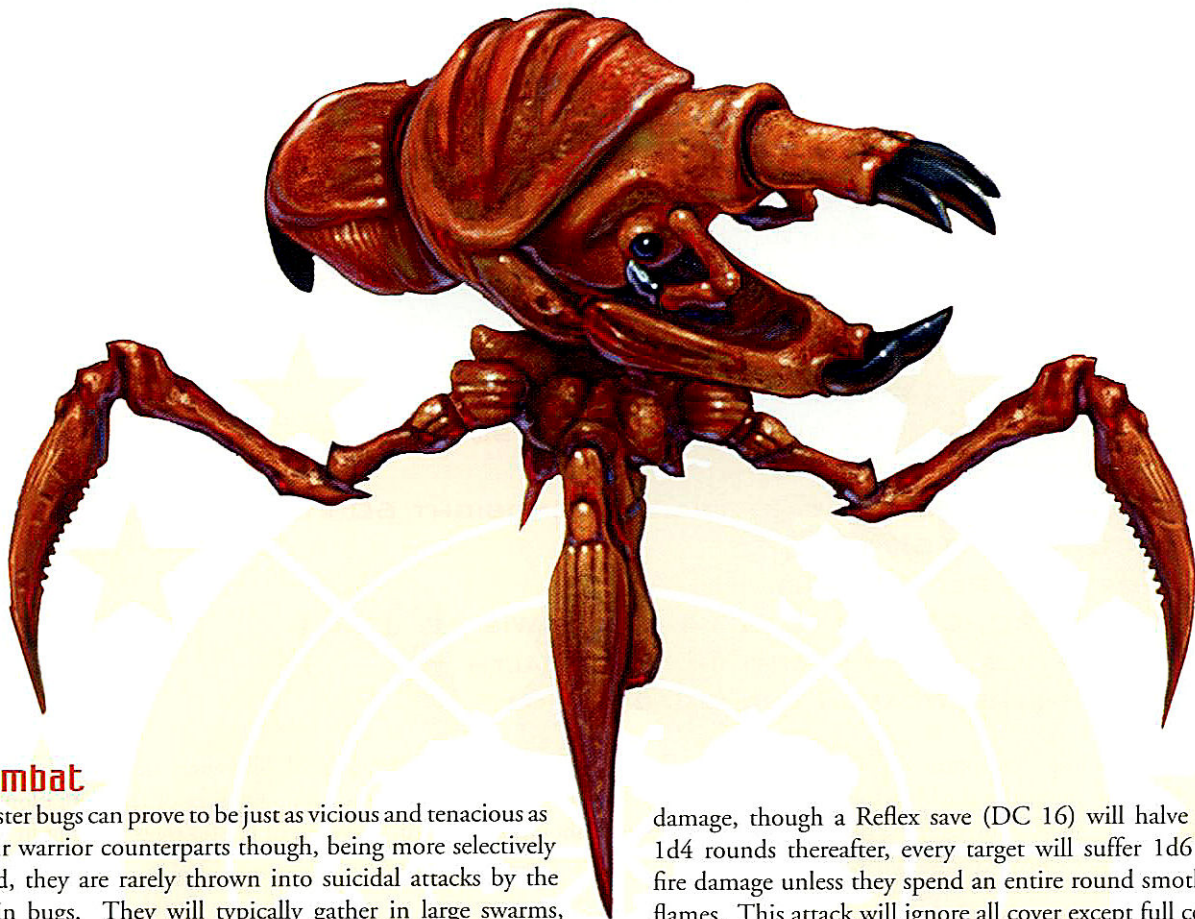
SKILLS: ATHLETICS +6, PERCEPTION +4, STEALTH +6

FEATS: GREAT FORTITUDE, TOUGHNESS

A classic example of the Arachnids adapting existing sub-species to fulfil specific tasks, the blaster bug uses the warrior bug as a base but removes the powerful close combat attacks and replaces them with a ranged weapon. The blaster bug naturally generates two highly volatile chemicals within specialised organs located deep in its bulbous thorax. Muscular convulsions shoot these chemicals through channels that run the length of the blaster bug's body, into its mouth where they ignite, shooting a wave of flame forwards.

The blaster bug is typically deployed in large numbers, gathering in huge swarms to send a tide of flame across the battlefield, consuming all in its path. The one notable weakness of these bugs is the storage of the two chemicals within its body. Though buried under thick armoured plates, a lucky shot can penetrate both organs, allowing the chemicals to mix and blasting the bug apart.





Combat

Blaster bugs can prove to be just as vicious and tenacious as their warrior counterparts though, being more selectively bred, they are rarely thrown into suicidal attacks by the brain bugs. They will typically gather in large swarms, flattening entire areas with their flame attack and then retreating behind a screen of warriors before the enemy can retaliate.

Fiery Blast: As an attack action, the blaster bug can shoot a stream of flame 15 feet (3 squares) wide and 40 feet (8 squares) long. All targets within that area will suffer 3d6 points of fire

damage, though a Reflex save (DC 16) will halve this. For 1d4 rounds thereafter, every target will suffer 1d6 points of fire damage unless they spend an entire round smothering the flames. This attack will ignore all cover except full cover.

Unstable Chemicals: Whenever a blaster bug suffers a critical hit, it must make a Fortitude save (DC 14). If it fails, the chemicals within its body will mix and detonate, destroying the bug instantly and inflicting 4d6 points of damage against every target within 10 feet (2 squares). A successful Reflex save (DC 16) will halve this damage.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

QUICK REACTIONS
CAN SAVE A TROOPER
FROM BEING ROASTED
BUT BE WARY OF
MASSED SWARMS
COVERING AN ENTIRE
LANDING ZONE IN
FIRE.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 2
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 700 KG
WEAPONS: FIRE BURST

* Combat Danger Rating

BLISTER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 5D10 + 12 (39 HP)

INITIATIVE: +3

SPEED: 50 FT. (10 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 16 (-1 SIZE, +3 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +5/+14

ATTACK: CLAW +9 MELEE (1D6+5/19-20) OR ACID SPIT +8 RANGED (2D6 ACID SPLASH [10 FT.], 60 FEET/12 SQUARES)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +9 MELEE (1D6+2/19-20) OR ACID SPIT +8 RANGED (2D6 ACID SPLASH [10 FT.], 60 FEET/12 SQUARES)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: ACID SPIT

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 60 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 3, FEAR (15)

SAVES: FORT +6, REF +6, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 20, DEX 16, CON 14, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +6, PERCEPTION +4, STEALTH +6

FEATS: TOUGHNESS, WEAPON FOCUS (ACID SPIT)

At first sight, blister bugs can appear very similar to blaster bugs. In proportions, the only external differences are a slightly shorter jaw and less bloated thorax on the blister. However, whereas the blaster bug usually features striking orange or red coloration, the blister bug tends to sport a dirty brown or grey carapace. Troopers should be warned, however, of blister bugs fighting in dank terrain that can often stain their hides.

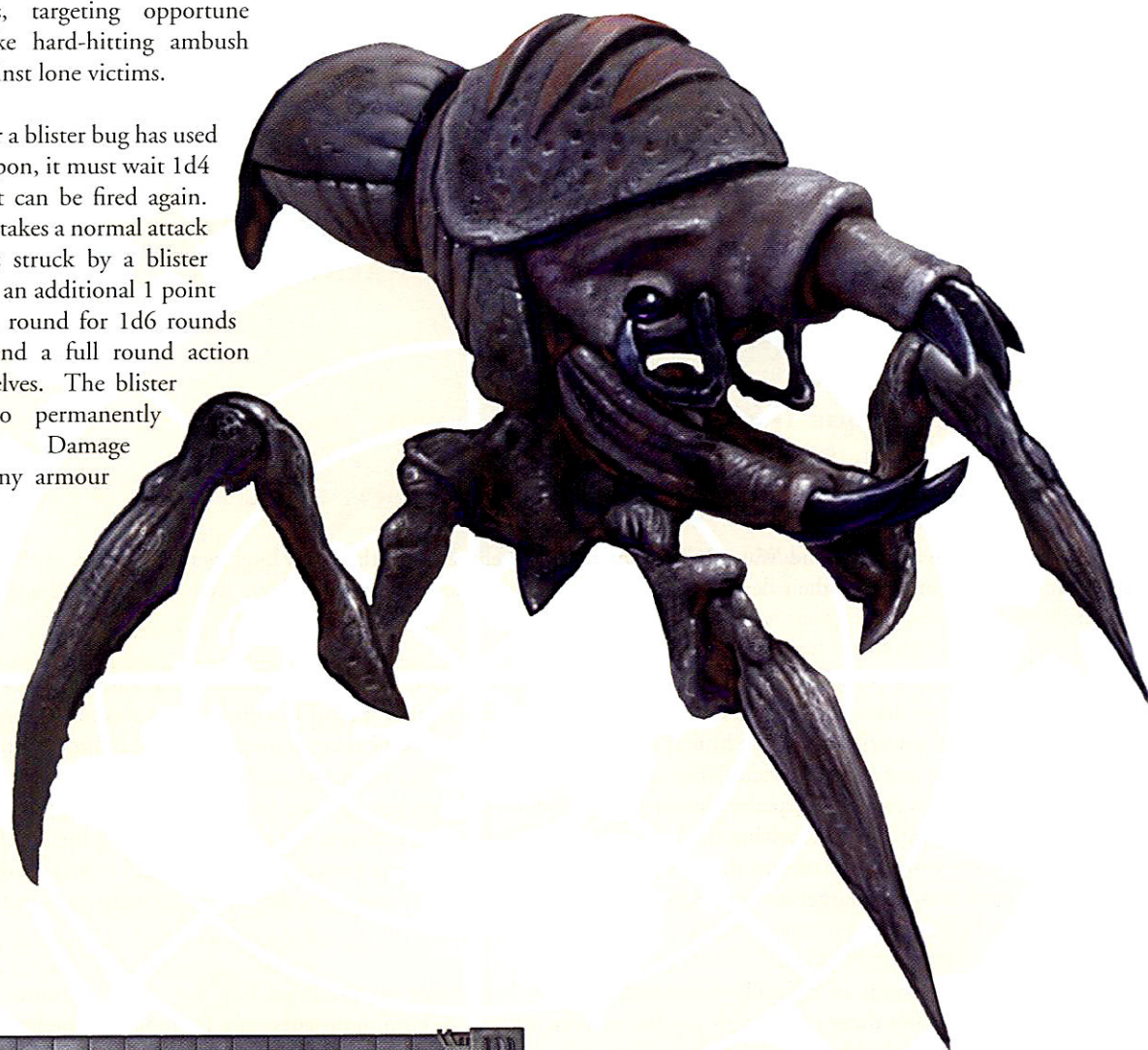
The blister bug has a longer ranged attack than the blaster, shooting globs of acid generated deep within its thorax. This acid, whose exact composition seems to vary from colony to colony, is fully capable of reducing the structural protection of even Marauder suits, making them lethal to Troopers on foot.



Combat

Blister bugs tend to be more independent than blasters, not needing to mass their numbers to make effective attacks. They often fight alongside warrior bugs in frontal assaults, targeting opportune targets, or make hard-hitting ambush style attacks against lone victims.

Acid Spit: After a blister bug has used its acid spit weapon, it must wait 1d4 rounds before it can be fired again. Firing acid spits takes a normal attack action. Targets struck by a blister bug's acid suffer an additional 1 point of damage each round for 1d6 rounds unless they spend a full round action cleaning themselves. The blister bug's acid also permanently reduces the Damage Reduction of any armour by one point.



CAREER SERGEANT

ZIM SAYS:

DON'T CONFUSE THESE BUGS WITH BLASTERS - LOOK FOR THE MUDDY BROWN CARAPACE AND BE SURE TO WIPE OFF ANY ACID YOU GET ON YOUR ARMOUR BEFORE IT EATS THROUGH TO YOUR SKIN.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 2

IQ: 30

WEIGHT: 675 KG

WEAPONS: ACID SPIT

* Combat Danger Rating

BRAIN BUG

HUGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 14D10 + 28 (105 HP)

INITIATIVE: -1

SPEED: 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 11 (-2 SIZE, -1 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +14/+23

ATTACK: NONE

FULL ATTACK: NONE

SPACE/REACH: 15 FT. (3X3 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: PSYCHIC ABILITIES

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ACTION POINTS (5), ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 6, FEAR (10)

SAVES: FORT +11, REF +5, WILL +11

ABILITIES: STR 12, DEX 8, CON 14, INT 16, WIS 20, CHA 10

SKILLS: KNOWLEDGE (HUMANS) +5, KNOWLEDGE (TACTICS) +5, PERSUASION +15, PERCEPTION +15, STEALTH +8

FEATS: IMPORTANCE, IRON WILL, PSYCHIC TALENT, SKILL FOCUS (PERSUASION)

For a long time into the Arachnid War, SICON Intelligence believed that the brain bugs were at the top of the bugs' command structure and the pinnacle of their development. Predictably, those Intelligence officers were to be proved wrong on almost all counts.

Though each brain bug possesses a high degree of self-awareness and is capable of directing Arachnid activities across an entire world if need be, they are still only one link in the chain, as the later discovery of the queen bugs was to demonstrate. Gigantic creatures, capable of towering far over a human when they are forced to shift their tremendous bulk, brain bugs rely on the sturdy chariot bugs to move any great distance. They are bred to oversee small to medium-sized Arachnid colonies, commanding all bugs beneath them through focused telepathy and chemical secretions. Brain bugs are incredibly receptive to telepathic directives from queen bugs and are capable of receiving direction across the light years between star systems, allowing the Arachnids to act as a co-ordinated force from Klendathu to the very limits of the galaxy. On the battlefield, they will rarely make a direct appearance in order to avoid creating a target for enemy guns but will direct warriors and other sub-species to make the most effective attacks and ambushes.

This is roughly the extent of officially-sanctioned SICON knowledge on the brain bug but there are some among Military Intelligence, particularly those gifted with psychic powers, who are beginning to guess at a far more comprehensive role that the brains serve within Arachnid society. Far more than mere sub-commanders, brain bugs use their massive intellect to analyse the activities and capabilities of their enemies, and then synthesise the correct response, whether this requires a change in tactics or the development of a new sub-species. An active brain bug is therefore the highest threat a Mobile Infantry company can face on an alien world. Once the presence of humanity is detected, the brain bug will immediately go to work, assessing the strength and firepower of the invaders, expending warrior bugs to determine potential weak points and then finally formulating the strategy that will lead to final victory. When more than one brain bug is present within a colony, the processing power available to them increases exponentially, making the leadership of the Arachnid force far more deadly than any Sky Marshal.



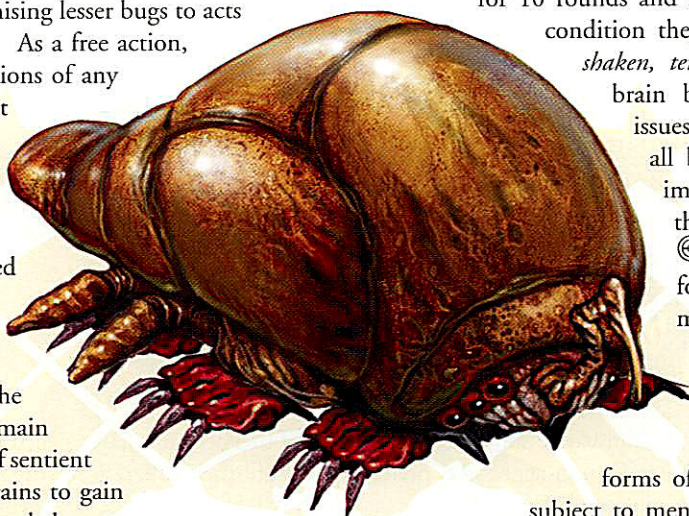
Combat

Brains bugs will avoid direct confrontation whenever possible, preferring to rely upon the brute force and overwhelming numbers of other sub-species. When cornered, the brain bug will employ its fearsome psychic abilities to defeat its attackers before retreating into hiding once more.

Big, Fat, Smart Bug: The brain bug can maintain a psychic link with its subordinates, galvanising lesser bugs to acts of incredible ferocity and speed. As a free action, the brain bug can direct the actions of any group of bugs within 480 feet (96 squares). All bugs directed must be of the same species and every directed bug must be within 10 feet (2 squares) of another directed bug. A directed bug gains a bonus move or attack action every round.

Brain Suck: Brain bugs have the gruesome ability to use their main proboscis to penetrate the skull of sentient life forms and consume their brains to gain a proportion of the victim's knowledge, memory and experiences. This can often provide the Arachnids with detailed intelligence, directly from the minds of their enemies.

Whenever adjacent to a helpless or pinned target, the brain bug may take a full round action to make a Brain Suck attack. The victim will lose 1d6 points of Intelligence, every round this attack is performed. The damage is permanent and cannot be healed by any means (bits of his brain are being eaten!). When the victim's Intelligence reaches 0, it dies. The brain bug must digest this meal for one hour per Intelligence point consumed. After this period, the brain bug will have full access to the victim's knowledge and memories.



Psychic Abilities: A brain bug can wield the following powers, once per round, as an attack action. There is no limit to how often each power can be used but each use costs the brain bug one point of non-lethal damage. Telepathic characters can attempt to interfere with a brain bug's powers as detailed in the Psychics chapter of the main rulebook.

⊕ **Rally the Swarm:** This power grants every bug within 120 feet in all directions the brain bug's Will save bonus for 10 rounds and instantly removes any mental condition they may be suffering (*stunned, shaken, terrified* or *frightened*). If the brain bug wishes, this power also issues an irresistible command for all bugs in the area of effect to immediately move toward it at their best possible speed.

⊕ **Psi-lash:** This is a tightly focused beam of disruptive mental energy that strikes the closest non-Arachnid mind to the brain bug within 60 feet and inflicts 1d6+5 damage. This damage ignores all forms of Damage Reduction, is only subject to mental defence and is quite real.

Victims suffer intense pain, ear, eye and nose bleeding, and can die from cerebral haemorrhaging if reduced to -10 hit points or less.

⊕ **Wave of Horror:** This ability sends out a mental command that strikes at an empathic level against every non-Arachnid within 60 feet. Only psychics with the Mental Endurance class feature or characters with the Iron Will feat may take a Will save (DC 18) against this effect. All victims in the area are *shaken* for 2d4 rounds by the terror this wave of emotion inflicts upon them. If a victim is already suffering from a Fear effect, they instantly become *terrified* for one full round (and then *shaken* for 1d4 rounds thereafter).



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM

SAYS:

AS A TROOPER
SAID ONCE, A BIG,
FAT, SMART BUG.
IT LACKS STRONG
PHYSICAL ATTACKS
BUT DON'T APPROACH
ALONE AS IT CAN
SERIOUSLY MESS
WITH YOUR MIND.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1-ULTRA

IQ: 275+

WEIGHT: 1.5 METRIC TONS

WEAPONS: PSYCHIC POWERS

* Combat Danger Rating

BREEDER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 2D10 + 2 (13 HP)

INITIATIVE: +1

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 12 (-1 SIZE, +1 DEX, +2 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +2/+5

ATTACK: CLAW +0 MELEE (1D6-1)

FULL ATTACK: CLAW +0 MELEE (1D6-1)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 60 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 2, FEAR (1D), SENSITIVE ANTENNA

SAVES: FORT +4, REF +3, WILL +0

ABILITIES: STR 8, DEX 12, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: KNOWLEDGE (ARACHNIDS) +5

FEATS: INSTINCTIVE (KNOWLEDGE (ARACHNIDS))

Though officially classed as a non-combative sub-species, the claws of breeder bugs have spelled doom for more than one careless Trooper. They are, however, generally non-aggressive, preferring to fulfil their sole task for the Arachnid colony – consuming as much organic matter as possible and converting this into eggs which will hatch into the next generation of bugs.

A well-fed breeder bug will display an amazing metabolism, being able to lay an average of a dozen eggs per day, though brain bugs can stimulate their breeders with chemical impulses to triple or even quadruple this output. Breeder bugs cannot sustain this level of activity long and will generally die from exhaustion within a month, making this a course taken only when the colony as a whole is under threat. The eggs laid by breeders are species-neutral, requiring the stimulus of nurser bugs to designate them as warrior, brain, hopper, etc, in a process similar to the fertilisation of eggs in other egg-laying races.



Combat

Breeder bugs will avoid combat at all costs, retreating before an attacking enemy and only fighting when cornered with nowhere to escape.



**CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM
SAYS:**

THIS BUG'S CLAWS CAN HURT BUT IT IS A STUPID TROOPER WHO GETS SMEARED BY THIS ONE. WILL USUALLY RUN INSTEAD OF FIGHT - PAY ATTENTION WHEN YOU CORNER IT.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 5
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 325 KG
WEAPONS: SMALL CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

BUG LARVA

SMALL ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 1D10 + 1 (6 HP)

INITIATIVE: -5

SPEED: 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

DEFENCE: 7 (+1 SIZE, -5 DEX, +1 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +1/-7

ATTACK: NONE

FULL ATTACK: NONE

SPACE/REACH: 2½ FT. (1 X 1 SQUARE)/ 0 FT. (0 SQUARES, DOES NOT GET FREE ATTACKS)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT.

SAVES: FORT +3, REF -4, WILL -1

ABILITIES: STR 3, DEX 1, CON 12, INT 1, WIS 8, CHA 1

SKILLS: NONE

FEATS: NONE

After hatching, all sub-species of Arachnids retain a larval form for anything between a week and a month. Kept within the deepest reaches of a colony, they are utterly helpless and spend their time consuming food to store energy for the metamorphosis into their final form, be it warrior or tanker.

Bug larvae make exceptional targets for Troopers able to penetrate deep into a colony, as every larva squashed may mean one less warrior to fight later on in a campaign. Their ineffectiveness in combat means that Morita rifles are often an overkill and flame or grenade attacks are far more efficient at destroying large numbers of them, though any good Trooper knows that a solid boot will work in a pinch. Bug larvae are thus very well protected within a colony and any invading force will have to fight or bypass hundreds of warriors in order to reach them.



Combat

Bug larvae are utterly helpless in combat and rely on the protection of warriors and other sub-species for survival. They will instinctively move away from any perceived threat.



**CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM
SAYS:**

YOU SEE THESE,
USE YOUR BOOT.
THEY MAY BE WEAK
NOW BUT IN A FEW
DAYS THEY CAN
GROW INTO A SWARM
OF BATTLE-READY
WARRIORS.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 5
IQ: 5
WEIGHT: 120 KG
WEAPONS: NONE

* Combat Danger Rating

BURROWER BUG

HUGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 12D10 + 36 (102 HP)

INITIATIVE: -1

SPEED: 40 FT. (8 SQUARES), BURROW 40 FT. (8 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 16 (-2 SIZE, -1 DEX, +9 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +12/+26

ATTACK: BITE +16 MELEE (2D6+9)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +16 MELEE (2D6+9)

SPACE/REACH: 15 FT. (3 X 3 SQUARES)/ 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 90 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 6, FEAR (18)

SAVES: FORT +13, REF +5, WILL +4

ABILITIES: STR 22, DEX 8, CON 16, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: PERCEPTION +14, SURVIVAL +4 (+14 UNDERGROUND)

FEATS: ENDURANCE, GREAT FORTITUDE, IMPROVED HIBERNATION, PROTECTED SYSTEMS, SKILL FOCUS (SURVIVAL)

Most colonies will rely on hordes of worker bugs to create the vast tunnel networks common to the Arachnids. The burrower bug is a huge and well-armoured sub-species developed to tunnel through rock at much greater speeds, using its sheer bulk and rows of grinding teeth to cut through the toughest natural materials as quickly as its worm-like body can be propelled.

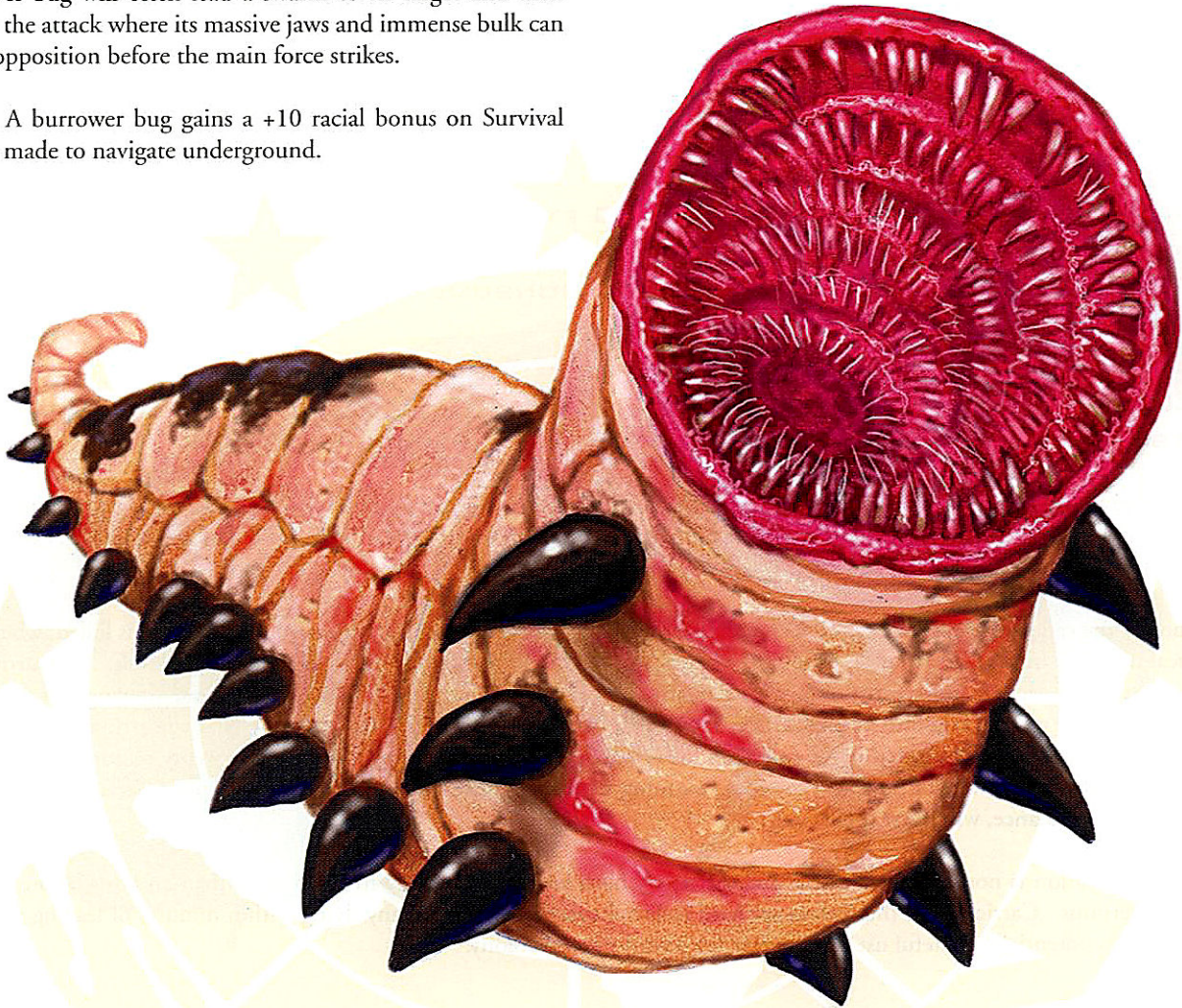
Burrower bugs will usually be attached to swarms of other Arachnids not capable of creating their own tunnels or unable to match the pace of the burrower bug when tunnelling. Several burrower bugs have been known to combine their efforts to create tunnels that even the massive plasma bugs can march down. They are often directed by brains to spearhead crucial attacks though when not at war they will be employed to extend the tunnel network of a colony, leaving the worker bugs to be engaged in other duties. They are not present in every colony but those brains who do breed them can expect to oversee a colony that has a tunnel network that is almost impossible to navigate quickly.



Combat

Burrower bugs are subject to the direct will of their ruling brain bug and will concentrate on creating a vital tunnel even if they come under direct attack. When spearheading an assault, a burrower bug will often lead a swarm to its target and then join in the attack where its massive jaws and immense bulk can crush opposition before the main force strikes.

Skills: A burrower bug gains a +10 racial bonus on Survival checks made to navigate underground.



CAREER SERGEANT

ZIM SAYS:

BIG AND WELL-
ARMOURED, A MORITA
JUST WON'T CUT
IT. BRING OUT THE
HEAVY WEAPONS AND
CONCENTRATE YOUR
SQUAD'S FIREPOWER.

SICON BIO REPORT

GDR*: 1

IQ: 30

WEIGHT: 2 METRIC TONS

WEAPONS: GRINDING MAW

* Combat Danger Rating

CARRION BUG

FINE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 1 HP

INITIATIVE: -5

SPEED: 5 FT. (1 SQUARES), BURROW 1 FT. (0 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 17 (+8 SIZE, -5 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +1/-20 (+11 SPECIAL)

ATTACK: NONE

FULL ATTACK: NONE

SPACE/REACH: 0 FT. (0 X 0 SQUARES)/ 0 FT. (0 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: LATCH

SPECIAL QUALITIES: BLINDSIGHT 10 FT., CONSUME HOST

SAVES: FORT +2, REF -4, WILL -1

ABILITIES: STR 1, DEX 1, CON 10, INT 1, WIS 8, CHA 1

SKILLS: NONE

FEATS: NONE

Though rare and so far detected on only a few worlds, carrion bugs are growing in number as they spread among Arachnid colonies and SICON Intelligence has classified them as a major threat in combat zones. Measuring barely ten inches in length, carrion bugs are sometimes mistaken for small bug larvae. They are, however, very, very different.

Attached to the carapace of a warrior bug deep within a colony, a carrion bug remains dormant until its host is killed, whereupon chemical impulses from the warrior flood into its system, stimulating its metabolism to dangerously high levels. The carrion bug burrows into the flesh of its host, consuming all the organic material beneath the carapace within minutes, growing as it assimilates the remains of the warrior bug into its own body. Fired by the stimulants it has received, the now bloated carrion bug transforms into a new warrior bug that bursts from the carcass of the original. The whole process takes less than twenty minutes and can mean an area scoured clean of warrior bugs will soon be swarming with them once more, a tactic that has put several Mobile Infantry commanders off balance, with fatal results.

This transformation is not without its costs and the newly born warrior bug rarely lives for more than an hour before expiring from its exertions. Carrion bugs themselves are hard to breed successfully with many dying within minutes of leaving their egg, representing a potentially wasteful use of resources for a hard-pressed colony.



Combat

Carriion bugs are completely dormant until activated by the death of their host. Once transformed into a warrior bug, they attack with double the vigour and ferocity of their original host, aiming to destroy any enemy in reach before they expire.

Latch: The carriion bug's size modifier for grapple checks made to stay in contact with its host counts as if it was Colossal (+16) instead of Fine (-16).

Consume Host: As soon as its warrior bug host dies, the carriion bug starts burrowing into its body, consuming it. 1d10+10 minutes later, the dried-out carcass will burst open in a sickening eruption and a new fully-grown and battle-ready warrior bug will emerge.



CAREER SERGEANT

ZIM SAYS:

YOU'LL NEVER EVEN SEE THIS BUG UNTIL IT BURSTS THROUGH A DEAD WARRIOR, READY TO FIGHT. PAY ATTENTION TO RECON REPORTS OF WARRIORS SPRINGING BACK TO LIFE AND TORCH ALL CARCASSES.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 5 IN LARVAE FORM,
1 AFTER DEATH OF HOST

IQ: 5

WEIGHT: 1/2 KG

WEAPONS: NONE

* Combat Danger Rating

CHARIOT BUG

SMALL ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 2D10 (11 HP)

INITIATIVE: +0

SPEED: 40 FT. (8 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 16 (+1 SIZE, +5 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +2/+1

ATTACK: BITE +6 MELEE (1D4+4)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +6 MELEE (1D4+4)

SPACE/REACH: 5 FT. (1X1 SQUARE)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 60 FT., CONVEYANCE, DAMAGE REDUCTION 2

SAVES: FORT +3, REF +2, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 16, DEX 10, CON 10, INT 1, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +5, PERCEPTION +3

FEATS: BEAT FEET

These concave-shaped bugs are tasked primarily with shifting the massive bulk of the brain bugs from place to place within the colony and on the battlefield. It was the discovery of this sub-species that demonstrated to SICON scientists that the Arachnids were both capable and willing to breed specific bug types to fulfil practically any requirement.

Chariot bugs function solely under the direction of the brain bug they transport, possessing little free initiative of their own. When danger threatens, they will be directed to attack any enemy, throwing themselves into harm's way while the brain bug makes its escape.



Combat

Chariot bugs will not enter combat unless the brain bug they accompany is placed under direct threat. If danger threatens, they will attack voraciously, as much to slow down an attack as actually defeat the enemy.

Conveyance: It takes six chariot bugs to carry a brain at their normal speed. For every chariot bug lost, reduce their base speed by 10 ft. while the brain bug is being carried. Two chariot bugs will be unable to support the weight of a brain bug.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

FAST BUT EASY TO
KILL WITH ACCURATE
RIFLE FIRE. THE
TROUBLE IS, YOU
WILL USUALLY SEE
THESE CRITTERS IN
THE COMPANY OF A
BRAIN. . .

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 3
IQ: 5
WEIGHT: 45 KG
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES

* Combat Danger Rating

CLIFF MITE

SMALL ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 1D10 (6 HP)

INITIATIVE: +5

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES), BURROW 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 18 (+1 SIZE, +5 DEX, +2 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +1/+5

ATTACK: BITE +8 MELEE (1D2-1)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +8 MELEE (1D2-1)

SPACE/REACH: 2½ FT. (1 X 1 SQUARES)/ 0 FT. (0 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: CRUNCH, DEXTROUS ATTACK

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., FEAR (8), WALL CRAWLER

SAVES: FORT +3, REF +7, WILL +4

ABILITIES: STR 8, DEX 20, CON 10, INT 2, WIS 15, CHA 15

SKILLS: PERCEPTION +6, STEALTH +13

FEATS: IRON WILL

So-called because they were first found during the Pluto Campaign as a Mobile Infantry squad traversed a cliff face, these mites act as sentries and advance scouts, seeding an area and using their small size to avoid detection as they watch for intruders.

Though not generally used in a combative role, cliff mites still pose a danger to any careless Trooper who gets too close. Their powerful mandibles are strong enough to crush almost any material and, when encountered on cliff faces, they have a disturbing habit of snipping lizard lines when a squad is dangerously high off the ground. Cliff mites are surprisingly agile, often throwing off a target lock from an enemy by leaping from cover to cover before closing for attack.



Combat

Cliff mites will generally avoid any contact with enemy forces. However, if discovered or in position to launch an effective ambush, they will attack en masse, deliberately targeting machinery and weapons where their mandibles will be at their most effective.

Crunch: When attacking an inanimate object as a full round action, it ignores half the object's hardness.

Dextrous Attack: A cliff mite uses its Dexterity bonus to attack rolls, rather than Strength. This has already been taken into account in the attacks listed here.

Wall Crawler: A cliff mite can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.



CAREER SERGEANT

ZIM SAYS:

THEY HAVE A NASTY HABIT OF HITTING TROOPERS WHO RELY ON LIZARD LINES. RECON AN AREA THOROUGHLY BEFORE ATTEMPTING A LONG CLIMB OR YOU COULD BE IN FOR A LONG DROP.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 4

IQ: 30

WEIGHT: 65 KG

WEAPONS: MANDIBLES

* Combat Danger Rating

COCKROACH BUG

FINE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 1 HP

INITIATIVE: +3

SPEED: 5 FT. (1 SQUARE), BURROW 1 FT. (0 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 21 (+8 SIZE, +3 DEX)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +1/-20

ATTACK: NONE

FULL ATTACK: NONE

SPACE/REACH: 0 FT. (0 SQUARES)/ 0 FT. (0 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 20 FT., SENSITIVE ANTENNA

SAVES: FORT +3, REF +4, WILL +0

ABILITIES: STR 1, DEX 16, CON 12, INT 1, WIS 10, CHA 4

SKILLS: PERCEPTION +4, STEALTH +6

FEATS: SKILL FOCUS (STEALTH)

SICON Intelligence classifies this sub-species as extremely rare though, in truth, its subversive nature may mean that high-ranking officials are simply not aware of how far the cockroach bug has spread into the human colony worlds. Looking, at first glance, identical to the common Earth cockroaches that have now spread to all human worlds, these bugs are used as basic information gatherers, able to travel where larger and more obvious alien life forms cannot.

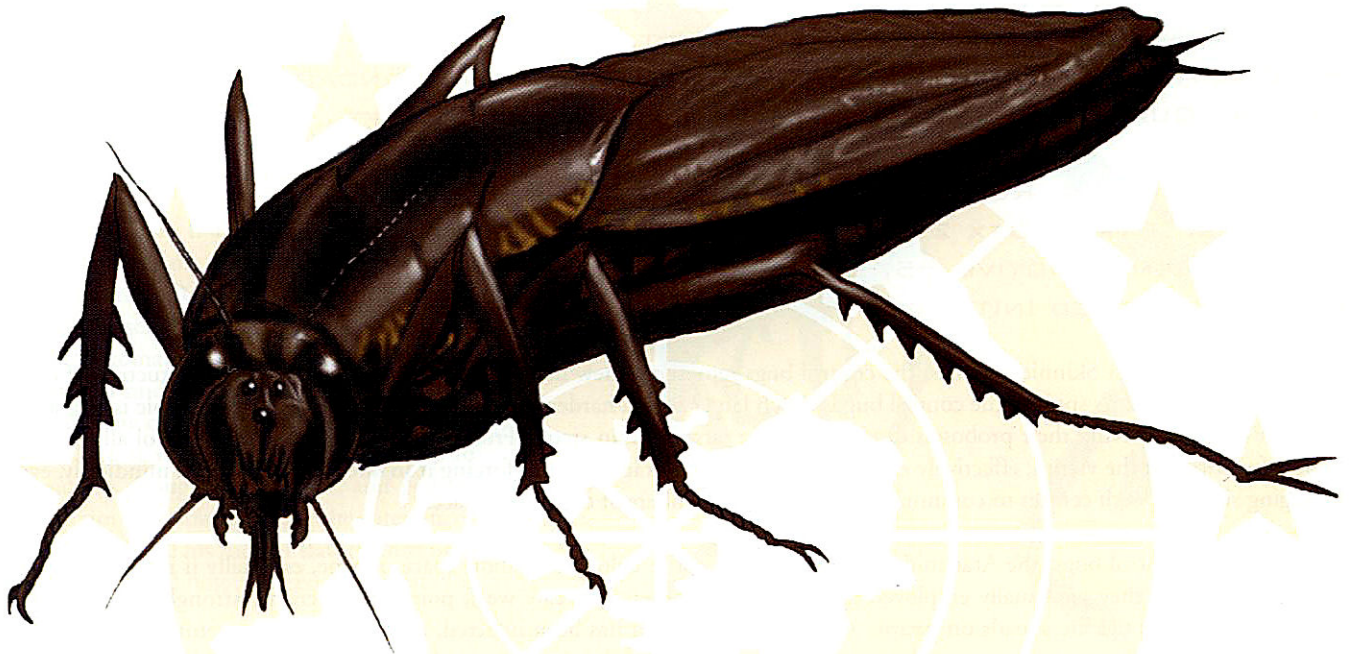
They possess only the meanest intelligence and can only be directed properly if a brain bug is within a few miles. However, when present in vast numbers within a Federation colony, they can provide a constant source of intelligence which brain bugs will sift through for useful information. They naturally home in on enemy radio transmission and energy sources and can breed independently of Arachnid colonies, meaning only a few need to be infiltrated into a human compound in order to fully infest it.

The discovery of these bugs has been known to create a heightened sense of paranoia in some Federation colonies, with citizens and civilians alike engaging in wide-sweeping cockroach hunts.



Combat

Cockroach bugs can be seriously disturbing but pose no direct physical threat.



**CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM
SAYS:**

I HATE THESE BUGS -
DIFFICULT TO DETECT
AND VERY USEFUL
TO A NEARBY BRAIN.
LEAVE THESE TO
THE EXTERMINATORS
AND GET ON WITH
THE BUSINESS OF
FIGHTING REAL BUGS.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 5

IQ: 10

WEIGHT: 0 KG

WEAPONS: NONE

* Combat Danger Rating

CONTROL BUG

TINY ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 1D10 + 1 (6 HP)

INITIATIVE: +9

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 19 (+2 SIZE, +5 DEX, +2 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +1/-4 (+8 SPECIAL)

ATTACK: BITE +8 MELEE (1D2-1)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +8 MELEE (1D2-1)

SPACE/REACH: 2½ FT. (1X1 SQUARE)/0 FT. (0 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: DEXTROUS ATTACK, GRAPPLER, MIND BONDAGE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., FEAR (14), WALL CRAWLER

SAVES: FORT +4, REF +6, WILL +2

ABILITIES: STR 8, DEX 20, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 15, CHA 15

SKILLS: SENSE MOTIVE +5, STEALTH +14

FEATS: IMPROVED INITIATIVE

First employed against Skinny colonies, the control bugs represent a new direction for the Arachnids in the destruction of other races. Similar to Earth's spiders, the control bug is much larger with a hardened carapace and great agility. Their role is to grapple sentient enemies, driving their proboscis directly into the target's brain stem. From this position, they can control all the basic motor functions of the victim, effectively exerting the will of the Arachnids and forcing it to obey all instructions mindlessly, even engaging simple speech centres to communicate with other members of the victim's race.

Given enough control bugs, the Arachnids can take over an entire colony in a short space of time, especially if it has no trained troops. However, they are usually employed against selected targets to create weak points in an enemy stronghold. Common targets for control bugs are squads on patrol. Once an entire squad has been infected, it will be forced to return to its base and sabotage its defences – sometimes even doing something as simple as leaving gates wide open as the Arachnids mass for a direct assault.



Combat

Control bugs, unless otherwise directed by a brain, will seek to attach themselves to the nearest sentient creature. Once a victim has been taken over it will serve as an Arachnid, either directly attacking enemies in a firefight or otherwise sabotaging efforts to resist a bug attack.

Dextrous Attack: A control bug uses its Dexterity bonus to attack rolls, rather than Strength. This has already been taken into account in the attacks listed on this page.

Grappler: Control bugs gain a +8 bonus to grapple checks.

Mind Bondage: If a control bug successfully grapples an enemy for a number of rounds equal to the Damage Reduction of any armour present (minimum of one round), it will automatically penetrate the victim's brain stem and nervous system. From this point on, the control bug can manipulate the victim as if it were the victim with access to the victim's thoughts, memories, and person. The victim will now work for the interests of the Arachnids. This mental slavery ends only when the control bug is forced to separate for any reason.

Wall Crawler: A control bug can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

NAIL THESE BUGS
AS SOON AS YOU
SEE THEM OR YOU
MIGHT FIND YOURSELF
UNDER FIRE FROM
YOUR OWN TROOPERS.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 2
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 25 KG
WEAPONS: MIND CONTROL
PROBE

* Combat Danger Rating

FIREFRY

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10+8 (30 HP)

INITIATIVE: +4

SPEED: 50 FT. (10 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 17 (-1 SIZE, +4 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+12

ATTACK: CLAW +7 MELEE (1D6+4)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +7 MELEE (1D6+4) OR TAIL +7 MELEE (1D8+4)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (1 X 2 SQUARES)/ 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: FLAME BLAST, SPORES

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 60 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 3, FEAR (15)

SAVES: FORT +6, REF +6, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 18, DEX 18, CON 14, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +5, PERCEPTION +4, STEALTH +4

FEATS: ENDURANCE, VACUUM SURVIVAL

With carapaces sporting thick green scales rather than huge plates, a firefry suggests something reptilian until its compound eyes fix upon their target. Very agile, firefries can use their powerful rear legs to leap great distances before launching their fire-breathing attack, making them perfect for well-timed ambushes.

Though initially bred within Arachnid colonies as any other species, firefries have the ability to reproduce themselves, permitting them to be sent on far-ranging missions deep inside enemy territory. Add to this their incredible resilience to the void of space and it is easy to see why they are often used as the vanguard of attacks on airless worlds and asteroids.

Though their rear spine looks like a fearsome poison-laden weapon, it is actually a spore injector, the main tool of their reproduction system. By injecting a victim with their spore, larval firefries will incubate within the host before erupting, painfully, from every orifice.

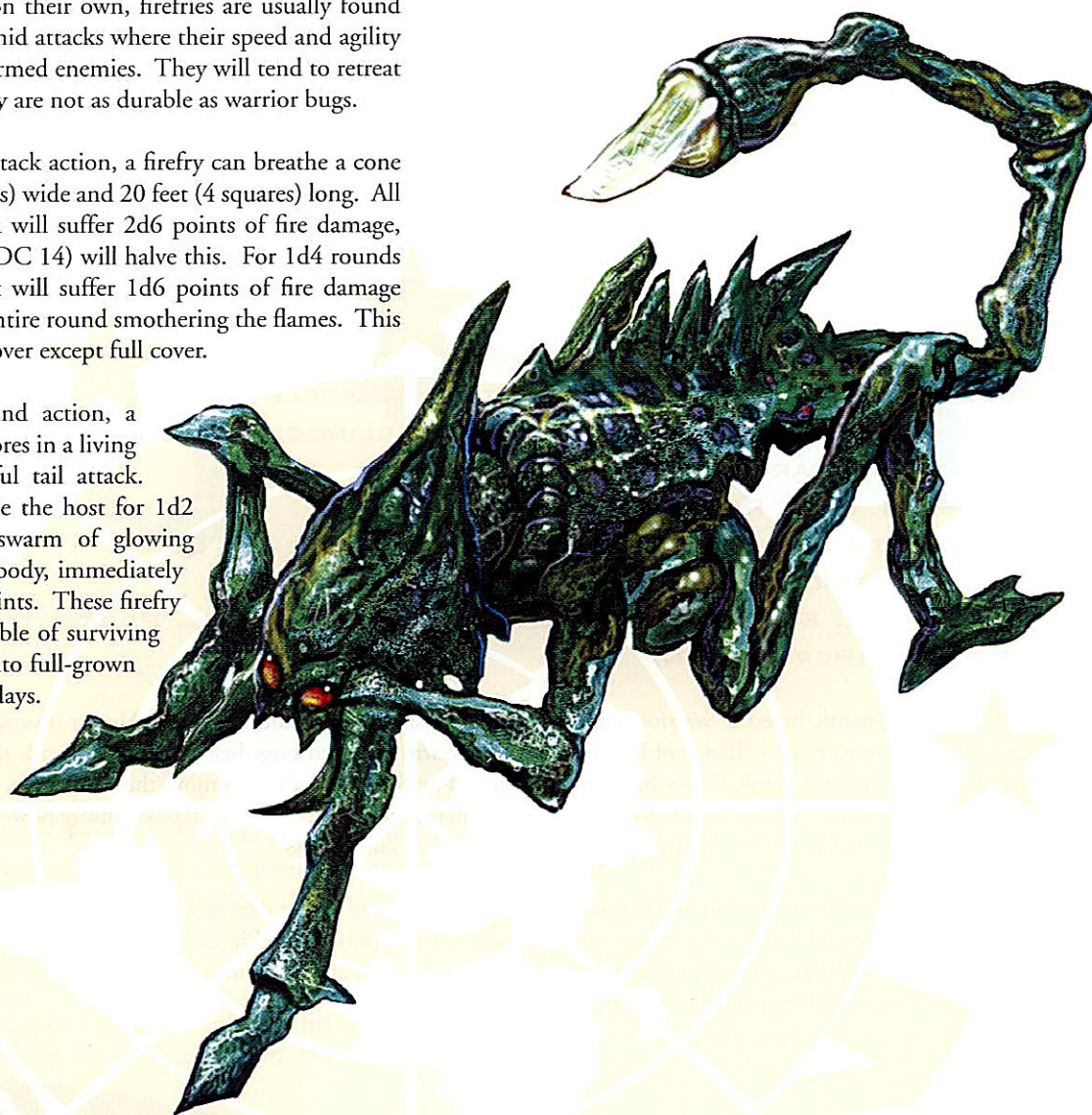


Combat

When not operating on their own, firefries are usually found on the flanks of Arachnid attacks where their speed and agility can overcome lightly armed enemies. They will tend to retreat under heavy fire as they are not as durable as warrior bugs.

Flame Blast: As an attack action, a firefry can breathe a cone of fire 20 feet (4 squares) wide and 20 feet (4 squares) long. All targets within the area will suffer 2d6 points of fire damage, though a Reflex save (DC 14) will halve this. For 1d4 rounds thereafter, every target will suffer 1d6 points of fire damage unless they spend an entire round smothering the flames. This attack will ignore all cover except full cover.

Spores: As a full-round action, a firefry can inject its spores in a living target with a successful tail attack. The spores grow inside the host for 1d2 days, after which a swarm of glowing bugs bursts out of its body, immediately reducing it to 0 hit points. These firefry larvae are already capable of surviving in space and mature into full-grown firefries after a 1d6+6 days.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

FIREFRIES ARE EASILY
DISPATCHED WITH
CONCENTRATED
MORITA FIRE
BUT BE WARY OF
AMBUSHES AS THEIR
FIRE ATTACKS CAN
SERIOUSLY HURT.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 2
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 300 KG
WEAPONS: FIRE BURST

* Combat Danger Rating

GUARD BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 16D10 + 64 (152 HP)

INITIATIVE: +2

SPEED: 50 FT. (10 SQUARES), BURROW 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 18 (-1 SIZE, +2 DEX, +7 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +16/+28

ATTACK: CLAW +23 MELEE (2D6+8/19-20)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +23 MELEE (2D6+8/19-20) AND BITE +18 MELEE (2D6+4)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2 X 2 SQUARES)/ 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: FREE ATTACK, LETHAL GRAPPLE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 120 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 6, FEAR (18), SENSITIVE ANTENNA

SAVES: FORT +14, REF +9, WILL +7

ABILITIES: STR 26, DEX 14, CON 18, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 4

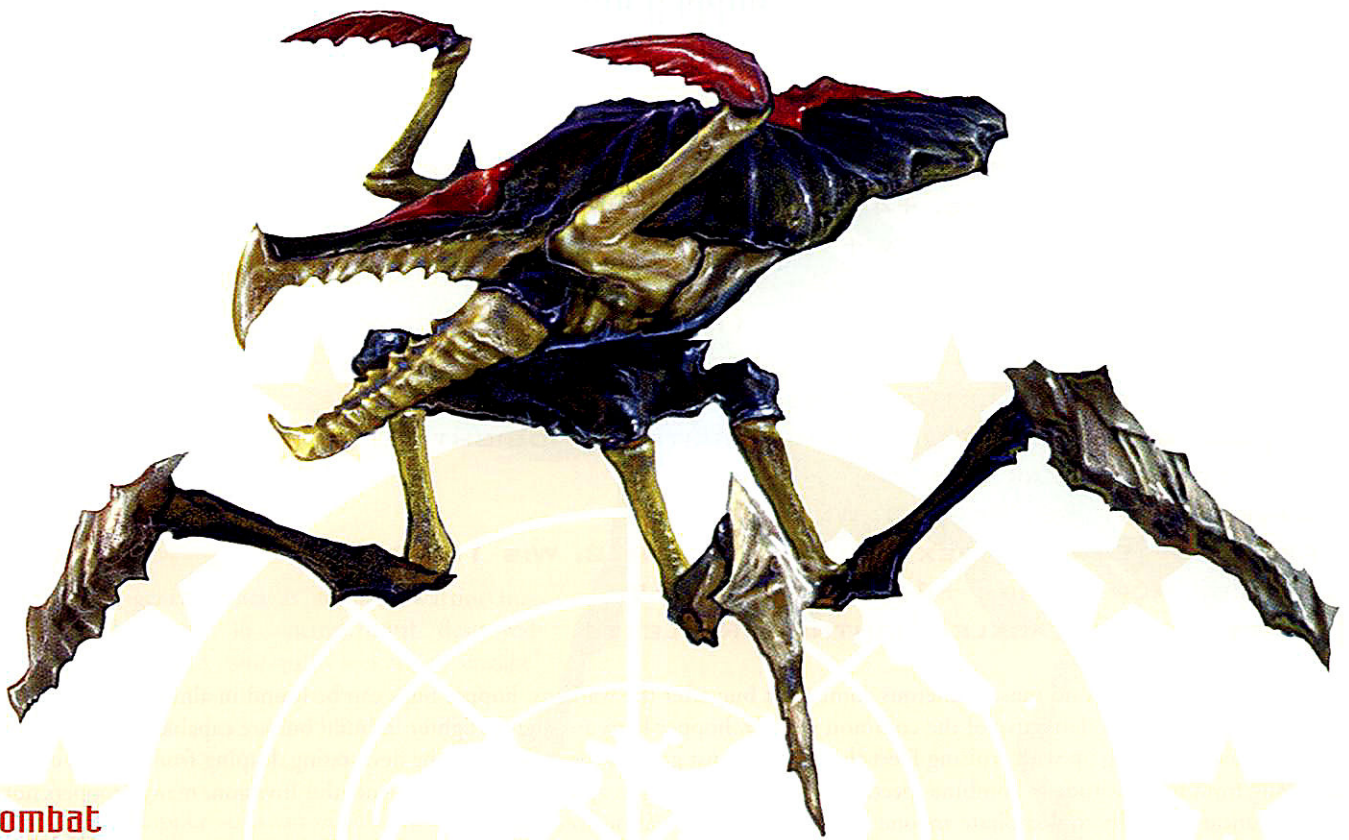
SKILLS: ATHLETICS +9, PERCEPTION +21

FEATS: CLEAVE, ENDURANCE, IRON WILL, POWER ATTACK, PROTECTED SYSTEMS, SKILL FOCUS (PERCEPTION)

Guard bugs are a gigantic breed of warrior bug, engineered for sheer power and brutality. Almost unstoppable in combat, only directed heavy weapons have a chance of bringing down a swarm of guard bugs before they close with their enemies. Once in close combat, they are unbeatable. They have been developed by the Arachnids to remove the weaknesses of normal warrior bugs discovered by veteran Troopers. As well as thicker armour, guard bugs have enhanced reflexes, more powerful attacks and a more evenly distributed nervous system that makes attempts at one-shot kills useless.

Looking like exceptionally well-armoured warrior bugs, guard bugs mass a great deal more and are far stronger. They are employed to guard the most vulnerable parts of a colony, such as the queen's chambers, the breeding pits and, occasionally, important tunnel entrances. If a Mobile Infantry squad manages to penetrate deep inside an Arachnid colony, they will be sure to meet a last line of defence of guard bugs, fighting fanatically to repulse the invaders.





Combat

If guard bugs are forced to engage in battle, it will be because the colony itself is at risk. They will therefore fight with no concern other than pressing the attack wherever possible, giving no quarter and utterly destroying their enemies. They fight as normal warrior bugs but tend to be far more effective.

Free Attack: If any enemy takes a move action within 10 feet of a guard bug, the guard bug gains an immediate free attack against it (see page 118 in the *Starship Troopers Roleplaying Game*).

Lethal Grapple: If the guard bug attacks only with its bite attack during a full attack action, it may choose to start a grapple as a free action. It may only do this to targets that are Medium-size or smaller. While the target remains grappled, the guard bug is not considered grappled itself and will automatically deal its bite damage every round. The target will be pulled into the guard bug's space for the duration of this attack.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

DON'T EVEN THINK OF TACKLING A SWARM OF THESE UNTIL YOU CAN NAIL WARRIORS IN YOUR SLEEP - IN EVERY WAY, THEY ARE BIGGER AND TOUGHER THAN THE BASIC MODEL.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 825 KG
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES
AND CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

HOPPER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10 + 8 (30 HP)

INITIATIVE: +4

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES), FLY 60 FT. (12 SQUARES) (PERFECT)

DEFENCE: 17 (-1 SIZE, +4 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+12

ATTACK: CLAW +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: LETHAL PASS

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 90 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 3, FEAR (15)

SAVES: FORT +6, REF +8, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 18, DEX 18, CON 14, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

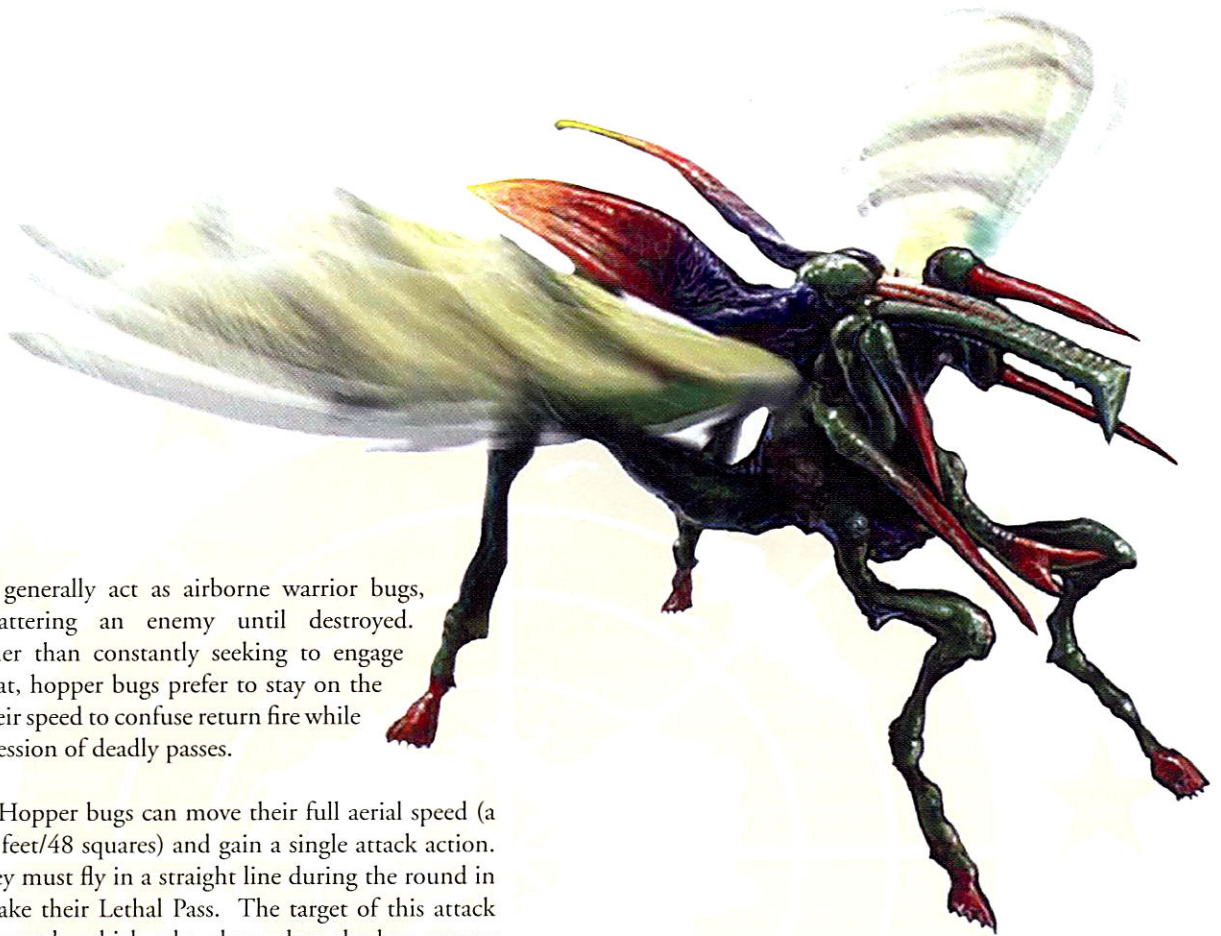
SKILLS: ACROBATICS +6, PERCEPTION +5

FEATS: FLYING TACKLE, LIGHTNING REFLEXES

Believed to be the second most numerous combatant bug after the warriors, hopper bugs can be found in almost every Arachnid colony. Effectively a derivative of the common warrior, hopper bugs are slightly lighter in build but are capable of flying at great speeds, even keeping up with cruising Fleet shuttles. Against ground forces, they can be devastating, leaping from behind cover or diving from high altitude to combine speed and mass to slice targets apart. During the Klendathu Invasion, many Troopers noted their uncanny ability to decapitate anyone who did not keep their heads down.

Their speed can keep ground forces off balance but when deployed in sufficient numbers, hopper bugs can make air travel extremely hazardous, filling the sky with bodies that can bring down even TAC Fighters.





Combat

Hopper bugs generally act as airborne warrior bugs, relentlessly battering an enemy until destroyed. However, rather than constantly seeking to engage in close combat, hopper bugs prefer to stay on the wing, using their speed to confuse return fire while making a succession of deadly passes.

Lethal Pass: Hopper bugs can move their full aerial speed (a x4 move, 240 feet/48 squares) and gain a single attack action. To do this, they must fly in a straight line during the round in which they make their Lethal Pass. The target of this attack suffers a claw attack, which takes place when the bug sweeps past it on its flight path. This does not offer a free attack. If the claw attack hits during a Lethal Pass, it inflicts double damage due to the speed and force of the blow. A successful critical hit during a Lethal Pass will decapitate a humanoid target, automatically killing it.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

KEEP YOUR HEAD
DOWN OR LOSE
IT. MAKE THEM A
PRIORITY TARGET
BEFORE ADVANCING
ACROSS OPEN
GROUND.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 485 KG
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES
AND CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

INFILTRATOR BUG

MEDIUM ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 8D10 + 16 (60 HP)

INITIATIVE: +7

SPEED: 40 FT. (8 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 19 (+3 DEX, +6 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +8/+11

ATTACK: CLAW +11 MELEE (1D10+3/19-20)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +11 MELEE (1D10+3/19-20)

SPACE/REACH: 5 FT. (1 X 1 SQUARE)/ 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 2, FEAR (18), INFILTRATION

SAVES: FORT +8, REF +7, WILL +2

ABILITIES: STR 17, DEX 16, CON 14, INT 6, WIS 10, CHA 6

SKILLS: ACROBATICS +8, ATHLETICS +9, ESCAPE ARTIST +6, KNOWLEDGE (HUMANS) +6, PERCEPTION +9, STEALTH +6

FEATS: IMPROVED INITIATIVE, POWER ATTACK, POWER SUIT PROFICIENCY

So far only encountered in the Federation colonies closest to the Arachnid Quarantine Zone, the infiltrator bug is nevertheless a disturbing indication of the degree of specialisation the Arachnids are capable of in breeding sub-species. Able to contract into a roughly humanoid shape, infiltrator bugs were bred to inhabit the power suits of fallen Troopers. They then approach Mobile Infantry positions, using their disguise to get close enough to launch a devastating attack, sometimes getting inside fortified positions and forward bases before bursting out of the power suit.

Infiltrator bugs are most effective when Mobile Infantry units have not encountered them. The first sight is usually of a Trooper limping towards an outpost as if wounded. If he is recognised by the name tags on the power suit, he will often be identified as a Trooper recently reported as missing in action during a patrol. Welcomed back to base after a hazardous mission, the defences are lowered and gates opened. The infiltrator bug is then left to walk right in, getting within striking distance of Troopers and equipment before shrugging off the power suit, unfolding its full eight foot frame and tearing apart anything within range.



Combat

Essentially suicide troops, infiltrator bugs are sent into the heart of enemy strongholds with the aim of causing as much damage as possible before being destroyed. Occasionally they are used in conjunction with assaults from other swarms but more often they are deployed at random intervals to force an enemy to stay on a heightened state of alert.

Infiltration: While wearing a power suit, an infiltrator bug gains the normal +9 bonus to Defence and gains Damage Reduction 4 (this does not stack with its existing Damage Reduction). Troopers who first encounter an infiltrator bug within a power suit may make a Sense Motive check (DC 25) to guess that something is not quite right with the 'Trooper'. The infiltrator bug does not gain its claw attacks until it bursts free of the power suit, which may be done as a free action.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

DOUBLE CHECK
ANY TROOPER WHO
APPROACHES YOU
WITH COMMUNICATION
PROBLEMS. HE
MIGHT JUST BE ONE
OF THESE LETHAL
CRITTERS. . .

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 50
WEIGHT: 250 KG
WEAPONS: CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

KAMIKAZE RIPPLER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10 + 4 (26 HP)

INITIATIVE: +5

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES), FLY 80 FT. (16 SQUARES) (GOOD)

DEFENCE: 17 (-1 SIZE, +5 DEX, +3 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+12

ATTACK: CLAW +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20) OR SPIKE +8 RANGED (1D6+4, 120 FT./24 SQUARES)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20) OR SPIKE BURST +4 RANGED (3D6+4, 120 FT./24 SQUARES)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: DEADLY PASS, KAMIKAZE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 90 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 2, FEAR (16)

SAVES: FORT +5, REF +9, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 18, DEX 20, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ACROBATICS +7, PERCEPTION +5

FEATS: FLYING TACKLE, LIGHTNING REFLEXES

One of several variations stemming from the hopper bug (itself a variation of the warrior bug), the kamikaze rippler retains the traits of the other rippler bugs but is deployed for a very different purpose. Against ground forces, it acts much the same as any other flying Arachnid and, indeed, it is physically identical to other rippler bugs. It is not until the Troopers on the ground start calling for air support that the kamikaze rippler reveals its true purpose.

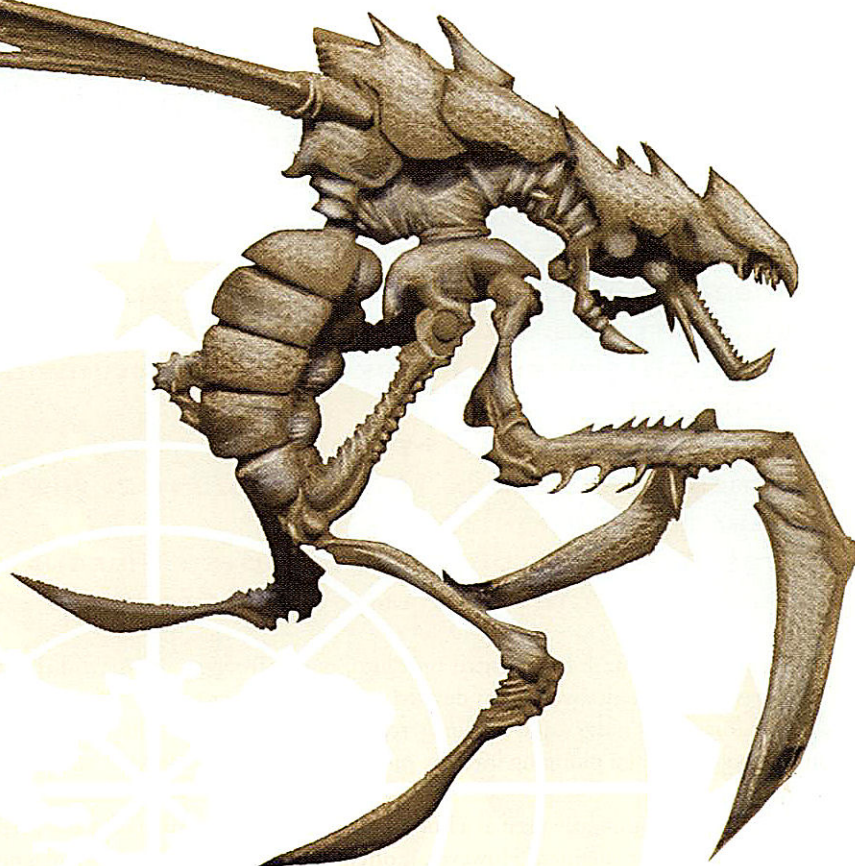
Used by Arachnid colonies who have suffered from air assault in the past, clouds of kamikaze ripplers will take to the skies, seeking out shuttles, drop boats and even TAC Fighters. Whereas other ripplers and even hoppers have been known to grapple with aircraft in an effort to bring them down, the kamikaze rippler will simply fly at full speed on an intercept course, smashing into the airborne vehicle, inflicting tremendous damage due to the velocities involved. Though this can be viewed as a potentially wasteful exercise on the part of the Arachnids, the loss of a kamikaze rippler or two means far less to the bugs than the loss of a shuttle and crew do to the Fleet.



Combat

Deadly Pass: Kamikaze rippler bugs can move their full aerial speed (a x4 move, 320 feet/64 squares) and gain a single attack action. To do this, they must fly in a straight line during the round in which they make their Deadly Pass. The target of this attack suffers a claw attack, which take place when the bug sweeps past it on its flight path. This does not offer a free attack. If the claw attack hits during a Deadly Pass, it inflicts double damage due to the speed and force of the blow.

Kamikaze: The kamikaze rippler bug may make a Kamikaze attack on any airborne vehicle simply by moving into it. An attack roll is made and, if unsuccessful, the bug misses its target for no additional effect. If it hits the kamikaze rippler bug will be automatically killed. The vehicle will immediately sustain 4d10 points of damage to a random location. Critical hits may be scored normally.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

TREAT IN THE SAME
WAY AS HOPPERS OR
OTHER RIPPLERS.
GENERALLY, THEY
CAUSE MORE
TROUBLE FOR THE
FLY-BOYS THAN US.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 450 KG
WEAPONS: CLAWS AND
SPIKE BURST

* Combat Danger Rating

KING TANKER

GARGANTUAN ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 20D10 + 160 (270 HP)

INITIATIVE: +0

SPEED: 30 FT. (6 SQUARES), BURROW 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 14 (-4 SIZE, +8 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +20/+40

ATTACK: BITE +24 MELEE (3D6+12)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +24 MELEE (3D6+12)

SPACE/REACH: 20 FT. (4 X 4 SQUARES)/ 20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: CAUSTIC FLAME

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 40 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 8, FEAR (20)

SAVES: FORT +20, REF +9, WILL +8

ABILITIES: STR 26, DEX 10, CON 26, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

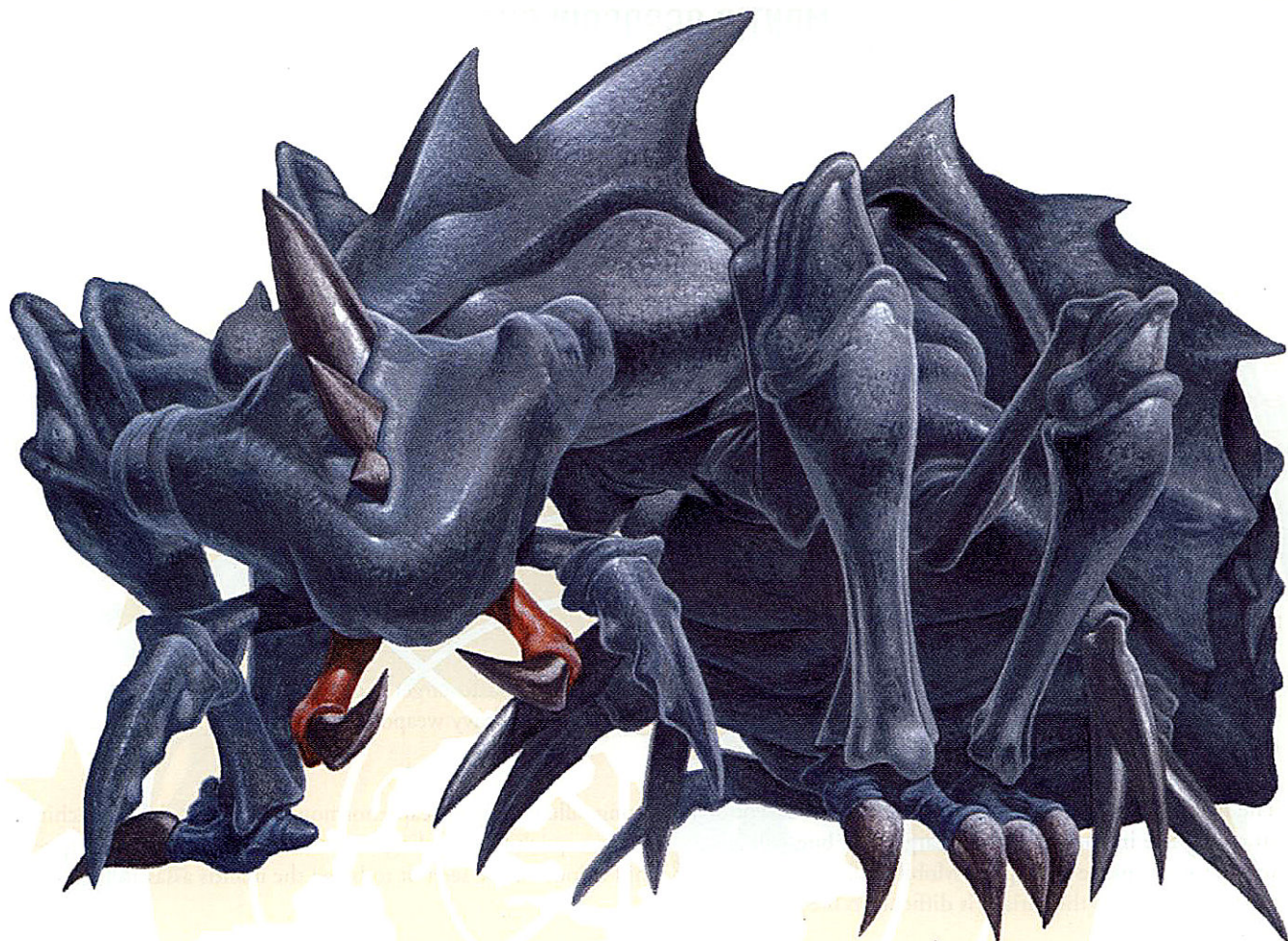
SKILLS: PERCEPTION +23

FEATS: CLEAVE, ENDURANCE, IMPROVED HIBERNATION, IRON WILL, POWER ATTACK, PROTECTED SYSTEMS, REND ATTACK

When tanker bugs were first sighted on Pluto, many Troopers questioned the wisdom of their enlisting in the Mobile Infantry. Time passed and tactics were soon devised to tackle these creatures. However, the Arachnids are also constantly developing their own version of technology and gradually reports began to filter to SICON Intelligence of an even larger breed of the tanker. Nigh on unstoppable when plunging into the midst of battle, the term 'king tanker' was soon coined.

The tanker bug is primarily used as a line breaker in battle, smashing past any prepared defence with ease to allow swarms of warrior bugs to assault their enemies. However, it often proves something of a fire magnet because of this, attracting the attention of every heavy weapon that can be mustered. The king tanker was engineered by the Arachnids precisely to counter this. With armoured plates twice as thick as those of the original tanker and a far more powerful muscle structure, the king tanker can weather any attack short of a tac-nuke and keep fighting.





Combat

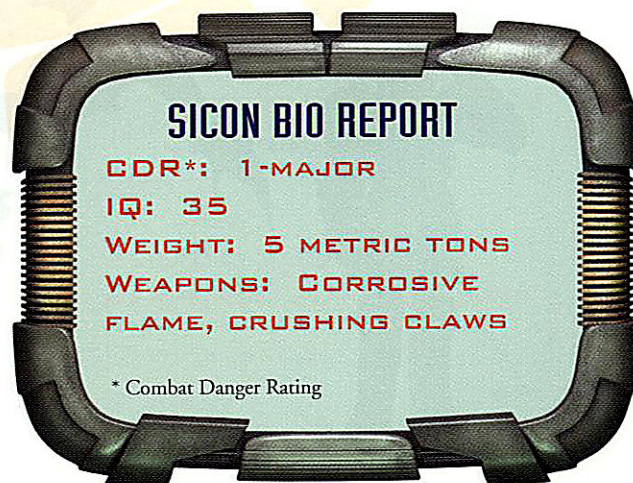
Having little to fear on the battlefield, the king tanker will willingly absorb heavy weapons fire, diverting it away from weaker swarms. It will head towards the greatest concentration of enemy fire or the strongest fortified position, using brute force to smash any opposition it encounters.

Caustic Flame: As a full-round action, a king tanker may breathe a stream of caustic flame, 5 feet (1 square) wide and 40 feet (8 squares) long. All targets within the area will suffer 4d6 points of damage, though a Reflex save (DC 18) will halve this. This attack will ignore all cover except full cover.



CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM

SAYS:
RUN. OR USE A PEE-
WEE.



SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1-MAJOR
IQ: 35
WEIGHT: 5 METRIC TONS
WEAPONS: CORROSIVE
FLAME, CRUSHING CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

MANTIS ASSASSIN BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 8D10 + 24 (68 HP)

INITIATIVE: +8

SPEED: 60 FT. (12 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 18 (-1 SIZE, +4 DEX, +5 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +8/+19

ATTACK: CLAW +14 MELEE (1D6+7/18-20)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +14 MELEE (1D6+7/18-20)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2 X 2 SQUARES)/ 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: POUNCE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 4, FEAR (18), SENSITIVE ANTENNA

SAVES: FORT +9, REF +8, WILL +2

ABILITIES: STR 24, DEX 18, CON 16, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 4

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +15, STEALTH +15

FEATS: IMPROVED INITIATIVE, POWER ATTACK, REND ATTACK

Distant relatives of the warrior bug, mantis assassin bugs have been developed to target individuals on the battlefield, approach them stealthily and then destroy them in short order. Targets often include heavy weapons teams, CHAS units, Marauders and officers identified by their increased communications traffic.

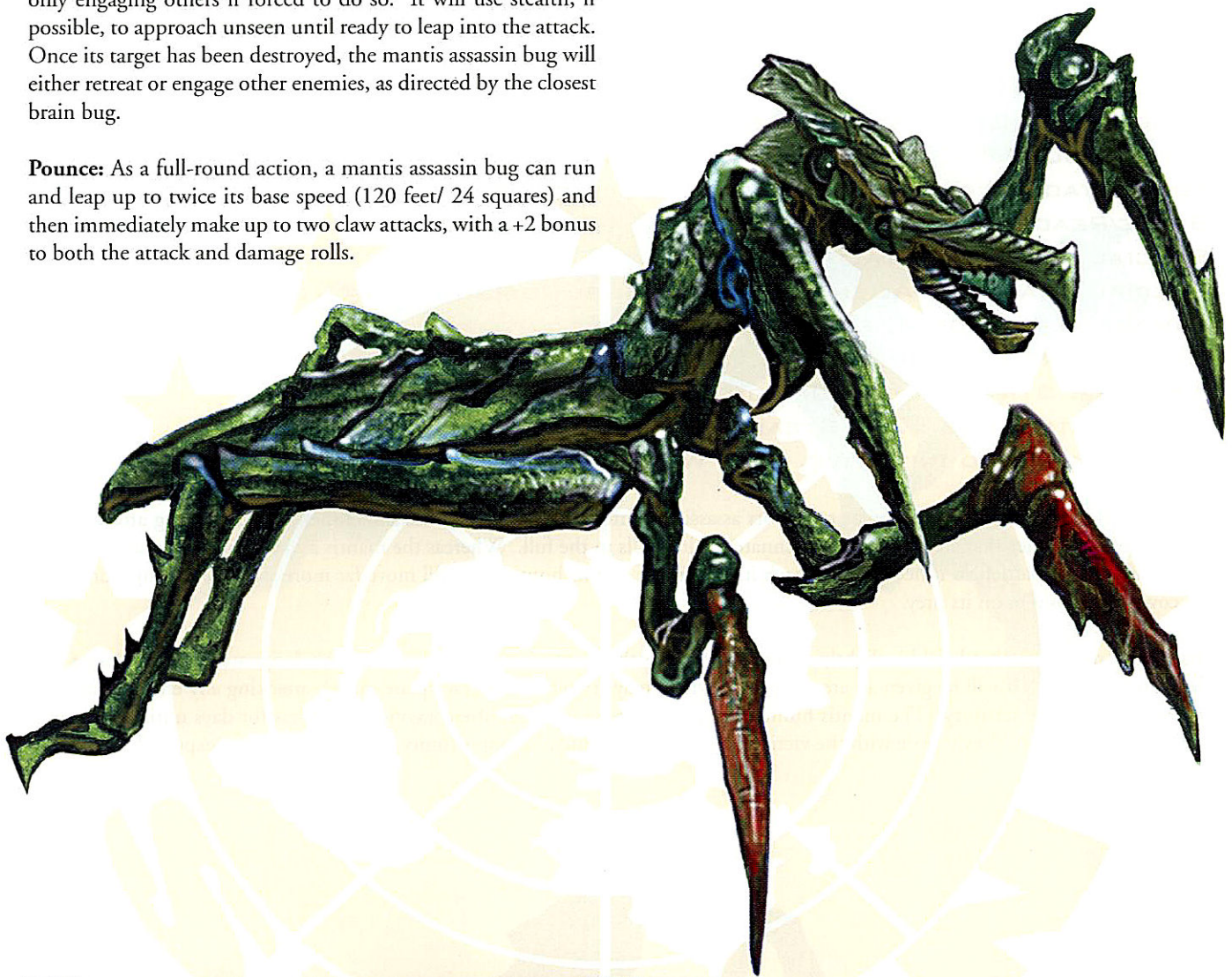
The leg muscles of the mantis assassin bug are exceptionally strong, allowing it to leap enormous distances when launching an attack. Once in contact with its target, the bug will always aim for a quick kill, rending with the two front claws that gave this sub-species its name among the Mobile Infantry. Not all Arachnid colonies have seen fit to breed the mantis assassin bug, leading to speculation that the variant is difficult to breed true.



Combat

Mantis assassin bugs are single-minded in combat, displaying little interest in enemies other than their prime assigned target, only engaging others if forced to do so. It will use stealth, if possible, to approach unseen until ready to leap into the attack. Once its target has been destroyed, the mantis assassin bug will either retreat or engage other enemies, as directed by the closest brain bug.

Pounce: As a full-round action, a mantis assassin bug can run and leap up to twice its base speed (120 feet/ 24 squares) and then immediately make up to two claw attacks, with a +2 bonus to both the attack and damage rolls.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

WILL OFTEN TARGET
YOUR OFFICER OR
SERGEANT - AND
IF YOU WANT TO
GET OUT ALIVE, I
SUGGEST YOU WATCH
HIS BACK.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 750 KG
WEAPONS: MANTIS CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

MANTIS HUNTER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 8D10 + 24 (68 HP)

INITIATIVE: +9

SPEED: 60 FT. (12 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 19 (-1 SIZE, +5 DEX, +5 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +8/+18

ATTACK: CLAW +13 MELEE (1D6+6/18-20)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +13 MELEE (1D6+6/18-20)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2 X 2 SQUARES)/ 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: STEALTH STRIKE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., CAMOUFLAGE, DAMAGE REDUCTION 4, FEAR (18), SENSITIVE ANTENNA

SAVES: FORT +9, REF +9, WILL +4

ABILITIES: STR 22, DEX 20, CON 16, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 4

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +15, STEALTH +17

FEATS: IMPROVED INITIATIVE, IRON WILL, SKILL FOCUS (STEALTH)

The mantis hunter bug fulfils a similar role to its assassin counterpart but replaces the sometimes suicidal leaping attack with a chameleonic carapace that allows it to use its innate stealth skills to the full. Whereas the mantis assassin bug will charge through a hail of fire on a battlefield if necessary to reach its target, the mantis hunter bug will move far more slowly, sneaking from cover to cover as it closes in on its prey.

Its general role on the battlefield is slightly different as well, as the mantis hunter bug will rarely be designated a precise target by a brain bug. Instead, it will be given an area to patrol (which may stretch for several square miles), attacking any enemy that dares to venture into this territory. The mantis hunter bug can also bide its time, often staying motionless for days until an enemy is detected. It will then slowly close with the victim, waiting for a moment of opportunity to strike when least expected.



Combat

A mantis assassin bug will not intentionally reveal itself until it has already launched its attack. Though as powerful as a mantis assassin bug is in close combat, its real advantage lies in stealth and surprise rather than raw strength.

Camouflage: Mantis hunter bugs receive a +10 bonus on all Stealth checks made to hide in natural environments.

Stealth Strike: The mantis assassin bug may make Stealth checks while moving at its base speed without penalty. If it makes a successful Stealth check while making a close combat attack in the same round, its target will be counted as flat-footed.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

OFTEN FOUND
TRACKING MI PATROL
ROUTES, SO KEEP AN
EYE ON THE TERRAIN
AND WATCH OUT FOR
AMBUSHES.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 750 KG
WEAPONS: MANTIS CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

MINION BUG

SMALL ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 1D10 + 3 (8 HP)

INITIATIVE: +2

SPEED: 60 FT. (12 SQUARES), BURROW 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

DEFENCE: 17 (+1 SIZE, +2 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +1/+0

ATTACK: NONE

FULL ATTACK: NONE

SPACE/REACH: 5 FT. (1 X 1 SQUARE)/ 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 50 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 1, SENSITIVE ANTENNA, WALL CRAWLER

SAVES: FORT +3, REF +3, WILL +0

ABILITIES: STR 16, DEX 14, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +7

FEATS: TOUGHNESS

The term minion bug actually encompasses a huge array of sub-species, all fulfilling specialised non-combatant activities within their colony. From waste disposal to water reclamation, there is a minion bug specially adapted to the task. In a way, they can be seen as the real 'worker' bugs of a colony, truly the lowest rung of Arachnid society.

Posing no threat to invading Troopers, minion bugs will simply scuttle away into the darkness if an enemy approaches, returning to their tasks when danger has passed.



Combat

Minion bugs will avoid combat at all costs, fleeing from an aggressive enemy.

Wall Crawler: A minion bug can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.



**CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM
SAYS:**
NOT EVEN WORTHY
OF YOUR ATTENTION.
SAVE YOUR
AMMO FOR MORE
DANGEROUS BUGS
AND DON'T GET
DISTRACTED.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 5
IQ: 18
WEIGHT: 50 KG
WEAPONS: NONE

* Combat Danger Rating

NURSER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10 +4 (26 HP)

INITIATIVE: +1

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 12 (-1 SIZE, +1 DEX, +2 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+7

ATTACK: NONE

FULL ATTACK: NONE

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2 X 2 SQUARES)/ 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., SENSITIVE ANTENNA

SAVES: FORT +5, REF +3, WILL +2

ABILITIES: STR 8, DEX 12, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 12, CHA 6

SKILLS: KNOWLEDGE (ARACHNIDS) +8

FEATS: INSTINCTIVE (KNOWLEDGE (ARACHNIDS))

Working in conjunction with breeder bugs, it is the role of the nurser bug to take the eggs produced and monitor their development, then take care of the resulting larvae until the new generation of bugs is ready for duty. Though larger than a human and somewhat fearsome looking, nurser bugs are incapable of combat and will retreat if threatened, taking their eggs and larvae with them when possible.

While controlling a batch of eggs, the nurser bug will constantly inject them with a chemical compound synthesised within its body. The exact mixture of chemicals will direct the development of the new bug and determine what sub-species it will eventually become, as dictated by a brain bug. Once the egg hatches, the nurser bug ensures the larvae is constantly fed and is provided with the right environment to prosper and grow. Once the larvae grows into the sub-species it is destined to become, the nurser bug takes another batch of eggs from the breeders and repeats the process.



Combat

Nurser bugs will avoid combat at all costs, fleeing from an aggressive enemy.



CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM
SAYS:
NO REAL THREAT.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 5
IQ: 18
WEIGHT: 350 KG
WEAPONS: NONE

* Combat Danger Rating

OVERSEER BUG

HUGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 16D10 + 48 (136 HP)

INITIATIVE: +1

SPEED: 10 FT. (2 SQUARES), FLY 20 FT. (4 SQUARES) (GOOD)

DEFENCE: 13 (-2 SIZE, +1 DEX, +4 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +16/+29

ATTACK: CLAW +19 MELEE (2D6+5)

FULL ATTACK: 8 CLAWS +19 MELEE (2D6+5)

SPACE/REACH: 15 FT. (3 X 3 SQUARES)/ 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: PSYCHIC ABILITIES

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ACTION POINTS (6), ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 120 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 8, FEAR (16)

SAVES: FORT +13, REF +8, WILL +9

ABILITIES: STR 20, DEX 12, CON 16, INT 12, WIS 14, CHA 12

SKILLS: CONCENTRATION +22, KNOWLEDGE (TACTICS) +23, PERCEPTION +24

FEATS: ENDURANCE, IMPORTANCE, IRON WILL, PSYCHIC TALENT, SKILL FOCUS (KNOWLEDGE (TACTICS)), SKILL FOCUS (PERCEPTION)

First termed king bugs by SICON Intelligence, this was quickly changed when the true nature of their role within Arachnid colonies was understood. Overseer bugs are a mass of carapace plates and ridges, from which hang eight legs with wickedly sharp claws. A pair of double-wings sprout from the carapace which appear barely able to keep it in the air.

The overseer bug provides a solid level of direct command over lesser bug sub-species and is capable of replacing a brain bug on the battlefield. However, it possesses none of the brain's awesome processing capabilities and has weaker psychic powers. They form a conduit between queen, brain and warriors, increasing the responsiveness of entire bug swarms and so are often made priority targets by the Mobile Infantry.



Combat

Overseer bugs are more pugnacious than brain bugs and will often be seen following up the first wave of warriors, trusting to their thick carapace to protect them from permanent damage.

Psychic Abilities: Although their talents are somewhat inferior to those of brains, overseer bugs can also manifest psychic powers. An overseer can use any of the following powers as an attack action, one each per round. There is no limit to the number of times per day an overseer can use a given power, though each use of its psychic abilities deals it 1 point of non-lethal damage.

⊕ **Rally the Swarm:** This power grants every bug within 120 feet in all directions the overseer bug's Will save bonus for 10 rounds and instantly removes any mental condition they may be suffering (*stunned, shaken, terrified* or *frightened*). If the overseer bug wishes, this power also issues an irresistible command for all bugs in the area of effect to immediately move toward it at their best possible speed.

⊕ **Wave of Horror:** This ability sends out a mental command that strikes at an empathic level against every non-Arachnid within 60 feet. Only psychics with the Mental Endurance class feature or characters with the Iron Will feat may take a Will save (DC 18) against this effect. All victims in the area are *shaken* for 2d4 rounds by the terror this wave of emotion inflicts upon them. If a victim is already suffering from a Fear effect, they instantly become *terrified* for one full round (and then *shaken* for 1d4 rounds thereafter).



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

TACTICALLY, THESE ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS BRAINS. IF YOU SEE ONE, NAIL IT BUT YOU'LL NEED SOMETHING HEAVIER THAN A MORITA TO DENT ITS HIDE.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1-MAJOR
IQ: 130
WEIGHT: 850 KG
WEAPONS: MULTIPLE
CLAWS, PSYCHIC ATTACK

* Combat Danger Rating

PLASMA BUG

COLOSSAL ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 22D10 + 198 (319 HP)

INITIATIVE: +0

SPEED: 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 10 (-8 SIZE, +8 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +22/+43

ATTACK: BITE +21 MELEE (2D6+10) OR PLASMA SPHERE +14 RANGED (SEE BELOW)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +21 MELEE (2D6+10) OR PLASMA SPHERE +14 RANGED (SEE BELOW)

SPACE/REACH: 30 FT. (6X6 SQUARES)/20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 240 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 4, FEAR (16)

SAVES: FORT +24, REF +12, WILL +9

ABILITIES: STR 24, DEX 10, CON 28, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: PERCEPTION +25

FEATS: CLEAVE, ENDURANCE, GREAT FORTITUDE, IMPROVED HIBERNATION, IRON WILL, LIGHTNING REFLEXES, POWER ATTACK, REND ATTACK

First presumed to be a rudimentary planetary defence system, the power of the plasma bugs and their enhanced targeting capabilities soon changed SICON's opinion of them after the Klendathu Invasion, where they were responsible for decimating the Fleet. Massed plasma bug fire was thrown into orbit, wreaking havoc on the ships attempting to drop the Invasion Companies to the planet's surface.

Ponderously large, plasma bugs have subsequently been seen engaging in artillery strikes against Mobile Infantry positions and strongholds, with devastating consequences. By using a smaller charge of plasma, the plasma bug can arc its fire onto ground-based targets at relatively short ranges. They are therefore often primary targets within a theatre, with considerable effort made by TAC Fighters and Mobile Infantry strike teams to destroy them before major military operations commence.



Combat

Plasma bugs rely on their great bulk to survive attacks, concentrating instead on targets that may be out of sight. They are usually escorted by swarms of warrior bugs that will voraciously attack any enemy that strays too close.

Plasma Sphere: The plasma sphere fired by plasma bugs has two modes of operation – anti-aircraft/orbit and artillery.

Anti-Aircraft/Orbit: The plasma bug makes a ranged attack but this is not modified for range and can reach into low orbit. The sphere inflicts 5d20 points of damage to every location on a vehicle of huge size or smaller and to one location on larger vehicles. Plasma spheres ignore Damage Reduction.

Artillery: The plasma bug may target any area between 1 and 5 miles (each mile is one range increment) with its plasma sphere. If the plasma bug cannot see its target it must be directed by a brain bug who is in contact with at least one other bug that can see the target area. The blast radius is 30 ft. (6 squares) and the attack is treated as if it were a Thrown Explosive (see page 83 of the main rulebook) but the distances the blast strikes if it misses are multiplied by ten. All targets within the area suffer 3d10 points of damage. Although the blast is huge, the distance travelled by the plasma allows some time for targets to get out of the way, and so anyone within the radius may make a Reflex save (DC 18) for half damage.



CAREER SERGEANT

ZIM SAYS:

ONLY A REAL
THREAT IF YOU
ARE IN A SHUTTLE,
DROP CAPSULE,
FORTIFICATION OR ON
AN OPEN BATTLEFIELD.
HOWEVER IT GOES,
YOU WILL PROBABLY
BE TOO FAR AWAY TO
EVEN SEE IT – CALL IN
SUPPORT.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 3

IQ: 18

WEIGHT: 7 METRIC TONS

WEAPONS: HIGH-ENERGY
PLASMA DISCHARGE

* Combat Danger Rating

QUEEN BUG

GARGANTUAN ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 26D10 + 286 (429 HP)

INITIATIVE: +3

SPEED: 60 FT. (12 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 19 (-4 SIZE, -1 DEX, +24 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +26/+49

ATTACK: CLAW +33 MELEE (2D8+11/18-20)

FULL ATTACK: 4 CLAWS +33 MELEE (2D8+11/18-20) AND 1 BITE +28 MELEE (2D10+5)

SPACE/REACH: 20 FT. (4 X 4 SQUARES)/ 20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: PSYCHIC ABILITIES

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ACTION POINTS (8), ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 240 FT., BUG LEADER, DAMAGE REDUCTION 12, FEAR (26), WALL CRAWLER

SAVES: FORT +26, REF +10, WILL +14

ABILITIES: STR 32, DEX 8, CON 32, INT 28, WIS 18, CHA 12

SKILLS: CONCENTRATION +35, KNOWLEDGE (ANY TWO ALIEN SPECIES) +25, KNOWLEDGE (TACTICS) +29, PERCEPTION +27, SENSE MOTIVE +22

FEATS: BEAT FEET, CLEAVE, ENDURANCE, IMPORTANCE, IMPROVED INITIATIVE, IRON WILL, POWER ATTACK, PSYCHIC TALENT, RESILIENCE

Found only in the very largest colonies or on board transport bugs travelling between the stars, queen bugs are the largest subspecies so far discovered by the military forces of the Federation. Towering above even plasma bugs, these immense Arachnids are exceptionally powerful both physically and psychically. They are the presumed leaders of the Arachnid species and, to date, none has ever been successfully pursued and destroyed by the Mobile Infantry. After the capture of a brain bug on Planet P during the Klendathu Invasion, the taking of a queen bug alive has become the ultimate goal for SICON Intelligence.

Rumour and speculation surround the queen bugs, perhaps because so few have been seen, even on the rare occasions when Mobile Infantry strike teams manage to penetrate deep into large colonies. The true battlefield potential of a queen bug is a mystery and, in the close confines of a colony, they are all too deadly. Many believe that the queen bugs are the original Arachnid race, with all others being derived from their intellect and genetic craft. There is also the question of what lies above the queen bugs. Until a queen was actually encountered, many presumed that the brain bugs were the leaders of the Arachnids. Now that the existence of queens has been proved, speculation inevitably turns to an even greater species. Is there an even larger queen bug (or empress bug?) buried deep within the tunnels of Klendathu, safe from SICON bombardment under miles of the planet's crust?



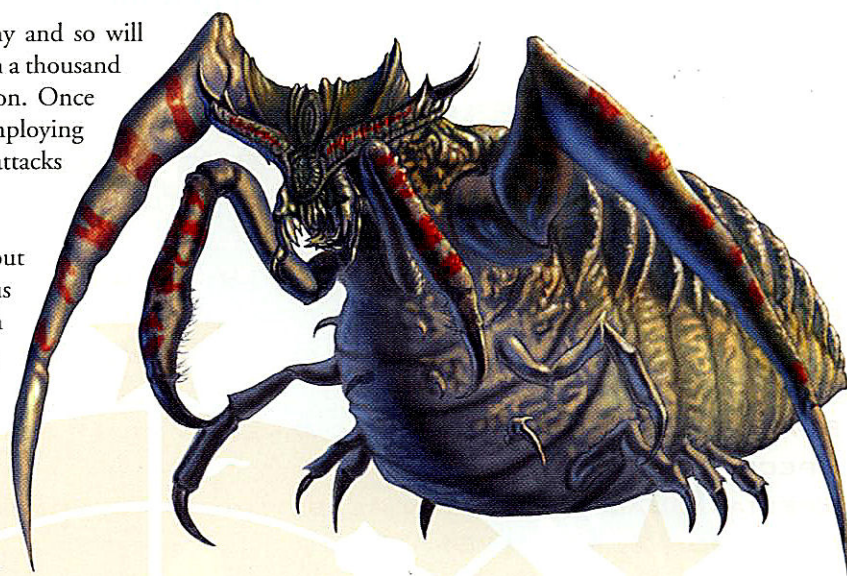
Combat

Queen bugs are vital to the survival of a colony and so will never risk themselves in open confrontation when a thousand warrior bugs will die in their place without question. Once involved in combat, the queen bug is relentless, employing its arsenal of devastating psychic and physical attacks until the enemy is destroyed.

Bug Leader: Though colonies can exist without a queen bug, once one is present it forms a nexus to the rest of the Arachnid race, the loss of which can be extremely disruptive. When a queen bug is slain, every Arachnid within 1 mile will be unable to perform any action for 1d6 rounds, though they can defend themselves normally. After this, the bugs will no longer operate as a cohesive force unless there are brain or overseer bugs also present. They will attack targets randomly and even begin fighting other bugs if no enemy is present.

Psychic Abilities: A queen bug can wield the following powers, once per round, as a free action. There is no limit to how often each power can be used but each use costs the brain bug one point of non-lethal damage. Telepathic characters can attempt to interfere with a queen bug's powers as detailed in the Psychics chapter of the main rulebook.

- ⊕ **Rally the Swarm:** This power grants every bug within 480 feet in all directions the queen bug's Will save bonus for 10 rounds and instantly removes any mental condition they may be suffering (*stunned, shaken, terrified* or *frightened*). If the queen bug wishes, this power also issues an irresistible command for all bugs in the area of effect to immediately move toward it at their best possible speed.
- ⊕ **Psi-lash:** This is a tightly focused beam of disruptive mental energy that strikes the closest non-Arachnid mind to the queen bug within 120 feet and inflicts 2d6+12 damage.



This damage ignores all forms of Damage Reduction, is only subject to mental defence and is quite real. Victims suffer intense pain, ear, eye and nose bleeding, and die from cerebral haemorrhaging if reduced to -10 hit points or less.

- ⊕ **Wave of Horror:** This ability sends out a mental command that strikes at an empathic level against every non-Arachnid within 60 feet. Only psychics with the Mental Endurance class feature or characters with the Iron Will feat may take a Will save (DC 26) against this effect. All victims in the area are *shaken* for 2d4 rounds by the terror this wave of emotion inflicts upon them. If a victim is already suffering from a Fear effect, they instantly become *terrified* for one full round (and then *shaken* for 1d4 rounds thereafter).

Wall Crawler: A queen bug can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.



**CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM
SAYS:**

NEVER SEEN ONE
MYSELF. DON'T
ENGAGE IN ANYTHING
LESS THAN COMPANY
STRENGTH.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1-ULTRA

IQ: OFF THE SCALE

WEIGHT: 6 METRIC TONS

**WEAPONS: CLAWS,
MANDIBLES AND PSYCHIC
ATTACKS**

* Combat Danger Rating

RIPPLER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10 + 4 (26 HP)

INITIATIVE: +5

SPEED: 20 FT. (4 SQUARES), FLY 80 FT. (16 SQUARES) (GOOD)

DEFENCE: 17 (-1 SIZE, +5 DEX, +3 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+12

ATTACK: CLAW +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20) OR SPIKE +8 RANGED (1D6+4, 120 FT./24 SQUARES)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +7 MELEE (1D6+4/19-20) OR SPIKE BURST +4 RANGED (3D6+4, 120 FT./24 SQUARES)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2x2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: DEADLY PASS

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 90 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 2, FEAR (16)

SAVES: FORT +5, REF +9, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 18, DEX 20, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ACROBATICS +7, PERCEPTION +5

FEATS: FLYING TACKLE, LIGHTNING REFLEXES

Themselves a variation on the hopper bug, there are several forms of the common rippler, each developed for slightly different uses. The rippler bug is built a little lighter than the hopper bug and is thus more agile in flight. However, it is also more susceptible to enemy fire and large numbers can be brought down in concentrated attacks.

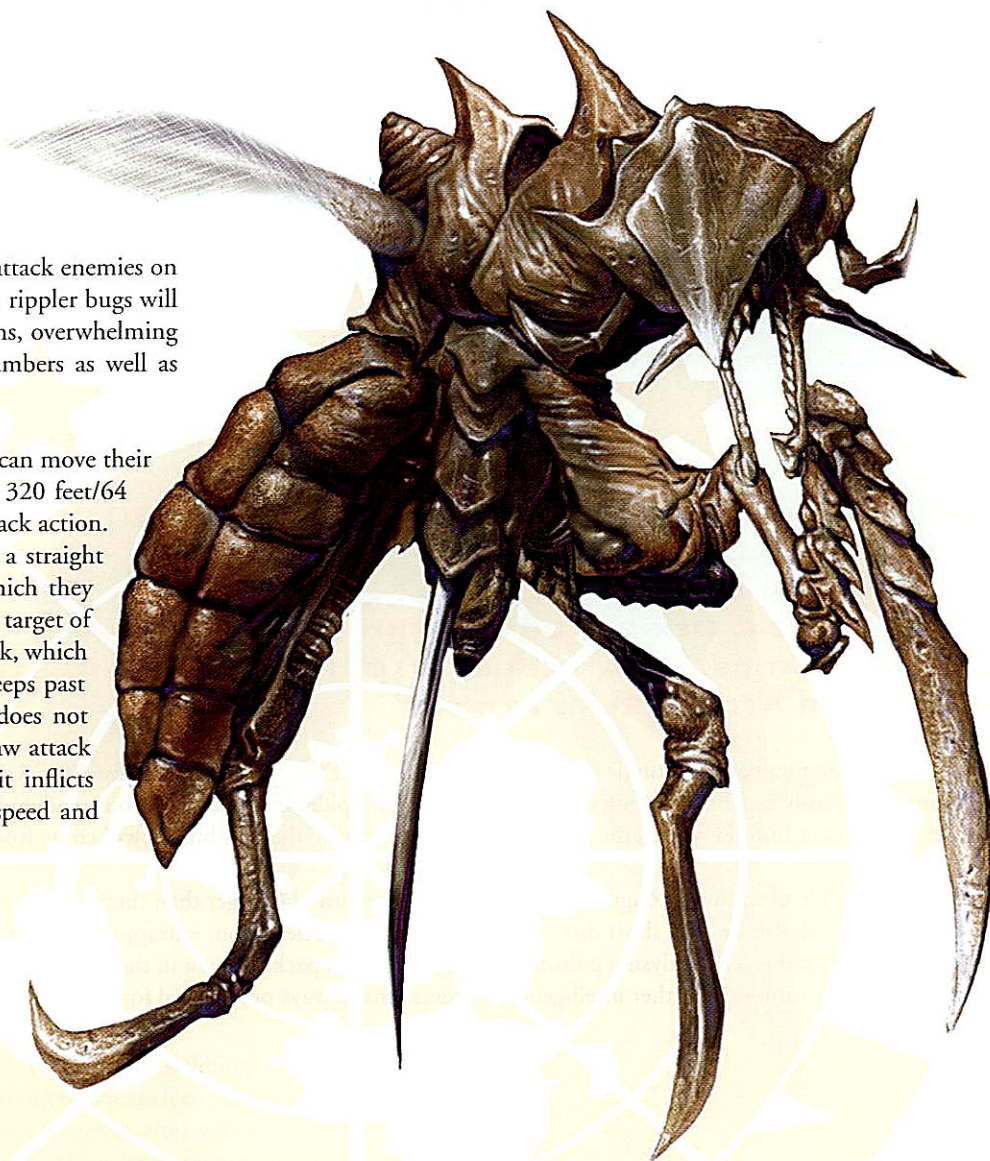
When a colony begins breeding rippler bugs, it will do so in great numbers, aiming to literally fill the surrounding sky with these airborne attackers. With sufficient preparation, a colony can make effective air support almost impossible for any attacker and cause ground forces to suffer correspondingly. Ripplers mature at a frightening rate, far faster than the larger hopper bugs, allowing these huge swarms to be produced at great pace.



Combat

Whereas hopper bugs often attack enemies on their own or in small groups, rippler bugs will try to amass into large swarms, overwhelming their victims by force of numbers as well as sweeping attacks.

Deadly Pass: Rippler bugs can move their full aerial speed (a x4 move, 320 feet/64 squares) and gain a single attack action. To do this, they must fly in a straight line during the round in which they make their Deadly Pass. The target of this attack suffers a claw attack, which take place when the bug sweeps past it on its flight path. This does not offer a free attack. If the claw attack hits during a Deadly Pass, it inflicts double damage due to the speed and force of the blow.



CAREER SERGEANT

ZIM SAYS:

IF YOU THINK THESE ARE THE SAME AS HOPPERS, YOU ARE IN FOR A SURPRISE. THEY DON'T RESPOND WELL TO ACCURATE RIFLE FIRE, HOWEVER, SO A WELL-PREPARED SQUAD SHOULD BE ABLE TO BRING DOWN LARGE NUMBERS.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1

IQ: 30

WEIGHT: 450 KG

WEAPONS: CLAWS AND SPIKE BURST

* Combat Danger Rating

SPIDER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 5D10 + 10 (38 HP)

INITIATIVE: +5

SPEED: 60 FT. (12 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 19 (-1 SIZE, +5 DEX, +5 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +5/+16

ATTACK: BITE +11 MELEE (2D6+10/19-20 PLUS POISON) OR WEB +9 RANGED (SEE BELOW)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +11 MELEE (2D6+10/19-20 PLUS POISON) OR WEB +9 RANGED (SEE BELOW)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2 X 2 SQUARES)/ 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: POISON, WEBBING

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 4, FEAR (16), WALL CRAWLER

SAVES: FORT +6, REF +8, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 24, DEX 20, CON 14, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ACROBATICS +9, ATHLETICS +10, PERCEPTION +4, STEALTH +9

FEATS: POWER ATTACK, REND ATTACK

Common among colonies based in jungle or forest territories, spider bugs are agile, tree-dwelling Arachnids, developed to exist in this environment. Easily capable of taking down a strong human, spider bugs pack a vicious rending bite that can tear a Trooper in half as they swarm over him. However, the main form of attack during their ambushes will come from their spinning webs.

Spider bugs are capable of spinning tough webs that will bind creatures far larger than themselves – few humans have the strength to burst free. This web can be shot short distances by a reflexive muscle action, entrapping the target. The spider bug will then bind the victim tighter, inject a paralysing poison and carry the entire package back to the colony. Typically this is done to present brain bugs with opportunities to gather intelligence, a process that always proves fatal for the victim.



Combat

Spider bugs like to lurk in groups of half a dozen or so, lying in ambush for Mobile Infantry patrols in their area. Casting their webs first, they will carry off anyone immobilised and assault the others.

Poison: The spider bug may inject a helpless victim with its paralysing poison as a full round action. The poison has a Fortitude DC of 18, initial damage of paralysis for 2d6 hours, and secondary damage of unconsciousness for 3d6 hours.

Wall Crawler: A spider bug can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.

Webbing: If a target is struck by the spider bug's web attack, it will be enveloped in webbing rendering it completely immobile. To break free requires a Strength check (DC 25) which may be attempted every round the target remains conscious and free of the spider bug's poison. The web has a range increment of 10 feet.

A spider bug can also create a thin wall of webbing as a full round action, with an area of about 60 square feet. Any creature touching the web will become entangled, after which it must succeed on a Strength check (DC 25) or become immobilised.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

GET CAPTURED BY
ONE OF THESE AND
YOUR NEXT STOP
WILL BE A BRAIN
BUG IN YOUR HEAD
— LITERALLY.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 500 KG
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES
AND SPUN WEBS

* Combat Danger Rating

TANKER BUG

GARGANTUAN ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 14D10 + 86 (163 HP)

INITIATIVE: +0

SPEED: 40 FT. (8 SQUARES), BURROW 15 FT. (3 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 14 (-4 SIZE, +2 DEX, +6 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +14/+32

ATTACK: BITE +16 MELEE (2D6+9)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +16 MELEE (2D6+9)

SPACE/REACH: 20 FT. (4X4 SQUARES)/20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: CAUSTIC FLAME

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 6, FEAR (18)

SAVES: FORT +15, REF +6, WILL +6

ABILITIES: STR 22, DEX 10, CON 22, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: PERCEPTION +17

FEATS: ENDURANCE, IMPROVED HIBERNATION, IRON WILL, PROTECTED SYSTEMS, TOUGHNESS

The original Arachnid fire magnet, the tanker bug is the main assault sub-species used in frontal attacks. Immensely strong and well armoured, small arms fire simply patters off its thick carapace while it remains fully capable of crushing vehicles and fortifications alike. Its ability to tunnel, rare in a creature so large, allows it to join stealthy warrior bug attacks or launch surprise assaults of its own, directly into the heart of an enemy stronghold.

Aside from raw brute force, the tanker bug also possesses a caustic stream weapon. Spewing a highly volatile chemical from a duct at the top of its head, this stream is ignited by a self-generated electrical charge. Metal and flesh alike literally melt under this intense blast meaning that even Troopers who find the means to outrun a tanker bug may find themselves in serious trouble.



Combat

The tanker bug prefers to tunnel its way towards an enemy force, only emerging when it is directly beneath a suitable target or when the rest of the Arachnid swarm joins battle. Weak Mobile Infantry strongholds have been known to fall when a tanker bug surfaces in the centre of their compound, quickly followed by a swarm of warrior bugs. If forced to travel on the surface, the tanker bug has more than enough durability to survive any incoming fire short of a tactical nuke.

Caustic Flame: As a full-round action, a tanker bug may breathe a stream of caustic flame, 5 feet (1 square) wide and 40 feet (8 squares) long. All targets within the area will suffer 4d6 points of damage, though a Reflex save (DC 23) will halve this. This attack will ignore all cover except full cover.



**CAREER SERGEANT
ZIM SAYS:**
CAN CAUSE SERIOUS
PROBLEMS WHEN
TUNNELLING BUT DON'T
BE DRAWN IN BY A
TANKER IN FULL VIEW
- THE BUGS ARE HAPPY
TO USE THESE GUYS
AS FIRE MAGNETS,
DISTRACTING YOU FROM
THE MAIN ASSAULT.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1

IQ: 35

WEIGHT: 3½ METRIC TONS

WEAPONS: CORROSIVE FLAME
AND CRUSHING CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

TIGER WARRIOR BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 6D10 + 12 (45 HP)

INITIATIVE: +7

SPEED: 60 FT. (12 SQUARES), BURROW 20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 20 (+3 DEX, +7 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +6/+17

ATTACK: CLAW +12 MELEE (1D6+7/19-20)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +12 MELEE (1D6+7/19-20) AND BITE+7 (1D8+3)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: LETHAL GRAPPLE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 5, FEAR (17), SENSITIVE ANTENNA, WALL CRAWLER

SAVES: FORT +7, REF +6, WILL +2

ABILITIES: STR 24, DEX 16, CON 14, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +8, ACROBATICS +7, PERCEPTION +4

FEATS: CLEAVE, IMPROVED INITIATIVE, POWER ATTACK

So far seen only in a few sectors on Klendathu, the tiger is a faster, stronger and more aggressive variant of the common warrior bug. It is recognisable by its strong yellow and black colour scheme but given the Arachnids' ability to alter the carapace colour of bugs they breed in different colonies to match environments, it is entirely possible that Troopers may face tiger warriors in the future without realising the fact until it is too late.

Tiger warriors take longer to breed than their lesser counterparts and it may be surmised that, when vast numbers of soldiers are needed (the Arachnids main advantage over the Federation), the quality of the individual is of secondary importance. In this fashion, tiger warriors may be viewed as an elite troop type, in the same way as the Pathfinders of the Mobile Infantry. On the battlefield, however, they fight alongside warrior bugs, rather than being grouped into specific units for special missions.

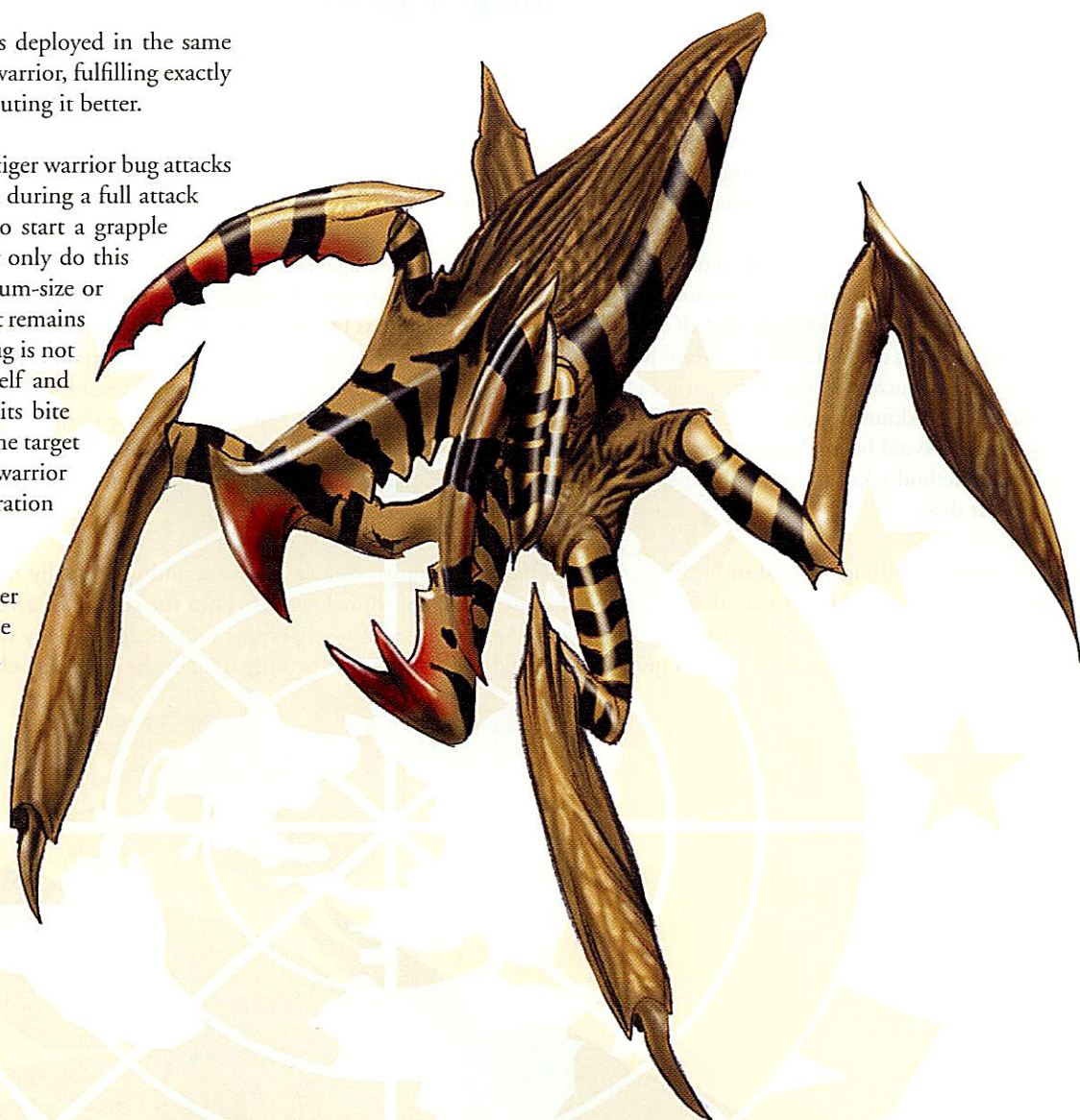


Combat

The tiger warrior bug is deployed in the same fashion as the ordinary warrior, fulfilling exactly the same role – but executing it better.

Lethal Grapple: If the tiger warrior bug attacks only with its bite attack during a full attack action, it may choose to start a grapple as a free action. It may only do this to targets that are medium-size or smaller. While the target remains grappled, the warrior bug is not considered grappled itself and will automatically deal its bite damage every round. The target will be pulled into the warrior bug's space for the duration of this attack.

Wall Crawler: A tiger warrior bug can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

WATCH OUT FOR
VARIANT HIDE
COLOURS WHEN
FIGHTING WARRIORS.
TIGERS TAKE MORE
FIREPOWER TO PUT
DOWN THAN THE
STANDARD MODEL
AND ARE A LITTLE
FASTER.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 35
WEIGHT: 575 KG
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES
AND CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

TRANSPORT BUG

Transport bugs are by far the largest of the Arachnid sub-species yet discovered. Indeed, they are likely to be the largest living creatures in the entire galaxy. The transport bug is simply a direct technological step forward for the Arachnids from their relatively primitive spore asteroids. Instead of simply hurling their spores into space on pre-determined trajectories that could, in theory, be intercepted, they can now respond directly to strategic movements from the Federation and other alien races. Whether it is diverting forces to engage a target of opportunity or allowing a valuable queen bug to escape, the transport bugs have given the Arachnids a quantum leap in strategic capability where before they had virtually none above the planetary level.

Lined with pulsating sacs and cavities, the transport bug is hardened against the cold void of space and can survive travel between the stars almost indefinitely. Its organic star drive, similar in concept, though very different in function, to the Federation's Cherenkov Drive occupies about half of the transport bug's total mass but is self-repairing and requires only hydrogen to function. Transport bugs are therefore bound to the same star systems they travel between as a huge amount of hydrogen is consumed during every hyperspace journey. They gather raw fuel either by taking on board vast quantities of water from the seas of a convenient planet or by skimming the atmosphere of a gas giant – a procedure fraught with danger as the transport bug must gather enough velocity to avoid being dragged into the gas giant's gravity well and yet still fly accurately enough to skim the atmosphere properly. Either method takes around 48 hours to gather the hydrogen, refine it into a useable form and then transfer the resulting fuel to the star drive.

The number of bugs carried on board can number anything up to twenty thousand and will usually represent an entire colony moving from one planet to another. This means that instead of throwing spore onto the surface of a world and waiting for the colony to grow large enough to root itself firmly, the Arachnids can now establish a fully-fledged colony within a couple of days of a transport bug landing, with its own queen, brains and legions of warriors ready to fight the defenders of the world.





**CAREER
SERGEANT ZIM
SAYS:**

TOO BIG FOR AN MI
SQUAD, THOUGH YOU
MAY BE DETAILED
TO ENTER AND
SABOTAGE. TREAT
AS A BUG COLONY
AND EXPECT THE
UNEXPECTED.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 5 - PRIORITY STRATEGIC
TARGET
IQ: UNKNOWN
WEIGHT: AT LEAST 20,000 TONS
WEAPONS: ON BOARD PLASMA
BUGS

* Combat Danger Rating

WARRIOR BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10 + 8 (30 HP)

INITIATIVE: +3

SPEED: 50 FT. (10 SQUARES), BURROW 10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 18 (+3 DEX, +5 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+14

ATTACK: CLAW +9 MELEE (1D6+6/19-20)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +9 MELEE (1D6+6/19-20) AND BITE+4 (1D8+3)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/10 FT. (2 SQUARES)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: LETHAL GRAPPLE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 30 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 4, FEAR (16), SENSITIVE ANTENNA, WALL CRAWLER

SAVES: FORT +6, REF +5, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 22, DEX 16, CON 14, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: ATHLETICS +8, ACROBATICS +5, PERCEPTION +3

FEATS: CLEAVE, POWER ATTACK

Warrior bugs remain the basic component of the Arachnid forces and are collectively responsible for the deaths of more Troopers than all other sub-species combined. Easy to breed and yet supremely capable on the modern battlefield, the warrior bug is perhaps the epitome of the selfless soldier. Having no fear, desires or ambitions beyond a mindless subservience to queens and brains, there is little it is not capable of, especially when accompanied by hundreds or thousands of its brethren.



Combat

Warrior bugs have an utter disregard for their own safety and this is their ultimate strength – that and their immense numbers. A warrior bug will not think twice about running into sustained cannon fire in order to allow those following it to advance just another few feet towards a line of Mobile Infantry. At all times, warrior bugs will press the attack, never retreat and never give up.

Lethal Grapple: If the warrior bug attacks only with its bite attack during a full attack action, it may choose to start a grapple as a free action. It may only do this to targets that are Medium-size or smaller. While the target remains grappled, the warrior bug is not considered grappled itself and will automatically deal its bite damage every round. The target will be pulled into the warrior bug's space for the duration of this attack.

Wall Crawler: A warrior bug can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.



CAREER SERGEANT ZIM SAYS:

IF YOU DIDN'T LEARN
HOW TO DEAL WITH
THESE IN BASIC,
THERE IS NO HOPE
FOR YOU.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 550 KG
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES AND
CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

WATER TIGER BUG

MEDIUM ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 5D10 + 15 (43 HP)

INITIATIVE: +2

SPEED: 10 FT. (2 SQUARES), SWIM 60 FT. (12 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 17 (-1 SIZE, +2 DEX, +6 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +5/+14

ATTACK: BITE +9 MELEE (1D6+7)

FULL ATTACK: BITE +9 MELEE (1D6+7)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2 X 2 SQUARES)/ 5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: PARALYSIS VENOM

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 60 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 3, FEAR (14), SENSITIVE ANTENNA

SAVES: FORT +7, REF +5, WILL +3

ABILITIES: STR 20, DEX 14, CON 16, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: PERCEPTION +5, STEALTH +10

FEATS: IRON WILL, POWER ATTACK

A surprising derivation from the rippler bug, this sub-species trades the ability to fly for a water-borne existence. Surprisingly fast underwater, the water tiger bug is a certain sight in any colony situated near any large body of water. The colony located at Zeguma Beach, for example, had a high mixture of rippers and water tiger bugs but correspondingly few warriors.

Though a little weaker than many other specialised sub-species, the water tiger can still be a nasty surprise for Mobile Infantry patrols and its cunning use of stealth to launch underwater ambushes has earned it a certain amount of notoriety. Its paralysing poison gives the Arachnids another tool by which to capture live prey for the consumption of brain bugs within the colony.

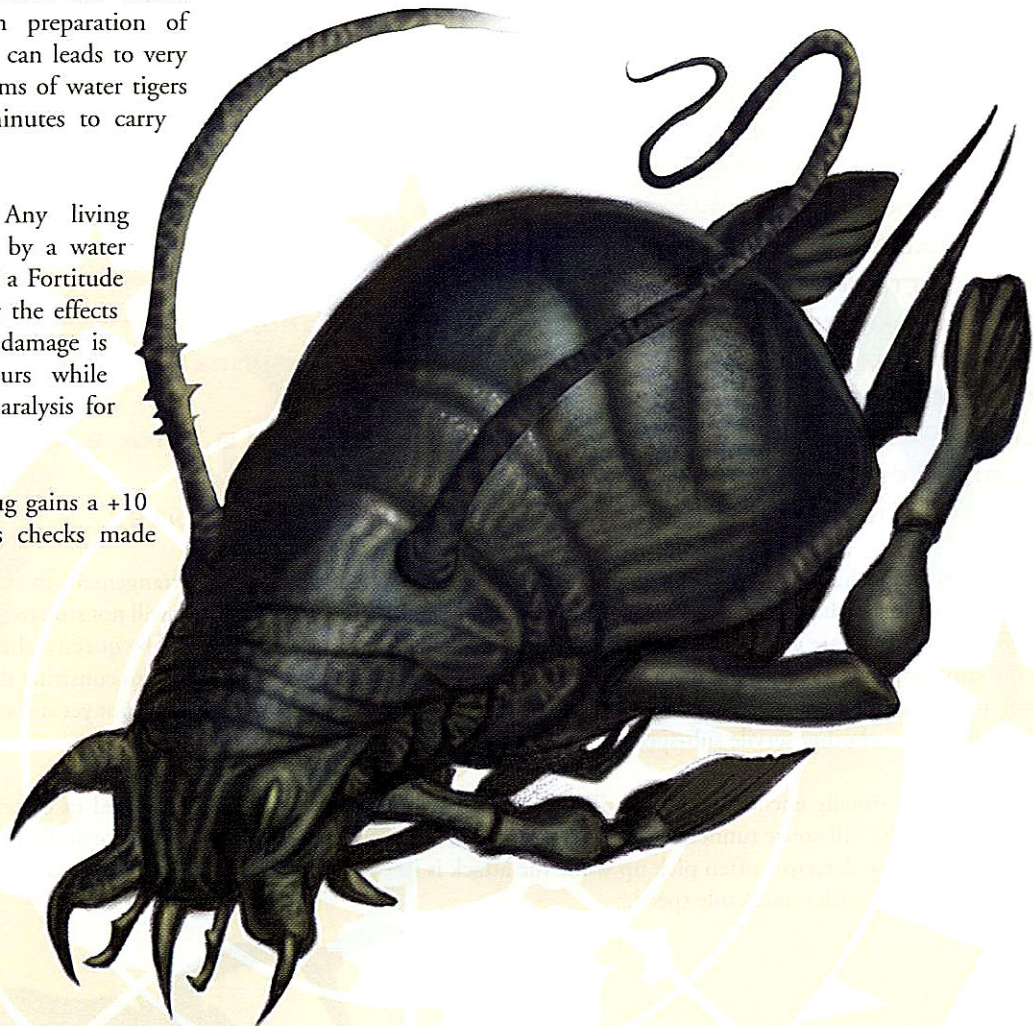


Combat

Water tiger bugs tend to be single-minded, concentrating on one target before submerging beneath the water's surface once more in preparation of another ambush. This can lead to very tense patrols with swarms of water tigers attacking every few minutes to carry another Trooper away.

Paralysis Venom: Any living creature that is bitten by a water tiger bug must succeed a Fortitude save (DC 15) or suffer the effects of its venom. Initial damage is paralysis for 2d6 hours while secondary damage is paralysis for 24 hours.

Skills: A water tiger bug gains a +10 bonus on all Athletics checks made while swimming.



CAREER SERGEANT

ZIM SAYS:

WHEN YOU ARE CROSSING WATER, YOU LIKELY WON'T SEE THESE UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE. DON'T LET YOUR SQUAD MATES GET CAPTURED OR YOU'LL BE ON A RESCUE MISSION TO THE DEPTHS OF THE NEAREST BUG COLONY.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 450 KG
WEAPONS: POISONED
MANDIBLES

* Combat Danger Rating

WORKER BUG

LARGE ALIEN BEAST

HIT DICE: 4D10 + 6 (28 HP)

INITIATIVE: +1

SPEED: 50 FT. (10 SQUARES), BURROW 20 FT. (4 SQUARES)

DEFENCE: 13 (-1 SIZE, +1 DEX, +3 NATURAL)

BASE ATTACK/GRAPPLE: +4/+11

ATTACK: CLAW +6 MELEE (1D3+3)

FULL ATTACK: 2 CLAWS +6 MELEE (1D3+3)

SPACE/REACH: 10 FT. (2X2 SQUARES)/5 FT. (1 SQUARE)

SPECIAL ATTACKS: NONE

SPECIAL QUALITIES: ALIEN BEAST TRAITS, BLINDSIGHT 50 FT., DAMAGE REDUCTION 2, FEAR (16, 10 IF RECOGNISED AS A WORKER), WARRIOR-LIKE

SAVES: FORT +5, REF +3, WILL +1

ABILITIES: STR 17, DEX 12, CON 12, INT 2, WIS 10, CHA 2

SKILLS: TECHNICAL (STRUCTURAL) +7

FEATS: INSTINCTIVE (TECHNICAL (STRUCTURAL)), TOUGHNESS

Physically indistinguishable from warrior bugs, worker bugs have a slightly different arrangement in their thorax carapace and mandible arrangement, though this is easily missed in the heat of battle and most Troopers will not stop to interrogate any Arachnid they find. Worker bugs are generally non-combatant but are sometimes thrown into battle by queen or brain bugs, where they act much the same as warrior bugs, though are notably less effective. It is the role of worker bugs to construct the huge tunnel networks common to Arachnid colonies though they will also adopt more menial duties if the colony is not yet sufficiently developed to have bred minion bugs and other servile sub-species.

Worker bugs are normally encountered when Troopers enter colonies but many are often used in direct assaults on Federation positions, where they will create tunnels for swarms of warriors behind them. They are the source of the famed 'sizzling bacon' that Mobile Infantry noise detectors often pick up while the attack is in progress, the sound of their frenzied clawing against bare rock as they create tunnels with remarkable speed.



Combat

Worker bugs avoid combat at all costs but may be ordered into battle by a brain bug needing to throw the full weight of his colony against an enemy.

Warrior-Like: A Knowledge (alien species or Arachnids) check (DC 20) is required to identify this creature as a worker bug instead of automatically assuming it is a warrior.

**CAREER SERGEANT****ZIM SAYS:**

A LOT HAS BEEN MADE ABOUT HOW SIMILAR THESE LOOK TO WARRIORS BUT A GOOD TROOPER WILL KNOW THE DIFFERENCE. DON'T ASSUME THEY ARE ALWAYS NON-COMBATIVE AS BRAINS WILL OFTEN PUSH THEM INTO ASSAULTS WHEN THE MI START WINNING.

SICON BIO REPORT

CDR*: 4

IQ: 18

WEIGHT: 475 KG

WEAPONS: CLAWS

* Combat Danger Rating

NEW BUG FEATS

Some of the sub-species in this chapter have the new feats described below.

Improved Hibernation

The Arachnid is capable of hibernating for months or even years.

Prerequisite: Endurance

Benefit: The Arachnid's hibernation may last for a number of months equal to its total hit points.

Normal: A typical Arachnid may hibernate for a number of days equal to its total hit points.

Protected Systems

The Arachnid's carapace is engineered for increased protection to its central nervous system.

Benefit: The Arachnid is immune to critical hits.

Rend Attack

If the Arachnid pins a target down, it can deliver a devastating rend attack.

Prerequisite: Power Attack

Benefit: As a full-round action, the Arachnid can make an opposed grapple check against an enemy it has already grappled. If the Arachnid wins, it immediately deals damage equal to 1d6 for every two full Hit Dice it possesses plus 1½ times its Strength Modifier.

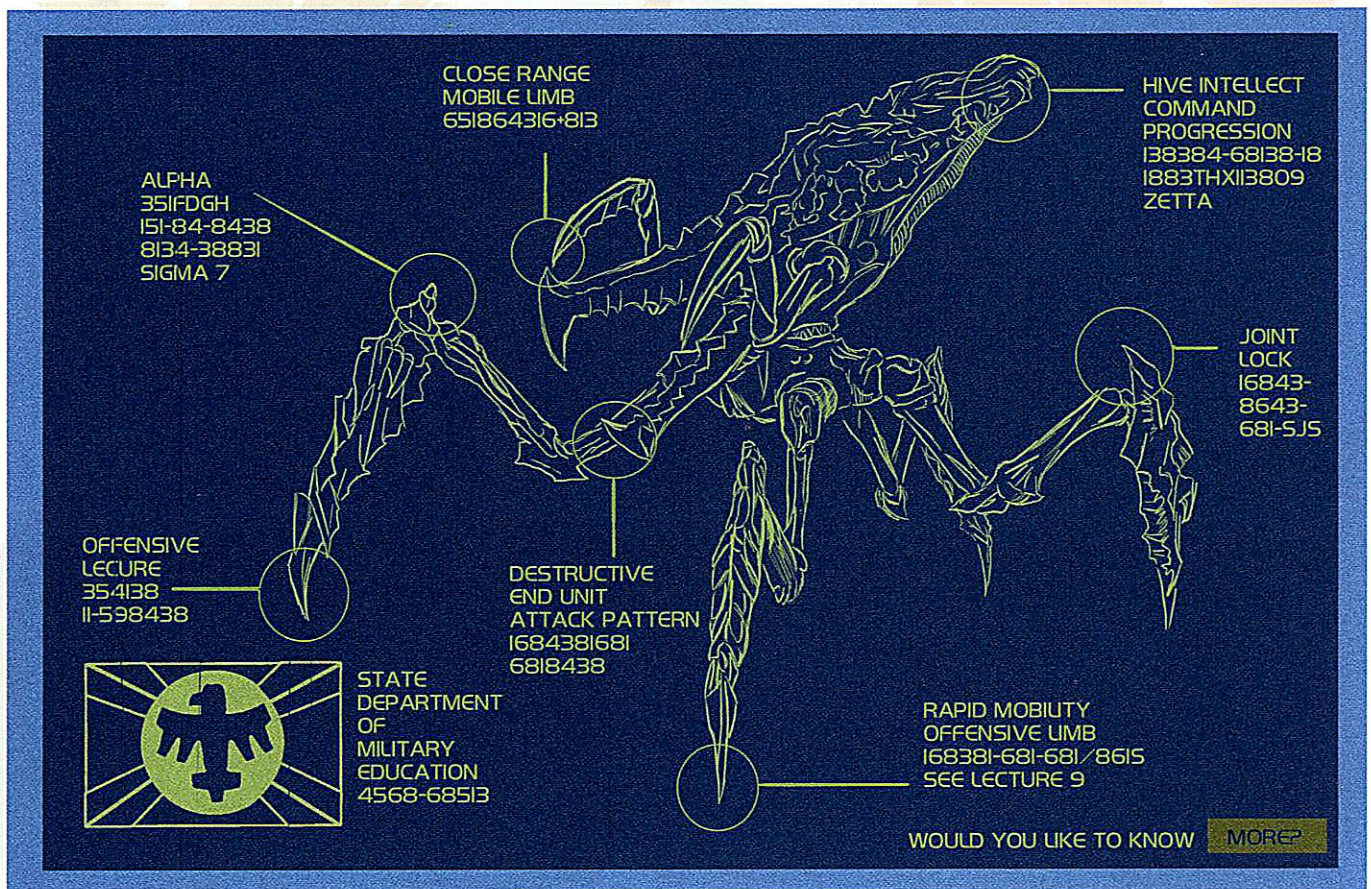
Vacuum Survival

The Arachnid can survive in space and other hostile environments indefinitely.

Prerequisite: Endurance

Benefit: The Arachnid suffers no harmful effects or penalties for fighting or moving in zero-gravity. It is also completely immune to the hostile environment of space, including cold, radiation and lack of air. Cold-based or radiation-based attacks still affect the Arachnid normally.

Special: An Arachnid that possesses a fire-based attack (such as blaster bugs or firefries) cannot use it in a vacuum.



BUG CENTRAL CHARLIE VICTOR

THE COLONY IS the centre of Arachnid organisation, evolution and power. Their planetary domination and expansion are based on colonies and it can be argued that the construction of tunnel networks and bug holes are the single most important and defining trait of the Arachnids. An Arachnid colony is a network of underground tunnels and chambers that are used to protect, breed and house thousands of bugs of all sub-species. A colony is also the basic unit of Arachnid society, the node of its organisation and identity of its individuals.

This chapter looks at the process required to create a colony and the classifications SICON uses to measure the capabilities of them. A complete colony is also detailed, allowing Games Masters to create a full scenario based on a Mobile Infantry assault of a colony or simply to use as inspiration for their own, unique, colonies.

COLONY CONSTRUCTION

The process used to build an Arachnid colony is a marvel, frightening for its speed of construction and miraculous for its high rate of success even in hostile territory. The process takes an average of twelve Earth weeks to complete, divided as follows:

Weeks One and Two

The creation of an Arachnid colony begins when a spore capsule, fired from another colony (often from another world) takes root on suitable ground. The capsule is a shell of carapace-like material, containing eggs and larvae of the most basic sub-species – breeders, minions and nursers, with a few warriors for protection. The eggs and breeders are ‘pre-programmed’ by the original colony’s brain bugs to raise a specific range of sub-species at an initially accelerated rate. Once the capsule lands, its shell cracks open, waking the larval Arachnids. The larvae burrow a small nest directly below the capsule, where they immediately begins to feed upon the organic material inside the spore. As it feeds, the larvae grow and develop into the first Arachnids of the colonies, taking care of the eggs and producing more. As the number of Arachnids increase, workers start to be produced and they burrow a larger den – the construction of the colony has begun.

Week Three

After several days, the Arachnids have consumed all the organic material brought with them and the burrow is now made into two chambers, one of which forms a small breeding area. The few warriors present will generally reside in the first chamber which forms the only entry point to the breeder bugs.

Weeks Four and Five

Breeding concentrates on producing workers and warriors, a perfect balance to serve the needs of construction and defence during this vulnerable time. Construction begins on the initial tunnel network under the surrounding surface area. At this time, there will be around 100 Arachnids in the colony, divided roughly between 20 warriors, 40 workers and 40 breeders, minions and nursers. Completing their original pre-programmed instructions, the nurser bugs will begin raising the first brain bug. Workers and warriors will begin patrolling the surrounding territory at night to scavenge organic material for food, though they will take all precautions to avoid discovery.

Week Six

The brain bug larvae matures into a young adult and begins to direct the construction of the colony. At this point, under intelligent direction, the construction and expansion of the colony accelerates. By this time, the workers have created the tunnel network that forms the labyrinthine entrance to what will be the larger colony structure and the first deep chambers have started to appear. If the colony arrived by transport bug rather than spore, this is the point at which construction begins though with hundreds of workers already present, the tunnel networks will take less than a week to build.

Weeks Seven and Eight

The brain bug continues to grow and direct the construction of the colony, all the while gathering information (through patrolling warriors and psychic means) about the immediate territory the Arachnids find themselves in. A more permanent breeding chamber will be created at the deepest part of the colony and breeder bugs are accelerated once more – within a few days, more than a thousand eggs will be laid to form the second, much larger, main generation of Arachnids.

Weeks Nine and Ten

At this point, the colony has grown to several separated chambers, including the main cave, breeding pits, nurseries and brain's chamber. If a plentiful source of organic material has been located in the surrounding environment, there will also be one or two farming chambers. Otherwise, the Arachnids will begin consuming the weaker colony members in order to survive, as commanded by the brain bug.

Weeks Eleven and Twelve

The colony has become strong enough to survive on its own. At the end of week twelve, the colony's second brain bug will be hatched and more aggressive or specialised Arachnids, such as tankers and guard bugs will soon follow. Over five hundred warrior bugs will be present with three to four times that number of workers, breeders, minions and nursers. The colony is officially complete, categorised by SICON as a Class One colony.

Final Structure

All Arachnid colonies follow a similar building pattern – a hidden maze of tunnels dug above a cluster of chambers. All chambers are interconnected by complex tunnels that seem to wind in bizarre directions, making it difficult for an invader to navigate a bug colony.

An Arachnid colony is usually made of more materials than just raw earth and rock. Besides digging into the ground and mountains to build their colonies, Arachnids bring additional building materials, from chewed wood and other natural organic sources to the dead bodies of other creatures. Worker bugs chew this organic matter into a thick paste, which hardens to rock-like strength upon contact with moving air. This paste is used for insulation and conditioning of the colony's deeper chambers but also as mortar for any aboveground structure. As a result, the substance of an Arachnid colony can feel more organic and 'alive' than a simple earth tunnel and is significantly stronger.

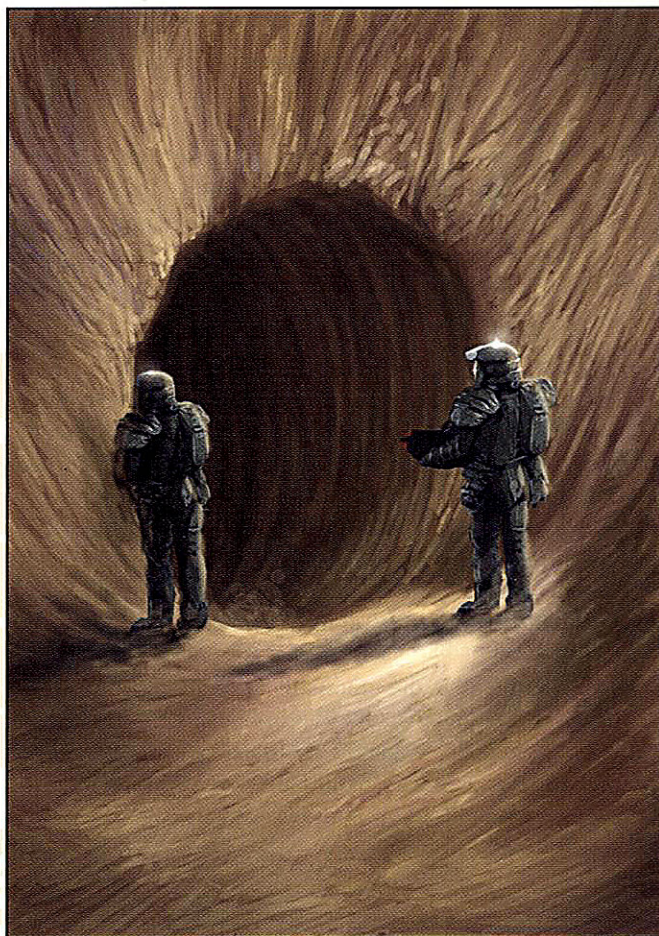
The typical colony tunnel wall has hardness 10, Break DC 40 and 100 hit points per 10-foot square.

SICON CLASSIFICATIONS

There are five categories of Arachnid colonies, assigned by SICON according to their size and capabilities.

Class One

These colonies are just starting out, with only the base Arachnid workforce and resources, including one brain bug. Class One colonies have from 1,000 to 3,000 individuals.



Class Two

These colonies are more advanced, though they still have not expanded to their full capacity. Here, the bugs have already begun interacting with the environment, identifying the most important resources they can use and developing their first tactics to overcome any enemies. Class Two colonies have less than 10,000 individual bugs.

Class Three

These colonies number around 50,000 individuals and have become larger than an average human city. It will be rich in variant sub-species. Class Three colonies have already dominated their immediate environment, as evidenced by the large tracts of devastated terrain surrounding them. Queen bugs begin to appear in colonies of this size.

Class Four

These colonies have hundreds of thousands of bugs swarming through their endless tunnels and caves, which may take up as much territory as a small state. A Class Four colony has expanded beyond what the environment can support – it is an ecological hazard and the first step towards the planet's complete bug infestation.

Class Five

Class Five colonies are those that have taken over a land area equivalent to a country. At this point, the planet is usually overrun with Arachnid colonies. Class Five colonies have millions of inhabitants and include virtually every Arachnid sub-species known to at least some extent. They will be ruled by large groups of brain bugs and may even have more than one queen.

ALERT STATUS

These rules provide the Games Master with an easy tool to measure the response of a colony under attack from the Mobile Infantry and provides guidelines on how to use the strategic tactics of the Arachnids. Alert Status indicates what priorities are assigned to tasks such as combat, reproduction, building, food gathering and so forth. The colony's Alert Status depends on many factors, though by far the most important is the perception of danger in the surrounding territory. There are three levels of Alert Status for Arachnid colonies.

Low Alert

An Arachnid colony only enters this Alert Status when the Arachnids have entirely taken over a planet and the only remaining obstacles come from terrain or environment. The colony dedicates virtually all of its warriors to hunting/scouting tasks and doubles the production of workers and minions.

Medium Alert

A colony in medium alert is not considered at war but its defences are ready and watchful. An Arachnid colony enters medium alert whenever there is potential danger in the vicinity, be it the presence of alien life forms or a very significant natural threat. Since Arachnids regard almost everything else as a threat, bug colonies are most often encountered at this level of Alert Status.

High Alert

A colony in high alert expends an extraordinary amount of resources to ensure its survival at all cost. Arachnids enter a high alert status only in two circumstances. First, when building the colony itself (as any interruption or attack before it is finished

could mean early extermination) and secondly, when in open war against a hostile force. At these times, a colony produces almost three times as many warriors as it breeds workers and often makes great sacrifices (such as wasting the lives of thousands of bugs or sabotaging compromised chambers) to safeguard itself.

A COLONY'S WORKFORCE

Upon completion, a colony never stops growing, expanding and increasing its population until it has devoured the entire planet. At this point, a colony's population reaches the thousands of millions. Regardless of actual population density, a mature colony's workforce is divided roughly as follows, according to the colony's Alert Status (see table below).

BUG CENTRAL CHARLIE VICTOR

Located in the wilderness of Sebarchus 7, just outside the Arachnid Quarantine Zone, is a small Class Two colony typical of hundreds located beyond the Arachnid Empire proper, steadily encroaching upon the worlds of the Federation. The Mobile Infantry came into contact with it as the Road to Victory crumbled after the Klendathu Invasion, when it was designated by SICON as Colony SEB7-87214VC. Troopers fighting the war, however, came to call it Bug Central Charlie Victor. Attacks were launched upon this and other colonies on Sebarchus 7 over the period of eight months but, despite bloody fighting which saw the deaths of thousands of Arachnids and hundreds of troopers, the bugs were never uprooted and the Mobile Infantry was finally forced to withdraw back to Federation space.

Bug Central Charlie Victor has much in common with colonies throughout the galaxy and many features will be near identical no matter what system the Arachnids have spread to. Games Masters can therefore use this colony or elements from it in any scenario based on any world if their players start getting close to invading a colony.

Colony Description

The following sections describe each area of Bug Central Charlie Victor, as they are located on the map found on p128-129.

COLONY WORKFORCE

Bug Type	% of Total Colony Population		
	Low Alert	Medium Alert	High Alert
Worker bugs	60	50	35
Warrior bugs	15	25	40
Minion and sentry bugs	3	3	3
Breeder and nurser bugs	13	10	7
Specialist breeds (e.g. burrower, control bugs)	2	1	1
Variant soldier breeds (e.g. blister, hopper, rippler bugs)	6	10	13
High requirement breeds (e.g. brain, tanker bugs)	1	1	1

Each of the locations has three descriptions of the effects of Alert Status which must be determined by the Games Master, based on a reflection of the players' activities and other squads. The Alert Status determines the quantity and type of Arachnids in each location, as well as their current activities in general.

A. BUG HOLES

Strewn across the surface of the immediate territory surrounding the colony are a multitude of bug holes, the primary entrances to the colony. Some of these are very large (capable of allowing a plasma bug passage) and obvious with just cursory observation. Others are well-shielded by terrain and may only be located by troopers scouting the area by foot.

High Alert: When the colony is on high alert, bug holes will be incredibly active, with warriors and other combative sub-species entering or leaving every few minutes. A very unlucky Mobile Infantry patrol may even find itself in front of an entire bug army, leaving to attack an important target.

Encounters: 60% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior bugs or similar) every minute.

Medium Alert: This alert level also sees a lot of activity around bug holes, except the density of patrols and wandering bugs is significantly reduced.

Encounters: 25% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior bugs or similar) every 10 minutes.

Low Alert: At a low alert level, bug holes are practically abandoned except for a few scattered patrols and some teams of workers.

Encounters: 25% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior or worker bugs) every hour.

B. TUNNEL NETWORK

The first line of defence for any well-established colony such as Bug Central Charlie Victor will be the hellish jumble of passages and tunnels winding out, up, down, left and right, often in other directions that do not seem natural or logical. Occasionally a distant skittering noise, not unlike that of frying bacon, lets itself be heard among the tunnels...

A two-dimensional map can never do justice to the intricacy of an Arachnid tunnel network. The map on p128-129 shows only a cutaway view of the maze, showing its progress from upper to lower levels. However, the labyrinth is also quite wide, with passages going out in directions that a flat page cannot describe so the Games Master is encouraged to make up tunnels leading left and right in impossible directions at every turn, taking advantage of the possibilities allowed by three dimensional space. The tunnels of the network vary greatly in

size, with most being able to take just one or two warrior bugs side by side while some can accommodate a plasma bug.

The whole purpose of these tunnels is to confuse an invading enemy and provide the defending Arachnids, who know the layout instinctively and find it no impediment, with the ability to constantly outflank and confuse the invader. Mobile Infantry troopers daring to venture into these tunnels will find progress slow as they constantly re-trace their steps from dead ends or loops, trying to navigate to the chambers below while under relentless attack. If an enemy does manage to make rapid progress, swarms of worker and warrior bugs will break through tunnel walls to attack the invaders, creating deadly ambushes and adding to the tunnel network simultaneously.

This labyrinth is of such complexity that invaders must succeed on a Survival check (DC 20) every time they change direction. Failure means they become irrevocably lost unless they have equipment or special abilities allowing them to find their way once more. An invader that becomes lost in the network heads out in a random wrong direction until it finds another junction, at which point it must regain its bearings by making another Survival check (DC 20) or keep stumbling around randomly.

High Alert: When the colony is on high alert, the network is full of bug activity, with Arachnid patrols appearing almost at every bend. In addition, there are many bugs waiting to ambush any intruders either by breaking through tunnel walls or simply lying in wait within small alcoves.

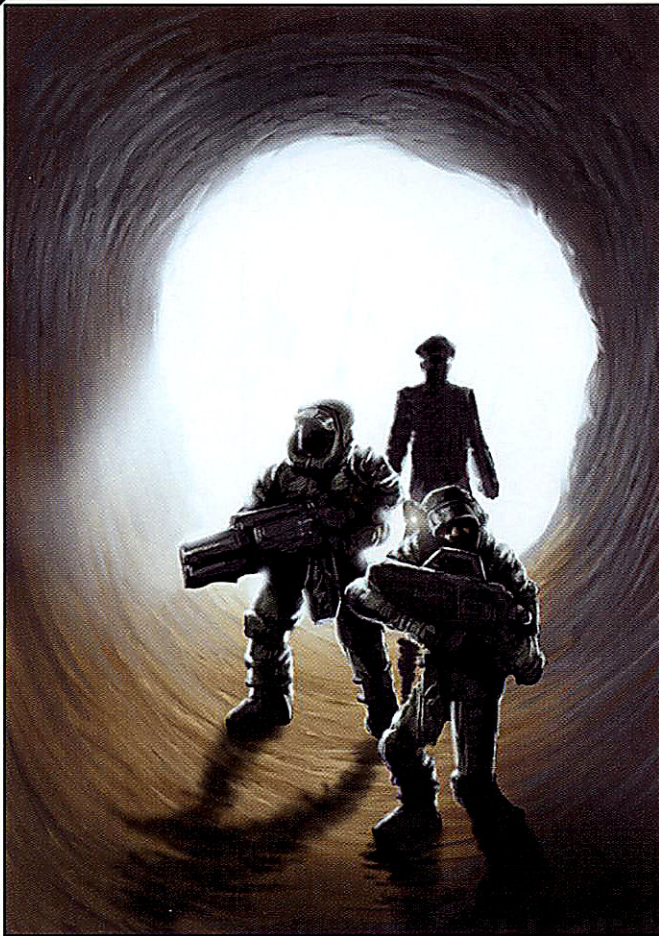
Encounters: 40% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior bugs) every minute. In addition, every ambush sprung by the Games Master contains a group of hidden bugs, waiting for trespassers. Roll 1d10 and compare the results on the table below to determine the type they belong to.

D10 Roll	Bugs
1-5	1d4 warrior bugs
6-7	2d4 warrior bugs
8-9	2d4 hopper bugs
10	1 mantis hunter bug

Medium Alert: This alert level sees a lot of activity in the network but the density of patrols and wandering bugs is significantly reduced and there are no bug ambushes (as there are no identified threats inside the colony).

Encounters: 10% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior bugs) every 10 minutes.

Low Alert: At a low alert level, the network is practically abandoned except for a few scattered patrols and swarms of workers. As the network is not used so frequently, it is possible to spot the tunnels with more activity by analysing the trails and



level of wear on the ground and walls. Thus a non-Arachnid could track its way into or out of the colony by succeeding at a Survival check (DC 25) every hour.

Encounters: 10% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior or worker bugs) every hour.

D. THE HIGHWAY

Below the main tunnel network is a kind of 'super' tunnel, nicknamed the Highway by the Mobile Infantry and Military Intelligence. This forms a backbone to the Arachnid transportation system of the colony, allowing them to move vast distances extremely rapidly.

The Highway is a very wide tunnel located 500-1,000 metres underground, large enough to allow at least two plasma bugs to pass side-by-side. On planets with several colonies in close proximity, it is not unusual for this Highway to be extended to join the colonies together. It has been surmised that this is exactly how the Arachnids were able to respond to the Mobile Infantry so quickly on Klendathu.

High Alert: When the colony is on high alert, the Highway is full of constant bug activity, with Arachnid patrols appearing on a regular basis.

Encounters: 80% of finding an Arachnid patrol (3d6 bugs of any species the Games Master chooses) every minute.

Medium Alert: This alert level sees a lot of activity in the Highway but the density of patrols and wandering bugs is significantly reduced.

Encounters: 40% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior bugs) every 10 minutes.

Low Alert: At a low alert level, the Highway is far emptier but it still remains an important component for Arachnids reaching different parts of their colony or even other colonies.

Encounters: 25% of finding an Arachnid patrol (2d4 warrior or worker bugs) every hour.

D. MAIN CHAMBERS

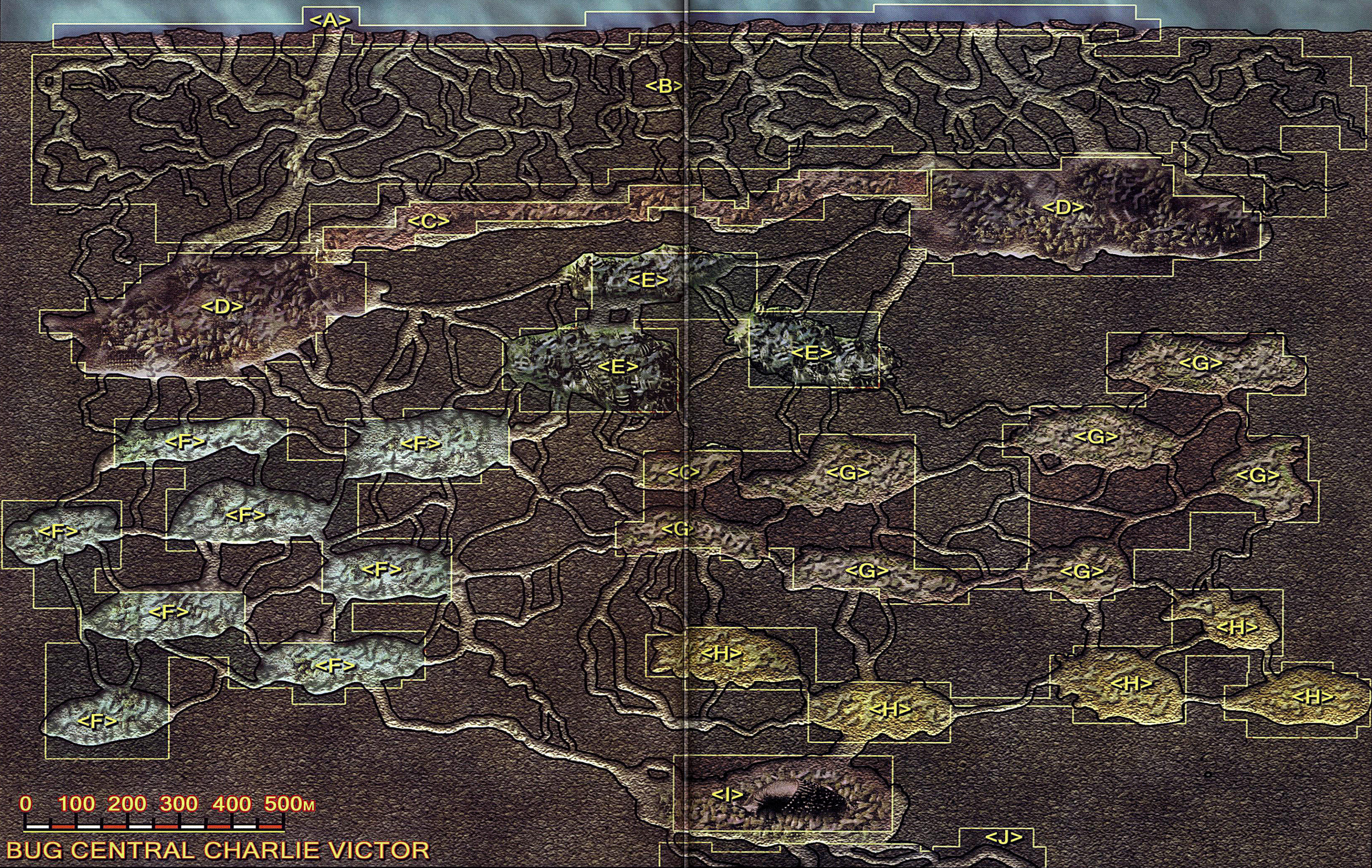
The sight of one of these chambers offers is one of bug hell. The walls, floor and ceiling of the chamber are almost invisible under the endless mass of skittering, crawling, flying, burrowing bugs rushing about in all directions. This chamber is where the majority of bugs in the colony dwell and can be found most of the time, scuttling from here to the network or deeper chambers and back until called for some task by a brain bug.

It is important for potential invaders to note that the only path into the deeper and more vulnerable parts of a colony is through one of these chambers, meaning a huge number of Arachnids have to be dealt with even if an attacker has managed to penetrate this far into the colony without detection. There is simply no way to just 'sneak in' and, say, assassinate a brain bug. The successful invasion of any colony must therefore entail a massive amount of resources and expected casualties will be extremely high as there is no way to bypass the main Arachnid swarms.

High Alert: The activity at this alert status is such that at least one bug overseer or even a brain bug is required to maintain control over the Arachnids. All sub-species of warriors, workers and various support bugs (such as blisters or blasters) are funnelled through the main exit to receive orders from the brain bug, while another endless line of workers carries dead bodies back to the deeper chambers. Even if the Arachnids are involved in outright battle, there will still be many bugs found here, forming a reserve force in case of disaster for the colony.

Encounters: Bug overseers (1), minion bugs (d10 x 500), other bugs (2d6 x 100 of any species desired) in every square hundred metres.

Medium Alert: At this level of alert, bugs just come and go, performing their assigned tasks and waiting for orders from the brain bugs. Most already have pre-programmed orders of what to do in case of emergency, so that as soon as the Alert



0 100 200 300 400 500m

BUG CENTRAL CHARLIE VICTOR

Status becomes high nearly half of the bugs vacate the chamber, leaving for their assigned posts immediately.

Encounters: Minion bugs (d10 x 600), other bugs (2d6 x 200 of any species desired) in every square hundred metres.

Low Alert: As medium alert, except the chamber is more crowded as bugs congregate for instructions, food and protection.

Encounters: Minion bugs (d10 x 750), other bugs (2d6 x 300 of any species desired) in every square hundred metres.

E. SPECIAL CHAMBERS

This colony has three great caverns set aside for larger and more specialised Arachnids, such as burrowers, plasmas and tankers. When bugs of these sub-species grow too large to remain in the nurseries, they are moved to these special chambers, where they continue their development and growth. Other than that, the chamber is much like the main chambers, though invaders had better be packing some serious weaponry to cope with the monstrosities found here.

High Alert: On high alert, the chamber is mostly empty as the specialised bugs will have been deployed elsewhere. A few tanker bugs will remain to protect the deeper parts of the colony and to support the main chambers should they come under attack.

Encounters: Tanker bug (1) in every square hundred metres.

Medium Alert: At medium alert, more bugs will be present though the chamber will remain fairly empty as most will have been deployed to fulfil specific roles.

Encounters: Tanker, king tanker, burrower or plasma (1) in every square hundred metres.

Low Alert: Without their specialised roles to be fulfilled, most of the larger bugs in the colony will be found here.

Encounters: Tanker, king tanker, burrower or plasma (1d3) in every square hundred metres.

D. FARMING CHAMBERS

The accumulation of rotting slime is greater here than anywhere else in the colony, to the point that the walls and floor, and even parts of the ceiling, are all but invisible, being completely covered with several layers of viscous goo. This chamber is a centre for collecting and cultivating putrid organic matter. As the Arachnid fungal crops need space to grow but are easily tended to by relatively few minion and worker bugs, the farms are almost like an open, empty space by comparison with the crowded, bustling warrens of the other chambers. There are

only a handful of worker bugs in each cave, assisted by minion bugs and other species.

Although commonly perceived as carnivorous, ruthless hunters (which they indeed are), most Arachnid colonies depend on plain fungal matter for more than 75% of their diet. Every day, hundreds of worker bugs gather decomposing matter from all imaginable sources, from rotting wood and leaves brought into the colony by foragers, to organic refuse and the bodies of dead Arachnids. Worker bugs take all of this to these specially prepared chambers, pile them in great mounds there and watch over the resulting heap until it grows the milky fungus that constitutes their primary food intake. When the Arachnids' fungus grows, workers harvest and distribute it among other Arachnids in the main and special chambers.

Besides producing food, the farming chambers have the very important function of providing an atmosphere for the colony, which is particularly useful on worlds with poor air conditions. Some bug colonies literally have no atmosphere except for the foul air inside an Arachnid colony and this comes purely from the farming chambers. All colony tunnel networks are designed to allow the gases produced by these chambers to rise naturally and fill most of the colony naturally. Only some intervention on the part of minion and worker bugs is required to reach the lower chambers of the colony and the few areas that the gases do not naturally spread.

High Alert: Farming chambers on high alert are quite peaceful with no more than a handful of warriors needed for extra protection. For all their importance to a colony, farming chambers are relatively easy to replace if attacked.

Encounters: Worker bugs (8d6 per chamber), minion bugs (10d6 per chamber), warrior bugs (2d6 per chamber).

Medium Alert: The farming chambers become even safer for invaders (if they have managed to penetrate the colony this far without triggering a high alert) and there will rarely be any warriors present.

Encounters: Worker bugs (8d6 per chamber), minion bugs (10d6 per chamber).

Low Alert: On a low alert, the work in farming chambers actually intensifies and food production is almost doubled to fuel the inevitable expansion of the colony.

Encounters: Worker bugs (12d6 per chamber), minion bugs (20d6 per chamber).

G. NURSERY CHAMBERS

These caves are always located close to the breeding pits, among the most heavily defended areas of the colony. Any invader getting this far has been hip deep in blood (be it the Arachnids'



or his own). As with many of the deeper chambers, they are covered with an organic goo which the growing larvae use as food and bedding. A swarm of larvae and bugs of all sub-species and sizes stumble and scurry about the place, under the ministrations of nurser bugs.

Nursery chambers are perhaps the busiest places in an Arachnid colony. Everywhere there are bugs raising other bugs. To facilitate this process, each nursery chamber is usually dedicated to the raising of a single sub-species wherever possible, though it is not uncommon to see hoppers mixed with warriors or blister bugs sharing their chamber with blasters and firefries.

High Alert: A nursery chamber on high alert is as swarmed and frantic as a battlefield, with countless bugs of all sub-species rushing about in all directions and many more warrior bugs positioned to guard the chamber from attack. The nursery chambers will be well-protected and are considered an extremely high value asset for the colony.

Encounters: Nurser bugs (1d6 x 50 per chamber), worker bugs (1d6 x 25 per chamber), warrior bugs (1d6 x 10 per cave), young (1d10 x 100 larvae and young of any sub-species).

Medium Alert: At medium alert status, the activity at the nursery is high and steady as the next generation of bugs is raised.

Encounters: Nurser bugs (1d6 x 50 per chamber), worker bugs (1d6 x 25 per chamber), warrior bugs (1d6 x 5 per cave), young (1d10 x 100 larvae and young of any sub-species).

Low Alert: At low alert status, nursery activity is geared towards expanding the colony with a new generation of bugs, fuelled by the expanded farming activities elsewhere in the colony.

Encounters: Nurser bugs (1d6 x 75 per chamber), worker bugs (1d6 x 50 per chamber), young (1d10 x 150 larvae and young of any sub-species).

H. BREEDING PITS

Found only in the deepest parts of the colony with few connections to the surface world, the breeding pits are one of the Arachnids' greatest assets as even if the entire colony was eradicated by attack, the surviving contents of these chambers could rebuild the colony within weeks.

A mass of yellowish, pestilent organic matter covers these caves entirely. Amidst this layer of slime can be found tens of thousands of sickly-white Arachnid eggs, produced by the many breeder bugs that spend their lives here doing nothing but producing more eggs. The eggs remain dormant until carried to the nurser bugs in the chambers above but get nourishment from the organic mass surrounding them, which functions as a temperature regulator and provides some physical protection as well.

High Alert: When on high alert, the number of warriors in the chamber increases and it is not uncommon to find guard bugs too. These additional guards patrol the entire area of breeding pits from one chamber to the other, while the breeders and workers continue to toil.

Encounters: Breeder bugs (1d6 x 25 per chamber), warrior bugs (1d6 x 10 per chamber), worker bugs (1d6 x 25 per chamber), guard bugs (2d6 per chamber).

Medium and Low Alerts: At these alert levels, work in the breeding pits simply goes on, without any member of the colony exerting itself unnecessarily.

Encounters: Breeder bugs (1d6 x 25 per chamber), warrior bugs (1d6 x 5 per chamber), worker bugs (1d6 x 25 per chamber).

I. BRAIN BUG'S CHAMBER

The brain's chamber deserves the title bug central, filled to the brim with battle-ready Arachnids of all sub-species. The brain bug is usually found here, borne by a retinue of minion bugs

and escorted by a squad of the colony's strongest guard bugs. This is where the Arachnid troops usually rally around their leader and it is from here that Arachnids are organised and sent to the surface to fight. Under normal circumstances, the only non-Arachnids likely to see this chamber are those captured and due to be interrogated by the brain bug.

In larger colonies, this area will usually be occupied by the queen bug. In this case, many brain bugs will be present throughout the colony but will be scattered to more closely monitor the work of their subordinates and provide some measure of 'redundancy' in case of disaster.

High Alert: When the colony is on high alert, this chamber is full of action and activity, with entire swarms of Arachnids, of all types, to protect the brain bug and, if necessary, consult with it for direct orders.

Encounters: Brain bug (1), brain bug's escort (5d10 guard bugs, 10d6 chariot bugs and 10d6 minion bugs), overseer bugs (1d6), worker bugs (10d10).

Medium and Low Alerts: At these levels of activity, the brain bug will be present with its escort, controlling the colony via telepathic contact. There will be less of a guard bug presence.

Encounters: Brain bug (1), brain bug's escort (2d6 guard bugs, 10d6 chariot bugs and 10d6 minion bugs), overseer bugs (1d6), worker bugs (10d10).

J. EXIT TUNNELS

The lower tunnels leading out of the brain bug's chamber form into an underground escape route, through which the brain may leave if the colony is in danger of being destroyed. These passages can be easily collapsed after the brain bug has left.

These tunnels wind for tortuous miles back up to the surface where the evacuating brain bug will attempt to leave undetected. However, other colonies may have exit tunnels that split into multiple escape routes or even tunnels that are extended many miles to the nearest colonies, where the escaping brain bug will simply be subsumed into the existing structure.

Response to Invasion

Once an enemy has been detected within the colony itself, the Alert Status will be shifted to high alert, a process that takes the entire colony just an hour to perform. On a more tactical level, the Arachnids have a sophisticated and effective warning system, using their complex chemical/telepathic language. The bugs emit this warning as soon as a threat is detected, gaining the attention of all other Arachnids within 100 metres or more.

Whenever an intruder is detected inside the colony, the closest patrols are warned chemically as soon as possible, so all converge on the intruders by the quickest route. In the tunnel network, this will usually be 1d4+4 patrols (of 2d4 warrior bugs each), which will surround the intruders in around 1d6 minutes after the warning was sent.

Traps

Arachnids have been known to use rudimentary natural traps since Klendathu, though there are veterans in the Mobile Infantry who claim they knew this long before the actual invasion. The following are two of the traps most commonly used within Arachnid colonies.

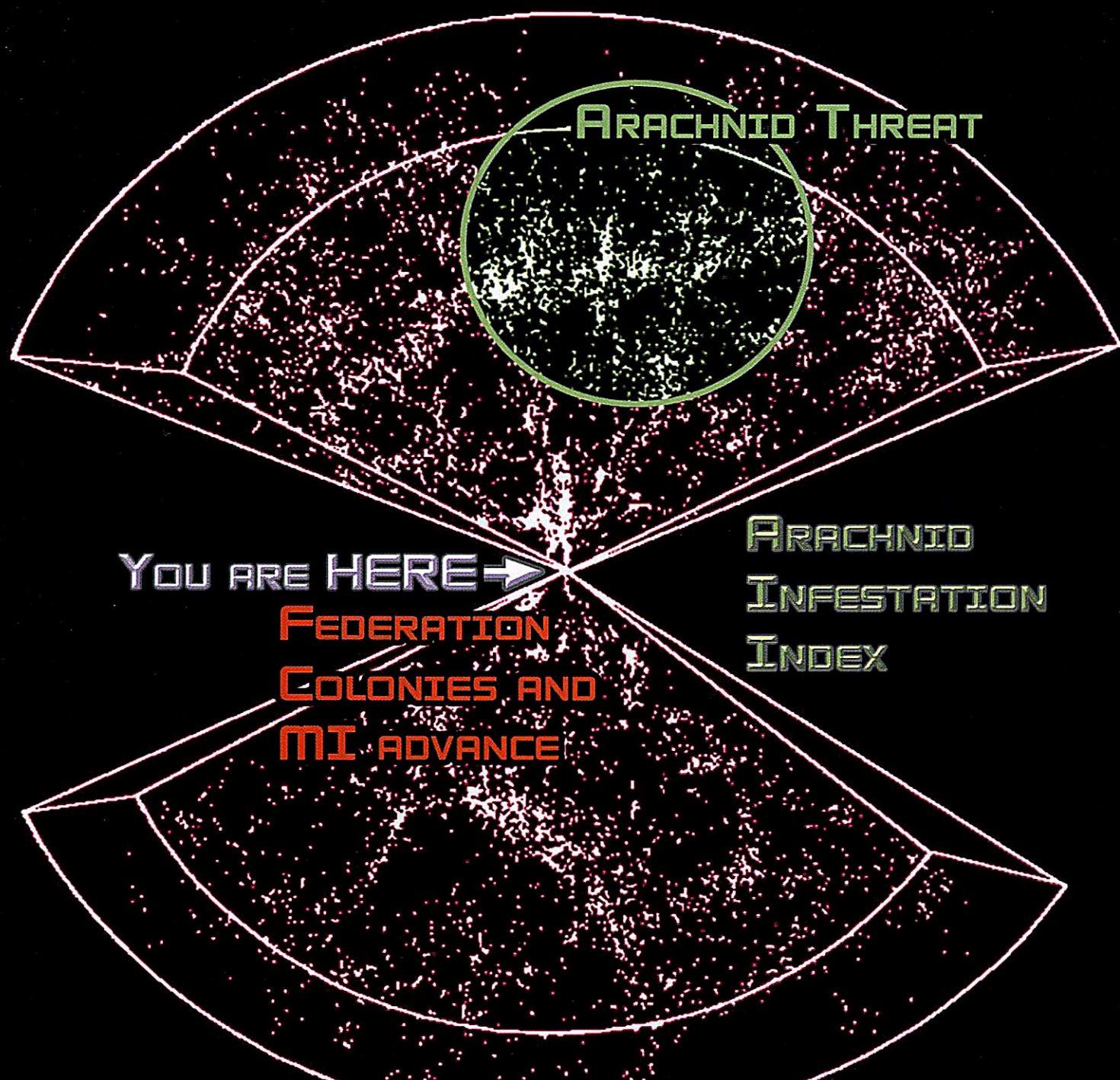
Cave-Ins: Arachnids build some areas of their tunnel network to collapse, so it becomes easier to strategically block certain passages in case of invasion, quake or flood. Usually, these tunnels are built in such a way as to collapse by themselves once a certain load is imposed on them though worker bugs are often dispatched to the area to ensure it happens.

Any creature caught within 10 feet of one of these engineered cave-ins must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 20) or suffer 6d6 points of damage from falling rocks. A successful save negates the damage, as the creature leaps clear of the rubble.

Pits: By the same token, the floors of the tunnel network are often made to be exceptionally weak. Those who tread here will plummet to certain death below, either from the distance of the fall or the waiting jaws of warrior bugs. These weak spots are no danger to Arachnids, as their gait and structure prevents them from focusing their full weight on any of their limbs and many are capable of walking on the walls and ceiling anyway. An invader may spot the weakened floor with a successful Perception check (DC 25).

Any non-Arachnid that steps on a weak spot must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 20) or fall as the floor crumbles around him. The fall is usually 50 to 100 feet deep, dealing damage according to the falling rules (see page 135 in the *Starship Troopers Roleplaying Game*). Even if the creature survives, the fall usually leads to a lower tunnel full of warrior bugs.

OUR UNIVERSE IS TURNING
INTO A BUGNEST!



IMPACT IS IMMINENT
JOIN THE MOBILE INFANTRY

SERVICE GUARANTEES CITIZENSHIP!

KNOW YOUR FOE



WARRIOR BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 550 KG.
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES AND CLAWS.

* Combat Danger Rating



WATER TIGER BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 450 KG.
WEAPONS: POISONED MANDIBLES.

* Combat Danger Rating



RIPPLER BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 450 KG.
WEAPONS: CLAWS AND SPIKE BURST.

* Combat Danger Rating



FIREFLY

CDR*: 2
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 300 KG.
WEAPONS: FIRE BURST

* Combat Danger Rating



GUARD BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 825 KG.
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES AND CLAWS.

* Combat Danger Rating



MANTIS ASSASSIN

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 750 KG.
WEAPONS: MANTIS CLAWS.

* Combat Danger Rating



BURROWER BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 2 METRIC TONS.
WEAPONS: GRINDING MAW.

* Combat Danger Rating



HOPPER BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 485 KG.
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES AND CLAWS.

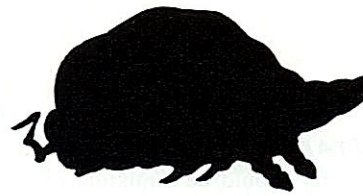
* Combat Danger Rating



BLASTER BUG

CDR*: 2
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 700 KG.
WEAPONS: FIRE BURST

* Combat Danger Rating



BRAIN BUG

CDR*: 1-ULTRA
IQ: 275+
WEIGHT: 1.5 METRIC TONS.
WEAPONS: PSYCHIC POWERS.

* Combat Danger Rating



OVERSEER BUG

CDR*: 1-MAJOR
IQ: 130
WEIGHT: 850 KG.
WEAPONS: MULTIPLE CLAWS, PSYCHIC ATTACKS.

* Combat Danger Rating



KING TANKER

CDR*: 1-MAJOR
IQ: 35
WEIGHT: 5 METRIC TONS.
WEAPONS: CORROSIVE FLAME, CRUSHING CLAWS.

* Combat Danger Rating



INFILTRATOR BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 250 KG.
WEAPONS: CLAWS.

* Combat Danger Rating



MANTIS HUNTER

CDR*: 1
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 750 KG.
WEAPONS: MANTIS CLAWS.

* Combat Danger Rating



CLIFF MITE

CDR*: 4
IQ: 30
WEIGHT: 65 KG.
WEAPONS: MANDIBLES

* Combat Danger Rating



PLASMA BUG

CDR*: 3
IQ: 18
WEIGHT: 7 METRIC TONS.
WEAPONS: HIGH-ENERGY PLASMA DISCHARGE

* Combat Danger Rating



QUEEN BUG

CDR*: 1-ULTRA
IQ: OFF THE SCALE
WEIGHT: 6 METRIC TONS.
WEAPONS: CLAWS, MANDIBLES AND PSYCHIC ATTACKS.

* Combat Danger Rating



TANKER BUG

CDR*: 1
IQ: 35
WEIGHT: 3 1/2 METRIC TONS.
WEAPONS: CORROSIVE FLAME AND CRUSHING CLAWS.

* Combat Danger Rating

NEW MISSIONS

THE TYPICAL *STARSHIP Troopers* campaign centred on the Mobile Infantry should be a mixture of fast-paced action, squad and platoon-based politics or rivalries, and an escalation towards final victory or defeat in the war. This will usually be achieved through the use of set piece scenarios which run through a series of events and encounters to form a 'chapter' in an overall story for your troopers. *The Selvache Incident*, also available from Mongoose Publishing, is a classic example of this kind of scenario.

A trooper's life is not an easy one, however, and the Games Master will find it useful to task his players with quick one-shot missions on a regular basis to aid with character progression as well as put across the feeling that a real war is going on and that troopers have a tough job to do – on a regular basis. The concept of these one-shot missions was first introduced in the main rulebook and they have been a popular idea, especially with Games Masters who do not always have time to prepare lengthy and complex scenarios – instead, they can just pick a suitable mission and go! A new set of one-shot scenarios are presented in this chapter, each focusing on the most terrible of the Federation's enemies – the Arachnids.

Each mission has the following information.

Character Levels: Assuming 4-6 players taking part, this is the range of levels required for characters to have a chance of successfully completing the mission.

Experience Points: The Experience Point award given to each surviving character that successfully completes the mission.

Mission Type: A general category of the role troopers will have to fulfil in this mission.

Mission Duration: The game time in which the mission must be completed, if applicable.

Terrain: The type of terrain the mission is situated in – use this as a

guide when picking a one-shot mission, allowing you to insert it into your current campaign easily.

Special Equipment: Any special equipment granted to the characters to complete the mission, above and beyond their Standard Issue. This can include anything from TOAD Charges and Marauder suits to Pee-wee Atomics and Sprite skimmers.

Available Support: Any support units granted to the characters, such as Slingshot Drop Boats, TAC Fighters and orbital barrages.

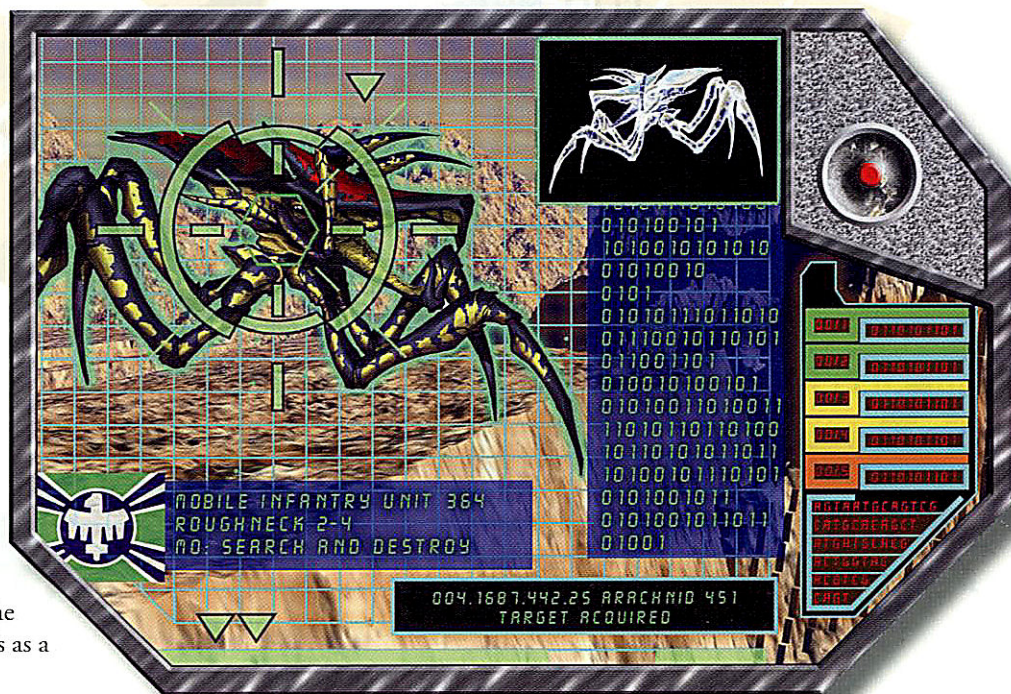
Enemies: A summary of the enemies the players will face.

Mission Briefing: Read out loud to the players, this details their objectives.

Mission Breakdown: For the Games Master, any special notes required to run the mission, including any complications the players may face.

Mission Objectives: The tasks the players are required to fulfil in order to successfully complete the mission and earn the Experience Point award.

In addition, each mission has a map detailing the surroundings.



OPERATION: FARM LIFE [1 OF 2]

Character Levels: 1st or 2nd

Experience Points: 100 experience points

Mission Type: Pick up

Mission Duration: Six hours

Terrain: Plains

Special Equipment: Basic

Available Support: Viking Landing Boat for EVAC

Enemies: Warrior bugs (8)

Mission Briefing: *'This should be simple enough. We got a small group of colonists planetside that are right in the path of a bug swarm. We need you to go in there and pull them out – get them all grouped together for the Vikings to come take them away. But don't forget, this planet ain't part of the UCF, and those ingrates got no love for troopers. Keep an eye out.'*

Mission Breakdown: The Player Characters are dropped off by a Skyhook in a small farming village just west of some low-lying hills. The hills themselves are filled with tunnels, both natural and bug-made.

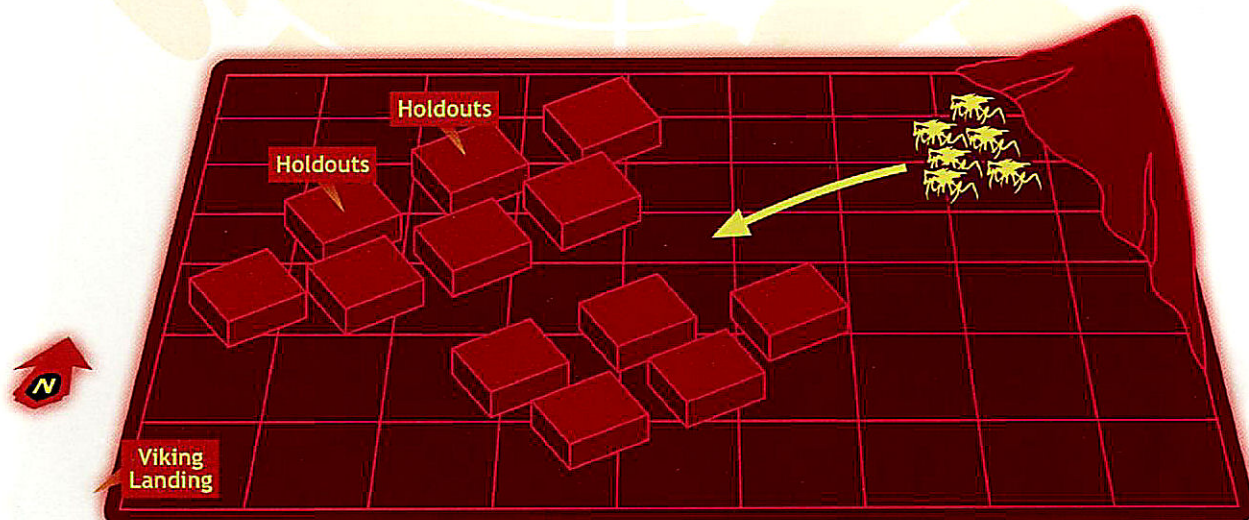
The troopers will receive a chilly reception from the villagers. However, most of them are far more afraid of the bugs than

they are of SICON and will willingly form up for evacuation. Not all of the villagers are quite so accommodating, however, and the Player Characters will be faced with two buildings full of holdouts (marked on the map). Of the 83 people in the village, only 63 line up for evacuation – the other 20 are evenly split between the two holdout buildings. Those in the western holdout building can be talked into joining the evacuation with a Persuasion skill check roll (DC 15). Those in the eastern building cannot be convinced to leave – at least not right away.

The Games Master may place the arrival of the first wave of bugs whenever he wishes, though it should be after the Player Characters have been in the village a while. The warrior bugs come from the east in two waves of four.

After the second wave of warriors is dealt with, one of the holdouts from the eastern holdout building (Samantha Breyer) announces their willingness to evacuate, but not until they have taken care of some last-minute business (see mission briefing for White Lightning). The Player Characters may choose to relay her request, they may attempt to take Breyer and her comrades by force or they may simply leave them behind.

Mission Objectives: Rescue of the civilians is the only real objective to this mission. However, if the Player Characters relay Breyer's request, SICON will approve it, setting the stage for White Lightning. SICON is not terribly concerned about getting every last civilian out of the village – so as long as the majority make it to safety, the Player Characters receive full experience.



OPERATION: WHITE LIGHTNING [2 OF 2]

Character Levels: 1st or 2nd

Experience Points: 300 experience points

Mission Type: Seek and destroy

Mission Duration: One hour

Terrain: Hills

Special Equipment: Basic, MAC Hauler

Available Support: Viking Landing Boat for EVAC

Enemies: Hopper bugs (2), warrior bugs (14)

Mission Briefing: *'I got to hand it to those villagers; they got some spunk. SICON has approved their plan, provided you apes oversee it. Get those bombs they've built into the caves Breyer and her crew have identified and blow the place. Be quick about it, those bugs ain't gonna be too happy with you. And if you see a swarm coming, drop it and get out of there. The Viking won't wait forever.'*

Mission Breakdown: Samantha Breyer and some of the other villagers were unwilling to leave their homes without a fight, and have constructed six immense fertiliser bombs they intended to

use against the bugs. They know of three caves in the nearby hills that are newly-made, and intend to put two bombs into each of them. The only problem, from their perspective, is getting close enough to do it without being killed.

The fertiliser bombs are already loaded onto the villagers' MAC hauler, ready to be deployed. It is now the Player Characters' job to do so, though they will need to take at least one villager with them to point out the target caves.

It is four miles from the village to the hill caves. Halfway there, the MAC hauler will be attacked by a pair of hopper bugs. It does not matter which cave the Player Characters go to first, each is guarded by a handful of warrior bugs, and each is about 200 yards from the next closest cave. The Player Characters must kill the bugs at each of the caves, then move a pair of bombs into the cave itself. The bombs must be prepared to detonate simultaneously (they are already equipped with rudimentary timed detonators). Making sure they all blow at the same time requires a Demolitions skill check (DC 10) for each bomb. Once the bombs are set, it is time to evacuate, and Breyer and her people will go without complaint.

Mission Objectives: For every bomb that detonates, the Player Characters receive 50 experience points (for a possible total of 300). If the bombs all detonate simultaneously, the character(s) who set the bombs receives a special commendation.



OPERATION: MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Character Levels: 1st or 2nd

Experience Points: 200 experience points

Mission Type: Emergency repairs

Mission Duration: One hour

Terrain: Airless craters, low gravity

Special Equipment: Electrical toolkit

Available Support: None

Enemies: Warrior bugs (22)

Mission Briefing: *'Damn Fleet idiots! They've tagged our location as a bug nest, and they're sending TACs in to light us up! Look, [static] but there's nothing else for it. Comms don't work for [static] this magnetic rock, and bugs have damaged the transmitter too. You're closest. Get in there and get the transmitter fixed. Hope you're receiving, can't hear [static] warn you when the TACs are coming and you need to get down. Will keep [static] them to peel off. Good luck.'*

Mission Breakdown: The greatest danger in this mission is friendly fire. Every five minutes, a squad of eight TAC fighters will sweep the area, killing any exposed human or bug. Fortunately, the troopers will receive a one-minute warning

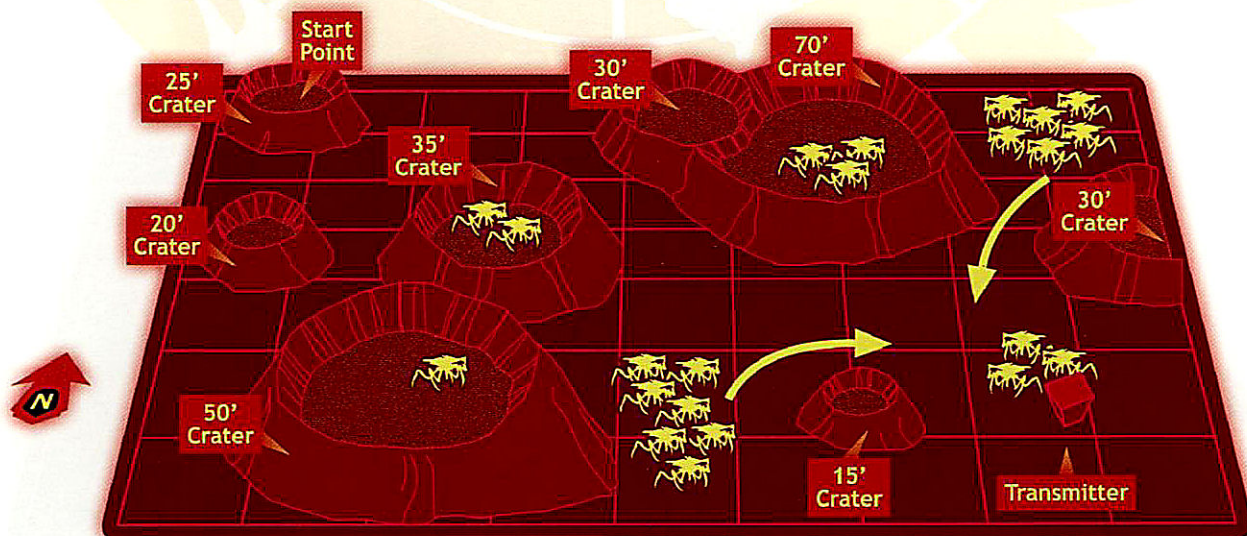
when the TACs are inbound, giving them a chance to seek cover. Safety can only be found in a crater at least 25 feet deep, like the one the Player Characters start the mission in. They must move from crater to crater, evicting the current bug inhabitants, or be obliterated by a barrage of fire from the TACs.

When the troopers reach the transmitter, they must dispatch the three warrior bugs milling around it before getting to work on repairs. The transmitter requires two Repair skill checks (DC 15), taking ten minutes each, which means that at least once during each check, work must be abandoned for the Player Characters to take cover in the nearby crater. Fortunately, there is an electrical toolkit lying abandoned next to the transmitter.

After the first TAC strike following the troopers' arrival at the transmitter, a group of six warrior bugs will charge in from the north. After the third strike, another group of warrior bugs will charge in from the west. As soon as the transmitter is repaired, the TACs will be called off and the mission will end.

Mission Objectives:

- ⊕ If the trooper carrying out the repairs succeeds with two Repair checks in a row, he will receive an additional 25 experience points and a special commendation.
- ⊕ If the troopers kill every bug on the map, they will receive an additional 50 experience points.
- ⊕ Troopers will also be reminded not to damage morale by mentioning this incident to anyone.



OPERATION: SICON CALLING

Character Levels: 2nd or 3rd

Experience Points: 300 experience points

Mission Type: Emergency repairs

Mission Duration: Two hours

Terrain: Mountains

Special Equipment: Electrical toolkit, mechanical toolkit

Available Support: None

Enemies: Warrior bugs (6)

Mission Briefing: *'This ought to be a milk run, apes. One of our listening posts a few clicks away has gone silent, and we need it working again. I know you're troopers, not technicians, but orders are to recon the post and repair the transmitter – or bring back the data core if the transmitter's a lost cause. I won't lie to you, the place was hit by bugs, but intel believes current bug activity in the area is light. Stay alert, stay on the bounce, and you should be fine.'*

Mission Breakdown: This mission is not quite as straightforward as it might seem. It is assumed the troopers will travel to the mission site unmolested by any enemies, but this lucky streak is about to come to an end.

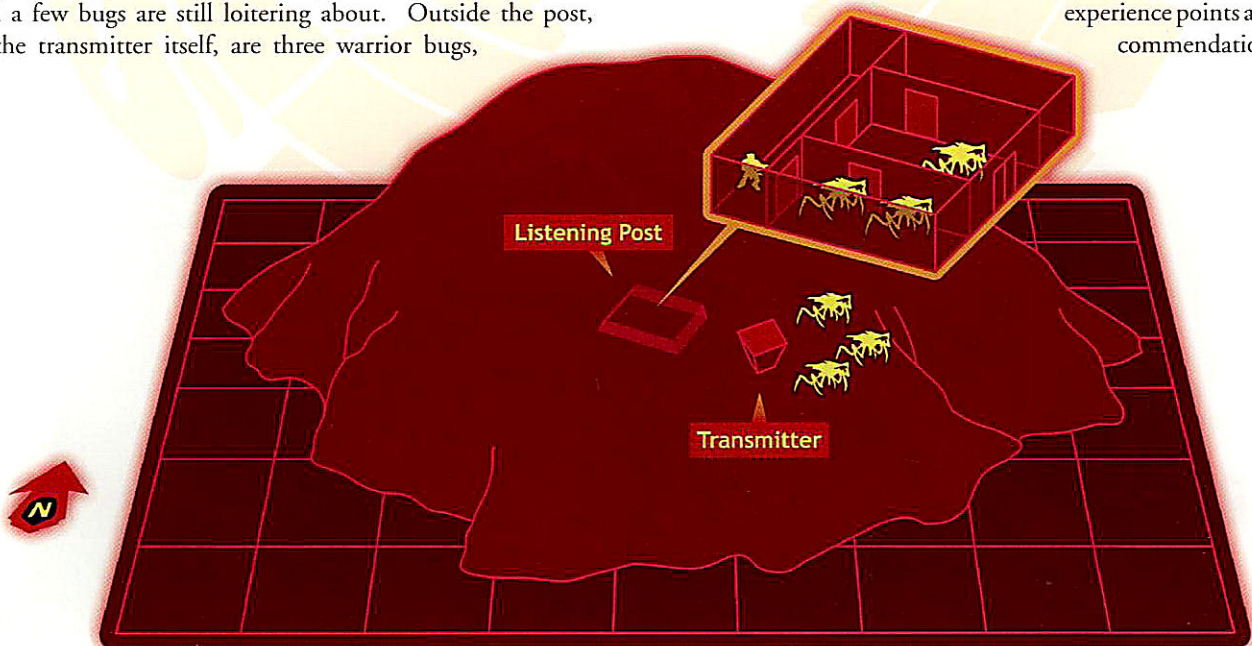
The listening post was hit by a bug attack several hours earlier, and a few bugs are still loitering about. Outside the post, at the transmitter itself, are three warrior bugs,

picking over the remains of the technicians and troopers manning the listening post. Three more bullet-riddled warrior bug corpses lie strewn about. The transmitter itself is badly damaged, having caught a few Morita bursts during the fight. Bringing it back on line will require three successful Repair skill check rolls (DC 15), taking 10 minutes per attempt. If the Player Characters decide against taking this amount of time, and would rather extract the data core and leave the transmitter as it is, they will have to go inside the structure.

One surviving technician is hiding inside the listening post, along with three more warrior bugs who are well on their way to digging through the wall to get to him. The bugs' activity can be heard from outside the post with a Perception skill check (DC 10). If the Player Characters do not go into the listening post, the Games Master may wish to have the warrior bugs inside come out to investigate the noises the troopers are making. The technician is hiding in the same room as the data core. As for the technician, he is unhurt but terrified.

Mission Objectives: So long as something is done about the listening post, SICON will be happy. However, some results are better than others.

- ⊕ If the Player Characters repair the transmitter and leave without investigating the listening post, they will each receive 300 experience points.
- ⊕ If the Player Characters retrieve the data core and the technician, they will only receive 200 experience points.
- ⊕ If the Player Characters repair the transmitter and rescue the technician, they will each receive 350 experience points and a commendation.



OPERATION: SNEAK PEEK

Character Levels: 2nd or 3rd

Experience Points: 250 experience points

Mission Type: Drop, search and report

Mission Duration: Twelve hours

Terrain: Jungle

Special Equipment: Any, plus communications rig and Stryker suits

Available Support: Slingshot for EVAC

Enemies: Plasma bugs (6), warrior bugs (160), worker bugs (30)

Mission Briefing: *'OK, we got every indication of a bunch of bugs massing in the jungles down there, ready to launch an attack on our forces. But that triple canopy is too thick for us to see them from orbit, so I'm sending you apes in to take a closer look. I'm giving you a lot of leeway in choosing equipment, but don't take that as meaning you can have a squad of CHAS to take with you. Stay small, stay quiet. You're down there to look, not fight – and that's why you're going in Stryker suits. Do not engage unless attacked. Clear enough?'*

Mission Breakdown: There are three separate sites SICON believes the bugs may be massing at, and it is the Player Character's responsibility to check out all three. The troopers would be wise to leave the drop site immediately, as five minutes

after they come down, a group of eight warrior bugs will arrive to investigate. The troopers can visit the sites in any order they like, though each requires substantial travel time. Every hour of travel, the Games Master should roll 1d3–1 to determine how many enemy encounters occur that hour. Encounters will be with 1d3 warrior bugs.

The first site is 1.5 miles from the drop site and has only a very sparse bug presence, with four warriors milling about on a small hillock. The second site, 1.5 miles from the first, is where the main action is. In a deep and narrow valley are five plasma bugs, 20 workers and more than 100 warrior bugs – very likely the largest force of bugs the Player Characters have ever seen. They may be tempted to call in the location and ask for evac now, in which case the mission will end, but they have not yet found all the bugs.

The third site features a much smaller force than the second, but with the presence of a plasma bug, it is still noteworthy. In addition to the plasma, some 25 warrior bugs and 10 worker bugs are present here.

Mission Objectives:

- ⊕ A good trooper is thorough. If the Player Characters call for evac after finding the second site, they will receive only half experience for the mission.
- ⊕ A good trooper follows orders. If the Player Characters engage in unnecessary battles, they will only receive half experience, as well as an official reprimand.
- ⊕ If the Player Characters avoid unnecessary combat and scout all three sites, they receive full experience.



OPERATION: CAVALRY

Character Levels: 3rd

Experience Points: 300 experience points

Mission Type: Pick up, assault, rescue

Mission Duration: Thirty minutes

Terrain: Foothills

Special Equipment: One Gecko

Available Support: Viking for EVAC

Enemies: Hopper bugs (8), warrior bugs (60)

Mission Briefing: *'Rousand's Razors are in trouble, men. They were doing a sweep about ten miles from your position and ended up kicking over a bigger anthill than they bargained for. They're pinned down now on top of a hill, and I'm sending you in to get them out. A Viking is dropping a Gecko off about half a mile from your position in a few minutes. Get to it, get to the Razors and get them out of there. Flash me when you're clear and I'll send the Viking back in to get you.'*

Mission Breakdown: So long as the troopers stay on the bounce, the time factor of this mission should not be a problem. They will make it to the Gecko unmolested, and can begin the 2.5 mile trip to the hill the Razors are defending. Halfway there, they will face their first opposition, in the form of six warriors and three hopper bugs closing from either side of the Gecko.

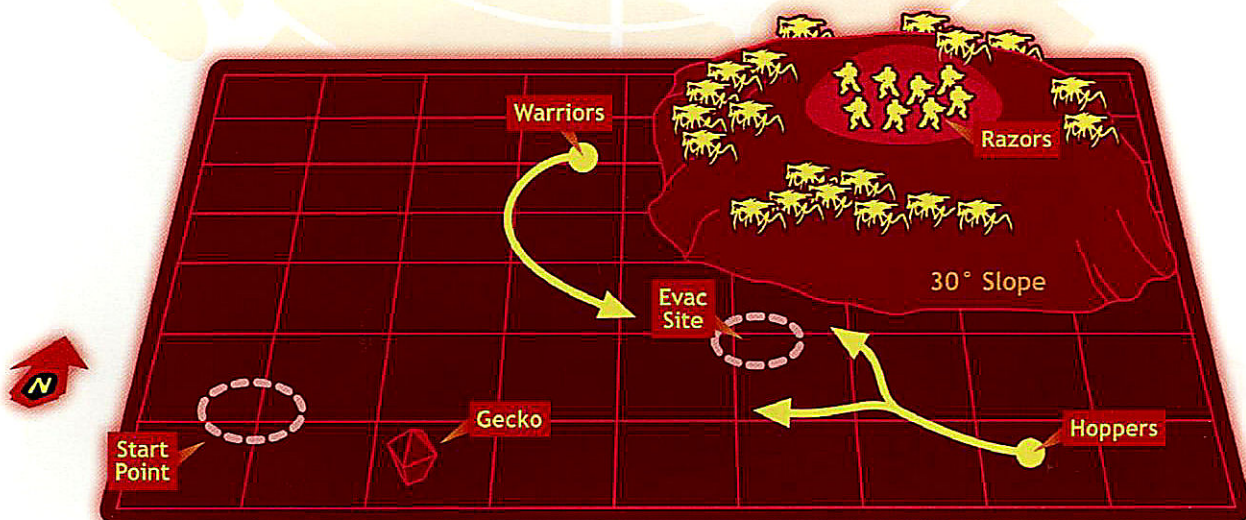
There are eight Razors left (including Lt. Rousand) when the Player Characters arrive at the hill, fending off some 24 warrior bugs. As the Player Characters join the fray, three more hopper bugs arrive to wreak havoc. For every combat round, the Razors will kill 1d4 warriors, but one of the Razors also has a 50% chance to be dragged to his death.

There is a hidden objective to this mission. Lt. Rousand is a psychic with information vital to SICON. Every round a Razor is dragged to his death, the Games Master should randomly determine whether it was Lt. Rousand.

After five rounds of combat, another five warrior bugs arrive from the north. This continues every five rounds until all 60 warrior bugs are killed or the Player Characters manage to load the surviving Razors into the Gecko and flee. Navigating the Gecko up the steep slope of the hill in the midst of a firefight requires two successive Drive skill checks (DC 20).

Mission Objectives:

- ⊕ If Lt. Rousand is killed, the Player Characters receive only 100 experience points and the displeasure of SICON. This will not be manifested overtly, but they can expect to receive unpleasant assignments in the near future.
- ⊕ If Lt. Rousand is rescued, the Player Characters receive full experience.
- ⊕ If somehow the Player Characters rescue all the Razors, they receive an additional 50 experience points each, as well as a special commendation.



OPERATION: EAGLE EYE

Character Levels: 3rd

Experience Points: 200 experience points

Mission Type: Search and report, air strike guidance

Mission Duration: Twelve hours

Terrain: Desert and subterranean

Special Equipment: Basic

Available Support: Orbital barrage

Enemies: Plasma bugs (2), tanker bugs (8), warrior bugs (?), worker bugs (?)

Mission Briefing: *'This here planet has a nasty bug problem, apes, and it's up to you to fix it. There's a mess of caves down there, and one of them has a whole world of bugs in it. We need you to find out which one so we can drop a little surprise on them. You're dropping on the desert, then must move through the caves until you find the right one. Do that, let us know where it is and then get out. Careful not to spend too much time on the surface – it's 155 degrees down there.'*

Mission Breakdown: The Player Characters will spend most of this mission off the map. They will spend 2d4 hours crawling through dark, cramped tunnels (old underground river courses) in search of the bug concentration. Every hour, the Games Master should roll 1d3-1 to determine how many enemy encounters occur that hour. Encounters will be with 1d3 warrior bugs.

The caves grow progressively wider as the Player Characters approach the bug cavern. By the time they actually enter the map, the caves are some 20 feet in diameter. The primary mission here is not to engage the enemy, merely identify the enemy's position for SICON.

As they approach the cavern, the Player Characters will encounter two warrior bugs standing guard in the passageway. Rather than fight, these bugs will attempt to flee back toward the cavern to warn the others. Unless the Player Characters can stop them, the troopers are likely to get a great deal more bug attention than they would like.

The cavern contains eight tanker bugs, two plasma bugs and a horde of warrior and worker bugs. The Player Characters must approach within sight of the cavern entrance to provide exact coordinates for the orbital bombardment. Considering the noise inside the cavern, there is no need to roll for silent movement, but the Player Characters should roll Stealth skill checks to hide.

Uploading the correct coordinates to SICON requires a Computer Use skill check (DC 10). Once this is done, the Player Characters are free to retreat the way they came.

Mission Objectives: So long as the Player Characters upload the correct coordinates to SICON, they will receive full experience points for this mission. If they upload incorrect coordinates, they receive no experience, and will possibly face disciplinary action.



OPERATION: LAVA LAKE

Character Levels: 4th

Experience Points: 200 experience points

Mission Type: Surgical strike

Mission Duration: Two hours

Terrain: Volcanic mountains

Special Equipment: Eight TOAD charges

Available Support: None

Enemies: Plasma bugs (3), warrior bugs (30)

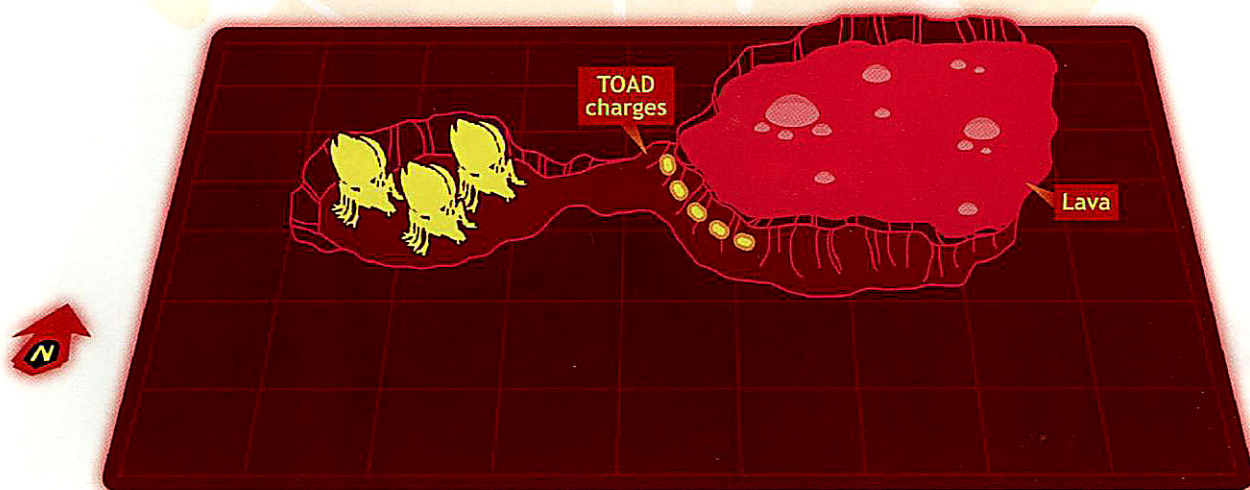
Mission Briefing: *'We got some plasma bugs on the surface making orbit too hot for those fancy boys in Fleet. SICON don't want Fleet's paint getting scuffed or their uniforms rumped, so it's up to us apes to close up shop on the plasma bugs. Three plasmas are set up in a wash near the top of one of those mountains. Bugs are stupid, though, and didn't think about the lake of lava a hundred yards away. Your job is to take these TOADs and find the right place to put them – bring down the side of that lake and remind the bugs that lava is hot!'*

Mission Breakdown: So long as the Player Characters avoid drawing the attention of too many bugs, this should be a simple mission. Their first task is to reach the edge of the lava lake without attracting attention – something they can do automatically so long as they approach from the direction opposite the bugs and do not start firing the moment they see one. Next, they must find the best spot to place the TOAD charges, which requires a Perception check (DC 20).

Laying the charges correctly is trickier. Placing the TOAD charges (minimum four charges to collapse the side of the lava lake) requires a Demolitions skill check roll (DC 10) and five rounds. For every five rounds after the first five, 1d3 warrior bugs will arrive to investigate.

The ensuing flood of lava poses no danger to the Player Characters, so long as they move away before triggering the TOADs. All three plasma bugs will be caught in the lava and killed, but at the Games Master's option, some of the warrior bugs might clamber out of the wash in time to avoid the lava and come after the Player Characters.

Mission Objectives: The destruction of the plasma bugs is the main objective of this mission. However, if all the warrior bugs are killed as well, the Player Characters will each receive an additional 50 experience points.



OPERATION: LOST AND FOUND

Character Levels: 4th

Experience Points: 300 experience points

Mission Type: Search and report, pick up, rescue

Mission Duration: Three hours

Terrain: Mountains

Special Equipment: One Gecko

Available Support: None

Enemies: Warrior bugs (45)

Mission Briefing: *'Well, who wants to drive a Marauder? We got a supply shuttle downed about 30 miles from here with some very valuable cargo aboard – four Marauder suits, to be specific. That electrical storm outside means Fleet won't risk sending another shuttle into the mountains to pick up the gear, so it's down to you apes. Take the Gecko out to the shuttle, suit up in the Marauders and bring 'em back here. They're supposed to be fully powered and warmed, so you shouldn't have any problems. Oh, and get the crew out of there too.'*

Mission Breakdown: The storm raging in the mountains is intense, so much so that finding the crashed shuttle without its GPS location would be all but impossible. Vision is reduced to 50 feet for the duration of the mission. With GPS, the trip to the crash site is easy, though it takes more than an hour. Five warriors are milling around in the rain, but they should not pose a significant problem to the troopers. Once the bugs are

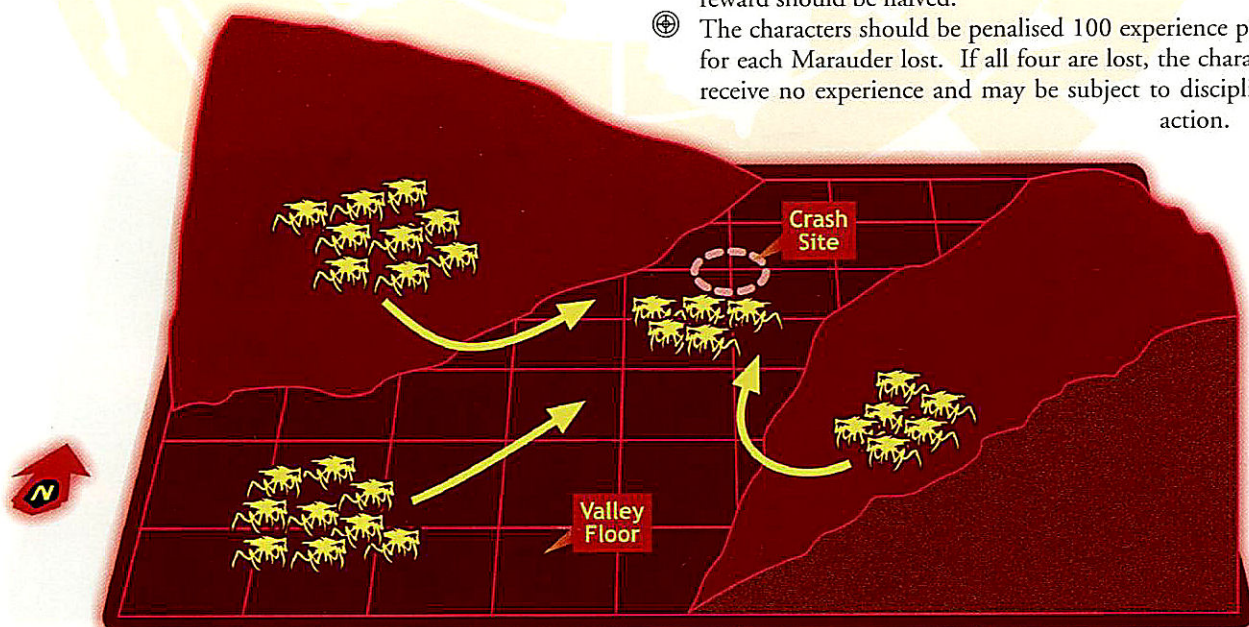
dispensed with, the Player Characters can examine the wreck. The two crewmen are quite dead, but the M-8 Marauders in the cargo bay seem undamaged, and are indeed warmed up. However, they are not fully charged. Each suit has only about an hour of power left in it – not enough to make it back to base. Taking the Gecko back to get more batteries is impossible without exceeding the mission's time frame.

As the troopers leave the crash site, they will be set upon by a two-pronged bug attack, groups of ten warriors coming at them from either side of the valley. With four M-8 Marauders, these bugs should not be much of a challenge, but the fight may reveal a new complication. The Marauders were damaged in the shuttle crash. Any time a weapon system is used, the Games Master should roll 1d8. On a 1, that system shorts out and is useless until it can be repaired.

Once the troopers reach the mouth of the valley, they will come under attack again, this time by a group of 20 warriors moving into the valley. With this second bug attack behind them, the troopers are home free, except for the fact that none of the Marauders has enough power to make it more than two-thirds of the distance back to the base. How they solve this problem depends on the ingenuity of the players.

Mission Objectives:

- ⊕ If all four Marauders make it back to base within the time frame without additional help, the characters should receive an additional 50 experience points.
- ⊕ If the Marauders need help to make it back, but do so within the time frame, the characters receive 300 experience points total.
- ⊕ If the Marauders exceed the time frame, the experience reward should be halved.
- ⊕ The characters should be penalised 100 experience points for each Marauder lost. If all four are lost, the characters receive no experience and may be subject to disciplinary action.



OPERATION: SPECIAL DELIVERY [1 OF 2]

Character Levels: 4th

Experience Points: 300 experience points

Mission Type: Transport guard

Mission Duration: Six hours

Terrain: Hills

Special Equipment: One MAC Hauler and one Sprite reconnaissance skimmer

Available Support: None

Enemies: Tanker bugs (5), warrior bugs (?)

Mission Briefing: *'You'll have to be on the bounce for this one, apes. A supply shuttle bringing weapons and equipment to one of our forward fire bases on this Godforsaken rock got clipped by a plasma bug and ditched 20 miles from the base itself. You'll be taking a hauler and a skimmer out to the crash site, rescue any survivors, load up the cargo and take it to Charlie Base yourself. Looks like the bugs are planning to pay that base a visit before long, so time's a factor.'*

Mission Breakdown: Upon arriving at the crash site, the Player Characters find they are not the only ones interested in it. Several tanker bugs and eight warrior bugs have just arrived, and are milling around the crashed and burning shuttle. One member of the shuttle crew survived the crash, but he will not live long unless the Player Characters drive off or dispatch the bugs.

The easiest path from the crash site to the base is also the most dangerous, featuring two large concentrations of warrior bugs. So long as the Player Characters are willing to deviate from the planned route, they can avoid these large groups of warriors (noticing them in time to avoid them requires a Perception skill check DC 20). If the Player Characters cannot successfully avoid them, the Games Master should consider each swarm to comprise about 20 individual warriors.

Though avoidance of the warriors is the best course of action, the Player Characters cannot range too far afield. The impending attack on the advance base will occur six hours after the troopers begin this mission, and the cargo of weapons is desperately needed.

Mission Objectives: The safe transport of the cargo is the only concern in this mission. The majority of the equipment is exceptionally sturdy, so the Player Characters need not worry about incidental damage during transport. However, if the hauler itself is destroyed, the mission will fail.



OPERATION: CHARLIE BASE [2 OF 2]

Character Levels: 4th

Experience Points: 500 experience points

Mission Type: Keep and hold

Mission Duration: One hour

Terrain: Hills

Special Equipment: One MAC Hauler and one Sprite reconnaissance skimmer, 8 MW-5050s, 2 Yinimina MW-5029 'Scythe' Laser Cannons, one mechanical toolkit (deluxe), one electronic toolkit (deluxe)

Available Support: None

Enemies: Tanker bugs (2), warrior bugs (200)

Mission Briefing: *'Good thing you got to Charlie Base on time. Hope you like the place, because you're staying there for a while. They've already been hit once, and it looks like they're about to be hit again. You're assigned to them for the time being. You'll need to get the new guns installed and shore up the other defences. If it needs doing, do it. We're working on getting you some relief, but for now, hold that base!'*

Mission Breakdown: Half an hour after the Player Characters arrive, Charlie Base will come under a concerted attack by the bugs. How difficult a time this is for the troopers depends entirely upon their efficiency in repairing and upgrading the base's defences. There are 43 other troopers and technicians in the base when the Player Characters arrive, none above the rank of private.

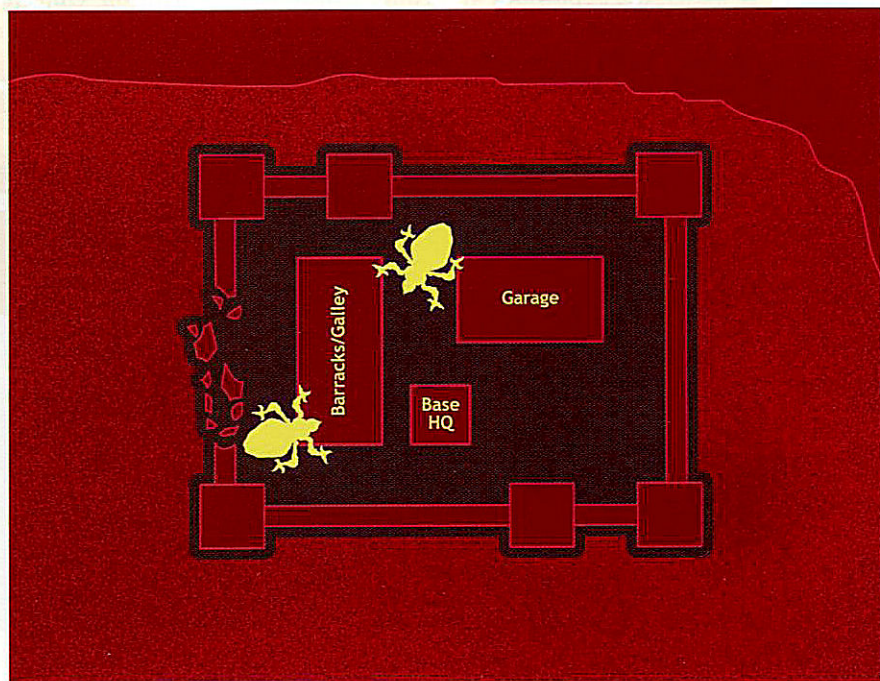
The central towers along the north and south wall currently have no guns, making them ideal spots for the MW-5029 Scythes from the last mission. Additionally, the northeast and northwest towers each have only one functional 5050 – the others will have to be repaired (two Repair skill checks DC 15 for each) or replaced with 5050s from the convoy. Replacing one of the guns requires a Repair skill check DC 20 and 30 minutes, compared to the 20 minutes required for repairing. Installing the MW-5029s likewise requires half an hour of work for each one, as well as a Repair skill check DC 20.

The base's western wall fared worst in the last assault, and is currently being repaired with ferracrete. At the current rate of work, it will not be done for another hour, but a successful Technical (structural) skill check DC 10 will cut that time in half.

When the bugs come, they come in force. The first assault involves groups of three warriors attacking each of the towers. This will continue for three waves. So long as all towers have their guns repaired (and the Player Characters did not lose the cargo from Special Delivery), any tower not manned by a Player Character will destroy all three of its targets every round. If the bugs make it into the base, these same gunners will take down six bugs per round between them. However, one gunner will also die each round for every two bugs that remain in the base at the end of the round.

The second assault is much like the first, except the second of the three waves includes a tanker bug burrowing up inside the base itself, followed by 12 warrior bugs. The third and final assault begins with a second tanker bug burrowing up from beneath the barracks, accompanied by 40 warrior bugs. Once this assault is pushed back, the mission ends.

Mission Objectives: Survival is the objective here. If fewer than ten Non-Player Characters die in the course of this mission, the Player Characters will each earn a commendation. If fewer than half the Non-Player Characters die, the mission is considered a success. If more than half die, even if the bugs are repelled, the mission is considered a rout, and the Player Characters receive only half experience.



OPERATION: CAPTAIN NEMO

Character Levels: 5th

Experience Points: 400 experience points

Mission Type: Assault, nuclear deployment

Mission Duration: Six hours

Terrain: Underwater

Special Equipment: One Poseidon Armoured Water Cruiser, one FedCom SW-404 Javelin missile launcher loaded with M-988M1 Pee-Wee missiles, two Marauder suits

Available Support: None

Enemies: Warrior bugs (?), water tigers (5)

Mission Briefing: *'Some bugs like the surface; some bugs like to be way below ground. We got us a deep nest on this planet, and it's up to you apes to take it out. Here's the funny part – there's a back door. SICON has looked at this place for colonisation in the past, and guess what? There's a cave network that leads right to the bug nest. The trick is you can only get to it from underwater, so dust off those bathing suits, apes. You're taking a dip. Get down there and glass the place with these Pee-Wees.'*

Mission Breakdown: This mission is a study in things not going as planned, and how a simple impediment can cause major problems.

The Player Characters will be provided with a three-dimensional map of the area, showing their route through the cave system in detail. The entry point to the cave network is about 400

feet down, stretching the limits of the Poseidon's endurance. The proposed path to the bug nest (marked on the map) is the safest and quickest way there, a tunnel of sufficient size to accommodate the Poseidon. However, it is blocked off by a cave-in. The tunnel just south of it also leads to the bug nest, but it is too narrow for the Poseidon.

The Player Characters have a third option as well. If they venture into the abyss marked on the map, they will find another cave branch that will take them on a circuitous route to the bug nest. How the Player Characters reach the bug nest is ultimately up to them. They might try using their Marauders to clear the cave-in, may abandon the Poseidon and make their way through the narrows relying on their power armour or may attempt the path through the abyss.

Upon arriving in the bug nest, the Player Characters have very little time to act. If they use the Poseidon, they will be noticed immediately upon surfacing, otherwise they have 1d3 rounds before being spotted. As soon as the bugs realise the humans are there, they will begin attacking, in waves of four warrior bugs every round. Additionally, five water tigers will reveal themselves and attempt to assault the Poseidon and its passengers. Unless the Player Characters fire their Pee-Wees and go, they will soon be overwhelmed.

The detonation of the Pee-Wees will collapse the bug nest entirely, and has a 50% chance per passageway of causing another cave-in, forcing the Player Characters to again find another way around or dig their way through.

Mission Objectives: So long as the bug nest is destroyed, SICON does not care how it is done.



OPERATION: FORTUNATE SON

Character Levels: 5th

Experience Points: 300 experience points

Mission Type: Drop, rescue

Mission Duration: Nine hours

Terrain: Inhospitable volcanic hills

Special Equipment: One Sprite reconnaissance skimmer, one CHAS, one communications set

Available Support: Skyhook for EVAC

Enemies: Hopper bugs (12), plasma bug (1), warrior bugs (36)

Mission Briefing: *'We got ourselves a situation here. Seems a young man named Jericho Morita – yeah, one of those Moritas – got himself shot down on that nasty planet you see below you. Don't ask me how or why, I'm not paid enough to know those things. As you can guess, getting him out of there is our top priority, and you're to do whatever it takes to rescue him. SICON's even assigning you a CHAS for this. We know roughly where he went down, but there's too much atmospheric and electrical interference to pinpoint him, so we're putting you down at our best guess. We think he's got nine hours before his life support runs out, which happens to be the same amount of time you have to rescue him. Now, get to it.'*

Mission Breakdown: This is a hellish place, completely inhospitable to human life, though the bugs seem fine with it. The Player Characters have only nine hours to complete their mission before the life support of their suits runs out and they die on the surface.

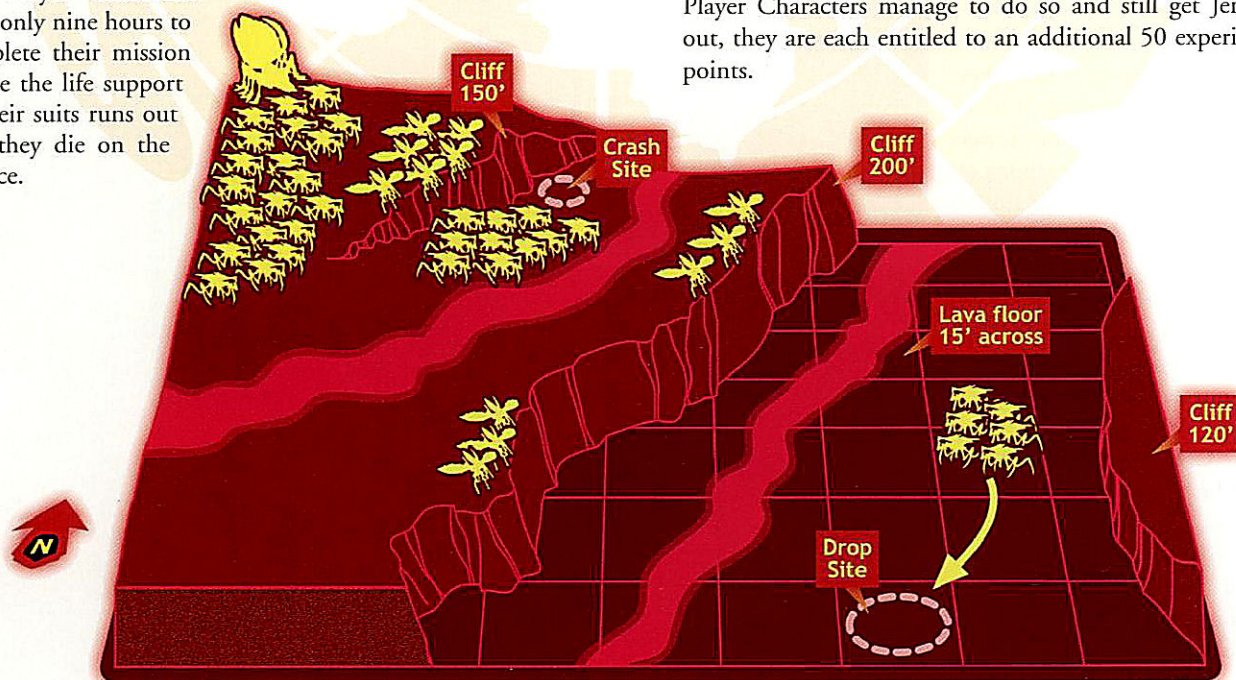
Upon landing, the Player Characters get their only good hint about which direction to go – a plasma bug to the northwest firing at something in orbit. They also get a warm reception almost immediately, in the form of six warrior bugs attacking from the north. To reach the crash site, the Player Characters must cross two lava flows and scale one 200-foot cliff, which is patrolled by six hopper bugs. At the crash site, ten warrior bugs are busily digging away at the skin of Jericho Morita's crashed shuttle. If the Player Characters do not engage the bugs within 10 rounds of arriving, one of them will breach the hull and Jericho will die.

As the Player Characters battle the warriors, six more hopper bugs join the fray from above. Meanwhile, 20 more warrior bugs are marching from the direction of the plasma bug, and will arrive ten minutes after combat begins with the first group of warriors.

Getting Jericho out of his shuttle is not easy. He has an environmental suit inside, which he has not yet donned, as it only has a 30 minute air supply. The hatch to the shuttle was damaged in the crash, and must be jury-rigged to work (Sabotage skill check, DC 20), a task that takes 2d10 rounds. If no one can manage this, the shuttle's hull must be breached.

Mission Objectives:

- ⊕ So long as Jericho Morita is returned alive, SICON is pleased.
- ⊕ If Jericho dies, there will be no experience for this mission, and the Player Characters will be subject to disciplinary action.
- ⊕ Though there were no orders to kill the plasma bug, if the Player Characters manage to do so and still get Jericho out, they are each entitled to an additional 50 experience points.



OPERATION: REPO MAN [1 OF 2]

Character Levels: 5th

Experience Points: 200 experience points

Mission Type: Capture

Mission Duration: One hour

Terrain: Hills

Special Equipment: Any

Available Support: None

Enemies: Control bugs (6), tanker bug (1), warrior bugs (30)

Mission Briefing: *'Got a repo job for you, apes. We lost one of our bases to the bugs, and you're going to go in and get it back. Intel shows fewer than two dozen bugs in the place now, but the strange part is that there's any of them there at all. Bugs don't fortify, and SICON thinks there may be a brain bug somewhere nearby directing the warriors to stay there. Why, we don't know, but it doesn't much matter, because you're going to go in there and kill every last one of them.'*

Mission Breakdown: If the Games Master wishes, this mission can be run as a follow-up to the Special Delivery and Charlie Base missions.

The Player Characters may attack the base from whatever direction they wish, as the bugs certainly will not be manning the base's defences. Their best tactic is likely to use their lizard lines to scale the defence towers and turn the base's weapons on the warrior bugs milling around the centre of the base. However, the guns were used extensively in the failed defence of the base, and each has only two rounds of firing time left to it before it runs out of ammo.

The Games Master should describe the carnage inside the base – dozens of human and bug corpses, red and yellow blood mingling on the ground. As soon as the 20 warriors in the base become aware of the troopers, they will attack with

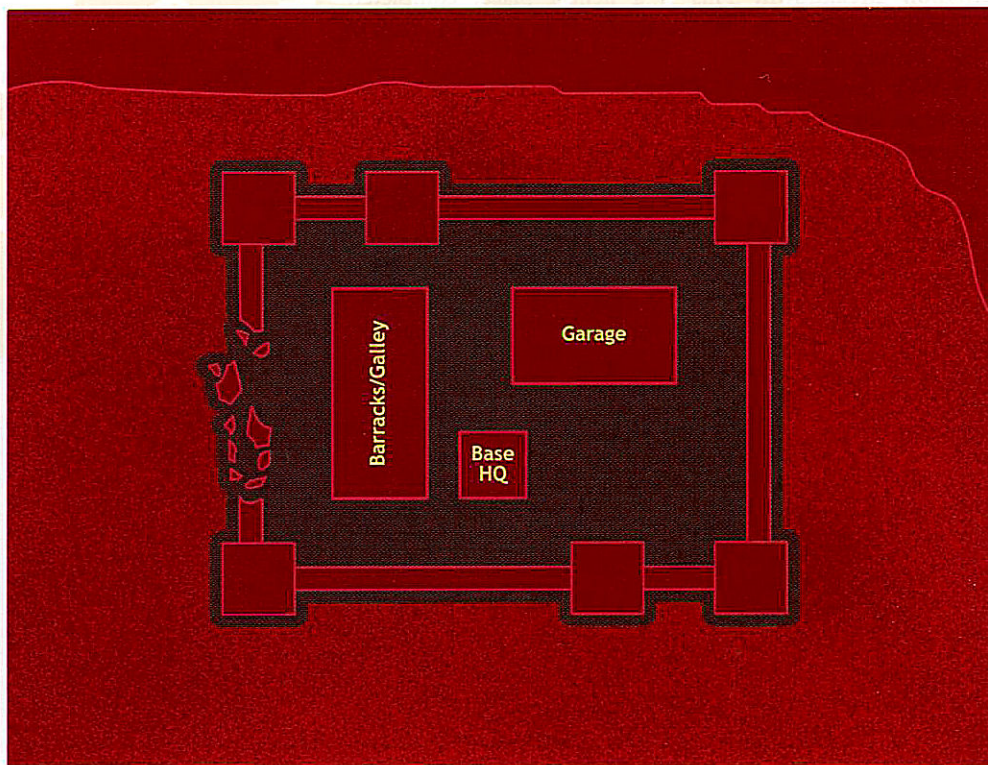
full force. Once the warriors are dealt with, the base seems clear, and the Player Characters can proceed to investigate it. However, as soon as they are on the ground, a tanker bug will burst out of the earth to attack, followed by five warrior bugs. Three rounds later, another five warrior bugs will arrive.

With the obvious threats gone, the Player Characters will have little trouble finding out the base is empty of survivors, though it is not empty of bugs. Six control bugs lurk inside the buildings, waiting for the opportunity to leap onto a prospective host. Any characters enthralled by a control bug will continue acting normally unless discovered.

Though there is no sign of survivors inside the buildings, there are some signs outside. In the disturbed earth around a hole left by a tanker bug are human footprints, that can be noticed with a Perception skill check (DC 15). The footprints seem to belong to several individuals, and indicate they actually climbed down into the tanker bug's hole.

Mission Objectives:

- ⊕ If the Player Characters do not discover the control bugs and do not notice the footprints, the mission ends here with an award of 100 experience points.
- ⊕ If the Player Characters discover the footprints and/or the control bugs, they are immediately assigned the next mission and receive full experience for Repo Man.



OPERATION: RABBIT HOLE [2 OF 2]

Character Levels: 5th

Experience Points: 100 experience points

Mission Type: Rescue, search and report

Mission Duration: Thirty minutes

Terrain: Subterranean

Special Equipment: Anything left over from Repo Man

Available Support: None

Enemies: Tanker bug (2), warrior bugs (11)

Mission Briefing: *'Looks like they might be right. If what you found at the base means what it seems, there just might be a brain bug hiding on this rock. I know you'd rather be on Zegama right now, but your job is to go down into the hole and get our people back. On the bounce, apes, they ain't paying us by the hour.'*

Mission Breakdown: Upon entering the tanker hole, the troopers must navigate their way down a 60-degree incline that runs for almost 100 feet. Keeping one's balance in the tumbled earth is very difficult, requiring an Acrobatics skill check roll (DC 20) – or the use of a lizard line.

At the bottom of the slope wait five warriors, who will attempt to pick off the Player Characters one by one as they descend.

The troopers are then faced with two potential paths to follow. To the south await four warrior bugs. A Perception check (DC 20) will reveal human footsteps on the path heading east. A trooper with the Track feat may make a Survival skill check (DC 9) to determine there are four distinct individuals.

After travelling some 300 yards beneath the ground, the troopers will come to a larger chamber, containing a tanker bug and two more warriors.

Depending on the Games Master's wishes, this can either be a short mission or just the first step in a very long journey. If the Games Master wishes to keep this mission self-contained, he may have the cave-in trap the four enthralled troopers on the same side as the Player Characters. On the other hand, if he wishes to pursue this plotline further, he may simply have the cave-in marked on the map occur after the enthralled troopers have already passed that point, putting them beyond the reach of the Player Characters. If the enthralled troopers do have to fight, the Games Master should consider them all to be 2nd level troopers with standard equipment.

Mission Objectives: SICON will not be pleased if the troopers come back empty-handed, though obviously there is little enough that can be done about a cave-in when there are so many bugs about.

- ⊕ For each enthralled trooper the Player Characters kill, they receive an additional 10 experience points.
- ⊕ For each enthralled trooper the Player Characters bring back alive, they receive an additional 50 experience points.



OPERATION: MERCY KILLING [1 OF 3]

Character Levels: 6th

Experience Points: 400 experience points

Mission Type: Seek and destroy

Mission Duration: One hour

Terrain: Hills

Special Equipment: One FedCom SW-404 Javelin missile launcher loaded with a single M-988M1 Pee-Wee missile, two FedCom SW-402 'Triple GL' Grenade Launchers with any grenades

Available Support: Slingshot for EVAC

Enemies: Hopper bugs (6), warrior bugs (18)

Mission Briefing: *'Damn bugs hit us hard this time, apes. We got a flash from the CHAS attached to Carson's Killers squad, and it ain't good news. The squad's gone, wiped out, and the CHAS has been damaged beyond repair – so bad its deathwish circuit's off-line and it can't self-destruct. The CHAS is holed up in a canyon now, holding the bugs off, but it won't last long, and SICON wants it scrapped before the bugs can get their claws on it. We're dropping you as close as we can with a Slingshot, but you'll have to leg it from there. Once you find the CHAS, burn it with the Pee-Wee and call for evac. On the bounce, apes, the CHAS is falling apart.'*

Mission Breakdown: The Killers' CHAS is in bad shape, missing both legs and one arm. It has wedged itself into a crevice in the canyon and has managed to fend off two waves of bug attacks. However, its internal ammunition is now depleted and it is down to a pair of Morita assault rifles as its only defence.

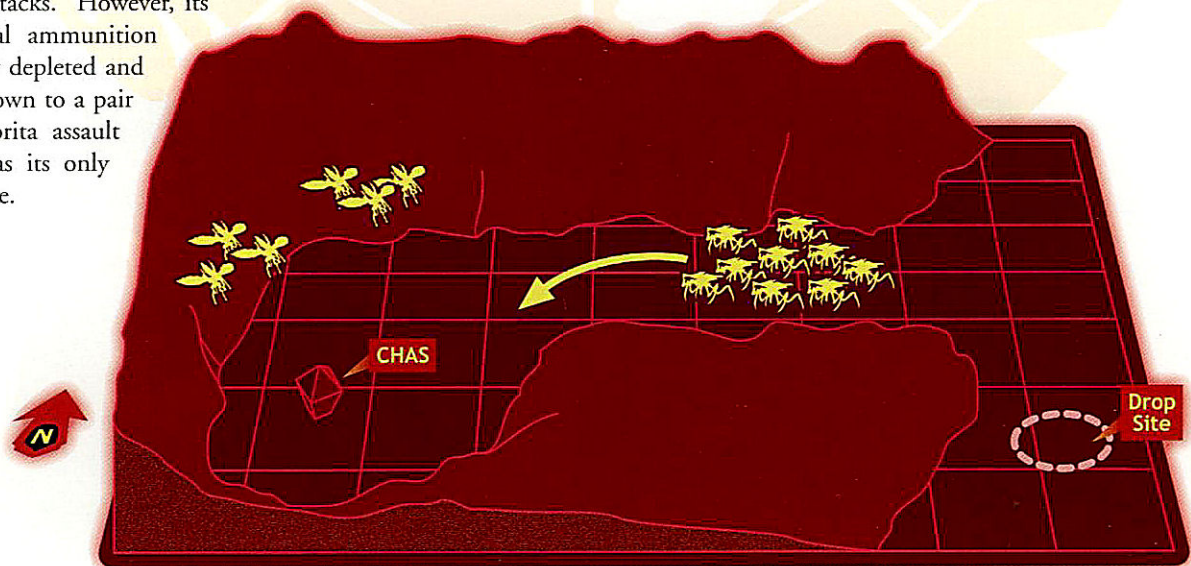
Six hopper bugs wait like vultures on the cliffs above the CHAS, unable to reach it for now. When the Player Characters land, they will be behind six warrior bugs making their way up the canyon toward the CHAS. Ten rounds after the Player Characters enter the canyon, another wave of six warrior bugs will arrive, and six more ten rounds after that. When the hopper bugs see the Player Characters approach, they will launch their own attack.

When the CHAS sees the Player Characters coming, it will call out to them and ask them not to shoot, beckoning them closer with its one remaining arm. Of course, the Player Characters can ignore its calls, hit it with the Pee-Wee and call for evac, but if they venture closer, they will find this mission just became more complicated. The CHAS's communications system has gone off-line, but just before it did, the robot picked up a burst of chatter from some of the Killers it had thought were dead. It believes the troopers are in the next canyon over (about half a mile) and are under attack.

The CHAS cannot be repaired, and any Player Character attempting it should be reminded that monkeying with a CHAS's internal circuitry is strictly forbidden. The only way to end the mission is to destroy it with the Pee-Wee.

Mission Objectives

- ① If the Player Characters destroy the CHAS without speaking to it, they condemn the surviving Killers to death, and should only receive half experience for this mission.
- ② If the Player Characters speak to the CHAS and find out about the Killers (assuming they report that information) they will receive full experience and may move on to Errand of Mercy.



OPERATION: ERRAND OF MERCY [2 OF 3]

Character Levels: 6th**Experience Points:** 400 experience points**Mission Type:** Rescue**Mission Duration:** Two hours**Terrain:** Hills**Special Equipment:** Basic, plus anything left over from Mercy Killing**Available Support:** Slingshot for EVAC**Enemies:** Cliff mites (5), hopper bugs (2), warrior bugs (11)

Mission Briefing: *'Well, that CHAS had good news and bad news. Good news that some of the Killers are alive, bad news that you apes are the ones who have to go in and get them – we have no one else that's up to the mission. No time to drop any more supplies, it's up to you to take it on the heel and toe and get to the Killers' position. Next canyon over and into the shallow caves. Flash us when you have 'em and we'll drop the Slingshot in for your evac. Stay alert – we don't know what's in there.'*

Mission Breakdown: The Player Characters must make their way back out of the canyon where they found the CHAS and travel half a mile on foot to the mouth of the next canyon. As they enter that canyon they face their first challenge – a pair of hopper bugs and four warriors.

The canyon is approximately 200 yards in length, hooking around at the end to the mouth of a small cave network. There are several trooper corpses scattered along the canyon

floor, offering Player Characters a chance to replenish ammo if necessary (how much ammo is available is left to the Games Master's discretion). One corpse has a Voight & Gromann TW-121-f 'Tinderbox' Flamer with three shots left in it. As the Player Characters approach, they will hear the sound of gunfire coming from the caves. The mouth of the cave is large (nearly 15 feet across) and the four warrior bugs just within the cave will come out to attack the troopers as they arrive.

There are three branches in the cave system, and the acoustics of the cave make it very difficult to determine which of the three branches the gunfire is coming from (Perception skill check, DC 20). The branch to the Player Characters' left as they enter contains nothing, the branch directly ahead contains a single trooper (Private Adam) from the Killers taking cover behind some rocks. To the troopers' right is where the immediate action is. Three of the Killers are at the bottom of a 30 foot drop, trying to fend off three attacking warrior bugs (each reduced to 20 hit points by the fighting). The three Killers are 3rd level troopers, with hit points of 7, 12 and 14. They have only basic gear.

Before the Player Characters can reach the three Killers, however, they have another enemy to contend with, a small group of cliff mites lurking on the walls and ceiling of the cave. Once they are dealt with, the Player Characters may advance and mop up any of the warrior bugs that remain. After collecting all four survivors of the Killers squad, the Player Characters can exit the caves and call for evac, which is when things really start to go bad. The Games Master should go straight to the mission briefing for Quality of Mercy.

Mission Objectives: Rescue of the surviving troopers is SICON's primary concern in this mission. For each of the four Killers who dies before the completion of the mission, the Games Master should deduct 100 experience points from the award.



OPERATION: QUALITY OF MERCY [3 OF 3]

Character Levels: 6th

Experience Points: 400 experience points

Mission Type: Evacuation

Mission Duration: Four hours

Terrain: Hills

Special Equipment: Basic, plus anything left over from Mercy Killing and Errand of Mercy

Available Support: Slingshot for EVAC

Enemies: Rippler bugs (2), tankers (8), warrior bugs (?)

Mission Briefing: *'I hate to give you more bad news, but here it is. There's a plasma bug down there we had no reading on, and it took out the Slingshot as it was coming in to pick you up. Even worse, it was the only one we had available on this side of the planet. Now for the good news – there's a Gecko about a mile and a half south of your position. It's taken a pounding, but you should be able to get it running. Fire it up and head further south. I'm calling in a Skyhook to get you, but it won't be able to link up for at least an hour. And now the bad news. We're showing a horde of bugs coming down on your position from the north – mostly warriors and tankers. Keep ahead of them, that's an order. I expect to see every one of your ugly faces back on the ship tonight. On the bounce now, apes!'*

Mission Breakdown: So long as the Player Characters keep moving, they have enough of a lead on the oncoming bugs to

stay ahead of them. However, they are not completely in the clear. A pair of rippler bugs will intercept them halfway to the Gecko, a deadly attack that must be fended off before the mission can continue. Unknown to the Player Characters (and three of the Killers), there is a traitor in their midst. Private Adams is in the thrall of a control bug that is currently quite content to simply go along for the ride.

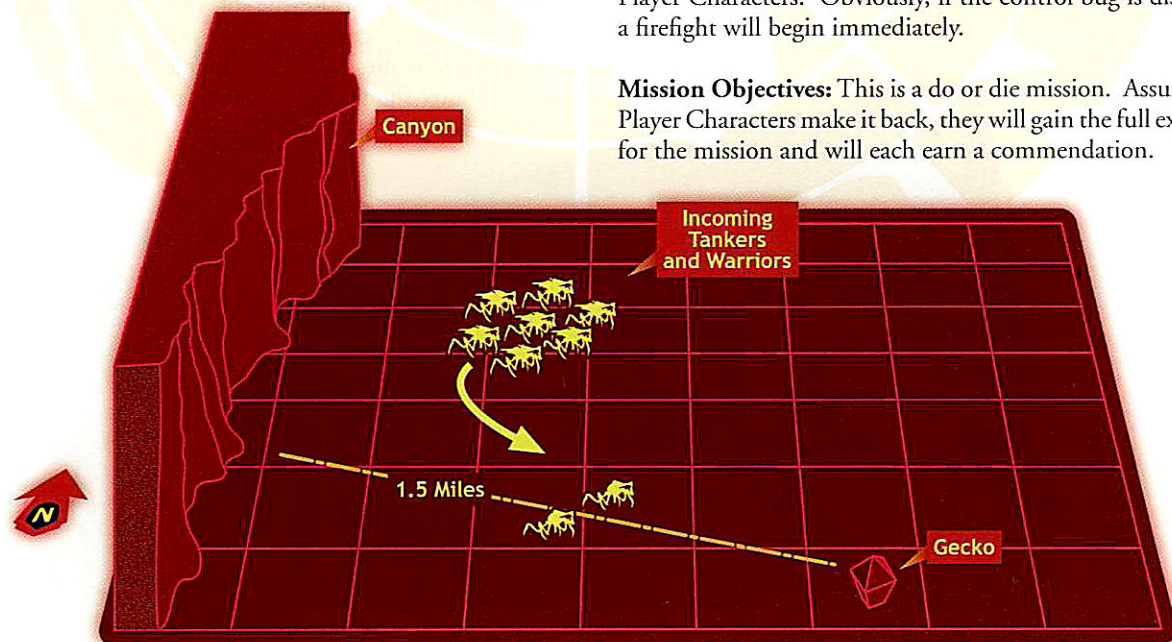
Upon arriving at the Gecko, the Player Characters will see it has indeed taken a pounding, but can be repaired. Fortunately, the weapons systems are still operational. Getting the vehicle running again requires two successful Repair skill checks (DC 15) at ten minutes each. Fortunately, there is a mechanical toolkit on board. After ten minutes of repair work, however, the forerunners of the oncoming bug horde will begin to arrive.

The first arrivals will be warrior bugs, showing up in groups of 2-5 every 1d3 minutes. At 30 minutes, the first tanker bug arrives. At 40 minutes, if the Gecko is not yet operational, the bugs arrive in force, with seven tanker bugs and literally dozens of warriors. Needless to say, if this happens the Player Characters are likely doomed.

Once the Gecko is repaired, the Player Characters are essentially home free. They can stay ahead of the bugs until the Skyhook arrives to pick them up.

The true wild card in this mission is the enthralled Private Adams. If the Games Master wishes to expand this plotline, he may simply have the control bug lie low until the troopers are back at base. On the other hand, the control bug may force Adams to sabotage the repair efforts or even attack the Player Characters. Obviously, if the control bug is discovered, a firefight will begin immediately.

Mission Objectives: This is a do or die mission. Assuming the Player Characters make it back, they will gain the full experience for the mission and will each earn a commendation.



OPERATION: HAMMER

Character Levels: 8th or 9th

Experience Points: 600 experience points

Mission Type: Seek and destroy

Mission Duration: Two hours

Terrain: Jungle

Special Equipment: One CHAS, one FedCom SW-404 Javelin missile launcher loaded with a magazine of M-666C5 HEAT missiles, one FedCom SW-402 'Triple GL' Grenade Launcher with any grenades (per trooper), two Voight & Gromann SW-226-f 'Hel' Heavy Flamers.

Note: Games Masters should also consider allowing reasonable requested equipment for this dangerous mission.

Available Support: Viking Landing Boat for EVAC

Enemies: Plasma bugs (2), tanker bugs (3), warrior bugs (80)

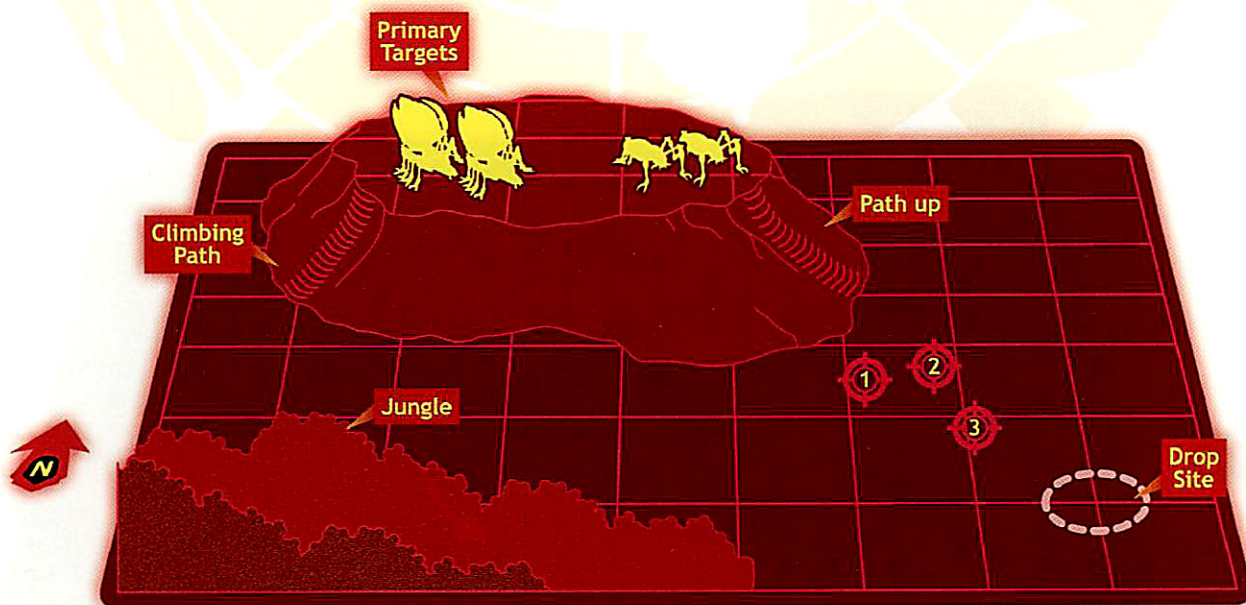
Mission Briefing: *'This is gonna be a rough one, no doubt about it, but we got a chance to take out a whole nest of bugs in one fell swoop. We'd do it with an air strike, but there's two plasmas down there with damn good aim, and SICON's not looking to lose any more ships. We're giving you some heavy artillery for this one,*

including a CHAS, so make the best of it. You're dropping into the jungle, then you'll advance on the enemy position. The objective's simple. If it's a bug, kill it.'

Mission Breakdown: This mission is exactly what it appears to be – an all-out assault on a bug position. From the drop site, the Player Characters advance northwest toward the low-lying plateau where the two plasma bugs and two of the tanker bugs have set up shop. Along the way, they will face three waves of assault by warrior bugs, attacking in bands of 20 and using the dense foliage of the jungle to their best advantage. The third wave of bug attackers includes a tanker bug as well, which will clear much of the foliage with its flame attacks.

The primary means of reaching the top of the plateau is by a steep (30 degree) slope on the eastern side. However, there is also a passable way up on the western side, though it requires climbing rather than walking (Athletics skill check DC 15). If the Player Characters divide their forces, they could launch a feint assault on the eastern side, drawing off the warriors and tankers, while the rest of them climb the western side to take out the plasma bugs.

Mission Objectives: The plasma bugs are the primary concern in this operation. So long as both plasmas are killed, the Player Characters will receive full experience. However, wiping out all bugs in the area is worth an additional 100 experience and a special commendation.



OPERATION: PINCER

Character Levels: 8th or 9th

Experience Points: 400 experience points

Mission Type: Interception

Mission Duration: Ninety minutes

Terrain: Desert

Special Equipment: Any

Available Support: Viking Landing Boat for EVAC

Enemies: Tanker bugs (28), warrior bugs (230)

Mission Briefing: *'I'm sending you apes a present. Fleet blew the hell out of a swarm of bugs just now and the survivors are fleeing south near your position. The TACs have gone back to reload, which gives you the opportunity of a lifetime. Load up with whatever you want and intercept the swarm. Make sure not so much as a damn beetle gets back to the hive. Good luck.'*

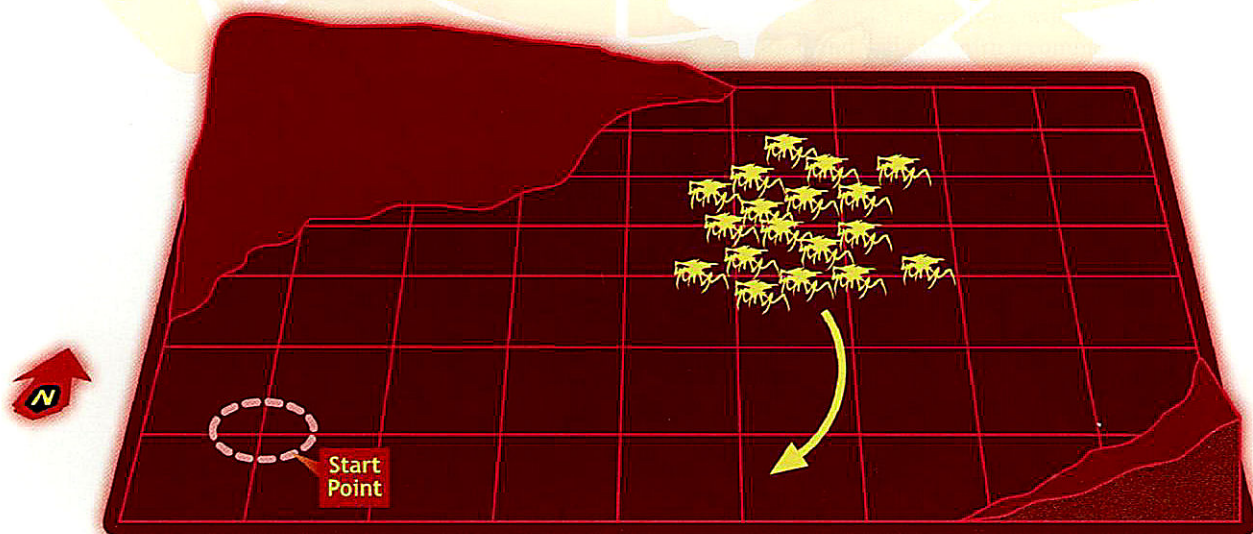
Mission Breakdown: This is the rarest of all missions – a turkey shoot. The Player Characters can choose whatever equipment they wish, taking the opportunity to project overwhelming force on a beaten and wounded swarm of bugs. From the start

of the mission, the Player Characters have one hour to prepare and travel the three miles to the path of the swarm.

All the bugs in the swarm are survivors of a furious Fleet attack and each has been reduced to half its normal hit points. For once, the bugs are not interested in fighting, they are merely attempting to flee back to safety. Only those immediately around the Player Characters will attack, all others will simply keep moving. While this certainly makes the mission safer for the Player Characters, it also makes it more difficult for them to succeed.

In order to succeed completely, the Player Characters will have to kill every single bug. When a bug is more interested in flight than fight, however, that is something of a challenge. When the bugs and Player Characters meet, the leading bugs are only half a mile from their nest hole, and it will only take the warrior bugs 15 rounds to cover that distance (moving as they are at a full run). The Player Characters will have to maximise their firepower and efficiency to keep any bugs from escaping them.

Mission Objectives: SICON wants dead bugs, not excuses. For every 10% of the swarm that makes it past the Player Characters to the nest, the Games Master should deduct 100 experience points from the award. If more than 50% of the swarm makes it to safety, the Player Characters will be officially reprimanded.



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UP TO NOW, THE ARACHNIDS HAVE REMAINED A FACELESS, OMNIPRESENT ENEMY, SPEARHEADED BY MILLIONS OF VICIOUS WARRIOR BUGS AS THEY SPREAD IN WEAVES ACROSS EACH NEW WORLD. FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE SECRETS OF THE ARACHNIDS ARE REVEALED. THIS BOOK WILL SERVE GAMES MASTERS WANTING TO PRESENT THE ARACHNIDS IN THE MOST TERRIFYING WAY POSSIBLE, AS WELL AS PLAYERS SEEKING AN EDGE THAT WILL ALLOW THEIR MOBILE INFANTRY TROOPER TO SURVIVE JUST A LITTLE LONGER IN BATTLE.

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