

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY BOOK 3: IN THE FIELD



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

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INTRODUCTION

This volume presents numerous tickets for mercenary forces of varying size and composition. These can be modified to suit a different force or used as the basis for other adventures. For example, the battalion-level tickets could be scaled down so that a smaller mercenary unit can participate or the Referee can assume some other force is distracting most of the opposition whilst the Travellers take on as much as they can handle. The ticket's specified mission might be carried out by a different force whilst the Travellers provide support or undertake a related action, in which case the focus is on the Travellers and the ticket becomes backstory.

The tickets presented in this volume are intended for use in any *Traveller* campaign and are independent of Charted Space and the Third Imperium universe. Some are standalone incidents, which can be placed in any suitable location, whilst others form part of a wider conflict or confrontation. In addition to the tickets presented here these situations provide a backdrop for further mercenary operations and adventures.

The Referee should keep in mind that a mercenary campaign is not just about performing missions specified by the tickets. It is entirely possible to have standard *Traveller* adventures during a ticket or between tickets. These may be related to the ticket's mission, or caused by it, but it may be that the mercenaries just stumble into a situation unrelated to their mission and have to deal with it.

UWPs are not presented for the worlds upon which these tickets are set. This is deliberate, allowing the Referee to place the adventure on any suitable planet. Minor tweaks should not affect the course of the ticket – having to wear a filter mask because of atmospheric taint or bouncing a little because the gravity is low are not major factors. However, the Referee may have to factor in the lethality of an environment or any special conditions that may apply.

The mercenaries may have to travel between planets to fulfil their contracts. They need to pay salaries and maintenance costs during the weeks in jump but it is assumed that transportation is arranged and paid for by the client. Long periods spent in cramped conditions aboard starships can be detrimental to efficiency and the ability of the mercenaries to get along with one another, so Travellers should be mindful of the need to provide suitable rest and recuperation for the force once they reach their destination. Clients might want the mercenaries to go straight into action at full efficiency but often they can have one or the other – immediate action or effective action. Making the client understand that is part of the mercenary experience.

There are also many possibilities for adventure during the setup and break-down periods of a ticket. The Travellers may have to negotiate with the local authorities to get their personnel out of the drunk-tank or try to find a source for some vital component that has somehow been left behind. The arrival of the mercenary force might be misconstrued by a local faction, triggering completely unexpected events. The mercenaries might be attacked by insurgents and annoyed by protestors, who might be upset at them in particular or something only vaguely related to the ticket.

Overall, a mercenary campaign should not be about dashing from one firefight to the next. Nor should the Travellers be permitted to resolve tickets with a couple of dice rolls, pocketing the fee and moving on. A mercenary campaign is about having adventures, not rushing through missions and collecting loot drops. A ticket, therefore, is a ticket to adventure and should be used as fully as possible by the Referee.



USING TICKETS

A ticket is essentially a job offer. It is the beginning of an adventure that might go in an entirely unexpected direction. In most cases the job will be more or less as presented, with a few complications, and can be played out as normal. Some incidents along the way might spark mini-adventures and the situation might well develop far from what the mercenaries might expect after having read the ticket.

Or it might not. The Referee can use tickets in a variety of ways, not all of them invitations to carry out the mission as described. The Travellers might have an adventure on the way to the ticket's specified location and then find the job itself can be resolved with a couple of CEI checks. On other occasions the situation might have changed completely by the time the mercenaries arrive and the adventure might revolve around dealing with this new set of circumstances or just trying to get out alive.

How the Referee uses tickets depends on the type of adventure desired. It would be possible to set out every detail and play through in the manner of a conventional adventure or even to run a skirmish game with miniatures. At the other end of the scale the active parts of the ticket might be abstracted. This should not be commonplace but there are times when the Travellers engage in a routine mission that needs little detail. A ticket might even be used as an adventure hook for something quite different. This might be dealing with an inquiry into what the Travellers' force did during a mission or incidents occurring before, during or after a mission. An adventure might happen to part of the force during the ticket.

The tickets presented in this book are not just situations to be played out; they are intended as examples of how a mercenary ticket can be creatively used by the Referee. The Travellers will not know when they accept the contract exactly what kind of adventure they will have. For this reason, and also for clarity, a standard format is used for all tickets. Even when the ticket is intended to lead to a straight mercenary operation, some details will vary depending on the complexity of the

situation. The parts of the ticket intended to be viewed by the Travellers are always presented in the manner described in *Book 2*. The remainder of the information is for the Referee. In some cases it is quite detailed; in others a few lines will suffice.

Note that the four elements of a ticket –Type, Background, Objectives and Details – are presented in text form rather than neat bullet points. This is deliberate; the ticket is what the Travellers see in-game, not a set of game mechanics and criteria. If necessary, game-mechanic information can be placed in the Referee's section of the ticket along with a fuller description of the situation, opposing forces and so forth. The upshot of this is that the Travellers must deduce the precise objectives they need to fulfil in order to have a high Ticket Success Indicator (TSI). Those who learn to do so will generally do better in the mercenary marketplace than those who trundle into action with their brains on standby.

The format is as follows:

Header: This summarises the most important information the Travellers need to decide whether to inquire further.

Description: This section of text – typically no more than three or four paragraphs long – which contains the ticket type, background, objectives and details in a summary form.

Referee's Summary: The remainder of the information is for the Referee only.

Revisiting the example ticket in *Book 2*, these elements are highlighted below:

Striker, Platoon. Cr175000. Success-only.

The ticket header contains enough information for the Travellers to decide if they are interested. The commanders of a battalion-sized unit or one specialising in missions other than Striker, will move on to other contract offers. Those in the right general area can obtain further information.

Decentralised Mineral Extraction Incorporated (DMEI) has small facilities on multiple worlds. Many of these are frontier systems with little effective law enforcement. DMEI personnel have recently begun suffering harassment and even violence from unlicensed competitors who exploit sites already in use by the corporation.

This paragraph is all background. The situation looks legitimate, which may be important to the Travellers. Some mercenary units will take any job if the money is right. Others prefer to be on the 'right' side – or at least to take jobs unlikely to trigger an inquiry or generate a great deal of bad press. Of course there is no guarantee that DMEI is telling the whole truth or even part of the truth, with this information.

DMEI is offering Cr175000 for a platoon-sized unit to make a strike against one of the larger independent facilities. Loss of life is to be kept to a minimum but the facility is to be occupied and its extraction and processing equipment destroyed. The intention is to underline DMEI's legal position that it has exclusive rights to its registered sites and will not tolerate interference or violence towards its personnel.

This paragraph outlines the objectives of the contract without reducing them to TSI points. The Travellers ought to be able to figure out that they must trash the extraction and processing equipment to consider the operation a success. Minimising loss of life is another obvious TSI objective. They may also infer that the reaction of the independents to the operation will be taken as an indicator of success. The Travellers may decide to take actions that underline their client's position, making it more likely this criterion will be met.

The target site is known to be protected by an ad-hoc security contingent numbering around 20 personnel equipped with small arms. Total personnel complement is around 200, of whom an unknown number are armed.

These are details, which may or may not be entirely accurate. If the Travellers have time and want to engage in reconnaissance and intelligence operations they can obtain a much more detailed picture of the likely opposition.

REFEREE'S SUMMARY

The situation is more or less as presented. Appeals have been made to law enforcement agencies to protect the company's rights, and have not produced significant results. The ticket appears (and is) legal and above-board. The Ticket Success Indicator criteria are easy to deduce – take possession of the site, wreck the machines and try not to kill anyone unnecessarily. Although not specified as such, the client is primarily interested in sending a message, and will base the degree of success it perceives by whether the rivals back off, and how much bad publicity arises from the matter. Mercenaries who realise this can tailor their actions towards these unspoken goals and do so without triggering a war between the corporation and its rivals. This is a typical 'corporate strike' mission that is all about business, not conflict.

This is one example of the Referee's information section. In some cases this is all that is needed; in others it will be necessary to specify much more about the situation, the operation and the events that occur during and around it. The Referee's section will often be much longer than the Travellers' part of the ticket and its exact contents can vary enormously.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Rather than repeat the same information about the conflicts and situations featured in this book, it is compiled and presented here for the use of the Referee. Some of this data might be publicly available if the Travellers think to look but there is no guarantee that what is in the public databases is free from errors or deliberate falsehoods. Intelligence work by the Travellers – or on their behalf – might uncover more reliable facts.

Some mercenaries simply do not care about the reasons for a conflict or the motivations of those involved. They fight, they get paid, they move on to some other petty squabble. Usually this is sufficient but mercenaries who do not do their homework sometimes get unpleasant surprises. These can include unreliable clients, third parties intent on exploiting the disruption caused by the conflict, insurgencies breaking out in the rear where the mercenaries lightly-guarded base is located, governmental collapse, intervention by a peacekeeping force and all manner of other complications.



THE MERRAIN CONFRONTATION

Merrain is a habitable world with multiple TL7 states that have gradually coalesced into two main power blocs and three smaller ones, with the remaining independent states dominated by the two super-alliances. The Merrain Federation claims to be a planetary government, often referring to those that have not accepted its sovereignty as rebels. It is becoming a single state under this government, with member nations gradually accepting more and more unifying measures. Unfortunately, the Federation seems to have fallen for its own propaganda and has gone from wooing other states to join its governmental framework to coercing them with economic warfare or outright conquest. It is in the process of becoming a very nasty organisation whilst retaining its democratic nature. The majority of the population support the unification of their world and have been induced by years of propaganda to view the 'rebels' as a threat to peace and stability.

The primary opponent of the Merrain Federation is a much looser alliance formed mainly out of fear of the Federation's growing military power. Styling itself the Lennent Treaty States, or LTS, this alliance suffers from internal divisions and an inability to form a coherent strategy. Whichever of the member states feels most threatened tends to push for action, whilst the others attend to their own concerns.

The other three powers are the Shelter Islands Alliance, the League of Eder and the Minnent. Minnent is the name of one of the world's great rivers and has become the title of a league of three small states in its drainage basin. The Minnent is primarily an economic alliance, whose forces are small and equipped mainly for internal security. Thus far it has been little troubled by the clashes elsewhere but it is only a matter of time before its three small states become part of the Merrain Federation... one way or another.

The League of Eder has at times been an ally of the Merrain Federation and the Lennent Treaty States but usually tries to play them off against one another. It is the oldest alliance on Merrain and seems stable. Its armed forces have a long tradition of working well together, to the point where the much larger LTS is an easier target for conquest.

The Shelter Islands are distant from the mainland states and generally untroubled by the situation there. An alliance of minor states, their involvement in the situation to date has been little more than a token security presence to protect maritime shipping assets.

Conflict between the major alliances would be very bloody and neither seems willing to commit to war. Instead a 'cold war' situation exists in which mercenaries are used as deniable assets to harass or disrupt the activities of the opposition. The Merrain Federation has undertaken wars of conquest against smaller states, usually on the pretext of dealing with a threat or responding to aggression. The pattern of vilifying the next target with propaganda and provoking a war that can be easily won is well established but in recent years the LTS states have begun supporting the likely victims with economic measures and toughening them with mercenary forces. This proxy defence is expensive, however, and tends to proceed in fits and starts.

PORT REIKIR

Port Reikir is a corporate-run spaceport functioning as an independent city-state. It has a modest TL12 industrial base that dominates the planetary economy by producing goods the local TL8 economy cannot rival. To do so the port's owning consortium brings in large quantities of raw materials from offworld, buying locally only when necessary. The world government sees Port Reikir as an economic threat, diverting revenue that would otherwise be generated by local businesses.

The world's actual starport is a rather modest affair built by the world government to TL8 standards and cannot compete in terms of efficiency or comfort with Port Reikir. As a result Reikir has drawn off most of the shipping coming in and out of the world, further reducing the revenue available to the world government. An attempt has been made to upgrade the port but it remains a poor second to the well-appointed facilities at Reikir.

Port Reikir has its own problems, however. It is constructed on an artificial island in the delta of a major river, the Gugther, and connected to the mainland by a pair of long bridges/causeways. Beyond the delta, the major rail and road links run through a cleared area of what used to be rainforest and the forest apparently objects to remaining cleared. Work is constantly needed to keep the links open and there are those who favour abandoning them entirely. Most of the planetside traffic into the port comes in by sea, and grav vehicles are available to maintain overland links, if necessary.

The shipping channel through the delta was once a natural deep-water passage but the constant shifting of sediment has moved the navigable channel several kilometres. Regular dredging is necessary to allow large maritime vessels to enter the docks at Port Reikir. These are common, taking goods to market in the cities of the world, but often arrive empty. The change in displacement caused by loading has caused the occasional freighter to ground itself in the channel, requiring a refloating operation before the port can continue to operate.

Much of the activity at Port Reikir consists of goods arriving by starship, offloading into warehouses serving the port's factories and eventually being transformed into consumer goods which are shipped out by sea. The port is obviously wealthy, in contrast to the seaports its goods travel to. These are mostly in decline, except where the Reikir consortium has invested in improvements. In turn this has created an increasing stake in local maritime trade. The planet's government is deeply unhappy about the situation and there are activist groups determined to 'stop Reikir buying our planet'. Some of these groups have made threats or carried out acts of violence against the port and its personnel, and the government does not seem inclined to act against them.

THE WAR ON WAR

The 'Cease Warmongering!' movement, often known as 'CW!', began as a peaceful opposition to the 'warmongering' of planetary governments. Whether or not the conflicts were justified or, as CW! claimed, they were the product of egotistical politicians and greedy corporations is a matter of opinion. What is known is that the CW! movement changed in character over time and eventually became a violent insurgency. This happened by way of the 'war on war' declared by CW!'s leaders. Their stated intent was to disrupt all military operations and preparations by peaceful means. Typically this was limited to protesting outside government buildings and military bases, at least in the beginning.

Perhaps inevitably, but certainly ironically, the 'war on war' escalated into violence. Protests continued but sabotage of military and government vehicles eventually led to loss of life. The more radical members of CW! began to attack corporations involved in arms manufacture or related industries. Soft targets like corporate personnel were favoured over trying to attack military facilities, drawing an ever harsher response from the authorities.

CW! was declared an illegal organisation on multiple worlds and most of its adherents began distancing themselves from it. What was left was a hard core of activists and militants, some of whom were willing to resist attempts to arrest their leaders. Once the shooting started, it escalated rapidly and soon an active insurgency had broken out on several worlds. The original intent of the organisation was forgotten long ago. Rather than opposing warmongering, CW! now fights to bring down the governments that have offended it. One aspect of the organisation's original moral stance has resurfaced, however. Terrorism is unacceptable to CW!, to the point where those who go too far may be handed over to the authorities. Whether this is to gain public sympathy or a genuine ethical stance is unclear.

The insurgency has grown large, although communications between its branches on various worlds remain intermittent. In urban areas the usual methods involve emplaced bombs, snipers and raids on governmental installations. These are carried out with great restraint and indiscriminate killings are considered unacceptable. Indeed, the organisation has at times informed the authorities about its own emplaced explosives, throwing away all preparation for an operation in order to avoid civilian casualties. Again, it is not clear if this is a propaganda gambit or not.

In rural areas, the insurgency operates as a large and poorly equipped militia. It is capable of taking over a region for a time and has made itself popular by destroying government facilities such as tax offices and police stations without harming anyone. Whilst the peaceful origins of the movement have been long forgotten, its antipathy for the governments it was formed to oppose is stronger than ever and it has become a direct threat to their existence. Despite being a violent insurgency, which causes a great deal of damage and disruption to the lives of ordinary people, CW! continues to garner support among the population. Each clash with government forces is portrayed as yet another example of the sort of warmongering the organisation was created to stop. Far from winding down, the 'war on war' continues to escalate and may eventually explode into full-scale civil war.

UNITED VS DIVERSIFIED

Many years ago, Suntori Heavy Industries was a medium-sized business group operating in the heavy industry sector. It operated small shipyards, mining installations and alloy-making facilities on a number of worlds. The firm expanded quickly during a boom period and moved into other sectors. A series of mergers and buyouts turned the firm into a diversified corporation operating under the name The Suntori Group. When the boom ended, The Suntori Group found itself in financial trouble and attempted to divest itself of the worst loss-making assets.

A hurried restructuring created two firms, both claiming ownership of the Suntori name and of some facilities and licenses. Suntori Unified returned to the firm's original areas of activity and consolidated its holdings, whilst Suntori Diversified made a risky grab for a wide range of assets. Both are now stable and capable of expansion,

which has resulted in friction. Disputes over ownership of everything from the company name to its assets on remote worlds began as legal bids but have recently spilled over into small-scale mercenary operations.

To further complicate the situation, some assets were nationalised by local governments in a questionable manner. Attempts to regain control of these assets or at least to obtain a fair buyout, have largely been ignored. Both Suntori groups claim ownership of these assets, and have launched mercenary operations to recapture them or remove their valuable equipment. Mostly these operations have been aimed at outsiders but upon occasion the two firms have clashed directly. Suntori Unified particularly resents any intrusion into its core market sector and has attempted to claim any Suntori assets operating in this field must belong to it. Diversified rejects this position and has expanded its security element in case it needs to prove the point. It seems likely that a full-scale trade war will break out in the near future.



TEAM OR SECTION TICKETS



The following tickets are intended for a small group of mercenaries, typically no more than a section-equivalent. Such small groups are often informally organised and referred to as teams rather than by a military unit designation.

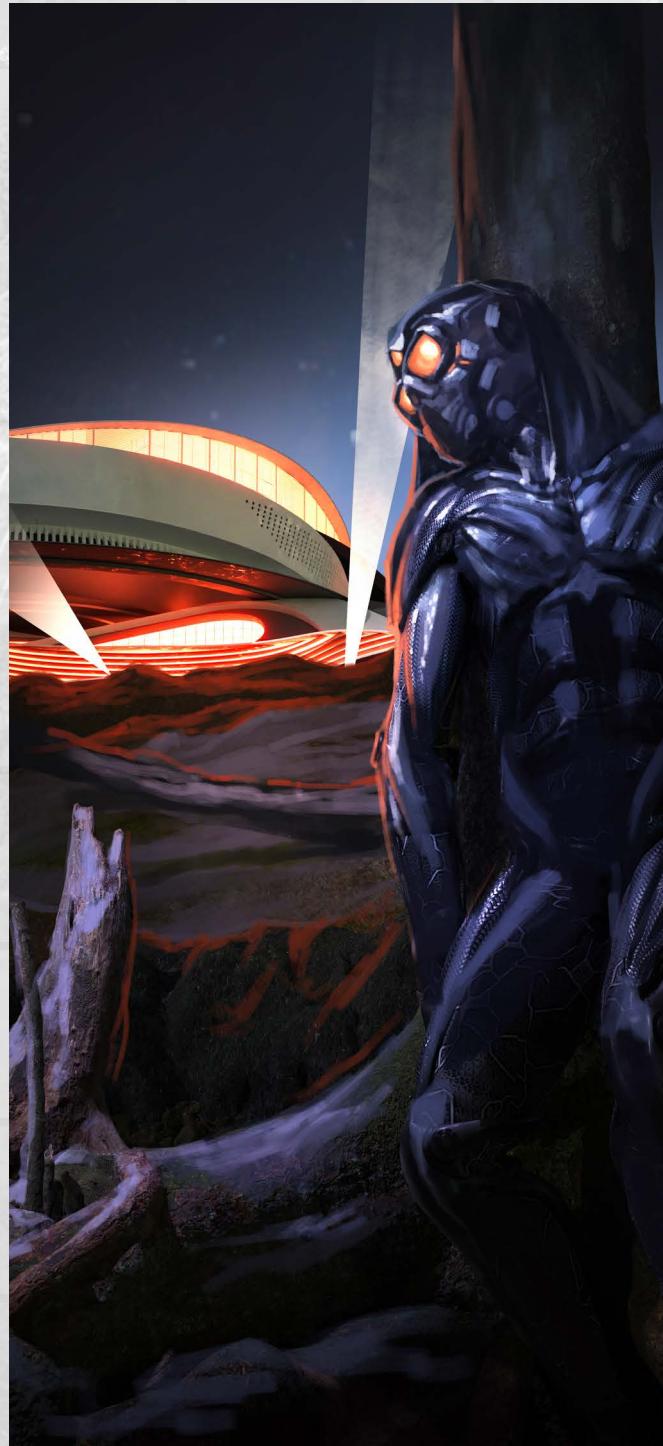
HOT RECOVERY

Commando, Section. Cr75000. Success-only.

The Breulen Mansion is one of several residences owned by the extremely wealthy Hansenger family. It is only used intermittently, when a family member is on-planet. The rest of the time it is maintained by a small caretaker staff and a handful of guards. It has long been suspected that the Hansengers have ties to organised crime operating on an interstellar scale but evidence is hard to come by. A rival, who does not wish to be identified, has become aware that the mansion contains a secure, physically isolated computer system used to store data on the family's illicit dealings.

The rival is offering Cr75,000 for a small team of mercenaries to enter the mansion by whatever means necessary, locate the data storage and obtain copies of the contents. The operation is entirely illegal but the mansion is located in a remote area so local law enforcement personnel are unlikely to arrive within an hour even if alerted. The client is not unduly worried about damage to the mansion or harm coming to its occupants but wishes to avoid any entanglements with law enforcement and would prefer to keep the operation as low-profile as possible.

The mansion officially has a small private security detail, equipped with sidearms and civilian weapons. It is presumed that, given the sensitive nature of the facility, the security force is actually larger and better-armed than outward appearances indicate.



Referee's Summary

The situation is more or less as presented. The mansion is located in a huge estate with difficult terrain in most directions – steep hillsides and thick forests for the most part. There is a single road in and out, used mainly for deliveries as the mansion is well equipped with grav vehicles. Automated sensors are emplaced throughout the estate. These are of a commercially available type, constructed at TL10, and relatively easy for a military force to spoof or disable once detected. The Travellers will need to get in and out without coming into contact with local law enforcement personnel.

Approaching the Mansion

There are three potential approaches to the mansion, and possibly others if the Travellers are creative. Infiltrating on foot through the forest is entirely possible but will take time and require patience. If the Travellers choose this option they will need to consider exfiltration from a hot situation. A long hike through the forest with security gunmen, and possibly law enforcement agents looking for them, is unlikely to be a good idea – although very stealthy Travellers could pull it off. Extraction by grav vehicle after the mission has gone ‘loud’ is a better option. Indeed, this is a standard model for mercenary operations; slow and quiet infiltration, extreme noise and violence, then a fast exfil. There will be pursuit of course but the Travellers may be able to break contact and disappear.

Ground vehicles must use the road, which is watched. Deception might work, with the Travellers pretending to be delivering something. There is nothing else on the road, so claims to be on the way to a holiday village for some outdoorsy recreation will fall flat. The Referee should keep in mind that the owners of the mansion are ruthless criminals. They are quite willing to have their security force riddle a vehicle with bullets and hide the wreckage, without any warning whatsoever. Using the road poses the additional problem that the attack will trigger intervention by a law enforcement response unit, which will be coming the other way and expecting trouble. The Travellers are unlikely to be able to bluff their way past alerted law enforcement agents.

The most effective approach is also the simplest; dash in using a grav vehicle and use it to escape afterwards. The vehicle might draw off and lay low somewhere during the operation, since leaving it parked on the lawn invites destruction or capture. A low-flying grav vehicle is unlikely to be spotted by guards if its pilot makes use of terrain cover until the final approach. This means the guards will have only seconds to react – providing they have not detected the vehicle on their sensors. Such is the nature of the target that its defenders will be instantly alerted and prepared for violence if they detect an intruding vehicle. They know an attack is possible and are prepared for it but can still be caught by surprise.

The client did not tell the mercenaries about emplaced sensors, for the very good reason that their presence is unknown. It is logical that there would be some form of remote detection system in place but if the Travellers fail to think of it they will have to deal with the consequences. Planning ahead and foreseeing problems is an essential part of mercenary operations.

If the mercenaries do not do something about the sensors they will definitely be detected on approach, probably whilst they are still a few minutes out if approaching by grav vehicle. This will permit the security personnel to arm up and take positions. If the Travellers are on foot the guards will have hours to prepare and may set up an ambush. Surprise, garnered either by disabling the sensors and coming in fast or by some form of deception, will find the outer guards equipped only with their sidearms. The Hansenger family maintain the facade of being respectable wealthy people as much as possible and keep security arrangements inconsistent with this poise out of the public eye.

The Security Detail

The mansion's security force is 12 strong, including some of the ‘caretaker’ staff who are actually guards. The force has access to military grade body armour and small arms but is a group of gunmen rather than an organised military force. They will fight hard but probably in an uncoordinated fashion. If the situation is to be resolved in a force-versus force manner using the rules in *Book 1*, the following characteristics apply.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Breulen Mansion Security Detail	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	3	-1
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	10	+1

If combats are to be run using the standard *Traveller* rules the security force's CEI gives an indication of skill levels in primary and secondary areas; in this case 2+1/1+1. This means any given security detachment member will have a skill level of 2 in one key area – probably Gun Combat – and 1 in another key area such as Recon or Electronics (sensors). They will also have two skills at level 1 in related or secondary fields such as Medic, Persuade, Recon or Stealth.

Guards caught with just their sidearms will try to retreat into the mansion and get to the concealed arms lockers. There will always be a couple of guards close to the lockers who can grab their weapons instantly and don body armour quickly. Weaponry in use is up to the Referee but likely to include submachineguns, combat shotguns, assault rifles or advanced combat rifles. There are also a couple of powerful long-range rifles and the security force may even have an anti-materiel rifle for use against light vehicles.

Tactically, the security detachment will prefer to seal the building and rely on its toughened doors and windows to keep attackers out. Windows can withstand a few hits from gunfire but will eventually break. Doors are

electronically dead-bolted and extremely tough but can be battered down or riddled with gunfire until they fail. The Travellers should have considered how they would make entry to the mansion before they arrived; if not, they will have to improvise.

The security detail will hit their panic button, summoning local law enforcement to their aid. The first elements will take an hour or so to arrive and consist of whatever patrol units are nearby. The local equivalent of a SWAT team will follow but will take 90–120 minutes to reach the mansion. Law enforcement personnel use ground vehicles and do not normally operate in the countryside. They do not think like soldiers, although the SWAT team may come close and may run into an ambush that a military force would detect. Attacking the police is not a good idea but the Travellers will have advantages if they do.

The defenders will try to buy time for this to happen rather than battling mercenaries head-on – although they are willing to do that if they must. Law enforcement will not be automatically alerted by the sensor system as the Hansenger family does not want police at its estate if this can be avoided. If the defenders detect the approaching mercenaries they will decide whether to hunker down or stage an ambush depending on the perceived level of threat.

A well-executed approach will see the mercenaries on the ground and possibly inside the building before the defenders can seal it. They will encounter light resistance from poorly armed gunmen and sweep them aside before having to deal with a handful who have armed up properly. The mission in this case will be a bit like being hit by a train and the mercenaries may be surprised at how easy it was. On the other hand, if they are detected on approach, or faff about and give the defenders time to respond, they could be in trouble.

The security detail will use rifles to snipe from rooftops or upper windows whilst greeting any attempt to break through a door or window with a hail of automatic gunfire. They might have to explain to the local police afterward, but they will do what they must right now and worry about consequences later. The owners of the mansion have cultivated a close relationship with local officials and can smooth over any little issues like why the Travellers' air/raft was disabled by a 15mm anti-materiel rifle which has now mysteriously disappeared.

Executing the Mission

The computer facility is buried in a deep concealed basement. The mercenaries will have to search carefully or persuade one of the guards to reveal its location. Not all of them know. Some truly believe they are simply guarding a rich family's property, albeit one with better security than local laws permit.

Once inside the house, there is surprisingly little security other than combination locks on some internal doors. These are easily disabled electronically and the doors themselves can be opened with a Mk1 combat boot. The mercenaries may be under time pressure and could face complications such as holdouts from among the security detail or 'harmless' gardeners and housekeepers suddenly opening up with military-grade firepower.

If the entrance to the concealed basement can be located, the computer itself has reasonable access security but was never intended to resist a hacking attempt. It is defended by anonymity, physical isolation and a lot of automatic weapons; the owners did not envisage anyone gaining access to their computer room and have become complacent about cyber security.

The volume of data is such that it will take 30 minutes or so to copy it all. Local law enforcement may or may not have been alerted, depending on whether the Travellers disabled the mansion's communications system or overran the guards before they could call for help. Once the data is downloaded the Travellers will have to exfiltrate. They may be ambushed by holdouts if they are careless and could run into police vehicles coming up the road to the mansion. There will be a search or pursuit if the police are alerted but a rapid exfiltration followed by going to ground should take the Travellers clear of any response.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket uses standard fivefold criteria. These are as follows:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Extract a significant volume of data from the hidden computer facility.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Avoid causing casualties among local law enforcement personnel.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Exfiltrate from the mission site without being tracked.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Do not cause wanton destruction in the mansion.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Do not take any serious or fatal casualties.

The values for Ticket Success Criteria are found on page 37 of *Book 2*. With one Critical, one Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI score for completing all these objectives is 13. The mission will be considered a success of sorts – enough to pay the fee – by the client if the Important criterion is met with Complete or Partial success. TSI can be used to determine the overall degree of success attributed to the mission. See page 43 of *Book 1*.

ADMINISTERING HOT RECOVERY

A ticket is subject to considerable Referee interpretation and must be tailored to the situation. The mission fee, for example, assumes a section-sized force with small overheads. Commando mission fees are based on six months' salaries for a standard sized force, often with an increment for hazard. The actual mission will take no more than a couple of hours, more than likely, and even with a day or two of preparation there is a good margin of profit in this mission. However, this assumes the mercenaries are already on-planet. If they have to travel to the target world, paying salaries as they go, the mission fee will be quickly eaten up. In this situation the Referee may assume the client is willing to cover salaries whilst the force is en route. The default position is that the client does not do this but that assumes a fairly large force on a longish deployment. For short tickets like this one, it is not unreasonable for the mercenaries to ask the client to cover expenses.

The Referee must decide how this ticket is going to be played out and prepare accordingly. It could be played using the standard Traveller rules, or as a skirmish game. Alternatively it might be resolved in an abstract manner. It is not always necessary to determine CBAS characteristics, CEI and so forth for the opposition, or to create statistics for the personnel involved, but the Referee must be prepared for the sort of game they intend to run.

However the mission is played out, TSI must be determined. As a success-only ticket this one has a Critical criterion, which must be met at least partially for the client to be willing to pay. The details of the TSI criteria were not spelled out to the mercenaries but can be inferred from the mission brief. Overall, a successful mission is one in which the mercenaries get in and out fast with the data and keep the level of destruction to a minimum. The client does not much care about this, and might actually like seeing a bitter rival's home being trashed, but they do not want to draw the attention of law enforcement agencies or the media to any greater degree than necessary.

NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN

Security, Section. Cr25000 plus full support. Bonus possible.
Lamika Municipal Spaceport (LMS) is a typical secondary facility, serving a cluster of cities far from the main starport. Its budget is small, since volume of traffic is low, and security in particular is underfunded. This has not been a problem until recently but a series of incidents has resulted in the port gaining a reputation for lawlessness.

LMS Port Authority is offering Cr25000 plus full ‘fat ticket’ support including 100% coverage of salaries for a section or equivalent of mercenaries with urban security experience. Full support includes accommodation at the port, use of vehicles and other facilities as needed. The force will provide an armed deterrent to crime and actively operate against lawless elements within and around the port.

No significant opposition is expected. Most incidents will be of an armed-arrest nature with the possibility of occasional escalation.

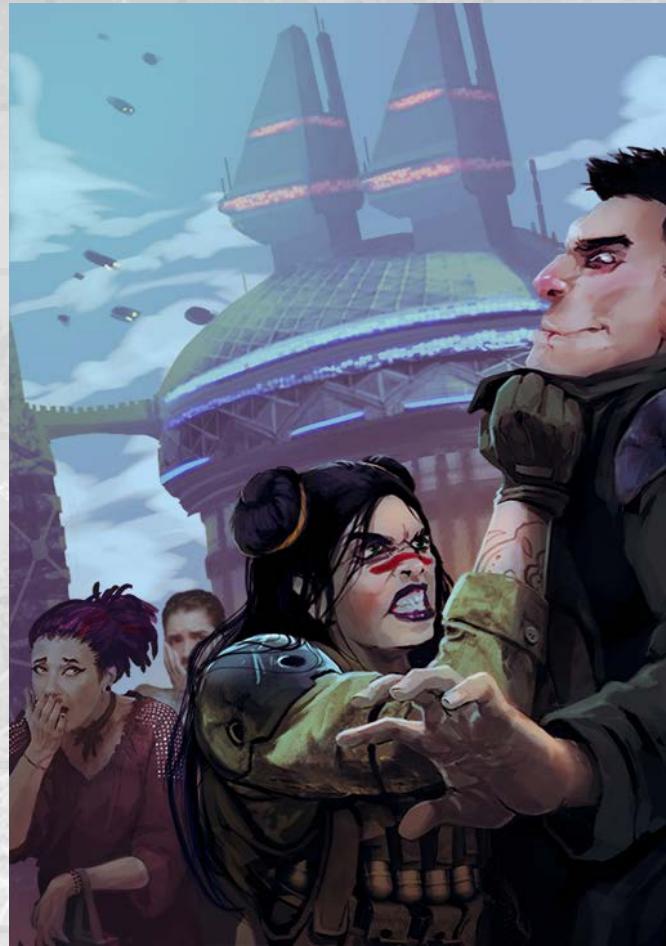
Referee's Information

The situation at the port is rather worse than advertised, although overall the client has been truthful. What has happened is that the weak and poorly led security detachment at the port, numbering 12 low-quality guards, has become defensive and risk-averse. Patrols are limited to certain areas of the port such as the landing field and main concourse, with most other areas ignored. Visitors straying into one of these no-enforcement zones risk being robbed, or worse, and the security force lacks the will or the resources to investigate.

Arriving at the Port

The Travellers will be unwelcome from the moment they arrive at the port. Nobody trusts them and the security force sees them as both a threat and a reminder of its own inadequacy. The mercenaries will meet with passive resistance or apathetic lack of cooperation, making their initial operations particularly difficult. Little information is volunteered, even by those who should be providing it, and answers to questions are often vague or defensive. The Travellers may start to wonder if the local security force or port authority is in the pocket of a crime ring or similar organisation but the truth of the matter is that they are simply unwilling to show outsiders just how badly they have been performing.

The accommodation assigned to the Travellers is entirely adequate – they will more than likely be put in a local hotel – but it is anything but ‘military’. Security for stowed equipment is lacking and the mercenaries may have to perform maintenance in a loading bay



or even the front lobby, to the mortification of hotel staff. Thievery is likely if the Travellers leave valuable hardware lying about and if they are really careless some of their weaponry might turn up on the local black market or in the hands of their opposition.

A short period of orientation is advisable after arriving at the port and will allow some first-hand information to be gathered. This will indicate the real situation if the Travellers are diligent, highlighting the inadequacy of the security force and the lawlessness of much of the port. It should be possible to infer from reports of thefts and robberies which areas are really dangerous and which are merely inhabited by low-level criminals. Good intelligence-gathering work at this point might prevent the Travellers from blundering into a lethal situation or unloading hundreds of rounds at a couple of unarmed pickpockets.

Carrying out the Mission

How the Travellers proceed is very much up to them. As usual, planning is critical and the Referee may need to highlight this. Some Travellers have a tendency to expect the adventure to happen to them rather than driving events forward. This approach leads to rather limp adventures at the best of times but in the case of

a mercenary operation it is a straight road to failure. In this case, failure will not be too deadly. Wandering around with brains in neutral waiting for something to happen can lead to being attacked at a time and place of the enemy's choosing, with rather bad results. This could happen here but it is more likely the Travellers will simply fail to make any real difference.

The Travellers will need to carry out patrols of the port but this will not be enough on its own. They may pick up minor criminals and deter others from acting in the areas the Travellers can reach but 'fire brigade' policing is not going to crack the major gangs. The mercenaries are unlikely to face much opposition if they are carrying military weapons and arrests made at gunpoint will be relatively easy. The dangerous gangs could resist the Travellers but they have no real need to. They are better off keeping their distance and hoping the Travellers will eventually fall into the same pattern as the existing security force. The only reason the gangs will seek a confrontation is if they feel the need to strike before the Travellers do or if they have an opportunity to eliminate the mercenary force in a badly secured base.

The Travellers will also notice that over time attitudes harden towards them. Eventually small protests begin, branding the mercenaries as heavy-handed thugs and demanding their withdrawal. If the Travellers think to investigate they will discover that someone is running a propaganda campaign, amplifying anything questionable and inventing reasons to want rid of the mercenaries. This will escalate if permitted to continue, until the mercenaries start being pelted with trash or confronted by ostentatiously unarmed but angry people. These provocations are rather unwise but there are always people self-righteous enough to think they can get away with this sort of thing. It may be that they can, since gunning down unarmed people in the street is likely to result in termination of contract and investigation by a more competent branch of the local authorities.

The propaganda campaign can be countered by a 'hearts and minds' effort based around success in reducing the level of crime in the port. It may also be possible to find out who is leading the campaign with some intelligence work and to shut them down. A thorough investigation will reveal that there is no high-level organised crime within the port but there are several associations of criminals who find the situation useful. The port's brokers benefit from smuggling and cargo misappropriation, shipping illicit goods on behalf of local criminals or selling to them. It is not a grand conspiracy as such, more an evolved way of doing things that has replaced regulated business with graft and occasional robbery.

Dealing with the Crime Gangs

The crime gangs do not want anyone poking around in their parts of the port and consider robbing anyone who ventures there a perk of 'ownership'. They are also prone to intimidate or take reprisals against anyone who opposes them or provides information to those who do. This makes concrete information on the gangs hard to come by. However, it is not difficult to figure out where their territory lies. A map of where the port's security force does not like to go reveals several areas likely to contain gang territory.

There are several gangs, most of which are small associations of half a dozen individuals that sometimes cooperate to mutual advantage. They have had it easy for a long time and are complacent. Even a ham-fisted lunge into a 'no-go area' in the hope of blundering into some suspects can work. If the Travellers make the slightest effort they can figure out numbers and locations, and there is little a handful of individuals with handguns and knives can do when heavily armed mercenaries come calling. If someone does go for a gun there may be violence but the gangs are more likely to flee than fight. Good, or even mediocre, planning will enable the Travellers to net a few bad guys. They will be removed from the port area for trial and are not the Travellers' problem once handed over.

However, once the Travellers start to become a real threat the crime gangs will sit up and take notice. Their first attempt to get rid of the Travellers is the propaganda campaign but once it becomes apparent this is not going to work they will take direct measures. Unfortunately for them, they are amateurs who do not really understand how dangerous professionals can be. One of the larger gangs will attempt an ambush, which could work if the Travellers are complacent. If they are alert or well-informed – perhaps as a result of winning some of the local population over – the Travellers may even be able to turn the tables on the attackers, catching them as they move into ambush positions and making mass arrests or eliminations.

The gangs at first try to fight for their turf against the Travellers as they would do against one another and should be outmatched by the mercenaries. Whilst not a pushover, a band of armed criminals is not likely to be a serious threat to a mercenary force. Eventually, some of the gangs will form an alliance and try to take out the Travellers directly. This might be by way of an attack on their base if they have not taken measures to secure it, or might result in running battles through the more dangerous parts of the port.

The crime gangs are not military forces but can be modelled using the same characteristics.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Lamika Municipal Starport Criminals	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	5	-1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	3	-2

Individuals are likely to be armed with a handgun or melee weapon, although the more dangerous gangs have access to submachineguns and similar urban combat weapons. Support equipment such as communication gear is limited to civilian personal comms and the like and organisation is informal even in more competent gangs.

Gaining Control

Ultimately the Travellers will need to hand back the port to its security contingent, which means rebuilding it into a force capable of decisive action. Direct confrontation will cause resentment and although the security force can be bullied back to work the mercenaries will achieve better results by coaxing the locals. One option is to ask a couple of them to tag along with patrols as ‘backup’ or ‘to provide local knowledge’. Participating in effective operations will build confidence and remind the security personnel of what they used to be.

If the Travellers handle this situation well they may be able to inspire the local security force to consolidate areas cleared of criminals and gain support of the local population. Driving off the criminals is useful but without such consolidation they will only come back. To create a lasting legacy the mercenaries will need to do more than fight their enemies; they will have to win over the population and restore a culture that demands proper law enforcement. This can be modelled by a ‘hearts and minds’ type campaign if required but well-thought-out actions on the part of the Travellers should be rewarded with a positive outcome.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Drive off or arrest the criminal gangs.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Do not cause casualties among local civilians or law enforcement personnel.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Shut down the propaganda effort.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Restore confidence among the local security force.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Keep use of lethal force to a minimum.

With two Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 12. The client will pay the unit’s fee regardless of success or failure providing the mercenaries made a credible effort.

ADMINISTERING NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN

This ticket takes place over a month, with the Travellers gradually learning more about the situation in the port. Intelligence work can be interspersed with routine encounters and patrols, with arrests of criminals who are disinclined to shoot it out with the mercenaries. The situation will gradually escalate, with a ham-fisted attempt to take out the mercenaries leading to an any-means-necessary clearance of the criminals’ home areas. In order to fully restore order the mercenaries will need to motivate the security force and win over the local population to at least some extent.

TEAM-BUILDING

Cadre, Section. Cr25000 per month plus bonus.

Emilio Durant is a successful wine merchant, specialising in rare and expensive vintages. He has built his business up from a single small shop to a multiworld import/export business and now employs hundreds of staff. Under his insightful leadership, Durant Wines and Spirits has become a market leader renowned for quality. The company has exclusive contracts with heads of state and captains of industry, and is a household name in the field. This is in part due to the care with which Durant Wines and Spirits develops its staff and helps them achieve excellence.

Durant Wines and Spirits is offering Cr25000 plus bonuses for a small team of security experts to lead a team-building exercise for the firm's latest intake of fast-track management candidates. These exercises are always innovative and challenging, and this time the theme is military. The mercenaries will protect the candidates and mentor them in combat and survival skills, increasing their confidence and ability to withstand the sometimes brutal environment in which interstellar-class businesses operate.

The mercenaries will provide challenging experiences for the candidates, including live-fire weapons training. No combat is expected.

Referee's Information

The tone of the ticket might give the Travellers some warning about what they are letting themselves in for. They will be dealing with a group of about 20 young corporate go-getters who 'know' that the life of a professional soldier is not nearly so challenging as surviving in the boardroom. They will be expected to devise a set of team-building challenges to take place over two weeks in the 'wilderness' a few kilometres from the nearest city.

The Field Trip

The client will provide camping equipment, which turns out to be the most luxurious high-end palace-tents imaginable and all the supporting resources. This includes a chef to cook for the executives-to-be and about a dozen runners to see to their every whim. The candidates vary in enthusiasm for the exercise. Some complain incessantly about the awful conditions whilst others are gung-ho for everything in the hope that their enthusiasm will be noticed. They know they have to pass the mercenaries' challenges to remain in the fast-track management programme. Some will try to sleaze their way through, others make a reasonable go of it. What they all have in common is a complete lack of aptitude for most of what they have to do.



It should not be hard to devise suitable activities. Getting a heavy object to some other place with nothing but muscle power is a favourite in this situation, as are escape and evasion challenges. Keeping themselves from strangling the candidates is more of a problem but if they can do so the mercenaries will receive a bonus of another Cr25000 for what is pretty easy work. This is payable if the client is satisfied the mercenaries did indeed challenge the candidates and make them learn about themselves.

This part of the ticket is characterised by interpersonal problem-solving. The candidates are exceptionally annoying and simply do not understand the difference between their world and that of a professional soldier. Most of them ‘know’ they are better than mere thugs-for-hire and will manifest it in various ways. Some will try to bribe or browbeat the mercenaries into letting them bypass challenges they do not want to take part in. Others will try to humiliate the mercenaries, perhaps by inviting them to enjoy dinner and wine then making pointed comments about their lack of finesse – and in some cases the executive-to-be will genuinely think the mercenaries do not understand they are being made fun of. On the other hand, some of the candidates will think the mercenaries are cool or sexy and genuinely want to spend time with them.

The mercenaries will have to deal with all this but other than the behaviour and general annoying-ness of the candidates, nothing much goes awry for the first few days. Inevitably, the over-enthusiasm of the most determined candidates proves to be their undoing. Cleverly circumventing an obstacle in a manner that wiser or less pushy individuals would have not attempted, some of the candidates get themselves into a predicament. Its exact nature depends on what challenges the Travellers have set. It might be an accidental gunshot injury, a fall into a ravine or some similar hazard.

Rescuing the Executives

The Travellers will have to set up a rescue. Depending on the circumstances of the disaster this could be quite tricky or time-sensitive. They could probably do it better themselves but if they involve the candidates the mercenaries have a chance to make this a graduation exercise. If they do not involve the candidates but do not think of giving them something to do in order to get them out of the way, the Travellers will have to contend with corporate

go-getters trying to show how resourceful they are by finding ways to help. The resulting chaos may make the Travellers wish for a nice, straightforward firefight.

It is extremely unlikely any of this will lead to combat. The mercenaries might be able to fulfil the needs of the brief in a way that impresses the client, although this will require selling what they have done in a post-mission debrief. The client will want to know which candidates performed well and who did not, ideally in the sort of terms that can be used by a corporate personnel department to justify promotions or firings. The Travellers might find it distasteful to have to present their feedback in such terms when they would like to be a lot more blunt but equally they could have some fun presenting damning criticism in bland, corporate terms.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Provide challenging and interesting things for the candidates to do.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Do not over-react to the annoyances caused by the candidates.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Rescue the idiots from their own stupidity.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Involve the remaining candidates in the rescue or keep them out of the way.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Provide positive feedback to the candidates in a suitably ‘corporate’ manner.

With two Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 12. The bonus is payable if the overall mission is a success and will be doubled if the Travellers sell the idea that a self-inflicted disaster is somehow an opportunity for growth and self-knowledge. They might think otherwise but the client is impressed by this sort of thing.

ADMINISTERING TEAM-BUILDING

This ticket is intended as a change of pace in what might otherwise be an unrelenting violent campaign. There are problems to solve and opportunities for black humour... and in the end it is all money in the bank.

KNOCKING ON DOORS

Striker, Section. Cr75000 plus bonus.

Suntori Diversified recently acquired a small orbital installation in the outsystem, which serves as a central spaceport for industries such as asteroid mining. However, far from being a going concern the port is crippled by lawlessness and intimidation, and spacers prefer to go elsewhere even if it means an in-system transit of several days. The new owners are in firm control of the main docks and administrative area but facing resistance from armed gangs who demand a percentage of the port's revenue in return for not disrupting its function.

Suntori Diversified is offering Cr75000 for a small force to eliminate the gangs. The force will be brought onto the station as 'additional workers' and only key staff will know their true purpose. The mercenaries can bring whatever weapons and equipment they have and use them at their discretion. Suntori Diversified would prefer lawful arrests but has lost patience over the matter. The mercenary force is clear to engage any threat it encounters.

The gangs are mostly armed with civilian weapons but may have light automatics or laser weaponry. Resistance is to be expected but likely disorganised.

Referee's Information

The port is a fair size, capable of housing 20,000 people and some modest industry. Much of it is derelict or abandoned, although life-support still functions. These areas could be reclaimed if the gangs are removed and if so the port might become a useful asset. At present it is a money pit and Suntori Diversified wants the situation turned around fast.

The clean-up is expected to be short and violent, with raids on the gangs' territory conducted in rapid succession. Dead or in custody is fine, so long as the gangs are shut down. The company will ignore almost any level of excessive force – as far as it is concerned it is at war and will do what is necessary.

Deploying

The mercenaries are expected to spend a few days familiarising themselves with the station and its occupants but after that they will be under pressure to get down to business. The cover story that the Travellers are 'additional staff' will not bear much scrutiny but if the Travellers are discreet nobody will be taking much notice of them at first. They might even spread some disinformation, perhaps letting slip that they are some kind of corporate troubleshooters investigating Suntori's



officials ahead of a round of dismissals. A story along those lines will convince most people they want to stay out of the way and should deflect suspicion for a while.

The Travellers will have to decide how to bring their weaponry and military equipment in and how it is to be stored. A few personal weapons should be easy enough to smuggle, although the mercenaries might have to deceive the installation's security personnel. If this fails they can present their authorisation and just bring in whatever they like but their targets will be alerted.

Wise Travellers will undertake some intelligence work before commencing operations. If they do not, they will have to rely on information presented by the client. This is broadly accurate but was compiled by a corporate body rather than an intelligence staff serving a military unit. The level of opposition is much

as predicted, with one exception. The gangs have informers within the port staff. If the Travellers conceal their intentions their first raid will be a total surprise – the gangs are not diligent intelligence officers, just criminals who like to know what is going on. Once they realise dangerous opposition has emerged they will want to know who the mercenaries are and where they intend to strike. If the Travellers are not careful about operational security they might run into an ambush.

The Opposition

There are three major criminal gangs within the port. All are similar in terms of organisation and numbers, but one has access to military-grade infantry weapons. The others make do with civilian weaponry and the odd laser carbine. Their headquarters are located in difficult to access parts of the installation, making it likely the Travellers will be detected as they approach. This can be offset by clever use of a diversion or an unexpected avenue of approach. One possibility is to use the maintenance shafts to move deep into a gang's territory before commencing operations. People who live in the installation tend to forget these even exist, although some criminals use them to move illicit goods. The Travellers might encounter unrelated criminal activity if they choose this option.

The gangs will fight, and hard, if they are attacked but they are not military units. Morale is low, so whilst initial resistance is stiff the gang will falter once casualties are taken. This is possibly to the detriment of the mercenaries, who may be forced to pursue fleeing gunmen through unfamiliar areas instead of taking them out in a simple firefight.

Surprise should be easy to achieve when the first raid is made, so long as the Travellers have been careful to conceal their intentions. After this the gangs will be on the alert and will bribe or threaten their contacts for information on the mercenaries. By the time of the third raid the gangs will either be waiting and watchful or will have gone to ground. In that case further intelligence work will be necessary to find the leaders, perhaps using documents left behind in their hastily abandoned headquarters.

The operation is likely to be over in a few days. The company will pay a bonus of Cr25000 for a solid purge of the gangs and at least double this if the Travellers get the job done quickly and cleanly. There will be no legal complications unless the Travellers do something truly appalling.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Gunmen	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	5	-1
Reputation	4	-1

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Eliminate the three major gangs plaguing the port operators.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Do not cause collateral casualties among the port population.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Make the raids quickly, taking no more than three days from first to last.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Maintain secrecy and achieve surprise.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Do not suffer any serious/fatal casualties.

With one Critical, one Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 13. A fast, precise execution will impress the client, who may well have other work for the mercenaries.

ADMINISTERING KNOCKING ON DOORS

This is a straightforward application of boot to booty. The mercenaries have a refreshingly simple remit and a client who just wants the problem gone. Smart Travellers will do some intelligence and reconnaissance and conceal their intentions with a suitable cover story. With some good planning the raids may be completed without significant resistance and even if the gangs are able to fight back the difference between professionals and gunmen will be readily apparent.

The gangs will not have time to mount an oblique challenge if the Travellers act quickly. If there are delays, the gangs will lean on officials to suspend the Travellers' operations or interfere in them and might try to paralyse the mercenaries with a lawsuit. This is a common gambit, often based on the premise that the mercenary operation is unlawful in some way. Once begun, a credible lawsuit can force the mercenaries to shut down operations for days, weeks or even longer, and even if unsuccessful will give the gangs time to mount a better resistance or escape. Stalling an operation in the courts until the money runs out is a valid tactic but cannot work if the operation is completed before the case is even presented. Thus mercenaries who are discreet, quick and decisive in their actions are likely to succeed whilst indecisive Travellers may face an uphill struggle.

INFORMATION WARRIORS

Support, Section. Cr50000 plus bonus.

The Lennent Treaty States, or LTS, have typically responded to threats from the Merrain Federation in a disorganised manner. Attempts to create a more cohesive doctrine have for the most part failed but in recent months a new initiative has been launched. This might actually create an effective joint force but the planners have a limited budget and wish to ensure they spend wisely.

The LTS offers Cr50000 for a small team of experts to obtain intelligence on the nature and deployment of Federation forces. This can be done by any means necessary but LTS will deny responsibility if mercenaries are caught in Federation territory. It is desirable that the Travellers ascertain if offworld mercenaries or equipment are present among Federation forces and to determine

the specifics of front-line weapons. This includes armour thicknesses on tanks, performance of aircraft and the quality of guidance systems on missiles. Bonuses are payable for significant information blocks.

Combat is not desirable and in the event that mercenaries are engaged with Federation forces no support can be provided.

Referee's Information

The adage that 'if you want peace, prepare for war' does not mention that in order to prepare effectively you may have to take actions that could cause the war you are trying to avert. The LTS is willing to take the risk if it enables them to build a force tailored to defeating the Federation's military. However, the planners are aware of the possibility of triggering a war they are not ready for and wish to minimise this by using a team of – they hope – experts who can get the job done without being detected. The LTS leadership has no firm ideas about how the mercenaries might operate. So long as they are discreet and effective their methods are their own business.

The Safe Option: Electronic Warfare

Much can be learned by electronic warfare at a distance. Local (TL7) communications equipment cannot resist decryption attempts by TL10+ gear and whilst most of the radio chatter is entirely mundane and not very informative an intelligence expert can build up a picture of Federation forces over time. The odd snippet of specific information can be gleaned from the radio traffic and other emissions but for the most part this is general information. The Travellers will be able to present a detailed analysis of radar and similar sensor coverage and capabilities based on emissions detection and the LTS is willing to pay a bonus of Cr25000 for this.

Obtaining this information requires establishing electronic listening posts close enough to intercept emissions and signals. A hill close to the border would do, although ideally the Travellers will conduct EW operations at various points to ensure they have as much data as possible to analyse. They may not think of it but there is no reason why the Travellers cannot enter Federation territory under some suitable cover story and move around entirely legally. They will not be able to use dedicated signals-intelligence and similar equipment if they do this but high-tech personal devices can collect some useful data. The Travellers will be challenged from time-to-time and may have to account for their activities but should be able to bluff their way through providing the forces they encounter do not realise how powerful their electronic devices really are.



Obtaining Blueprints

Specifics of vehicles and equipment typically require examining one or getting hold of the blueprints. One option for the latter is the Central Defence Computer, which is an imported TL9 system. It is reasonably secure but would not be hard to hack into using higher-tech equipment if access can be gained. There are few remote access points to the system, which is physically isolated from the Federation's rather basic datanet. The computer is located in a heavily secured military installation deep within Federation territory.

Getting access to the central defence computer would require some impressive deception or covert infiltration of the base and would be extremely hazardous. It could be done by inventive and bold Travellers but any mis-step would result in alerting the entire Federation military whilst deep in its territory. The Travellers are unlikely to escape such a situation. Even using one of the remote access points is tricky, as they are well secured. The weak point in this setup is the Federation's senior command staff, some of whom prefer convenience to security. Whilst most access points are located in secure command facilities, the senior commanders have mobile computer systems with the requisite hardware to communicate with the central system.

All remote access points have a hardwired security system, without which the central computer will not communicate with any other device. It would not be hard to replicate the device using more advanced technology but to do so one must be examined. This requires getting into a remote access point or obtaining a general's laptop and either using it or – better – duplicating the security hardware then replacing it. Travellers who think of this option might be able to find a way to pull it off and if they do they will have complete access to the Federation military database until their intrusion is detected and protocols changed.

If the Travellers do decide to penetrate Federation territory they can obtain plans and blueprints from maintenance installations or other bases without accessing the central computer. This is risky but could pay dividends if the Travellers can get away with it. A simple smash-and-grab raid might work but would certainly increase tensions. If the Travellers can obtain information without the Federation knowing they have it there will be no increase in tensions and the client will be extremely pleased.

Examining Equipment

Covert infiltration might be used to obtain access to equipment such as armoured vehicles and aircraft but an alternative to sneaking into Federation territory is to locate equipment left behind on old battlegrounds. Much can be learned from a wrecked tank or downed aircraft and there are a few as a result of the Federation's previous conquests. It may also be possible to buy information – legally or otherwise – or to examine weapon systems by means of deception. If the Travellers can convince the Federation they are representatives of a neutral state on Merrain interested in buying weaponry, they may be able to take all the measurements they want – and might even get a test drive. Some neutral states that have already received weapons from the Federation might be willing to let the Travellers examine them. Again, this might happen through deception, bribery or some other means of persuasion.

Mission Success and Opposition

The LTS leadership will pay bonuses of Cr50000 for good, solid information on each of: Federation tanks and armoured vehicles, aircraft and air-to-air missiles, and maritime warfare capabilities. In each of these three cases the planners want a mix of technical data

and information on deployments and tactics. A lot of that can be gained from electronic warfare operations, as noted above, or from conducting a detailed analysis of publicly available records and documents.

The Travellers could blow the mission so badly they end up fighting the Federation's military but they are more likely to have to deal with patrols or civilian security personnel if they are circumspect or use deception. A group busted as they travel around the Federation under false pretences faces little more than a fine and deportation, and it may be that the Federation's authorities never realise what the Travellers were up to. On the other hand, if they decide to steal a tank and present it to their client for inspection the Travellers are likely to meet a robust response – not to mention causing an international incident.

The most likely opposition if conflict occurs is a security detachment travelling in wheeled soft-skinned vehicles similar to a militarised SUV with a pintle-mounted machinegun. Heavier forces – including armour and artillery – will take longer to deploy and would only be fielded in the event of a major clash. If the mercenaries were to get into a stand-up fight with a security detachment and somehow win it, they will gain the full attention of the military.

Security personnel are armed with TL7 assault rifles and light support weapons, including some mounted on unarmoured ground vehicles. Security units are part of the regular army and trained for large-scale combat but spend most of their time operating in small patrols and detachments, or manning installations and checkpoints.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

- 1: PARAMOUNT:** Maintain deniability even if hostilities occur. Do not cause a war.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Present a solid analysis of general Federation capabilities and doctrine.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Obtain solid information on armoured warfare capabilities.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Obtain solid information on air warfare capabilities.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Obtain solid information on maritime warfare capabilities.

With one Paramount, one Important and three Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 14. If the mercenaries manage not to increase tensions the client will pay the basic fee even if they do not obtain meaningful information. LTS would prefer the mission to fail safely than to succeed and cause more problems.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Federation Security Detachment	—
Unit Size	Section to Platoon	—
Unit Type	Motorised Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	7	-0

ADMINISTERING INFORMATION WARRIORS

The mercenaries are basically acting as spies and intelligence analysts rather than soldiers and will need to think outside the usual small-unit tactics. They could set up cover identities and enter the Federation's territory openly. If they do, the Travellers will find that routine security is quite good in terms of practice and execution but it is limited by TL7 capabilities. Documents forged at a much higher Tech Level will seem completely authentic and it will be easy to conceal most devices. The majority of the population do not have access to high-tech imports and will not expect cameras, listening devices and the like to be so small, so may not think to look for them. Security personnel may not be familiar with the capabilities of offworld electronics and can be deceived into believing devices have just a few simple functions. It may not occur to local guards that what looks like a book-reader or navigational aid is in fact a high-capability handcomp capable of auto-hacking a local computer in moments.

If the Travellers take a less subtle approach they are on their own. The LTS will not support or assist them in any way. This does not rule out a hard intrusion style of information grab but the Travellers will have to make their own plans for exfiltration afterwards. The locals have few grav vehicles but their combat aircraft can possibly intercept one. This might be a less-than-subtle way of finding out how good the Federation's radar and anti-aircraft missiles are. Making this much noise will not please the client, since LTS is the obvious suspect when someone starts causing a ruckus in the Federation. Deniability is useful but what the LTS military planners really want is for the Federation not to realise anything has happened.

ARTISTIC LICENSE

Security, Section. Cr 25000 per month plus bonus. Ongoing.

Celebrated art dealer Rica Lovell recently sold her entire private collection before beginning a truly extravagant retirement. Among the works of art offered for sale was a four painting set entitled 'seasons of the forest', which was purchased on behalf of an anonymous collector. The paintings are to be shipped under the tightest possible security, by a roundabout route, to their new owner.

An anonymous client is offering Cr25000 per month for a small unit of mercenaries with plenty of firepower to escort the paintings on their journey. They will be in transit for around three months aboard liners and high-security packet boats and the paintings will be swapped out at some point in the journey. The mercenaries will continue to guard the secure transportation container as if the paintings were still in it, ensuring that the final destination and therefore clues to the identity of the buyer are not revealed. A bonus of Cr100000 is payable when the mercenaries make a formal handover of the secure casket at a misleading destination. Passage aboard the vessels will be provided and will for the most part be to a high standard of comfort and convenience.

Combat is not expected but the paintings are fabulously valuable and may be a target for criminals. The client will obtain special licenses for the mercenaries to retain personal weapons aboard ship but they must be discreet when interacting with other passengers.

Referee's Information

The mission is genuine but there is an additional layer of deception in place. The actual paintings are en route via a low profile courier, whilst information on the Travellers' mission has been leaked. The client hopes they will seem authentic enough to attract any attempt to steal the paintings and if they deal with it successfully so much the better.



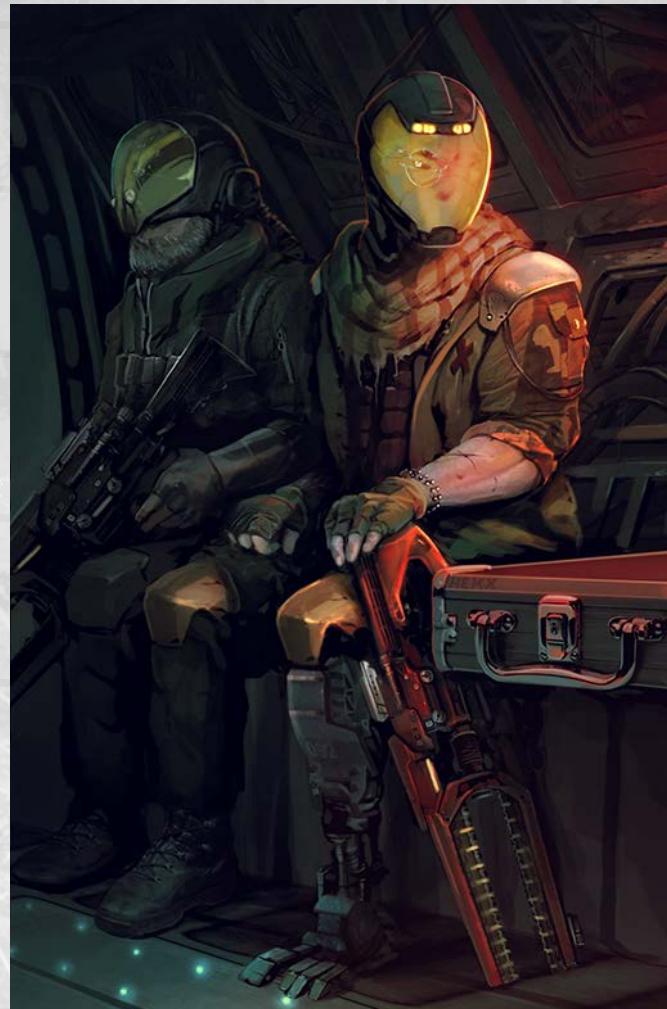
En Route

The trip itself has the potential to be something of a vacation. The Travellers will, for the most part, be travelling aboard high-quality vessels and have access to all their facilities. There is a certain amount of meandering and backtracking on the route, which necessitates changing ships several times but a secure cargo handover is child's play to the shipping industry.

One downside of the mission is having to interact with entitled rich people. Most are pleasant enough but there are always those who have to treat the 'lower orders' with contempt. If they are fooled into thinking the mercenaries are fellow rich idiots these people will turn their assumed-to-be-shared contempt on stewards and other crew and also any middle passengers who may be aboard. Mercenaries tend to lack airs and graces, so it is likely they will stand out as members of these 'lower orders'. If so, they will find that some of the high passengers are distinctly unpleasant and not at all worried about retaliation. They 'know' the mercenaries cannot do anything to them so will seek to put them in their place at every opportunity. This may have repercussions if there are incidents during the trip where the mercenaries could help their fellow passengers but might not want to.

There are plenty of people who travel aboard high-end passenger ships and secure couriers who are pleasant to be around, of course, and it may be that the Travellers make contacts during their mission. One interesting plot twist is for the Travellers to encounter someone else multiple times, as if they too are swapping ships and retracing their steps. This individual or group could be trying to penetrate the Travellers' security or may have an entirely legitimate and unconnected purpose aboard. They might even be carrying out the same sort of convoluted tracks-covering secure delivery – a real one, perhaps, or a decoy like the Travellers.

At some point it will become apparent that the supposedly secret transportation mission is known, at least on the rich-people grapevine. The mercenaries will receive requests – and also demands – to view the paintings from people who will be very displeased to be declined by a mere soldier of fortune. Allowing a viewing will breach the terms of the mercenaries' contract and also reveal that the secure casket contains nothing. Within hours of the next planetfall the grapevine will know the paintings are missing or were never there. This blows the mission and may expose the real courier to attack.



Interception

If the mercenaries do not open the casket their secret is safe but this attracts a different problem. Another band of mercenaries has been contracted to 'recover' the paintings by any means necessary and will attempt to do so later in the journey. This might take the form of an attack in port, infiltration of the ship and an inside job, or piracy by an armed vessel. Naturally, as soon as danger threatens any rich bullies nearby will want the mercenaries to protect them and may be terribly put out at being refused.

The most likely way an interception will be attempted is during a transfer between vessels. This might be scheduled or necessitated by a problem with the ship. In the latter case, it is likely that the 'problem' will be imposed by port officials bribed to hold the ship on spurious grounds or to 'find' a fault during an inspection. Alternatively, the crew might be induced to 'discover' a need to remain in port for long enough that the passengers and cargo need to be transferred to another vessel.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Mercenaries	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	10	+2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	11	+2
Morale	13	+2
Reputation	8	-0

A force of mercenaries has been hired to take the secure casket and will strike without warning. The Travellers might see warning signs and prepare themselves but if they are complacent they may well be caught off guard. The attackers are not acting out of malice and will not cause unnecessary casualties but are quite willing to open fire on sight, use snipers or booby traps, or any other measures to ensure they complete their mission without taking casualties.

The mercenaries will be as well armed as they can be in the circumstances. If they have to smuggle weapons into a spaceport, the mercenaries will have concealable equipment such as submachineguns or rifles that can be dismantled. If they have a free hand the attackers might roll in with battlefield firepower, possibly even using a vehicle mounting a support weapon.

ADMINISTERING ARTISTIC LICENSE

This is essentially a bodyguard mission, little different to protecting a person travelling under the same circumstances. Much of the journey is mundane but with repeated changes of ships and stopovers in port the mercenaries will have to be vigilant. All manner of additional incidents might occur and indeed this mission could be used as a plot device to get the mercenaries to a place or aboard a ship where the Referee has an adventure waiting for them. The adventure associated with a mercenary ticket will not always be the one implied by the contract and mercenaries can be blindsided by circumstances from time-to-time.

If and when the attack comes it will be suddenly, explosively, violent. The attackers have been paid well to get the job done quickly and as cleanly as possible but above all ruthlessly. It may be that friends the Travellers have made get caught in the crossfire, bringing home to them just how unpleasant their profession looks to outsiders. Ultimately, the Travellers will have succeeded if they are attacked. By drawing attention they have safeguarded the paintings and will be paid even if they failed to defend the secure casket.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** The casket must remain unopened.
- 2: ROUTINE:** Do not attract attention with incidents, no matter how much provocation.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Maintain routine security on the casket.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Defeat the attempt to seize the casket when it occurs.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Maintain a low profile during the voyage.

With one Important and four Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 11. The mercenaries do not really have to do much for most of the journey and once they have attracted an attack their work is done. If they are an effective decoy the client will be satisfied and pay the bonus. No apologies are made for deceiving the mercenaries, nor for making them a target; this was an essential part of the operation as far as the client is concerned. If the mercenaries have proven discreet and resourceful they may be offered other jobs in the future.

PLATOON TICKETS



The following tickets are aimed at platoon-sized units or the equivalent. A larger force might detach one or more sub-units whilst training the remainder or taking other small tickets and in theory a very cheaply equipped oversized unit might find these tickets viable.

INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

Striker, Platoon. Cr150000 plus bonuses.

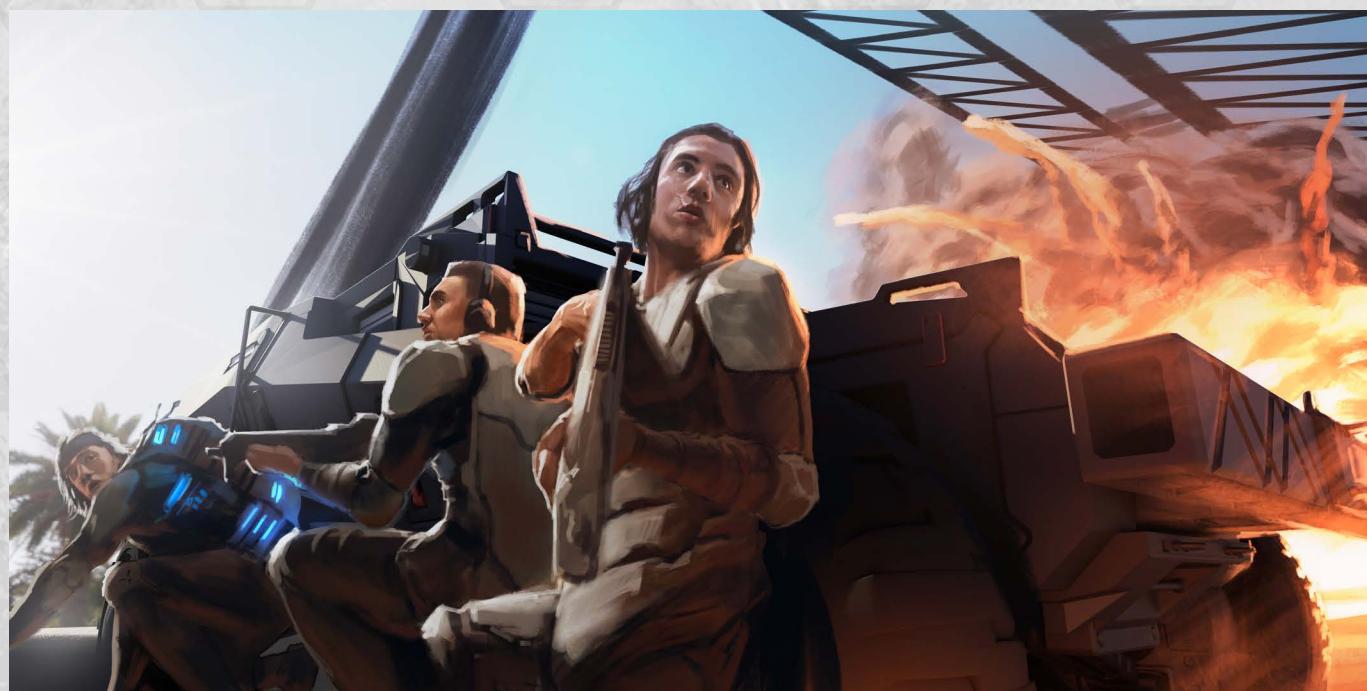
The planetary government of Djeilf illegally sized corporate assets worth hundreds of millions of Credits during the emergency restructuring of the Suntori Group. Suntori Diversified has made repeated representations to the government for the return of its assets or a negotiated fair-price buyout. Since these efforts have been ignored, the corporation intends to force the government of Djeilf to the negotiating table.

Suntori Diversified is offering Cr150000 plus bonuses for a platoon-sized force to undertake operations against key targets on the world of Djeilf. The corporation is in dispute with the planetary government over ownership of an industrial plant located at the planetary capital. The plant itself is not to be attacked. Targets are government-owned installations elsewhere. The force must provide its own transportation.

The government is expecting action but does not know where and when the blow will fall. The target assets are primarily infrastructure that will be expensive to replace including a major road bridge and installations whose loss will embarrass the government. The intention is to make continued illegal possession of the industrial plant too expensive, forcing the government to negotiate either the removal of its valuable machinery or sale of the plant on favourable terms. The mercenary force can expect resistance from TL8 local troops, who are not expected to be at any given site in large numbers.

Referee's Information

The Travellers will sooner or later notice that many tickets contain biased information. In this case, the question of ownership is debatable and subject to endless legal wrangling. The government can find laws that make its annexation of the factory legal due to 'de facto abandonment' whilst both Suntori factions have a claim to it under their preferred body of law. Suntori Diversified intends to force a resolution regardless of the legal situation. Mercenary operations are legal in this situation but it would be questionable whether the government would view it this way. Units that are properly registered with a licensing agency are protected



by its legal, political and possibly military capabilities; their members can expect to be treated fairly if captured and repatriated as soon as possible. Unregistered mercenaries might slip through the cracks and become victims of an aggrieved state.

Mission Overview

The client has identified three key targets it believes will force the government to the negotiating table. The road bridge at Abenir Gorge has long been lauded as a triumph of local engineering and provides the only major ground route across the gorge for over 100 kilometres. Its destruction would send shockwaves through the population. The governmental broadcasting centre at the world's second city, Cedivve, is an iconic building whose image is used at the beginning of all official announcements. Destroying its famous spire would undermine confidence in the government whilst crippling the broadcasting apparatus might impair the government's ability to maintain public support. The third potential target is a rail freight terminal serving a factory complex. The client considers that wrecking some of the trains and the supporting infrastructure will send a clear message but should not cause much loss of life.

Platoon-level operations are sometimes very straightforward and simple but often require more planning and coordination than section-level missions. In this case the Travellers will have to do some strategic planning if they are to execute their strikes in an effective manner. Ideally, the client wants all three targets hit and subjected to graphic destruction. A bonus of Cr25000 is offered for each of the targets that is heavily damaged – or even just appears to be. This ticket is about creating the impression, correctly or otherwise, that the planetary government cannot protect its assets. If all three targets are successfully hit an additional bonus of Cr25000 is available, bringing the potential total to Cr250000. This is high for a supposedly low-risk job but the client stands to make a fortune in the event of success.

Government Forces and Dispositions

The planetary government is expecting this sort of gambit, since Suntori Diversified has used it before. However, it cannot provide strong garrisons everywhere and has settled for placing a company-sized force at each of the selected locations as well as other potential targets. These are regular army units with little experience of combat, equipped as TL8 infantry. They have a few trucks and light vehicles but are primarily deployed as static defenders.

Support for these garrisons will initially be in the form of aircraft flying from the nearest bases, followed by local response formations composed of wheeled armoured cars and infantry in trucks. A reinforced company or larger force can be on the road in minutes but will take over four hours to reach the bridge. The other two targets can be reinforced in 15-20 minutes if the support force is not distracted.

In addition, the planetary government has hired some mercenaries of its own. This is a platoon-sized force with grav APCs, equipped to TL10 standards. The force is currently based at the capital and will take at least two hours to reach the distant targets selected by the client. However, after the first attack the mercenaries will be moved to a forward operating base where they will be within minutes of the remaining targets.

DEFENSIVE INFANTRY

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Defensive Infantry	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Partial Motorised	0
Combat	17	+2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	6	+1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	8	0

In all probability the mercenaries will face little opposition on their first strike. The garrison will be complacent and simply going through the motions at this point. After the first attack the local garrisons will be alert but still not highly competent but there is a chance of intervention by their supports or the offworld mercenaries. The chance of this is even higher after the second target is struck.

The defensive companies are composed of reasonably well trained but inexperienced infantry, occupying prepared positions reinforced with sandbags and barbed wire. Personnel are armed with TL8 small arms and light support weapons, including shoulder-fired anti-armour and anti-aerospace missiles. Mobility is limited; there are enough light ground vehicles for patrol work and to move part of the force around but overall the companies are considered to be part-motorised.

RESPONSE FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Response Force	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Company	—
Unit Type	Composite Infantry/Armour	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	2	-2
Support	2	-2
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	8	0
Reputation	8	0

The response force will deploy in company strength with some attached light armour, forming a mixed infantry/armour battlegroup. Its armoured cars mount light autocannon and are armoured against light support weapons only, whilst the trucks have no protection but carry a machinegun for self-defence. Infantry are equipped much as their static counterparts. An air defence vehicle or two, using autocannon in a high-angle mounting, will accompany a response force.

Air response takes the form of light strike jets with some air-to-air capability. Their primary CBAS characteristic is Bombardment for this reason. Aircraft are armed with missiles and guided bombs and are very vulnerable to high-tech anti-air weapons. They normally deploy in pairs, making a strike the equivalent of a platoon-level force.

AIR RESPONSE FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Air Response Force	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Aerospace Strike	—
Unit TL	8	8
Mobility Type	Aerospace	+12
Combat	1	-2
Bombardment	6	0
Aerospace	3	-1
Support	2	-2
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	8	0

The mercenary force hired by the planetary government is a typical ‘pseudo-lift infantry’ formation, using civilian air/rafts and grav trucks for mobility but fighting as infantry once deployed. Personnel are equipped to TL10 standards, with typical small arms and personal armour and have a small amount of heavier support equipment. This includes a gatling laser anti-aerospace weapon mounted on an unarmoured grav truck and a pair of three-barrelled support mortars transported on other vehicles. The force overall contains more than a platoon’s worth of personnel but some remain at base for security or are busy maintaining and repair vehicles. The overall result is that the force can deploy a platoon-sized fighting element.

MERCENARY FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Mercenaries	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Grav-Mobile Infantry	+8
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	1	-2
Aerospace	3	-1
Support	3	-1
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	10	+1
Reputation	9	+1

Making the Strikes

The client wants graphic damage to infrastructure and iconic buildings rather than casualties, although some will be inevitable. The Travellers’ planning may reflect the fact that they do not need to hold the objective for long enough to damage it. If so, they may be able to stage a quick hit-and-run strike that gets their force clear before the response force can even mount up. Interception by aircraft or the grav-mobile mercenaries is always possible during a retirement, although the latter will not pursue closely if there is a significant threat to their soft-skinned vehicles. If, on the other hand, the mercenaries get bogged down or decide to chew their way ever-so-carefully onto the objective, they may still be in place when reinforcements arrive. If they decide to hold the target for some reason they will face an escalating counterattack as more response companies arrive.

Given the nature of the strikes, a force equipped with grav vehicles might simply dash onto the objective and start blasting. A few shots from the gun of a light grav tank will cause enough damage to satisfy the client and might seem laughably easy to the mercenaries. This is in no way unfair – it is what tanks are for and those who can afford them reap the rewards.

A force that does not have this capability will need to get past the defences and place charges or otherwise cause the necessary destruction. This might lead to a running fight in which some defensive concentrations are overrun but others bypassed. Speed, aggression and firepower are the order of the day here. If the Travellers realise this and make a good plan they should succeed but an obsession with eliminating every strongpoint and sniper will result in being bogged down.



Forcing Negotiations

After each attack the client will try to persuade the planetary government to accept its terms. Rules for negotiation are found on page 113 of *Book 1*. The Situation Indicator starts at 7 – the negotiations are stalled inasmuch as the government is not even listening to the corporation's demands. The mercenaries can send their own representative to negotiate with the government or use the corporation's DM+2 on Persuade checks. The following DMs apply to the Persuade or Diplomat check:

For each successful attack: DM+2

For each unsuccessful attack: DM-2

If attacks have been made but none were successful: additional DM-4

A successful attack is one that inflicts serious damage on the target. The mercenaries do not need to capture and hold their objective; flying past in a grav tank blasting chunks out of the structure will generally do the trick. However, a thorough job will impress the client more, such as rigging the bridge or spire with explosives and dropping the whole lot in one spectacular explosion. This would require at least temporary possession of the objective.

As soon as the Situation Indicator reaches 12 the corporation gets what it wants. Complete acceptance is preferable, of course, since this indicates the government has given in to all the corporation's demands. If the Travellers can achieve this they will be paid the full bonus even if some attacks failed or were not made at all.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Destroy or seriously damage the bridge.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Destroy or seriously damage the broadcasting centre.
- 3: IMPORTANT:** Destroy or seriously damage the rail yard.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Inflict a significant defeat on government forces at any location for partial completion or at more than one for complete success.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Inflict a defeat on the mercenaries.

In the event that a strike does not have to be made because negotiations have reached Complete Acceptance, it is considered to have been a complete success. The maximum TSI value attainable is 13. Note that a success under these TSI criteria represents how well the mercenaries did what they

were hired to do. The ticket may still be a success even if the Suntori negotiators threw away all the advantages the mercenaries gained them – a failure on the part of the client will generally not reflect on the mercenaries.

ADMINISTERING INDUSTRIAL DISPUTE

The Travellers can approach this ticket in a variety of ways. Most will choose to launch a series of strikes from a concealed base of operations, making direct attacks on the targets. However, there are other options. Infiltration and sabotage will get the same results or the mercenaries may come up with a more creative option. What matters to the client is getting what they want out of the negotiations, whilst the mercenaries want to get paid and preserve their reputation. The details may take care of themselves.

The upshot of this is that the ticket can play out in a variety of ways. The Referee will have to adjudicate whatever the Travellers do. They may do some good intelligence work, learn of the other mercenaries and impede them in some manner. If they do not, the arrival of a comparably armed and equipped force may be an unpleasant surprise.

The Referee should keep in mind that the local government is alerted but not omniscient. Its forces greatly outnumber the mercenaries and can probably eliminate them in a stand-up fight. If the Travellers expect to just bull their way through they will end up taking serious losses. However, if they are smart and make good use of mobility they should be able to misdirect the government's forces sufficiently to get the job done and escape without becoming bogged down in an escalating battle they cannot win. There is a fundamental lesson to be learned in the mercenary marketplace – winning is not the same thing as destroying all the enemies and taking possession of their stuff. Winning means getting paid and living to fight another day and an expeditious withdrawal after a mission is critical to making this happen.

TIN POT CRACKPOT

Warfighting, Platoon. Cr100000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The continent of Espalen is a vast expanse of semi-desert, which was sparsely settled by small expeditions in the distant past. Few grew beyond the level of independent town-states, creating a patchwork of more or less self-sufficient microstates separated by wide areas of worthless wilderness. Patchy deposits of precious stones and rare minerals have been found in recent years and the idea of unification has finally surfaced. Chief among its proponents is Colonel-Governor Cietin, currently the leader of a three-town microstate.

Colonel-Governor Cietin is offering Cr100000 per month with a hiring bonus of Cr50000 for a platoon-sized unit to lead the expansion of her state. There will also be a completion bonus calculated as a percentage of the fee thus far accrued – thereby rewarding loyal service – and the success the unit has achieved. The force will be expected to undertake a small war of conquest against nearby towns, supported by local troops as necessary.

Opposition is not expected to be significant. The world has a mature TL6 economy with few imported items and enemy forces will be small. Most towns have only a militia for defence, with a scattering of professionals to lead them.

Referee's Information

Cietin is what might be described as an ambitious nutjob. Her title is made up but she does have popular support in her home town. The other two she controls were conquered at considerable cost by her forces, which made her realise she needed a proper military force. Such is the local political situation that a platoon of mercenaries is a strategically important asset in Espalen and besides it is all Cietin can afford.

Cietin's forces are essentially her home town militia, enlarged to include unenthusiastic 'volunteers' from the conquered settlements. These are not as firmly under control as Cietin thinks but there is little overt resistance to her regime. That may change if Cietin's war of conquest causes serious casualties or overstretches the budget, which it has already begun to do.

Both of the captured towns have modest resources which can be exploited, whilst the 'capital' does not. This is what sparked the whole unification concept – Cietin realised that other towns had got lucky and would eclipse hers and simply could not stand the



idea. She has funded the war and the mercenary force by selling off assets and using up reserves. The mercenaries' operations are expected to somehow enrich Cietin's regime, which might be possible in the short term if a certain amount of plundering is permitted.

Opposing Forces

The militia used by all the local towns are of very low quality, armed with basic small arms and little more. The odd mortar or light machinegun is available, usually mounted on a civilian vehicle or towed by one. Forces on both sides are capable of putting up a decent fight from prepared positions but have little concept of cooperation and mutual support. They are so tactically inexperienced that the simplest flanking movement seems like a masterstroke. Unfortunately, in the case of Cietin's forces, this ineptitude is accompanied by an excess of ego.

'Volunteers' from the captured towns are mostly serving because they have to, although some have bought into the dream of becoming leaders among conquered states, whilst the majority of Cietin's militia are becoming convinced they are conquering heroes. They have a tendency to strut about bullying

people whenever they can but to a professional eye it is obvious they lack basic skills such as safe weapons handling. Accidents are not uncommon even when not under the stress of combat.

Cietin's militia is fully motorised, having commandeered almost every vehicle it encounters. Some have been converted, with tops cut off to allow pintle-mounted weapons to be carried or crude armour to be welded over the bodywork. Breakdowns are common with these overloaded vehicles.

Opposing militia are no more competent and typically less well-armed. Where Cietin has gone to some trouble to obtain military small arms, most local militias have to rely on whatever civilian weapons are available.



CIETIN'S MILITIA

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Cietin's Militia	—
Unit Size	Section to Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	6	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	1	-2
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	4	-2
Morale	6	0
Reputation	3	-1

TOWN MILITIA

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Town Militia	—
Unit Size	Section to Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	6	0
Mobility Type	Partially Motorised	0
Combat	3	-2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	3	-2
Morale	4	-2
Reputation	5	-1

War of Conquest

Cietin is eager to have the mercenaries overrun everything in sight and is not tolerant of what she terms as 'excuses'. If the Travellers tread carefully they can convince her to expand in a more steady manner, choosing a target and demanding submission before launching an attack.

The mercenaries may be able to persuade some towns not to fight, although this will be a struggle since Cietin's regime is unpleasant and most towns have a long tradition of independence. Most will resist, in some cases with assistance from others who feel it is in their interest to fight in someone else's back yard. The Travellers will be up against bands of totally inexperienced militia who have a tendency to scatter in panic once they take casualties. There are always a handful of would-be heroes or idiots who do not understand how much danger they are in and the mercenaries may be wary of having to eliminate them. It may be possible to talk some into surrendering but their treatment by Cietin's people may make this more difficult as time goes on.

Overall, conquests are not difficult to make. Towns cannot put up much resistance against the mercenaries and Cietin's militia will impose a harsh controlling regime on those towns that do not voluntarily join their expanding state – as well as some that do. The expansion will, overall, be a success unless the Travellers are extremely incompetent but capturing towns was never the problem here.

If the Travellers do not recognise the situation right away, the red flags will begin to pile up. Money is short but Cietin is spending it anyway. She wants to create a sort of brand identity for her new state – which is not in itself a bad idea – but is going about it by purchasing status symbols. She wants a gray limousine, ideally a classic model, and will go on about this at length every time she interacts with 'her' mercenaries. Impressive and fanciful uniforms start to appear on the militia, accompanied by medals, and some of her gunmen acquire titles as they move into political posts. This means that towns will be taken over by someone whose credentials come down to a big hat and an itchy trigger-finger.

This can still be a 'clean' mercenary job but the usual model is for the mercenaries to defeat whatever forces are defending a town or installation, then they are pulled back 'to rest' whilst the militia – soon renamed

the Unified Defence Force – secures the objective. Secures, in this case, translates to plundering the living hell out of it. The mercenaries will soon be aware they are the spearhead of a rather unpleasant campaign of conquest and plunder.

Unification could be a good thing in the long run, allowing efficient pooling of resources but for the foreseeable future it is a series of small-scale conquests that wreck the local economy for the sake of plundering enough to pay for the operation. Personnel have to be detached to control the towns and installations, weakening the loyal component of the militia, which then has to be shored up with coerced 'volunteers'. The whole thing is a house of cards run by a delusional narcissist and sooner or later there will be rebellions or internal powerplays. How the mercenaries deal with that, if they are still present, is up to them.

If the Travellers are wise they will get out of this contract as soon as they decently can. It is considered bad form to leave a contract and join the fight against a former employer but it does sometimes happen and is generally accepted by the mercenary community. Whether the towns will accept help from their oppressor's spearhead force and whether the prospect is financially viable, is an open question. It is possible the Travellers will end up toppling the Cietin regime either on behalf of a consortium of towns or on a freelance basis. Of course, revolutions tend to produce unpleasant regimes so things might not get any better. The Unification of Espalen – or its return to comfortable disunity – could become an ongoing campaign in its own right.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Provide Cietin with a string of conquests and victories.
- 2: ROUTINE:** Keep friction with the militia to a minimum.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Capture at least some targets intact.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Obtain status symbols for Cietin.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Improve the efficiency of Cietin's forces.

The maximum TSI score for this ticket is 11. Overwhelming a bunch of scared militia is no great achievement. Success in this context means keeping Cietin happy enough to pay the bonus, which is likely to be around 10% of the fees accrued so far but may be more if the Travellers perform better than her expectations.

ADMINISTERING TIN-POT CRACKPOT

There are many stories to be told here, depending on how the Travellers feel about their patron. They might just do the job and collect the money – after all, this sort of thing is nothing new to experienced mercenaries. If so, they may move on before the inevitable collapse or actually prevent it. It would not take all that much to consolidate Cietin's gains into an organised state and build an economy. However, the biggest obstacle to that is Cietin herself. She will want to keep going until she has conquered everything and ultimately that means stretching herself too thin. The mercenaries are likely to end up as a fire brigade, dashing from one internal crisis to the next whilst fending off demands for an explanation why they are not conquering more towns.

The actual military operations are small scale and typically one-sided. A town of 5,000 or so people can field quite a lot of militia if they are desperate but they will be disorganised and easy to scatter. The Travellers can expect to be heavily outnumbered but their compact force can deliver telling blows at the point of decision if well handled. Watching Cietin's militia make a hash of mopping up operations might not sit well with the mercenaries.

The mercenaries are under contract to Cietin and bound by its terms. If they turn white knight before the contact expires, their mercenary careers are over. Once they are released from it, they can of course do as they please. This might include toppling Cietin or propping her up, accepting spurious promotions from her hand or just pocketing the fee and moving on.

AID TO CIVIL POWER

Security, Platoon. Cr75000 plus bonus.

Life in the sealed city of Nulcef tends to be dull and repetitive but standards of living have traditionally been high and the population were safe from their world's hostile conditions. Those who craved excitement could find it in the 'outside' industries or through a programme of arts and entertainment. In recent years a decline in the world's major industries – notably chemical extraction and processing – has led to budget cuts.

Combined with rising unemployment this has created a bored and angry populace with nothing to distract them. The city has seen riots and violence in recent months, targeted upon the governing elite and senior officials of the industries that once made the city prosperous.

The city governors are offering Cr75000 for a platoon-sized unit with urban security experience to quell riots and arrest the ringleaders. Less-lethal options will be used unless absolutely necessary. Some general security work, guarding installations and personnel, will also be undertaken. A bonus is payable if the situation is brought under control within the projected four week period of operations and if not an extension to the contract will be made on the same terms.

The mercenary force can expect to have to deal with angry mobs throwing objects but no significant armed resistance to its operations.

Referee's Information

The situation is more or less as represented but both sides have moved to a hard-line stance that makes escalation inevitable. If the mercenaries care about the rights and wrongs of the situation they will discover that there are plenty of both. The decline in critical industries is not really anyone's fault and despite allegations of graft and corruption the business leaders have generally behaved in an honourable manner. The decline was caused by external factors coupled with decisions that seemed good at the time but which have since proven to be flawed. Funding cuts were inevitable and with them came disaffection, which was fuelled by people with an agenda or just looking for someone to blame.

What was avoidable was the move to the present situation. Both 'sides' wanted too much from one another. The populace wanted jobs and diversions that could not be funded and the elite wanted the populace to be satisfied with the little they gave. The elite blame an ungrateful, grasping populace whilst the people blame a greedy elite. The truth is somewhere in the middle. Rioting was met with an excess of force, creating ever greater resentment. The situation has reached a point where the city leaders want to bring in experts to break the will of the rioters – and whom they can blame for any further excesses that may occur.

Quelling the Riots

The mercenary force is not employed to consider rights and wrongs or the niceties of the legal system. Their job is to bring the rioting under control and whilst they could theoretically achieve this by using lethal force they will be exceeding their remit. Lethal force is permissible in self-



defence but gunning down rioters ‘because they posed a potential threat’ will land the Travellers in court at least. It may also inflame the situation to the point where unrest turns into revolution. Instead the Travellers must de-escalate the overall situation by using force judiciously.

The Travellers will be faced with a series of violent protests and outright riots. Their remit is to break up the riots and ideally arrest the ringleaders. This either means going into a hostile crowd to drag out anyone who looks like they are giving orders or to observe them and make an arrest later. The client controls the local legal process, so anyone arrested will simply be dumped in a holding facility ‘awaiting trial’ and kept there until the situation calms down.

By chipping away at the ringleaders the Travellers can gradually bring the situation under control. They may be attacked with improvised weapons or have objects hurled at them but the situation will not escalate into lethal violence unless the Travellers make the first move. Capturing enough ringleaders and breaking up riots may eventually discourage the populace enough that local forces can regain control but the process will be much quicker if both sides can be encouraged to negotiate.

The interplay between the Travellers and an active riot can be interesting. One option is to contain the riot and wait for the participants to get tired or hungry. This is quite a ‘soft’ approach but can work under some circumstances. However, agitators will try to get others to provoke the Travellers or take action they have to respond to. Containment requires patience and determination, which can be a tall order when rioters are throwing objects or come threateningly close.

A more active approach is to combine containment with measures likely to disperse the rioters. These might include water cannon, tear gas or specialised anti-riot weapons such as sonic or microwave devices intended to cause severe discomfort. If the rioters get too close they may be driven back by an aggressive advance using batons or similar less-lethal weapons. An even more robust version of this tactic uses electrical stun devices or large calibre soft projectiles. Accidental injuries and even fatalities are possible, which may escalate tensions even further.

Charging into an active riot to grab suspected ringleaders or those who are likely to have weapons is a standard tactic for security forces. It can be dangerous but this is mitigated by the same tactics as used in more lethal combat – one element seizes the target, another covers their withdrawal and a reserve stands ready to assist if either is in danger of being swamped. It is possible to chip away at a riot like this until the most belligerent members are in custody and the remainder lose their will to carry on.

The mercenaries might also try propaganda and negotiation. Neither will work alone but with a combination of arrests and apparent control of the situation the Travellers might convince the rioters to disperse. A policy of identifying those who become prominent and taking them into custody after they have returned home can also discourage the remainder. Most are just people who are angry and frustrated. If they realise they cannot achieve anything but risk incarceration many will give up.

The Travellers may have other ideas, which may or may not work. Excessive brutality will bring a rebuke from the client, since it might have consequences for them and may eventually result in termination of contract. On the other hand, if the mercenaries are careful and professional

they will be able to restore order. A credible attempt at negotiation by the governmental and business elite will also help, although the Travellers may have to convince them it is worth making the effort.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Get the situation under control by breaking up riots and protests.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Arrest and detain at least 12 high-value suspects.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Do not kill anyone, except in self-defence against a lethal threat.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Make overtures to the populace about negotiating with the elites.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Convince the elites to negotiate.

The highest possible TSI for this ticket is 12, which requires the Travellers to patiently endure violence and gradually remove ringleaders from the equation whilst setting up a possible negotiated resolution. This is not mentioned in their brief but often a client does not really know what is necessary to get the outcome they want. Hiring mercenaries is as much about obtaining expert advice as it is getting things done.

ADMINISTERING AID TO CIVIL POWER

The situation can be abstracted as a set of negotiations, with each set of events being a phase in the proceedings. If the Travellers successfully defuse a riot they get a chance to persuade one side or the other to consider reopening talks. If they use excessive force or are unsuccessful in making an arrest the position moves the other way. Once both sides have agreed to talks the mercenaries will have to keep the negotiators safe from those who would prefer to keep the situation ongoing. If instead the mercenaries just want to break the will of the populace this can also be administered as a negotiation, with each serious blow – such as a set of arrests – creating an opportunity to advance the mercenaries' position.

TARGET HARDENING

Cadre, Platoon. Cr75000 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.
Suntori Unified is the successor to the Suntori Business Group and legal owner of all its assets. This position has been challenged by a company unlawfully using the Suntori brand identity to pass itself off as something called Suntori Diversified. After losing several legal battles, Suntori Diversified has escalated into attacks on Unified's holdings, usually carried out by proxy forces hired on the mercenary market. To defend against this aggression, Suntori Unified wishes to train a workers' militia at one of its larger factory sites.

Suntori Unified is offering Cr75000 per month plus a bonus on successful completion for a cadre force in platoon strength to train industrial workers in small arms handling and elementary security practices. Training is to include search techniques, infiltrator identification and detection of explosive devices as well as direct combat. Military operations will not be required of the militia; they are simply a backup to regular security forces at their place of work.

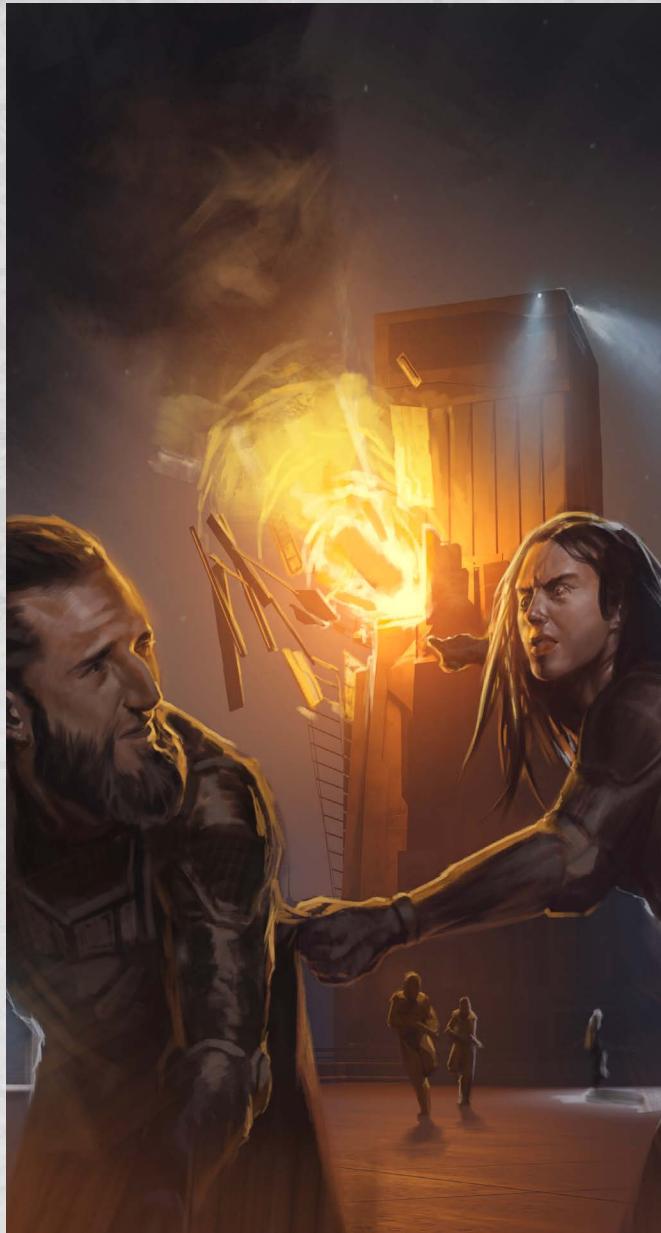
Combat is not expected but the mercenary force must run realistic exercises that may simulate combat situations.

Referee's Information

The plant is quite large, with an ore terminal leading into a processing works and smelting plant in addition to a fabrication plant. The installation makes components for heavy industry, which are shipped off to various destinations in bulk containers. The installation has a security force in the direct employ of Suntori Unified but whilst they are competent enough these personnel are spread too thin to properly secure the plant. The intent is to create large numbers of low-skilled backup personnel who can help cover ground during an intruder search and who know what to look for in case of sabotage. The concept is one of routine security rather than defeating an attack by a serious military force.

Deploying

By the time the mercenaries reach the plant, the situation has worsened. There have been several intrusions into the plant, one of which turned into a firefight, and a couple of small bombs have been detonated. The workers are frightened and threatening to go on strike or simply leave for other, safer jobs. The mercenaries' first task will be to convince them to stay at their posts.



The attempt at persuasion can be roleplayed using the standard *Traveller* rules or abstracted using the negotiation rules on page 113 of *Book 1*. The workers are vocal and argumentative, citing examples of how people have been, or could be, injured. It is clear their position is emotional rather than logical, meaning they cannot be swayed by cold, rational arguments. The Travellers will have to inspire, reassure or frighten them into remaining.

The mercenaries will need to get going straight away if they are to avert a mass walkout at the plant. A demonstration of intent and capabilities will help but at this point the mercenaries lack solid information and may be unable to take meaningful measures. A period of orientation and intelligence-gathering may be in order.

Training the Workforce

Assuming the workers can be convinced to stay, the Travellers will need to start training them. The ‘fun stuff’ like small arms training will build confidence but the workers are worried about infiltrators and bombs, which requires more complex training. The Travellers must deliver theoretical and practical training then run exercises to put it into practice. This requires undertaking a thorough exploration of the site, which in turn may lead to revelations.

There have been infiltrations and acts of sabotage on several occasions. Some of these were entirely external but in some cases there is evidence of inside help or insurmountable difficulties in getting into the plant without it. If the mercenaries are thorough in their investigation and try to figure out how the saboteurs got in, they will eventually conclude that someone, or perhaps several people, are assisting the infiltrators. It may be that the reason no-one can figure out how the saboteurs got into the secure parts of the installation is because they did not – they were already inside.

Once the mercenaries know there are insiders at work they will need to find out who they are. A careful look at workers’ backgrounds will turn up some probable candidates but it is slow going. Likewise security camera footage will reveal suspects but there is a lot of it and it is strangely patchy. If it is obvious the Travellers are looking for insiders, some of the workers will disappear. The only way to catch any of them will be to conceal the investigation and arrest the perpetrators by surprise.

This will require painstaking intelligence work, possibly undertaken by personnel with no background in the field. Help is available from the locals but the question of who to trust is a difficult one. Suspects will begin to emerge either by inference from their background and areas they have access to or by looking at surveillance footage and work logs. The Travellers might discover some unconnected information as well; workplace romances or pilfering that has nothing to do with the present situation but could be of benefit to the mercenaries or the infiltrators. Indeed, it may be that someone is being blackmailed into helping the infiltrators as a result of their illicit activities.

Exposing the insiders will stop the campaign of harassment and sabotage but Suntori Diversified has another plan. Its original intent was to scare off a lot of the workers, requiring the hiring of more, which would allow Diversified to build up a force already in the plant. It has hired a platoon-sized mercenary force to seize the installation with the assistance of this advance party and will now push ahead with its plans.

Under Attack

A few days after the insiders are rounded up or forced into hiding, the mercenaries make their attack. They will mostly be equipped in a similar manner to the Travellers and about as skilled and expect to have the advantage of surprise. Whether they achieve that depends on how diligent the Travellers are and how well they have trained their new security personnel.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Attacking Mercenaries	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Partial Grav	+4
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	3	-1
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	7	0

The Travellers have an advantage in terms of numbers, since they can call on the assistance of the full-time security contingent and the militia as well. However, these are not combat troops and are facing a professional force. If the Referee wants to give the Travellers additional problems to solve the mercenaries might have a light grav tank or some similar powerful asset which the defenders will have to counter somehow.

The client expected to pay a bonus of Cr75000 at the end of the contract if the Travellers were successful but this did not factor in the possibility of a major attack. If the Travellers manage to retain control of the installation and it remains in functional condition, the client will pay a total bonus of Cr150000.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Ensure the installation remains in the hands of Suntori Unified.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Train a militia security force to an adequate standard.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Ensure the majority of the workers do not quit.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Realise there are insiders and take steps to eliminate them.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Capture the insiders rather than causing them to flee.

A maximum TSI score of 13 is possible for this mission. Success or failure is clearly defined by whether there is anything left of the installation and who owns it at the end of the fight. The direct attack on the plant is a clear sign of escalation in the dispute between the two Suntori legacy companies and will probably lead to retaliation.

ADMINISTERING TARGET HARDENING

Rallying and training the workers can be abstracted with a couple of checks but it is not preferable for a mercenary campaign to fall into this pattern. The Travellers may want to gloss over the non-combat part of the ticket and get on to the big fight at the end. The Referee should not permit this; part of the adventure is solving different problems. Instead, the Travellers should come up with a plan for the training and experience its implementation.

'Press X to realise there are infiltrators within the workforce' is not a great way to run a mercenary campaign either. It is much more satisfying for the Travellers to come to the realisation themselves rather than as the result of an abstracted dice roll. Likewise, planning how to locate and capture the infiltrators is part of the experience and should be played out unless there is a pressing reason not to.

The attackers' equipment should be tailored to cause the Travellers some problems. In a straight infantry fight the odds are stacked in their favour as the defenders but their plans should be upended by some unexpected difficulty. This might be the tank mentioned above or some other threat but whatever the Referee decides should force the Travellers to think fast and take decisive action. A mercenary campaign is about the decisions the Travellers make, not stacking the odds in abstract combat resolution checks.

COMPANY TICKETS

The following tickets are intended for a company-sized force. The majority of mercenary units are in this category and larger formations often detach a company to take on a suitable ticket.

THE WAR ON WESTERLEA

Warfighter, Company. Cr750000 initial, ongoing.

The Cease Warmongering! movement has been gaining strength on Westerlea in recent months. Governmental control over rural areas is patchy at best and insurgents are consolidating popular support in areas where they are able to operate as they please. Government forces have suffered numerous setbacks trying to retake these areas, possibly due to leaked information on forthcoming operations.

The government of Westerlea is offering Cr750000 for a company-sized unit to commence ongoing warfighting operations in the target region. It is expected that the contract will run for several months, with a fee of Cr400000 per month after the first. This is offered on a 'thin ticket' basis, with the mercenaries operating out of a

government base and receiving supplies from government stockpiles. Operations will consist of sweeps to clear insurgents from designated sectors and keep them clear whilst the authorities restore proper control.

The insurgents on Westerlea are equipped with a mix of civilian small arms and captured TL7 military equipment. They have few artillery pieces or armoured vehicles, relying on technicals armed with light support weapons for mobile firepower. The world's military forces are much better equipped, although at a similar tech level. They are demoralised as a result of repeated setbacks and the effects of a long asymmetric conflict in which casualties have steadily been mounting.

Referee's Information

The situation is actually worse than the local government believes. Some officials in the military and civilian administration have been suborned and are considering going over to the insurgents. In the meantime they have been providing information to the CW! movement which has caused several major operations to fail. There is a real possibility that the current government will not survive the next round of elections which are due in just a few months.



Warfighting on Westerlea

As is common in an ongoing contract, the mercenaries will be expected to carry out missions as directed by the client rather than one specific task agreed upon beforehand. There is a certain amount of negotiation in these matters, depending on the letter of the contract, but normally the mercenary force has the right to make decisions that concern its personnel as well as a responsibility to provide a suitable service to the client.

The missions required by this contract will be a mix of security sweeps, strikes against insurgent strongholds, patrols and responses to attacks on government facilities or troops. There will be several missions to perform; some planned and some in response to an opportunity or emergency. The exact nature of these missions depends on the decisions made by the Travellers. If they are passive or wait to be spoon-fed the adventure they will find themselves rushing to the aid of local forces that have been ambushed or bitten off more than they can chew... and usually getting there too late.

If the Travellers are proactive and look for ways to hit at the insurgents they are likely to be more successful. The insurgents have become accustomed to knowing what their enemies are up to – and what they are not up to. They are likely to be complacent and lax at first, enabling the Travellers to hit some of their strongholds and catch them by surprise.

In between strikes the Travellers will need to engage in intelligence gathering and patrol sweeps, possibly in conjunction with local forces. They will witness the demoralisation and lack of confidence of governmental forces and may be able to help restore their willingness to fight by providing opportunities to win. If so, the mercenaries will see the character of local forces begin to change – they are not bad soldiers, just weary of a war they are not winning and losing faith in their leaders.

Local forces use typical counterinsurgency formations built around infantry riding in a mix of tracked APCs and lighter but more mobile wheeled vehicles. APCs mount 25mm cannon for fire support, whilst most lighter vehicles have a machinegun or an automatic grenade launcher on a pintle mount. Tanks are available but not normally deployed on counterinsurgency sweeps. On the occasions they have been sent out they have proven ineffective and vulnerable to emplaced explosive devices, although this is mainly a result of the information leaks rather than any deficiency on the part of the vehicles or their crews.

WESTERLEA PLANETARY ARMY COUNTERINSURGENCY FORMATION

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Westerlea Planetary Army Counterinsurgency Formation	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Composite Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Mechanised/Motorised	0
Combat	7	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	2	-2
Support	2	-2
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	5	-1
Reputation	7	0

The insurgents are mostly armed with small arms and light support weapons captured from the planetary army's bases and fire support weapons mounted on light civilian vehicles. The insurgents also possess a few tanks and other armoured vehicles but have few personnel capable of operating them; they are held back in the most important strongholds as a reserve and status symbol. The majority of insurgent forces are light, mobile and inclined to skirmish and retreat if they cannot obtain a clear advantage. Their favourite tactic is to skirmish or raid and to draw out a response force or a pursuit that can be ambushed.

CW! INSURGENTS

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	CW! Insurgents	—
Unit Size	Platoon to Reinforced Company	—
Unit Type	Motorised Light Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Mechanised/Motorised	+4
Combat	7	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	8	0

Investigations

The mercenaries may also be able to find out why the local forces have been so inept of late. Up until around six months ago they were reasonably effective but a series of confused operations led to significant defeats. The army suddenly seemed incapable of bringing the insurgents to action, other than when they got ambushed. Forward bases have been lost, some regions have become no-go areas for anyone connected with the world's administration and efficiency has generally dropped to a huge degree. This sort of thing sometimes happens in a long insurgency but rarely so suddenly.

The mercenaries might consider the drop in effectiveness and morale as a red flag; a sign that the local administration might collapse. They are not entirely wrong in this but there is more to it. Intelligence work or just making the right friends will give the mercenaries

access to records of orders going back several months and there is a pattern to be found. Orders given by certain officers are often a little vague and cause dislocations in an operation. There are also some suspicious timings; hostiles choosing to pull out of a position just before it is shelled, or ambushing a supply convoy whose route was changed at the last minute. It will become apparent that there are leaks within the local military and governmental apparatus and the mercenaries may be able to figure out who.

This sort of internal investigation is outside the mercenaries' remit but it may be in their interests to conduct one. Being on the losing side of a war is not good for the unit's reputation and a grateful client is always good for business. If the mercenaries just do their best they will encounter the same problems as the local army; the insurgents know their movements and try to evade or ambush them if possible. If at some point the mercenaries go off-script and 'adjust' (or completely ignore) their orders they will find they have more success. DM-2 applies to all operations and combat carried out in accordance with orders from the government or in cooperation with local forces. If the mercenaries are not exactly where the insurgents have been told they will be, for whatever reason, this negative DM does not apply.

Countermeasures

The insurgents will be alarmed if the mercenaries start to win successes and will try to eliminate them. This is likely to take the form of an ambush. If they have to, the insurgents will try to sucker the mercenaries into a trap using their standard tactic of attacking a vulnerable point to draw out a response force along a predictable route but they may be able to use their control of some officers in the local chain of command to order the mercenary force into danger.

If this is the case, the Travellers will receive orders to make a sweep of a certain area or strike a known insurgent stronghold held by a significant but inferior force – in short, they will be sent to operate against what they think is a weaker force and be ambushed en route or when they arrive. If the Travellers wander blindly into this they will find themselves up against three or more times their number of insurgents, equipped with a suspiciously large amount of support weapons, rocket launchers and the like. When resolving combat against this force it is considered to be more or less battalion-sized, imposing DM-4 on combat resolution in addition to any other ways the insurgents have stacked the deck.

The Travellers can avoid this death trap if they do their own reconnaissance, but may have to explain to their client why they broke off a contracted operation or fled from a mob of ill-armed militia. If they are not suspicious by this point they are likely to take heavy casualties in a series of similar incidents. It is possible they might be able to bull through anyway but it will be a tough ticket.

Counter-Countermeasures

An investigation into which officials are aiding the insurgents will take a long time, especially if they are to be lawfully removed from their positions. The Travellers might circumvent that process by simply eliminating them but this can cause complications – the mercenaries might be sure they have the right suspects who deserve what they are getting but the world government may well see this as usurpation of its authority and an attack on what were at the time still its senior officials.

An alternative is for the mercenaries, with or without the knowledge of their client, to operate outside the local chain of command much of the time, answering only to a small group of trusted officials. False information can be fed to the insurgents by way of the leaks and when they move to counter or evade an operation against them the Travellers' unit will catch them by surprise. It may take some time to set this up and in the meantime the mercenaries will operate against the insurgents as a mobile battle group. Their effectiveness will increase notably since the insurgents think they know what the mercenaries are going to do – and not do – so any contact will be unexpected. The Travellers will receive a positive DM on their first combat resolution once they start doing this. The DM is equal to the score rolled on 1D and reduces by one in each subsequent combat until it reaches zero.

Endgame

Defeating the insurgency will still be a long haul. Conflict will be ongoing for months, or even years, and the Travellers' contract will not be extended that long. There are two ways this ticket can come to an end. If the Travellers do not manage to turn the situation around their client, the world government, will collapse at the next elections in a few months. The contract will be terminated with a bonus of Cr200000 on top of monthly payments and the mercenaries encouraged to get offworld whilst the new regime distances itself from the

'warmongering, mercenary-using and thoroughly corrupt' previous government. Whilst not quite a revolution, the change of regime on Westerlea is an unpleasant business and any unit connected with it may suffer a reduction of its Reputation.

In order for the Travellers to turn the situation around they will need to win notable successes against significant insurgent forces. There are plenty of opportunities to make this happen, from incidental contacts when making a counterinsurgency sweep to targeted raids on strongholds. Any combat that results in a clear win for the Travellers counts as a 'notable success' unless the fight really was a pushover.

The loyal members of the local government can take even a slight victory and use it to restore confidence and public support. Three such wins are sufficient to satisfy the client and instil renewed vigour into the planetary armed forces. The mercenaries will be paid off with a Cr500000 bonus and as they leave Westerlea they will see news reports of more victories won by local forces. This is not uncommon – mercenaries are expensive and often paid off as soon as the locals think they can cope with the situation. The Travellers may want to keep in touch with the government of Westerlea, however. It may not be long before they are needed again.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria. They are more nebulous than is sometimes the case, since the conflict can take many paths.

- 1: CRITICAL:** Defeat an insurgent force of at least company size or capture a significant stronghold.
- 2: CRITICAL:** Win at least three clear victories against the insurgents.
- 3: IMPORTANT:** Determine that the insurgents' recent successes are due to disloyal elements in the government and military.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Do not take more than 5% casualties in any one operation or combat.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Do not suffer an inglorious defeat such as having to flee from an ambush.

With two critical, one important and two routine objectives the maximum TSI score for this ticket is 15. The Travellers could win a famous victory here... but they might end up slinking offworld in disgrace.

ADMINISTERING THE WAR ON WESTERLEA

The War on Westerlea is a large and complex ticket that could be expanded into an entire mini-campaign. The ticket presented here takes the Travellers into the situation, after which their own choices will dictate the course of the adventure. The Travellers might choose to do nothing but make combat patrols through the affected area and hope to wear down the insurgents in whatever contacts occur. At the other end of the scale they may engage in intelligence work against the insurgents and some ‘hearts and minds’ operations to win over the locals, identifying key targets and then eliminating them with precision. As always, the resolution of the situation depends on interaction between the Referee and the Travellers. The ticket provides a start and end point but the part in between is wide open.

Some Travellers might struggle with an open-ended campaign like this one, especially if they are used to the sort of adventures where they transition from one scripted skill check to the next. The Referee must provide sufficient guidance that the Travellers have had fair warning – they must gather information, make plans and act with initiative. If they fail to realise this is necessary the Travellers might not realise the ticket is slipping away from them; if so they will be puzzled when the government collapses and the ticket is declared a failure. Some Travellers may even protest it is somehow unfair they lost when they are supposed to be the heroes of the story. Fact is, the mercenary sector is not a place for heroes; it requires planning and decision-making of a clinical sort and there are never any guarantees.

AIMING HIGH

Striker, Company. MCr1.5. Success-Only.

The Dureniate Aerospace Defence Installation, better known as Fort Dureniate, was constructed to protect the nearby spaceport from attack. Like many such facilities it has heavy aerospace defences but only a light ground-level security complement. It was never envisaged the fort would be attacked by ground troops without sufficient warning to move ground forces to protect it. Unfortunately that is exactly what happened. It is still not clear how rebel forces got close enough to launch an attack but the small garrison was quickly overwhelmed and the fort has been in rebel hands for some weeks since. The spaceport is effectively out of action, since the planetary government cannot afford to risk civilian ships being fired upon. A ground assault by local forces is entirely possible but the planetary army is primarily a counterinsurgency force and lacks the finesse required to retake the fortress without wrecking the weapons installed there.

The planetary government is offering MCr1.5 on a success-only basis for a company-sized force to regain control of the installation within 10 days of arriving in theatre. The force will have to land elsewhere and travel overland, so grav-mobility is preferred. If the fort is not in government hands within 10 days the operation will be declared a failure and a full-scale assault launched.

The installation is capable of housing several hundred personnel and large numbers of insurgents have been sighted in and around it. Projected opposition is a battalion-sized force, loosely organised and equipped with basic small arms. Some defensive work has been undertaken around the fortress but for the most part this is poorly laid out and only partially finished.

Referee's Information

This is a straightforward striker ticket; seize and objective and hold it until local reinforcements arrive. The estimate of enemy force level is more or less correct, although some support weapons were seized when the fortress was captured and have now been emplaced or issued to bands of insurgents. Automated defences will fire on grav vehicles approaching the fortress unless they stay very low. The largest aerospace weapons cannot target vehicles but there are laser cannon and light missile launchers that can.

The insurgents are using the fort’s weapons as a threat, holding the nearby port to ransom. They have only a handful of personnel who can actually operate large aerospace defence weapons and could not defend against a major orbital strike. However, they are quite

capable of shooting down a freighter. Similarly, the insurgents holding the fort are loyal to their cause and willing to fight but are loosely organised and will react to any developing situation in a piecemeal fashion.

The Insurgents

The insurgents are equipped with an assortment of small arms from various sources, including a significant amount of weaponry from the captured fort. This is mostly geared to security operations in a fortress environment, such as combat shotguns and submachineguns. A scattering of body armour has been passed out among the insurgents' fighters but remains in short supply. The fortress also has a fair amount of emplaced support weaponry including mortars, autocannon and light laser cannon in addition to its long and short-ranged aerospace defence systems. The characteristics given below do not reflect the capabilities of the fort against starships or high-flying grav vehicles; if the Travellers are foolish enough to try this sort of approach they will be shot out of the sky.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Insurgents at Fort Dureniate	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Motorised Light Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	8	+1
Bombardment	4	-1
Aerospace	10	-1
Support	6	0
CEI or DEI	5	-1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	6	0



The Fort at Dureniate

The fact that the fort is in insurgent hands is deeply humiliating to the planetary authorities and is causing economic problems. Eliminating it in a massive strike is considered a viable option but the cost of rebuilding is prohibitive. Hence authorisation has been given for a striker mission to retake the fortification but with a tight time limit.

The planetary authorities envisage a low-level or ground-level approach followed by a fast assault on the installation. Local forces will be kept out of the loop until the operation starts in case there are treacherous elements that might warn the insurgents. It is thought that the capture of this prestigious installation may have been an inside job; another reason for using mercenaries. The upshot of this is that whilst local forces are holding a cordon around the fort they will not be able to support or relieve the mercenaries for at least three hours. The client may be economical with these facts.

Unknown to the client, the rebel leadership has problems of its own. Capturing the fort was a coup but now a significant body of the rebel force is surrounded in it, running low on supplies and becoming nervous. Internal divisions are appearing and tempers are fraying. A breakout is the best option but this does mean abandoning the fort and thus being seen to have lost it. The only way to salvage anything from the situation is to scuttle the weapons, possibly using warheads from the missiles stored at the fort, and to make an escape. The rebel force is coming around to the idea and has begun setting up demolition charges but lacks experience in such matters and is making slow progress.

If the mercenaries attack promptly they will find the defenders particularly disordered, with some charges planted and some elements of the rebel force ready to make a run for it. A confused situation will ensue, with a horde of converted civilian vehicles dashing away from the fort even whilst other elements are stubbornly fighting for it. If given long enough the rebels will detonate their charges, with mixed effects. Some work, some do not and most of those that do detonate are less destructive than intended. Amid the chaos, the Travellers will need to secure the base, disarm the remaining charges and possibly fend off an attack by the rebel forces that previously fled. Their leaders may be able to bring them back once they realise how small the force is attacking the fort. Amid this chaos, the Travellers need to hold out for at least three hours until relieved.

If the mercenaries drag their feet, the demolition work is likely to be nearly complete. This means parts of the fortress are liable to explode during the fighting. The demolition charges were improvised by people who did not know what they were doing and are a mixed lot. Some are underpowered or do not work at all; others are grossly overkill and will endanger anyone nearby. Control is also rather unreliable. In theory the insurgent commander has a remote detonator that lets him set off some or all of the charges after a short setup period. In fact the process is not that simple and could be interrupted if the Travellers are able to get to the command area in time. There is also the possibility that charges might detonate without being triggered.

The effects of detonating charges will vary from utterly obliterating a weapon and possibly setting off stored missiles nearby to an inefficient explosion dangerous to unprotected personnel nearby but which causes merely cosmetic damage to the target. There is also the possibility that a weapon might be damaged and made unstable, requiring the assault force to fight against a backdrop of collapsing missile launchers and exposed high-tensile orbital defence laser power feeds.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: PARAMOUNT:** Take and keep possession of the installation.
- 2: CRITICAL:** Prevent major damage being done to the installation.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Find and disarm at least some of the demolition charges.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Achieve surprise when making the assault.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Avoid altering the rebels by informing local forces of the detailed plan.

One Paramount, one Critical and three Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 15. This can be achieved at once by routine means – maintain operational security, achieve surprise, strike hard and secure the objective thoroughly. A force that makes a good plan to achieve all this is probably destined for success in the long term.

ADMINISTERING AIMING HIGH

This is a straightforward striker mission with a clear objective. The client may not give out all the information they could but smart mercenaries will be able to spot a lack of preparation for an operation in their support. Mercenaries learn not to be too reliant on the client's forces anyway, whether for assistance or in terms of security.

The climax of the adventure will be an intense firefight, which may be very confused. Some elements of the insurgent force may flee early on, only to return just as others are making their escape. Coupled with random explosions and – quite possibly – a confused and piecemeal arrival by local forces who do not have a clear idea what is going on, this could be a memorable fight for all the wrong reasons.

LEARPORT SECURE

**Security, Company. Cr300000 per month plus bonuses.
Ongoing.**

Learport is a private concern on a backwater world, making a modest profit from passing vessels. Its importance has never been great but recently there has been an increase in the amount of ships using the port. Whilst this is good news on the economic front, the reason for this upswing is worrying. A spate of planetary raids by small starships has wrecked other ports in the area and driven shipping onto different routes. It seems likely that Learport will be attacked sooner or later.

The operators of Learport are offering Cr300000 per month plus bonuses for a company-sized unit to secure and defend the port. Some routine security work will be required but the force is to conceal its nature and numbers as far as possible. The primary mission is to drive off attackers using military-level force unavailable to the regular security contingent. If the attackers' ship can be disabled or significant losses inflicted, this would be rewarded with an additional bonus.

The attackers are known to be effective planetary raiders, probably armed with military weapons and possibly equipped with heavy body armour. They may or may not use vehicles. Thus far their method has been to tackle weakly defended sites using groups of three or more small starships. Ground-based weapons are eliminated by shipboard weaponry and an assault



landing is made. Raids are normally over in a few hours, resulting in a disproportionate level of destruction for the loot acquired.

Referee's Information

This is likely to be a lengthy ticket and for that reason the client wants to pay a relatively low monthly fee. They will sweeten this with a hiring bonus of Cr250000, and can be induced to offer more if the mercenaries are persuasive. Eventually, the port will be attacked. If the mercenaries prevent serious destruction they can expect a bonus of Cr250000, increasing to Cr500000 if they do enough damage that the raiders are forced to rethink their operations. In the meantime it is a steady job, which can be good or bad.

Settling In

A long deployment can be boring and lead to skill degradation but at the same time it is an opportunity to conduct training and recover from a previous hard deployment. The Travellers need to be ready to repel an attack with almost no warning but if they plan and manage their force well they can have a contingent ready for instant action at all times and still allow other personnel to rest or catch up on training. The Referee should encourage the Travellers to lay out their plans for routine security, response to incidents at the port and their reaction to an attack. These procedures can be evolved over time and may need to be revised but a mercenary force that fails to plan ahead will have to respond on the fly when the raid begins.

The Travellers will have to deal with some minor incidents over the weeks or even months they spend at Learport and may encounter behaviour that seems much more reasonable when viewed from the other side. In other words, the port will be frequented by small merchant crews who behave like typical Travellers, and the mercenaries are not allowed to shoot them or beat them up without good reason. There may be incidental adventures such as a band of chancers trying to rob the starport bank or a ship that needs repossessing. The referee should ensure the Travellers have time to establish a routine and perhaps become complacent. They cannot predict when the attack will happen, so will have to simply react when it does.

The Raiders

If the Travellers have taken effective measures to conceal their numbers and possibly their presence, the raiders will still know security has been beefed up but remain unaware of the extent. If the Travellers are careless their opponents will be better prepared. The attack will be more like a fair fight than a trap for the raiders.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Planetary Raiders	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	5	-1
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	6	0

The raiders have established an effective method of taking installations such as Learport. They have three starships and will use one of them to reconnoitre the target ahead of time. They also collect data from independent ships – by means of gossip, bribery or intimidation – about the defences of nearby spaceports. These innocent-seeming ships pass through the port and report back. Information will be at least a couple of weeks out of date, often more, but the overall picture built up by the raiders allows them to select good targets and avoid those where the risk to reward ratio is not in their favour.

Once a target is selected, the assault is prepared by an advance force landed ahead of time if possible. These are personnel dropped off at the port during a final reconnaissance. In some cases the vessel remains at the port until its companions arrive, sending a coded go/no-go signal to trigger the operation or recalling personnel for extraction. In some cases the vessel will take off and act as if it is intending to jump out of the system or may remain in place as a forward-deployed asset.

Weakly defended targets are attacked by simply landing the ships at the port and overrunning the defences. If there are aerospace weapons present it is necessary to make a fast approach, coming in low and using terrain to conceal the vessels. The raiding force will already have the port's aerospace defence weapons targeted and can take them out almost immediately when there is a clear line of sight. The ships then land and disgorge the attacking force.

The raiders' advance party will cause mayhem as a distraction, attempting to neutralise any command facilities they can get at, while the ships disgorge about 50 ground-combat personnel. At the Referee's discretion – perhaps if the Travellers' presence has been discovered – the raiders may have some combat armour or even a light grav tank or two. Their force is easy enough to roll over a typical starport security force but if the Travellers can get organised and fight back the battle may go badly for the raiders.

The Attack

If they are complacent and do not have a set of procedures in place, the Travellers will be caught by surprise and will be still trying to get organised whilst the attackers are in the port. If they do specify workable procedures, the Travellers might spot some warning signs in the days ahead of the attack or in the last moments before it unfolds. If so, they still have a fight on their hands.

The attackers are likely to be able to disable the port's defensive anti-starship weapons and can turn starship-grade lasers on vehicles or personnel caught in the open. Their assault is rapid and well-coordinated, with a diversion from troops on the ground and a strike at command centres. The Travellers will have to figure out what is going on in the middle of a very confused situation. If they do, they will be able to repel the attackers but may not be able to stop them from retreating in good order – and maybe shooting the port up in retaliation. An ideal outcome is for the Travellers' force to ambush the attackers and inflict heavy casualties on them, perhaps taking one of their ships. This will require good coordination and a plan in place before the attack begins.



ADMINISTERING LEARPORT SECURE

This ticket has the potential to run for some time and if the Travellers are enjoying dealing with the oddball problems of a backwater starport this can be played out in detail. After a period of mundane activity the adventure builds to a climax with the raiders' attack. The Referee should give alert and conscientious Travellers a chance to spot the advance party but once the attack begins the raiders will strike hard and fast. The climax of the adventure will be a vicious firefight in the port, with civilians and outmatched local security personnel caught in the middle.

Although the Travellers have an advantage as the defenders and have a powerful force at their disposal, this situation is no pushover. The mercenaries may not be able to commit their whole force, either because it is unprepared or because they do not know exactly what is happening. The Referee is entirely free to exploit every trick the Travellers would use if they were making the raid, maximising the advantages of surprise and confusion to offset the firepower ranged against them.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Repel the attack without suffering serious damage to the port.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Inflict serious losses on the attackers.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Detect the advance party and prevent them disabling the port's command facilities.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Maintain operational effectiveness over a long deployment.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Deal with whatever incidental issues arise during the deployment.

One Critical, one Important and three Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 13. To achieve this the Travellers will need to do a decent job as portside security whilst concealing their exact numbers, sucker the attackers into fully committing and then hitting them hard. A barely successful defence that allows the raiders to break off and escape will not impress the client.



REFORM AND MODERNISATION

Cadre, Company. Cr500000 per month. Ongoing.

The Cemmbiner Republic recently undertook a major defence review, which was conducted by offworld experts. The review exposed a shocking level of graft and cronyism within the senior echelons of the armed forces. The ensuing major reorganisation has left the republic's military in chaos, with the reality of its low training and preparedness levels only now becoming apparent.

The Cemmbiner Republic is offering Cr500000 per month for a company-sized force to provide training and guidance to a segment of its armed forces. This is a 'train the trainers' operation, after which the personnel will return to their units and share their experience.

No combat is expected.

Referee's Information

The Cemmbiner Republic is paying over the odds because it has a distorted picture of what military operations and services cost. The recent review resulted in a purge of senior officers and criminal proceedings against some of them. The entire force has been disrupted but its condition is not much worse than before. A practice of falsifying documentation and staging exercises to cover defects has left the military demoralised and incompetent.

The plan is to create a roughly battalion-sized force with personnel from many different units, train it up and run it through exercises. When personnel go back to their unit they will spread their experience and take improved skills back with them. Thus one formation gets a greatly improved captain, another a group of ordinary soldiers, and the improvement ripples out through the military as a whole.

In theory this is a reasonable idea but it is more likely the improved personnel will be swallowed up by the mass of military forces and nothing will change. Certainly the process is going to be slow and painful even if it is not interrupted by disaster. This is the point where the cadre ticket takes a sharp left turn and becomes a fight for survival.

The republic's army is equipped – it might be better to say under-equipped – to TL9. Most vehicles are wheeled, with only a few grav platforms. These are far more likely to be in service with the so-called elite formations protecting the top brass or under their direct control than with ordinary field formations. There are a handful of light grav tanks and a few

CEMMBINER TRAINING BATTALION

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Cemmbiner Training Battalion	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Infantry with supporting units	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	-3
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	2	-2
Aerospace	2	-2
Support	4	-2
CEI or DEI	5	-1
Morale	5	-1
Reputation	6	0

grav APCs but they are more status symbols than warfighting weapons. Combat formations make do with wheeled vehicles and the occasional air/raft for liaison and observation purposes.

Like most planetary armies, that of the Cemmbiner Republic has not fought a war in decades. Doctrine is standard, based around mobile formations made up of motorised infantry backed up by light armoured vehicles. The aerospace defence sector gets the lion's share of the budget or did until the recent review. It is not uncommon for aerospace forces to have a large budget as they are essential to the protection of a world, but in this case the commander has built an empire that subsumes some other functions of the defence sector. This was partially accomplished by overspending on some impressive defensive systems and partly by internal politics and vicious political manoeuvring.

The commander of the aerospace forces has been dismissed from her post and is awaiting trial for misappropriation of funds but retains considerable support – not all of it voluntary. The grav vehicle

contingent of the planetary army is mostly assigned to the 'security of the aerospace defence bases' role but in practice has become an internal political instrument loyal to the aerospace commander. Its assets have not yet been reassigned to ground combat formations.

Initial Efforts

Upon arriving the Travellers are assigned a base of operations that was clearly intended for a larger force than currently deployed. All personnel not involved in the cadre assignment, other than essential maintenance and administrative staff, have been redeployed elsewhere. Some of these units are undertaking training without offworld assistance or undergoing reorganisation at their new bases.

What the Travellers are faced with is a composite force a little more than a battalion strong, formed mostly of infantry but with contingents from armoured, air defence and artillery formations. Drawn from a demoralised and often neglected military, formed on the fly and not properly constituted, this force can best be described as a shambles. The Travellers are likely to be appalled at the state of the training unit but this is only the beginning of their problems.

The Travellers will face an additional issue from the internal culture of the military. Problems are covered up or blamed on someone else rather than being tackled, for fear of displeasure from above. Assurances are worthless as a result of years of sleazy and untrustworthy behaviour of many senior officers. On top of all that, the removal of those senior officers has led to a round of promotions. Some of the new top brass are reasonably honest but have not received training for their new role; others may or may not have the same problem but are also looking forward to a career spent skimming the military budget like their predecessors. Junior officers are more honest as a rule, not having benefited from their superiors' graft but afraid to draw attention to themselves. A culture of risk-aversion and blame deflection stands in the way of real progress.

The Travellers will have to retrain personnel who have learned to care only about not being caught screwing up and will have to unsnarl the tangled chain of blame and recrimination leading back to any incident's cause. This will be slow and frustrating work, making the government's relatively generous pay offer seem too low. The unit's starting status reflects this culture, along with serious equipment deficiencies caused by budget skimming and outright theft.

Some of the problems can be identified by a thorough audit of equipment, skills and personnel. This will indicate that much of the force's 'paper' allocation

of equipment was missing long before it was formed and when its constituent sub-units came to this base they were under-allocated again. This suggests the commanders of the units that contributed personnel have taken the opportunity to write off some of their equipment shortfall by claiming it was sent with the detachment. Missing gear can be attributed to mishaps during the move or perhaps misappropriation by the mercenaries.

Skills are lacking, too. In some cases personnel have officially passed qualification courses for their duties despite never actually attending one or have received shoddy training. This will be obvious from observing them on exercise, although personnel are highly unlikely to admit they are aware of a problem. Many will straight-out lie and say they have been through the courses and they were satisfactory, although they will be vague on the details and can be caught in their lies if they say too much. Most of those doing this are not bad people, they are just afraid of what might happen to them if they are candid about the corrupt internal workings of the army.

Once the Travellers realise how bad the deficiencies in equipment and skills are they can see how to pitch the training and what they have to work with. Some problems can be resolved by properly reorganising the force and putting people where they can be most useful, along with carrying out simple exercises to shake down the training battalion into something resembling working order.

Ongoing Training

The Travellers' mission is not a simple or quick one. Equipment deficiencies must be made good somehow but this requires obtaining funds and demonstrating a need. The higher echelons of the military know all about the grift that has created the situation but cannot be sure requests for additional weaponry are not more of the same. Even if requisitions are granted the shipments may be skimmed either by profiteers or other unit commanders that want to make good their own hardware deficiencies.

The Travellers could get additional equipment by making a case to the military's political masters, which will require negotiation and persuasion. They might end up having to do it all again, harder this time, if their shipment is intercepted or stolen. Alternatively, they might steal from other units, falsify requisitions or otherwise join the orgy of graft and scrounging that is the Cemmbiner Republic's supply chain.

Training is a matter for the Travellers. The force is desperately in need of basic small-unit training to improve battlefield skills and junior leadership and ammunition to conduct marksmanship training. Officers at all levels are used to being told exactly what to do in an exercise, down to the 'at this point you will be ambushed and your unit will retire in disorder' level. Many will flounder upon having to give meaningful orders in a fluid situation, either because they really do not know how to lead or because they are afraid to commit to an action.

Debriefings are an exercise in vagueness and blame deflection but if carefully handled it may be possible to show the officers that the mercenaries are aware of what really happened and that they will not be punished for admitting mistakes providing they learn from them. Subsequent exercises are likely to involve a lot of ham-fisted and amateurish attempts to do what a properly trained officer would have no problem with but now and then moments of competence will shine through. Improvement will be gradual at first then rapid as the force gains confidence in itself and its trainers. The Travellers might even see glimmerings of professional pride.

The Travellers will have to deal with visits from newly appointed top brass, some of whom will feel the need to demonstrate how important they are by criticising the mercenaries' work. Some are obviously corrupt and want to do deals with the mercenaries and some are clearly just struggling with their new roles. Diplomacy will be necessary if the Travellers do not want to make enemies.

The Coup Attempt

Over time the training battalion's efficiency should rise and the worst equipment deficiencies will be ironed out. Some personnel will rotate out and be replaced, which in theory should increase the capabilities of the army overall. However, this will be a slow process; it is more likely the good work they have done will be lost amid the general apathy of the military establishment. Before this can become apparent, events overtake the training battalion.

Some of the dispossessed generals still have considerable support – mainly from those who stand to lose out under the new and less corrupt administration. A segment of the army is willing to follow its old generals for various reasons and this has been augmented by a battalion-sized mercenary unit hired by arms brokers who liked things as they were. Only the

lead elements of this force are as yet on-planet, as its arrival would be suspicious, but they are enough to take control of the downport when the time is right.

What follows is an attempt at a military coup. Most of the military is not in on it, but the old commanders have managed to put together a spearhead force with which to seize the capital. Their plan is to take control of the seat of government and ‘suspend’ the civilian government, which they will claim is acting under the influence of foreign mercenaries. Meanwhile their own mercenary force will take control of the starport and use it as a base of operations. They hope the army will come out in their support or at least stay in barracks until the confusion subsides. In this they are mistaken.

The Travellers may or may not hear about the arrival of a new mercenary unit at the starport. At present this is nothing more than the ‘headquarters and security contingent’ of a TL10 light infantry force. Investigation shows it is oversized for a security contingent, looking more like a combat company than a few guards for senior officers. This may ring alarm bells and the Travellers can gain more information if they try hard enough. Nobody will reveal the mercenaries’ real mission but there are documents at army HQ that indicate its senior personnel are on-planet to discuss a long-term defensive deployment. This seems to be at odds with the attempt to raise the standard of the existing forces but it is a cover story with enough substance to resist initial inquiries at least.

The takeover of the downport is accomplished by the mercenary company, officially ‘assisting by local forces measures to secure the port in the present emergency’. In fact the mercenaries do the work and the small local army force present – and illegally so – simply struts in and starts making declarations about an attack by insurgents. The port is quickly in the hands of the mercenaries, whose main force is due to land in a few days.

In the meantime the coup is launched and it goes wrong from the start. This is mainly due to the incompetence of the army the commanders were skimming from. Units begin deploying to fight for or against the coup, also in total confusion. The result is a set of scrappy encounters in which mutual ignorance creates a lottery-like situation. At the head of a semi-trained provisional battalion, the Travellers wield the only serious fighting force loyal to the government.

Defeating a coup is not within the Travellers’ remit but they might be in trouble if the coup succeeds as they are part of the process that ejected corrupt commanders from their posts. Besides, those members of the government not captured in the initial descent on the capital are soon in touch asking the mercenaries to help them resist. They are willing to pay, of course, but will initially try to talk the mercenaries into it by pointing out the danger they face if the coup succeeds.

Governmental Response

The mercenary force at the starport will not be able to commence operations outside it for a few days as it needs to consolidate its hold over the installation and set up its heavy equipment. Detachments might be available but the Travellers should not face a major offworld force during the critical part of the conflict. That is in the next few days, during which the world’s remaining forces and most of the population will gradually drift into supporting or accepting whichever side is winning.

This means that the Travellers have just a few days to respond to the situation. After that control of the capital and starport will be cemented and the coup will be successful. A determined counterattack might actually succeed but even if it does not there is a chance the populace and undecided parts of the military might rally behind the mercenaries. If all else fails the Travellers might be best off surrendering to the mercenaries at the starport. Professional courtesy might be enough to get them off planet before the coup leaders think of pinning the blame on them for subverting the government.

If the Travellers decide to fight, they will find the capital a scene of confused street fighting, with no clear picture of who controls what. The grav vehicle contingent will be committed by the generals, in the hope that it can act as a hammer to crush resistance but their own activities have ensured the tanks are poorly maintained and crewed by incompetents – however politically reliable and loyal they may be. Above all, both sides are poorly led.

The fight for the capital is the decisive moment of the coup and one in which the Travellers can make a real difference. They are likely to become involved in street fighting for strategic objectives or attempts to fend off ham-fisted strikes by badly operated grav tanks.

Their leadership and tactics will decide the fate of the capital and therefore the world. If the coup fails at the capital the mercenaries at the port will activate their repatriation clause, declare themselves neutral and just leave. Thus the defeat of the grav vehicle contingent is likely to be the pivotal moment of the battle.

COUP FORCES GRAV CONTINGENT

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Coup Forces Grav Contingent	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Composite Lift Infantry and Armoured	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	2	-2
Aerospace	5	-1
Support	5	-1
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	5	-1

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: **PARAMOUNT:** Prevent the coup from succeeding.
- 2: **IMPORTANT:** Provide meaningful training that creates an effective unit.
- 3: **IMPORTANT:** Either win in the field or get offworld before the new regime acts against you.
- 4: **ROUTINE:** Arrange a training programme for the local forces.
- 5: **ROUTINE:** Inspire the local forces to follow you into action against the coup attempt.

One Paramount, two Important and two Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 15. Note that some objectives relate to the mission as planned and others to the situation as it plays out. It is not possible, for example, to deduce objective 1 from the brief at the beginning of this ticket.

ADMINISTERING REFORM AND MODERNISATION

This ticket is an example of how a mission can deviate enormously from the original brief. The Travellers are hired to provide training, drawing them into a situation where they have to fight to survive. The coup is sudden and unexpected by the locals but the Travellers might realise something is happening just before the launch. This could occur if some of the personnel under training are suspiciously absent. Capturing one will allow the Travellers to interrogate them and learn what is about to happen. This can lead to an alternative version of the adventure, in which the Travellers gain enough warning to lead their training battalion into battle as the coup is launched. The end result is much the same, with the Travellers and their troops fighting in the streets of the capital against the much more numerous but utterly disordered followers of the coup.

BATTALION TICKETS



Battalion-sized units are the largest commonly encountered in the mercenary marketplace. Some battalion-sized units detach companies and platoons to carry out the actual missions and are essentially an administrative formation. In such cases, the force – or part of it – can take on tickets intended for smaller units. The following tickets are aimed at battalion-sized units that operate on a single deployment.

WHOLE CLOTH

Cadre, Battalion. MCr1.5 monthly plus bonus, ongoing.

The Minnent is an alliance of small states lying along the Minnent river on Merrain. Until recently it has seen little need for significant military forces and has relied on ad-hoc unilateral operations to deal with such threats as they emerged. It has recently become desirable to raise a joint force to serve the alliance as a whole, acting as a deterrent to foreign aggression and a means to secure the Minnent Basin against banditry and lawlessness.

The Minnent is offering MCr1.5 per month, plus limited support and suitable basing, for a battalion-sized formation to train and lead the Joint Defence Force. The

contract will initially run for six months, with a MCr1 hiring bonus and a similar bonus upon satisfactory completion of the contract.

Level of risk is expected to be low, although minor operations against criminal gangs are possible from time-to-time.

Referee's Information

The offer is above-board and truthful, at least as far as the client is aware. The Joint Defence Force is to comprise a brigade-sized combined-arms formation and three independent battalions plus several ‘patrol companies’ that will use and operate from rivercraft. This force is being raised from scratch and contains only a few personnel seconded from the states’ own small armed forces.

Camp Arben

Since none of the Minnent states has the facilities to train so many personnel, a base is being constructed. Named Camp Arben, this facility is supposed to be finished by the time the mercenaries arrive. Unfortunately, it is anything but. A small civilian



contractor team is being assisted – if that is the right word – by a couple of hundred recruits who should be receiving their basic training by now. Few of the facilities are finished, most are nothing more than foundations and critical materials have yet to arrive. The mercenaries can expect hundreds more recruits within days of their arrival and they need somewhere to live even before training begins.

This will be the mercenaries' first problem. The handful of more experienced personnel have managed to create a roster whereby everyone has a place to sleep in the tents and handful of semi-completed buildings but only by rotating them through strict shifts. There is plenty of food but little capability to cook it, so the personnel are eating cold rations wherever they happen to be when the food is issued. The recruits are miserable, cold and tired, and many have already attempted to desert. Few get far and at present the camp's official and self-appointed leaders have turned a blind eye to the fact that those who are caught and returned – or who wander back in after failing to reach civilisation – should face stiff penalties. Those that manage to get to nearby towns may be arrested by their law enforcement personnel and returned but in many cases, have been fed and assisted by sympathetic locals.

The Travellers will need to solve this problem and quickly. Most of the recruits can be easily directed towards assisting in an organised building and setup plan if there is one – it is in their interests to get buildings to sleep in built after all. The mercenaries will need to solve planning and administrative problems, after which it is simply a matter of pointing work gangs at tasks that need doing. This part of the task is urgent but fairly straightforward.

Once buildings start going up, it becomes possible to stow equipment properly, provide hot meals and showers and get the camp functioning as it was intended. Training can begin before work is finished, at least in a basic way. Teams of recruits will learn to work together putting the roof on their barracks or peeling spuds for dinner and should be able to see the benefits of mutual assistance. Most formal military training will require the construction of firing ranges and similar facilities but these can be put into operation in phases as the living-area work comes to a close. It is possible that in just days or perhaps a week or two the mercenaries will have something resembling a proper training camp and can start work on shaping their recruits.

Equipment is not a problem. At least, lack of equipment is not. The camp receives deliveries of equipment and weaponry daily but since the local states do not have a great deal of transportation available it arrives in small mixed loads – and at first there is nowhere to store it all. When the mercenaries arrive, vehicles for the combined-arms force are parked wherever they stopped and several heavily armed corvettes are moored in the centre of the river with no dock available. The mercenaries will need to sort all this out – or show the locals how to do so – before their training ticket can begin.

Forming the Brigade

The recruits themselves are willing enough but for the most part completely untrained. They are the product of a generally peaceable society and do not really grasp the rather permanent consequences that can arise from poor decisions or sloppy execution. With patience and good example these people can be turned into effective soldiers but the mercenaries are likely to be tearing their hair out before long.

The largest force fielded by the states of the Minnent to date has been a composite battalion. The officers assigned to command the new brigade are familiar with the principles of their task but they have no experience of operating at this scale. The brigade is to comprise three combined-arms battalions using a family of wheeled TL8 armoured cars. Some are configured as APCs, some as fire support vehicles and others as artillery mounts. Additional similar vehicles are set up as field ambulances and logistics assets. In addition the brigade has a fourth battalion organised as a support and command unit. This includes a field workshop for the vehicles, additional artillery, a command post and a security element for it.

The independent battalions are organised similarly to those in the brigade, whilst the patrol companies are divided between riverine and conventional forces. Patrol companies are intended to operate independently. They are mostly equipped with light vehicles; many of them civilian SUVs painted green. Riverine units crew small maritime corvettes equipped with support weapons. These have been rather hurriedly rushed into service but are actually quite well made by experienced shipbuilders.

Once the mercenaries get the recruits organised and give them somewhere to sleep, training can begin. As noted, this may be painfully slow. One particular weakness is in command and control – some of the so-

called officers assigned to these units were civilians a month ago and simply do not know what they are doing. The mercenaries will need to show them how to both be and to lead soldiers, without undermining them. Leaders may have emerged from the chaos of the camp construction phase. The planetary authorities can be persuaded to grant rank to those recommended by the mercenaries but whilst they may have raw leadership ability they are not trained officers.

The mercenaries' best approach, at least in terms of getting a force into the field as quickly as possible, is to find out what skills and experience the recruits have from civilian life and harness those as best they can. Most of the recruits are young people with a decent education but few practical skills, although there are administrators, drivers and potential logistics experts among them. Keeping a small-town grocery store stocked is not quite the same as ensuring a military brigade gets enough rations and ammunition but it is a starting point at least.

Basic small arms handling and the like can be taught under quite primitive conditions and small-unit tactics training can begin quickly. This in turn feeds into field leadership training of a sort. Thus a force capable of fighting can be cobbled together reasonably quickly. More advanced skills such as operating the corvettes or maintaining proper signals protocol will be much harder to teach and the Travellers do not have much time.

Fielding a Force

Despite the fact that most armies require several months to train recruits to a basic level – and that assumes they will be joining an existing formation – the client will begin pushing for operational deployments within two weeks of beginning training. The force is obviously nowhere near ready at this point and may not even have a completed base but the client is unlikely to accept that. The client begins pushing for an operational deployment two weeks in and moves to not-quite demanding it after four weeks. If the Travellers put a formation of company size or so into the field within the four weeks after this, the client will be satisfied for a while. They will expect multiple forces capable of conducting field operations within 12–16 weeks of beginning training and for the whole force to be deployable at 24 weeks. This is achievable but the units put into the field will be under-trained and prone to making mistakes even in straightforward situations.

The client can be pacified by diplomacy and a demonstration of progress but ultimately wants a field force in an unreasonably short time. One way to satisfy this requirement might be to put together a small 'field training detachment' from the least-worst of the recruits and carry out some patrols using this. Personnel can then be rotated through this detachment and gain field experience. This is workable but risky.

Opposition

Any forces fielded by the mercenaries will come up against some opposition. The Minnent region has many independent communities, some of which are controlled by criminal groups. Cultivation of plants that can be used to make illegal drugs is quite common in areas around certain tributaries, which are characterised by poor land access and thick mangrove-like terrain. The groups controlling these areas are armed, mostly with civilian weapons, and know the waterways well. They have been successful in the past at repelling intrusions by the security forces – one reason for raising the new formations – and they will attempt to ambush patrols or resist incursions.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Armed Criminals	—
Unit Size	Platoon or Smaller	—
Unit Type	Armed band	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	6	0
Bombardment	2	-2
Aerospace	5	-1
Support	5	-1
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	5	-1

The mercenaries will have to deal with the criminals, either by themselves or with the assistance of the forces they are training. The difficulty here is one of leading inept local forces in such a way that they can defeat the enemy and not be humiliated by needing rescue. Mercenaries who breeze through a situation that has just caused a local company to scatter in panic are underlining the inadequacy of the locals and may be resented for it.

In all likelihood the training will be interspersed with a series of small-scale clashes. Water transport or infiltration through the mangrove swamp will give access to some communities; others can be readily reached overland. If the Travellers are patient with the population they will find many communities that dislike the criminals or are victimised by them but can do little about it. Sweeping the area can only do so much; the criminals will come back. The answer is of course to do what the Travellers were hired for – create a force capable of securing the region and show it how to make that happen.

Along the way there will be incidents and potential disasters. Communities may request detachments of troops to protect them but this creates problems regarding logistics and the possibility of an inexperienced force causing a tragedy. The Travellers will have to pick their way through this minefield of incompetence as they train up their charges into a competent force.

There is a limit to what can be achieved in six months with completely raw recruits, especially when juggling the demands of a client who expects an elite force in the field within a few weeks. Successful operations against the criminal gangs will go a long way towards client satisfaction, especially if the local forces are coached into putting on a good performance. If the Travellers think to put on a bit of a show at the end of the contract this will also help. A parade is unlikely to go all that well unless the Travellers have been concentrating too much on drill and not enough on combat soldiering but a staged exercise or even a successful operation involving a range of sub-units will impress the client.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Do not suffer a serious defeat at the hands of criminal gangs.
- 2: CRITICAL:** Demonstrate that a competent fighting force has been created.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Be seen to provide good training and leadership.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Sort out the mess at Camp Arben.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Get a force of some kind into the field by week 8 and demonstrate competence.

Two Critical and three Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 14. To achieve this the Travellers will need to make steady progress and balance the demands of the client against the realities of the situation. A force that sallies out and meets disaster will undermine all other successes. Payment of the end-of-contract bonus depends on achieving a generally positive outcome, as evidenced by a TSI of 7+.

ADMINISTERING WHOLE CLOTH

This is a six-month deployment with a variety of missions to carry out along the way. It could be completely abstracted but a campaign where months of potential adventuring is glossed over in a couple of checks is perhaps missing the point of the game. It would be reasonable to use abstract resolution for the training and organisational side of the ticket, with checks made every few weeks to determine progress. This would be counterpointed by incidents in the field, sudden visits by local dignitaries and similar problems requiring some hands-on roleplaying.

A series of encounters with the criminal gangs, not all of them planned, will allow the Travellers to see how much success they are achieving. If the Travellers want to come out of this contract with a good success record they will need to generate their own missions. These include intelligence gathering, meeting with local communities to offer support and assistance, raids against criminal strongholds and possibly clashes with the larger gangs. A proactive mercenary force can lead elements of their brigade in small victories that build confidence and allow personnel to gain experience. Given the short time frame, the brigade will still be weak in some areas but the Travellers will have set it upon the right path.



TIP OF THE SPEAR

Striker, Battalion. MCr7.5 plus bonus.

The Merrain Federation has long endured the provocations and sometimes aggression of its neighbours. A series of police actions and defensive retaliations has unfortunately not dissuaded certain nearby states from carrying out acts of violence against its citizens. It has unfortunately become necessary to deal with a particularly threatening nearby state but the forces of the Federation are presently deployed elsewhere.

The Merrain Federation is offering MCr7.5 for a battalion-sized unit to make a strike against the city of Olrain. Olrain is main maritime port of the Danneba Republic, a small state known for its support of international piracy and attacks on shipping. The mercenary force will take control of the docks and destroy their key facilities, rendering the port useless until rebuilt. It is envisaged that this will greatly reduce the incidence of pirate attacks and coastal raiding by removing the raiders' port of choice.

Resistance can be expected from the armed forces of Danneba, although they are based elsewhere and will take time to arrive. An unknown number of pirates and raiders are thought to be in the port, equipped with whatever small arms they have managed to steal or otherwise acquire.

Referee's Information

Some of the mission brief is sort of true-ish. There have been hijackings and raids over the years and a pirated ship once made port in Olrain. The Merrain Federation has, as usual, grossly inflated and misrepresented the situation in order to create a pretext for an attack. Its intention, depending on what the Danneba Republic does, is to either wreck its economy and begin exerting influence through a loaded assistance package or to provoke a war the Republic simply cannot win. The Federation is a democratic state and needs to give its voters a pretext – however thin – for its conquests.

Strategic Situation

The Danneban Republic has been monitoring the indignant noises emanating from Federation news channels every time a ship strays off course and suspects something is afoot. It has quietly moved a defensive force into the city. This is a reinforced battalion, composed of infantry with a few armoured vehicles and artillery in support. It is equipped to local TL7 standards and inexperienced. There are no heavily armed pirates in the city but a scattering of ship's crews and law enforcement officers might try to put up a fight.

The Danneban military is modest in terms of capability and size, being mostly formed of independent infantry battalions supported by light armoured and artillery companies. Infantry are provided with unarmoured trucks for mobility and have few heavy support weapons, although adding an artillery and/or armoured company to a battalion creates a fairly potent all-arms battlegroup.

One such battlegroup is deployed at Olrain. The armoured company has cheap four-wheeled armoured cars mounting a mix of 25mm autocannon and 50mm cannon, which pose a slight threat to light armoured vehicles. Artillery is limited to a composite mortar/light aerospace defence company equipped with multi-mounted autocannon and low-quality post-launched anti-aircraft missiles. Three infantry companies are deployed at key points in the city and are constructing hasty fortifications. The artillery/aerospace contingent, along with the infantry battalion headquarters and support formation, is deployed in a warehouse complex near the docks. The armoured force is also based there but is intended to make aggressive counterattacks against intruders.

DANNEBAN DEFENCE FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Danneban Defence Force	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Battalion	—
Unit Type	Combined-Arms Battlegroup	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	0
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	3	-1
Aerospace	2	-2
Support	3	-2
CEI or DEI	5	-1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	8	0

The key to the defences is a fort the Dannebans have begun constructing. Although far from finished it will provide the defenders with some advantages. At present the fort consists of a complex of small bunkers linked by concreted trenches, surrounding a half-built strongpoint covering the main road approach to the city. The fortress itself is not manned as it is only part-built but has an infantry platoon assigned for security. The part-built fortifications could be manned by an infantry company with sufficient warning, creating a significant obstacle. When completed the fort will be a Constructed position giving DM+8 on combat resolution but in its present condition it is worth only DM+5.

The client has neglected to mention this obstacle, not least because its intelligence work has been very sketchy. If the Travellers conduct any meaningful pre-strike reconnaissance they will become aware of the fort and a proper recon or intel operation reveals it is far closer to being operational than expected. The central command area is nothing but a skeleton, although there are powered emplacements for a pair of 200mm howitzers and a ring of anti-aerospace and anti-armour weapons. These have been rushed into operational status and are glitchy but functional and crews are available for them.

The Danneban plan is to use the fort as a pivot for manoeuvres by the armoured force. Its security contingent can be augmented by an infantry company if there is warning of an attack. Its primary purpose is to engage armoured ground forces approaching the city and for this purpose it has bunker-mounted cannon capable of endangering local armoured vehicles. The howitzers are a secondary capability intended to prevent the fort from being pounded into unserviceability by enemy artillery but are capable of engaging ground targets in the direct-fire role if necessary. They are very powerful but hugely inaccurate in this role.

The Strike

The mercenary force is not expected to take and hold the city or its docks. Quite the opposite, in fact. The Federation is making this attack in order to create a legal-ish precedent for further action and does not want to be seen as a conqueror at this time. The mercenaries are thus expected to grab the target, smash up the dock facilities or otherwise render them useless and retire before significant resistance materialises.

If the mercenaries manage to achieve surprise they will find the defenders almost completely unprepared. Training levels are low and the Danneban troops are likely to fall into confusion as they rush to their pre-

HALF-BUILT FORT

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Half-Built Fort	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Static Emplacement	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Static	—
Combat	8	+1
Bombardment	6	0
Aerospace	5	-1
Support	4	-1
CEI or DEI	6	-1
Morale	9	0
Reputation	8	0

designated positions. It would be possible to predict where these are likely to be if the Travellers do their homework, enabling them to intercept or even ambush the defenders and exploit their lack of coordination.

The fort is a problem, however. Even defended only by its weapon crews and security platoon it is a threat to anything within range of its big guns and reinforced with an infantry company it might be difficult to deal with. It could be bypassed by a grav-mobile force but even this gives the defenders some advantages as it creates a zone they do not have to defend with mobile forces. Putting the fort out of action will be a primary target for wise Travellers but this has nothing to do with mission success as far as the client is concerned. The client wants the docks smashed up and the fort is merely an obstacle to be overcome.

This fight can be almost ridiculously easy or it can go horribly awry. If the mercenaries do not catch the Dannebans on the hop they will run into inexperienced but determined soldiers in prepared

positions. These have been well thought out – local forces have little practical experience but have had plenty of time to study their strategic situation. The mercenaries will face interlocking and mutually supporting strongpoints supported by a small mobile element using the force's few armoured vehicles, with aerospace denial in place and heavy artillery available in support.

If the mercenaries do not win quickly they face an additional problem. The Danneban armed forces are modest but contain a single light armoured battalion. This force uses wheeled vehicles with good road mobility and will set out from its base as soon as possible after fighting is reported. It will still be five hours before the lead elements approach the city. If the Travellers are still in the city – or worse, are engaged with defenders outside it – they will be caught by the armoured force. This will not be a good day out for anyone involved. In all likelihood the Danneban armed forces will be so badly mauled they never recover but casualties among the mercenaries are inevitable.

Demolition Work

The Travellers need to demolish the docks and, ideally, sink the ships in the harbour before withdrawing. Done well, this operation is a surgical strike that stuns the opposition followed by an efficient demolition job and rapid withdrawal. A poorly planned or executed operation will turn into an urban bloodbath and it is possible for the mercenaries to become trapped in a hostile city with armoured vehicles prowling around outside.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Destroy facilities in the dock area.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Keep civilian casualties to a minimum.
- 3: IMPORTANT:** Withdraw before the armoured force arrives, avoiding contact.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Sink some or all of the ships in the harbour.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Catch the defenders by surprise.

One Critical, two Important and two Routine objectives give a maximum TSI of 14. A well-planned operation will likely meet all of these objectives, whereas one that goes awry will probably fail multiple objectives and perhaps become a fiasco. This is the nature of high-tempo striker missions like this one; big wins or big failures are more common than a middle of the road outcome.

ADMINISTERING TIP OF THE SPEAR

The Travellers will have to learn sooner or later that they must perform reconnaissance and intelligence work before piling in. Those who fail to do so might accuse the Referee of being unfair when the inevitable disaster unfolds but lack of planning results in losses that can only be considered self-inflicted. The Referee should be fair but merciless.

Conventional wisdom holds that a three-to-one advantage is required for a successful attack but this assumes equivalently equipped forces. Advantages can come from more than just numbers; technology and tactics also count for a lot. In the final analysis, however, this is a straight in-and-out raid. Elements of the defending forces may never engage and there is no need to mop up those that are bypassed. Such units may try to join the fighting but are likely to become disorganised once they depart from the pre-prepared defensive battle plan. They will arrive piecemeal if they arrive at all, creating a confused situation in which the force with the best leadership, communications and training has a huge advantage.



WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Warfighter, Battalion. MCr2.5 per month plus bonuses.

Ongoing.

The Tegrataal is a region characterised mainly by grassland and small forests, located on one of the worlds affected by the Cease Warmongering! movement. Its population have long stood apart from the rest of their world, occasionally demanding independence or autonomy but mostly being content to ignore wider affairs as much as possible. Open conflict between the CW! movement and the planetary government has provided an opportunity for secession and the cities of the Tegrataal have enthusiastically embraced it. The move went almost unnoticed for several months but now the government has begun to threaten forcible reintegration.

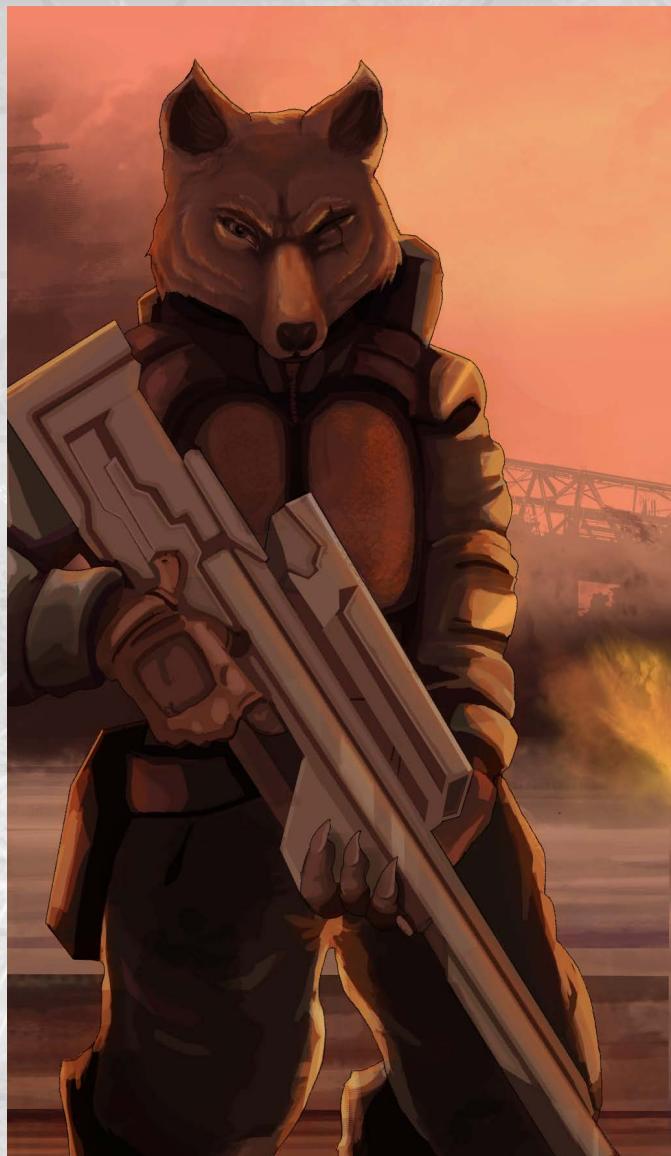
The Cities of the Tegrataal (CT) are offering MCr2.5 per month for a mobile battalion-sized force to conduct defensive operations along its southern frontier. Detachments will be necessary to cover key points, along with a mobile element to counter incursions. Some support will be available from local forces, increasing over time as units reach combat readiness. A bonus of MCr1.5 is payable upon arrival in theatre and an additional MCr2.5 will be payable for every three months served.

It is expected that the planetary government will attempt reconnaissance and testing intrusions in the near future. If these are firmly countered the situation may not escalate and independence should be recognised in due course. An aggressive response is therefore required, although the mercenaries may not attack targets outside CT territory.

Referee's Information

The Cities of the Tegrataal (CT) is a fledgeling alliance that is trying to evolve into an organised state. It might get there someday but at present it is still learning what statehood means. The Cities inherited some military assets when they declared independence and are trying to reorganise them into a coherent defence force. In the meantime, preparations for forcible reintegration have become obvious.

The CT analysis of the situation is reasonably accurate, up to a point. The world government will indeed attempt to probe the alliance's defences with the occasional reconnaissance in force. This is partly to obtain information and partly to inflict painful but minor defeats. The world government hopes that the independence movement will fall apart – which it might



– if it is shown the Cities cannot defend themselves. The Travellers' performance in the field will give the independence movement a chance to really get going – or not – and may shape the future of the region.

Opposed Forces

Local forces are equipped to TL9 standards and competent due to involvement in many offworld conflicts. This is the origin of the situation; the Cease Warmongering! movement has waged a long, bitter and thoroughly ironic campaign, which still ties down most of the planetary armed forces. The world government will seek to reintegrate the cities on a shoestring budget, hoping they can be pressured rather than forced back into the fold. A few minor skirmishes are unlikely to cause deep-seated divisions in the way that an all-out war might, so the government is taking a soft and cautious approach.

This will change over time but at first the Travellers will face incursions by company-sized units aimed at probing defences and essentially picking small fights with the as-yet-disorganised forces of the Cities. Infiltrations in section and company strength will also be made, again partly for reconnaissance and partly to cause damage for little cost. The first few weeks of the campaign will be characterised by raids and skirmishes that will keep the Travellers on their toes. They will have to respond to reports of enemy forces over a wide area – reports that tend to be rather garbled and lacking in necessary details if they come from local units.

The central government has constructed forward bases near to the Tegrataal region, each with a small defensive contingent. These are currently off-limits to the mercenaries, which may be galling but is not an uncommon situation when an outcome short of war is still possible. From these forward bases the government has deployed three types of force: light armoured, ground recon and aerospace strike.

The light armoured force uses tracked vehicles with a higher strategic mobility than typical tracked AFVs but which mount relatively light weapons. All are built on the same chassis and engine package, being fitted out as cavalry fighting vehicles, direct support vehicles or indirect support vehicles. Infantry are integrated with the vehicles and operate in close conjunction with them, resulting in a designation as cavalry rather than infantry.

These forces are effective in the fast strike role or in a fluid battle in the open, with cavalry fighting vehicles remaining in close support of their dismounted infantry. Lasers and light missile weapons are favoured for CFVs, with indirect support vehicles mounting 120mm gun-howitzers and direct support variants equipped with either rapid-fire 40mm autocannon or a high velocity 80mm gun capable of putting holes in most light armoured vehicles. This force punches above its weight but is vulnerable to soldier-portable anti-armour weapons of one or two Tech Levels above its own.

The light armoured force will be used to make incursions in force into CT territory but not usually very far. The intention is to demonstrate that the cities cannot defend their territory or to eliminate small forces caught by reconnaissance of a company-sized formation. These formations are cautiously handled in strategic terms, since the government does not want to take embarrassing losses but tend to be highly aggressive when contact is made. The light armoured force is also available to respond to a

GOVERNMENT LIGHT ARMOURED FORCE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Government Light Armoured Force	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Armoured Cavalry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Wheeled	—
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	3	-1
Aerospace	3	-1
Support	6	0
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	10	+2

situation that is getting out of hand, such as a ground recon force that becomes involved in a protracted action and cannot break contact.

The ground recon units are similar to special forces used by many states but make up a higher proportion of the government military than might be encountered elsewhere. Their standards are not up to those of high-end elite formations but they are skilled infiltrators. A ground recon unit will have some light grav vehicles in reserve for transportation into the target region and exfiltration after the mission is complete. Most operations are conducted on foot, using stealth rather than firepower and generally concerned with reconnaissance rather than destruction.

Ground recon units typically operate on the section level, with teams of up to 10 personnel carrying out lengthy missions in the field. A team will include a mix of personnel, all of whom have good basic combat skills and a specialism. This will include medics,

marksmen, explosives handlers, cyber-intrusion experts and other areas of expertise, typically equipped with weapons of their own choosing. Whilst unable to stand up to a large enemy force on their own, an infiltration section could paralyse one with some well-placed explosives, assassination of senior commanders and a carefully directed air strike before melting away. Close cooperation with aerospace forces is a speciality.

The ground recon units will be sent over the border to conduct reconnaissance and sabotage operations. Their remit is to demoralise the CT forces with nuisance attacks and to embarrass them by their failure to deal with the problem. If a response force can be drawn out by sabotage then ambushed by air or armoured forces, the recon forces will try to make this happen – but the converse may also be attempted. One common trick is to make a raid with light armoured forces, quietly dropping

off a recon section somewhere. This unit can observe the response force to gather data, direct air strikes onto it, harass its overnight laager with sniper fire or perhaps even drop a bridge span to trap the response force whilst the raiders turn on it. These units are highly motivated, well led and creatively used by their governmental masters and might prove to be the most frustrating enemies the Travellers face in the course of this ticket.

The aerospace strike forces use a combination of light grav sleds equipped with support weapons and conventional aircraft. They are effective but not used to operating in an environment where there are significant aerospace threats so might be complacent until they receive a wake-up call. Most aircraft are equipped with guided bombs and light missiles for ground attack and have very limited air-to-air capability.

GROUND RECON

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Ground Recon	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Infantry	-3
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-3
Support	4	-2
CEI or DEI	10	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	10	+1

AEROSPACE STRIKE

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Aerospace Strike	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	Mixed Aerospace/Grav Strike	+12
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Aerospace	—
Combat	1	-2
Bombardment	8	0
Aerospace	4	-1
Support	7	0
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	11	+2
Reputation	10	+1

The forces of the Cities are drawn from the same army as those of the government but are not yet well organised and have been augmented with many new and part-trained recruits. The result is a rather tangled chain of command from which information rarely emerges in a coherent form. CT units will fight with varying degrees of enthusiasm and are a curious mix of clueless noobs and long-service professionals. They have few vehicles, as those elements of the local forces that did not want to become independent took them when they retreated from the region. The best use the Travellers can make of these units is as static defence garrisons or what amounts to tripwires but they will improve over time. Transport and armoured support remains a problem.

CT INFANTRY

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	CT Infantry	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Partial Motorised	0
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	2	-2
CEI or DEI	5	-1
Morale	6	0
Reputation	8	0

Early Phases

The early phase of the campaign, around 10 weeks or so, is characterised by intermittent incursions and skirmishes. The Travellers will have to take the lead in dealing with these, as the local forces tend to react slowly and in an inept manner. If the Travellers do not take action a rather depressing pattern emerges, of CT forces bumbling their way across the countryside in response to a garbled contact report, only to run into a counterattack or air strike.

One gambit the government forces use is to spoof radio traffic and either add to the already impressive confusion besetting the CT units or to elicit a response. This works repeatedly if the Travellers do not find an effective counter whilst at the same time the governmental forces become more daring and aggressive. They may even cheekily draw a forward-deployed company out of its positions, slip a recon force in and blow up their ammunition whilst the main CT force is away. It is clear the governmental forces are making fools of the CT commanders and this has an effect on support for the secession movement as well as morale in its military.

Astute Travellers will spot the pattern and the trend towards escalation and may be able to analyse the tactics in use. These are not complex but are varied enough to be at least somewhat unpredictable. The aim, at least in the early phase, is to inflict embarrassing defeats using limited operations, exposing government forces to as little risk as possible. If the Travellers can mitigate the effects of these incursions or even inflict defeats upon them, the secession movement will continue to consolidate its position and the effectiveness of its forces will rise – albeit slowly.

Escalation

About 10 weeks into the campaign the world government finally bites the bullet and transfers troops from fighting CW! insurgents to the Cities theatre. The Travellers may note this if they are paying attention to reconnaissance and intelligence. If not, they are likely to lose the ensuing fight.

Government forces continue to probe the defences and cause a diversion, whilst a combined-arms brigade prepares a few kilometres from the provisional border. The mercenaries might consider a pre-emptive strike, which would more than likely be effective, but they are forbidden by their rules of engagement from attacking outside territory claimed by the Cities. If they do carry out an effective attack they provide the world government with propaganda-fodder and actually harm the CT cause whilst scoring a military success.

As it is, the mercenaries must wait to be attacked. Requests for permission to strike pre-emptively will produce a lot of debate and discussion at a high level but no coherent answers. Eventually the government brigade will roll across the border. It is a mechanised infantry force using tracked APCs mounting fire support weapons, with light mobile artillery in support. An attached armoured element uses tracked AFVs mounting heavier weapons. This is a well organised and experienced force but one that has become used to fighting insurgents. It is not as effective as its commanders would like when operating en masse.

The Travellers could simply plonk their force in the way of the advancing brigade and dig in but they are probably better off to try for an encounter battle where they can defeat one element of the enemy force before others come up. Trying to take on the whole brigade at once will be a problem unless the Travellers' force is very well equipped.

What degree of support is available from local forces is up to the Referee. By this point in the campaign the locals are beginning to get organised but their morale is shaky and they are not up to complex manoeuvres. These forces are capable of putting up a good fight from prepared positions or following a simple plan and could make an effective 'anvil' with the mercenaries acting as a 'hammer'.

However they do it the mercenaries will have to halt the advance of the government forces before they reach the nearest city. The fragile alliance is likely to fall apart if it is demonstrated to be unable to protect its members and cities will seek the best reintegration terms they can get in this case. On the other hand, causing the government brigade to retire will bolster the alliance and thus have long-term consequences in addition to dealing with the military threat.

If the Travellers are successful they will receive their bonuses when they hand over to the Cities' greatly improved armed forces. They will also receive a letter of congratulation from the leaders of the militant Cease Warmongering! movement. The jumble of ironies inherent in that is likely to be a talking point for some time afterward.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Successfully oppose the early incursions.
- 2: CRITICAL:** Force the government brigade to retire somehow.
- 3: IMPORTANT:** Do not operate outside the border.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Become aware of the government brigade by good intelligence work or other means.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Liaise effectively with local forces.

Maximum TSI for this mission is 15. This can be achieved in a variety of ways – it really does not matter if the government brigade retreated due to a bluff or was driven from the field. As always, the Travellers can find many ways to win so long as they do actually win.

ADMINISTERING WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The Travellers will have to fight several times before the big showdown and coordinate responses against multiple threats. With patchy and contradictory information from local sources, they may not be able to assign resources perfectly to any given situation. This is part of being a mercenary and it is why clients are willing to pay for experts.

The government forces are not stupid and will most certainly not march blindly onto the guns of the mercenaries and their allies. If the Travellers hope to build a fortified position and have the enemy attack it they will be sadly disappointed. Indeed, if they passively await attack they will probably lose the war. For example, the government brigade probably has more artillery than the Travellers. If so, it can stand off and bombard their position, forcing them to come out and attack or abandon their defences. If they do neither they will be steadily ground down.

There are other ways the government can seize the initiative. If the Travellers are passive, mobile forces will attack where they are weak. Enough small defeats will gall the Cities' leaders into demanding action, or even firing their mercenaries, and will undermine the independence movement. The Travellers must act, either on their own terms or those of the government forces. This is what this mission is all about – solving a complex military problem rather than simply resolving a combat.

FLIPPING A COIN

Security, Battalion. MCr2 per month plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The world government of Fairgreen has been unjustly targeted by the Cease Warmongering! movement, whose illegal activities have escalated into a major insurgency. This damages the infrastructure of the world and causes casualties among its citizens. Recently the very fabric of society has been damaged, with some regions considering secession from the world government. The time has come to end the insurgency. Having issued an ultimatum to the insurgents to stand down, the government is now seeking offworld assistance.

The government of Fairgreen is offering MCr2 per month plus thin-ticket levels of support for a battalion-sized force skilled in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. A bonus of MCr10 is payable if the insurgency is severely curtailed within six months of the force's arrival, dropping by MCr1 per month thereafter.

The contract will require a mix of defensive security operations and active removal of insurgent strongholds. Intense combat is to be expected on an intermittent basis. It is thought the opposition are in general not well supplied with heavy weapons or armoured vehicles.

Referee's Information

The insurgents have gained a good foothold on Fairgreen and control some rural regions. Small urban insurrections are taking place in the cities. These are mostly contained and being slowly ground down by the security forces, although this is taking up a lot of resources and distracting attention from the rural situation. It is this that the authorities want the Travellers to counter, as their own forces are taking unacceptable losses and making little headway against an increasingly confident insurgency.

Opening Moves

The Travellers will be expected to begin security operations as a matter of urgency, launching patrols into the insurgent-controlled countryside in order to demonstrate the government's willingness and ability to challenge the insurgents. This will rapidly build into a full-scale counterinsurgency operation comprising intelligence-gathering, strikes against insurgent strongholds and a campaign to win over segments of the populace that might otherwise support the insurgents.

Exactly how the Travellers go about this depends on the circumstances and their preferences. Many Travellers will prefer to seek a clear target then smash it rather than groping about in the dark or conducting nebulous actions to influence an apparently unreceptive populace. However, defeating an insurgency requires a package



of measures. If the Travellers focus too much on the military aspects of the ticket they might find themselves lamenting that they won every battle they fought... yet are being shipped out of a captured starport without payment for a ticket that went unaccountably awry.

The Travellers' early goals need to be to get some boots on the ground and be seen to be doing something, whilst gathering intelligence and looking for a way to get ahead of the curve. The first is easy enough; it would not be difficult to identify a few areas that seem to be under threat and put patrols through them. This does run the risk of being attacked or even ambushed but good battlefield skills and the availability of a reaction force can offset this. Something as basic as being seen in areas where the planetary army is not will signal a change in the wind as far as the populace is concerned. This will garner some interest and so long as the Travellers do not meet with immediate disaster the segment of the populace opposed to the insurgency will be encouraged. The insurgents themselves will greet the mercenaries arrival with blasts of propaganda proclaiming their deployment as proof the government is just a pack of warmongers but in reality there is little else the government can do now that the CW! movement has become an open insurgency.

Striking at Hearts and Minds

One of the factors the mercenaries are up against is the entrenched idea that the government is really a collection of warmongering egotists who use force to

get what they want. There is little truth in this, other than the fact that Fairgreen did send troops to assist in a couple of offworld situations but the message has been shouted endlessly and taken root with anyone who dislikes something the government has done. The insurgency has many passive supporters among the populace and many more people consider it is 'fair enough'. The general image is that the government chose this fight by attacking the peaceful Cease Warmongering! movement and is now reaping its just rewards. This has led to an increasing anti-war movement that is at present peaceful, with echoes of the original CW! campaign.

If the government is not seen to get on top of the situation soon there is a real risk of being forced into negotiations with the insurgents. The alternative, of course, is to use force to end the conflict. Every attempt to do so strengthens the popular opinion about governmental warmongering. This might be acceptable if the use of force was successful, so the mercenaries will be under a great deal of pressure to produce results quickly.

In order to do that the mercenaries need to hit targets, which means identifying them first. Strikes must be precise to avoid fuelling the propaganda war with collateral casualties – and the government genuinely wants to avoid killing its own people. Violence alone will not be enough, however. The Travellers will need to conduct their own hearts and minds campaign. The only way this insurgency can be defeated is to chip away at its popular support. It can be weakened in other ways, especially if the Travellers are able to think creatively.

Outside the Box

The Travellers are in the position of trying to oppose a violent insurgency without giving it a moral high ground by using violence. A counter-propaganda campaign to point out the hypocrisy of the CW! position is underway but is largely ignored by the populace. If the Travellers can discredit or weaken the CW! movement without a large body count, they may be able to get back into the game.

One option is to identify the insurgents' sources of weaponry and equipment. These include importers, smugglers and workshops that convert civilian vehicles into weapons carriers. In some cases a dent can be made in the supply chain by something as simple as identifying an offworld arms dealer and making them stop providing weapons to the insurgents. This might be done through legal channels but violence or intimidation might make the situation worse. Simple bribery can also work; if it is more lucrative not to supply arms, most dealers will select that option.

Gambits of this nature can undermine the capabilities of the insurgency, whilst more straightforward raids on the arms supply chain will not only disrupt the flow of weaponry but provide fodder for counter-propaganda. A large cache of arms intercepted on its way to an organisation calling itself Cease Warmongering! could be an embarrassment if played well in the media.

Direct Action

Whatever other action is taken, it will be necessary to operate against the insurgents somehow. Since they are operating in defiance of their planetary government's laws they can be treated as criminals rather than combatants. This is a tricky business, since it means operating within the law against those who are ignoring it, which can place the Travellers at a disadvantage. It does give them a superior moral position, however. If the Travellers are merely assisting the local police in rounding up armed criminals... that is likely to be perceived differently to charging around the countryside in tanks. If the Travellers choose to go down the full-military route they simplify their operations but play to the enemy propagandists.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Typical CW! Insurgent Band	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Motorised Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	4	-1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	5	-1
Morale	8	+1
Reputation	9	+1

As with most counterinsurgency operations there will be negotiations interspersed with use of force, or threats of it, and there will be steps back for every few forward. Often the mercenaries will be more or less certain that individuals are insurgents or supporting them but have no evidence and will be forced to release them. They could go down the route of executing suspected rebels but this is a war crime. The government would probably turn a blind eye for a while but eventually the mercenary unit will come under investigation. Atrocities will be used by the CW! movement, which is adept at such measures and may ultimately lead to the government losing the war.

There are no perfect answers to this situation. The mercenaries are acting lawfully if they strike an identified insurgent camp and respond to hostile action with lethal force, and whilst this will be played by the CW! propagandists a good strike can weaken the organisation or drive supporters underground. The usual model for defeating an insurgency of this kind is to weaken its military arm until it cannot hold an area, then sweep in and clean up with law enforcement personnel. At the same time support is undermined by winning over the populace until the insurgency fizzles out.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Greatly reduce the power of the insurgent movement in at least some areas.
- 2: CRITICAL:** Conduct operations to win over the population and weaken support for the movement.
- 3: IMPORTANT:** Do not cause atrocities or at least do not get caught.
- 4: IMPORTANT:** Capture some of the insurgents' senior leaders for a public trial.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Curtail popular support and/or the shipment of arms to the insurgents.

The maximum TSI for this ticket is 16, which will not be at all easy to achieve. Counterinsurgency operations are among the most difficult to complete successfully and cleanly, and those forces that can pull it off are rarely short of work.

ADMINISTERING FLIPPING A COIN

As with most larger-unit tickets this is a mini-campaign rather than a quick in-and-out. The Travellers will need to deal with a variety of situations, many of them tricky and threatening but not necessarily violent. One possible adventure is dealing with allegations that their soldiers fired on unarmed civilians – an allegation the CW! movement is fond of throwing around. The Travellers may be investigating their own people or attempting to prove they did not carry out an atrocity.

For the most part, operations will be carried out by detached parts of the force. These will often be outnumbered when combat occurs – insurgents have a tendency to melt away when overmatched – but a good system of mobile backup and operational orders that do not place elements of the unit beyond support will offset this. Indeed, an element of seduction is necessary if the insurgents are to be brought to action on favourable terms. This means creating a situation where the insurgents want to fight, thinking they can win, then deploying additional forces to defeat them and perhaps more to cut off their retreat.

The Travellers will face a wearying grind of patrols that do not make contact with the enemy, surly but not actively hostile civilians who may well be harbouring insurgents, the occasional roadside bomb or attack on an outpost and similar frustrating situations that make the ticket feel like groping around in fog. This can be countered by collecting information and evidence until a significant stronghold can be identified. Hauls of captured equipment and personnel, shown off on national media, might be worth more to the mercenaries than praise or medals since they indicate progress being made.

SPECIALIST TICKETS



Specialist tickets vary considerably in terms of the actions to be carried out and the size of the force required. Typically a small group of armed experts are required, who must have certain skills or equipment among them. Specialist tickets also include contracts for supporting formations such as medical or combat engineering units, in which case larger formations may be required.

MUCKRAKING

Specialist, Section. Cr100000. Success-only.

Port Reikir depends heavily on maritime shipping to take its goods to market on-planet. This in turn requires regular dredging of the deep-water channel between the maritime docks and open sea. Being greedy fat cats concerned only with their profit margins, the port's operators have only obtained one dredger. It is a large vessel, custom-built with imported equipment, and would take some time to replace.

A client who wishes to remain anonymous is offering Cr100000 for a force to seize the dredger, guide it into the deep-water channel and scuttle it in the most inconvenient place possible.

The dredger is not expected to be guarded when in operation, but routine security is in place around the maritime docks. Port Reikir has a modest security complement equipped with TL12 small arms. Heavy armour and weapons are not thought to be present.

Referee's Information

The client is obviously the world government, which resents the economic advantages enjoyed by Port Reikir. The attack will be blamed on 'rogue elements' or perhaps terrorists. Scuttling the dredger will not only cause the channel to silt up over the coming weeks, it will also block the channel if done correctly. Salvage equipment suitable for raising the wreck is available but the owners of Port Reikir have not invested in it. If they want the wreck removed quickly they will have to ask the planetary government for help. The same is true if they want to replace the dredger. In addition to disrupting the shipping in and out of the port, the mission is intended to force the local government to grant economic concessions in return for assistance.



The Target

The dredger is quite a big vessel, mostly automated with a crew of just four personnel. There is a gun aboard, in the emergency locker, but the crew will not resist a boarding by heavily armed mercenaries. If the dredger is to be boarded in the docks, the mercenaries will have to contend with portside security patrols, who are armed with sidearms and batons.

The dredger is easy enough to control even for an unskilled person but there is more to operating it than clicking on a waypoint. The Travellers will have to contend with currents and eddies in the delta and possibly other watercraft. Getting the dredger to the right spot also requires knowledge of watercraft operations, which is what makes this a specialist rather than a commando ticket.

Opposition

As already noted the dredger crew are not combatants and cannot put up any significant resistance. If the mercenaries are truly inattentive someone might get clobbered with a big spanner as the crew try to escape, but otherwise they are not going to be a problem. However, once the alarm is raised the port's security force will arm up and make a response. Personnel have military body armour and advanced combat rifles available but few support weapons more powerful than a light machinegun or heavy laser rifle. They do have access to a few grav vehicles that could be used to assault the dredger if necessary.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	CT Infantry	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	8	-1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	5	-1
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	10	+1
Reputation	8	0

Aftermath

This should be a very straightforward mission in terms of the hijacking and scuttling but sometimes the adventure is not the mission itself. A combination of speed, stealth and a bit of bluff might carry the whole thing off without a hitch but there is certainly the potential for this mission to go badly wrong. Even if it does not, there is an additional complication that the client does not really care about and the Travellers may fail to foresee.

Port Reikir is the world's main spaceport, with few ships using the government-controlled official starport. Getting offworld might be a problem if the Travellers are identified. If they use simple measures such as covering faces and not leaving evidence lying around that can identify them, the Travellers will still fall under suspicion if they travel through the starport. A band of military-looking people leaving the planet just after a commando raid is a bit obvious.

The Travellers will be pulled in for questioning in this case. They do not have to prove their innocence, merely avoid the local authorities having enough evidence – or self-incriminating statements – to charge them. The Travellers might solve this problem by being careful, frantic courtroom weaselling or finding another way offworld. The Referee should note that in the case of operations of this sort a licensing authority cannot provide legal protection if the mercenaries took actions that constitute a crime in the locality. This is a matter of common sense for most mercenaries but there are some who cannot tell the difference between a legitimate act in a war-like situation and a covert operation that requires a discreet departure from the locality.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: PARAMOUNT:** Put the dredger out of action in a manner that makes it difficult or impossible to repair.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Scuttle the dredger where it will be most inconvenient for the port's operators.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Avoid unnecessary loss of life.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Remain unidentified or ensure there is no evidence to use against the mercenaries.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Conceal the client's identity by ensuring there is no evidence tying them to the mission.

One Paramount, one Important and three Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 14. The client will consider the mission successful enough to pay the mercenaries if the dredger is put out of action for a few weeks but really wants it completely wrecked and forming a silt island in the shipping channel. A high level of success will induce the client to assist in sneaking the mercenaries offworld.

ADMINISTERING MUCKRAKING

This is, in essence, a straightforward mission but the aftermath has the potential to become very complicated. If the mercenaries do good reconnaissance and intelligence work they should be able to take control of the dredger bloodlessly and without the authorities being any the wiser. Once the vessel starts behaving oddly, someone will take notice. However, administrators at the port are used to seeing the dredger going out to do its work and might not consider there is anything amiss even if it does not have a mission plan filed. They will contact the vessel and ask what is going on but can be bluffed for a while.

If, or more likely when, the alarm is raised there will be a response from the security force. This is the part of the mission the mercenaries need to have planned most carefully. They will need to exfiltrate, possibly under fire, and will be pursued if they are detected. Pursuit will not be especially determined, however; once the force leaves the vicinity of the port the security detachment will return to base. Getting offworld after this might pose problems but the mercenaries can mitigate risks with good planning.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Specialist, Company. MCr1 plus bonuses. Ongoing.

Port Reikir is connected to the mainland by a pair of causeways across the wide river delta, providing both road and rail links to local communications hubs. The importance of these overland links is less than that of the maritime shipping facility at the port and maintenance on these links has received a low priority for some years. As a result, the aggressive local flora has begun to seriously encroach on the landward stretches and the swampy areas around some of the bridges are also in need of clearance. Recent events have brought to light the vulnerability of the port's transport network and it has been deemed necessary to take remedial action.

The operating consortium of Port Reikir is offering MCr1 for a company-sized unit on a three-month deployment, with the possibility of extension. An engineering unit is preferred but a force with some combat engineering capability will suffice. This force will undertake forest clearance, vegetation removal, inspection and repair of both major causeways, and install security emplacements at key points.

Combat, as such, is not expected although there are natural hazards in the operating environment.

Referee's Information

Port Reikir is becoming concerned about possible damage to its transport links, not without cause. The desire to repair and secure the causeways is genuine but the port's operators are also keen to have additional defensive capability on call. They do not want to be seen nervously hiring mercenaries, so have compromised on a combat-capable engineering formation that can get necessary work done during its deployment.

Working in the Field

The work is actually quite difficult and worthy of a combat engineering unit. Local vegetation is persistent, tough and grows quickly. It must be aggressively cleared and kept back with barriers, concreted-over areas or defoliants. The port authority is entirely happy for the mercenaries to do this but the causeways technically lie outside the territory of the port. Local officials will attempt to interfere with the work on environmental grounds and will be surprisingly pushy over the matter. This is a symptom of the general antipathy on-planet towards the port and its operators.

The mercenaries will, if they are diligent, discover several defects either in the original construction or caused by encroachment of roots, undermining by river currents and the like. These are sufficient to eventually cause sections of the causeway to fail, which will happen at some point if the mercenaries are lackadaisical. Repairs will have to be undertaken under difficult conditions but that is what combat engineers do for a living.

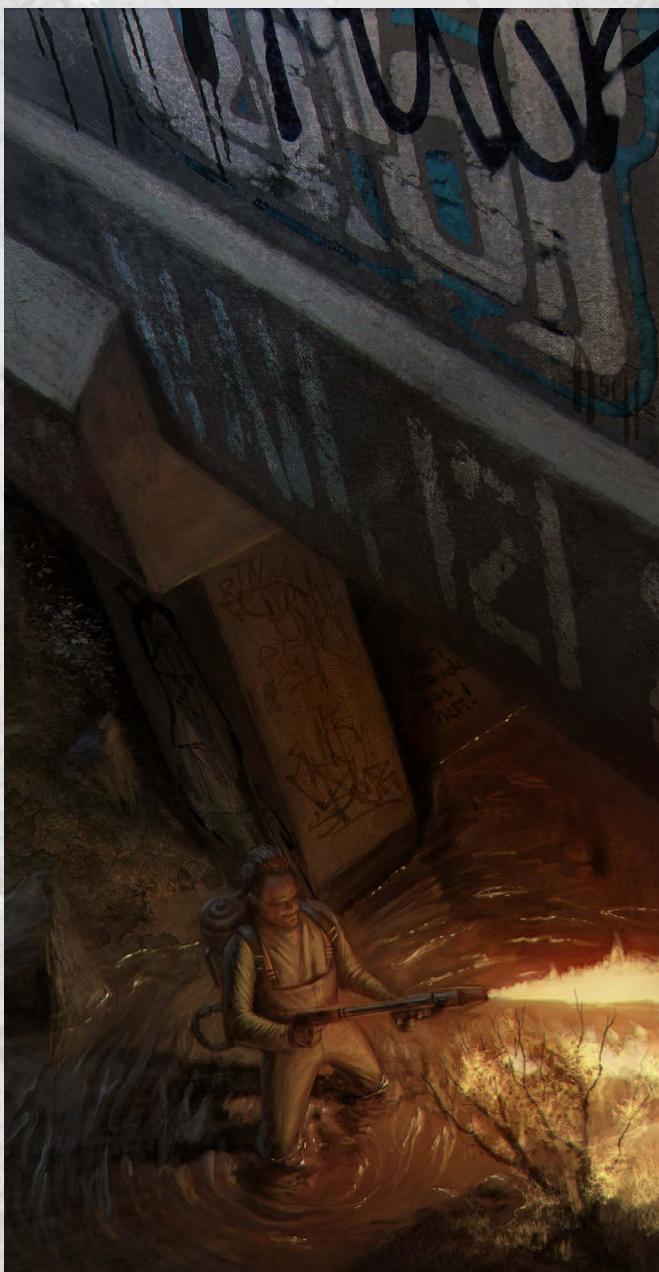
These operations can be abstracted as operations using the unit's Support characteristic. If the Travellers lay out a good plan to survey for defects and potential problems before plunging into the job they will suffer no penalties for the difficult conditions but mercenaries who fail to do so should be penalised at the Referee's discretion. A simple bridge-repair job will become far more complex if the section being used to support the Travellers' heavy equipment turns out to be weaker than expected. There is a real possibility for casualties even without hostile action but this is as always mitigated by a good plan.

Interference

Interference by local officials will at first take the form of protests, delays in providing licenses or allowing materials through to the site and other bureaucratic hassles. If this does not work, direct attempts will eventually be made to impede the mercenaries' work. This will take the form of officials storming into the work site waving legal writs and backed up by armed guards. It may happen multiple

times as the locals find aspects of the port's contract to take exception to or require clarification of work orders, or anything else they can find to slow down work and frustrate the mercenaries.

This is not a situation that can be easily solved with gunfire, as an incident between mercenaries serving the port and the host world's government can result in open conflict or serious economic damage from a long legal battle. It would be grounds to terminate the mercenaries' contract and withhold their fee... assuming of course they started it. The mercenaries may be able to negotiate a resolution, strongarm the locals or fight them and portray the incident as necessary self-defence after some local idiot opened fire. This might be ticklish but smart Travellers can wriggle their way out of a bad situation.



Depending on how they handle the interference, the Travellers may be able to shut it down with their own legal action or find a reason to exclude local officials from the work area – at gunpoint if necessary. If they can establish a legally controlled zone they have the right to deal with armed intruders using lethal force and the locals know it. They will not push the matter if this is the case.

Other than if the Travellers are provoked into violence there is little prospect of a stand-up fight on this deployment. The port authority might request assistance with a situation such as a hijacking or repossession of an illegally held starship, and the Travellers might have to deal with the local equivalent of giant crocodiles, but there will be no major military threat on this mission unless the Travellers pick a fight with the world government.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Carry out inspection, repair and construction work as needed.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Deal with local governmental interference without violence.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Identify flaws and weak spots in the causeway.
- 4: ROUTINE:** If an incident occurs, weasel out of the blame. If no incident occurs this objective is considered to be fully completed.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Avoid taking any serious or fatal casualties in accidents or animal attacks.

Two Important and three Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 12. This is not a mission that is going to make its way into history books but it will present the Travellers with a different set of challenges.

ADMINISTRATING BUILDING BRIDGES

This mission is about non-violent problem-solving, although the Travellers might have some fun blowing up the forests or hunting giant crocodilians in the swamp. They may be sure there will be an attack or sabotage but if there is always a violent incident on every mission this can become contrived and predictable. If the Travellers are desperate for some action they might be tasked with dealing with a hijacking or some other unrelated incident.

DEFENCE REVIEW

Specialist, Section. Cr100000 per month plus bonuses.

Ongoing.

The armed forces of the Cemmbiner Republic are outdated and in urgent need of overhaul. The military is large for the population size and absorbs a great many talented people who might contribute more elsewhere. The main reason for this is a history of empire-building within the force and blatant cronyism regarding posts and ranks as well as defence contracts. The end result is an overgrown, expensive and ineffective mess. Attempts to rationalise and downsize are vigorously resisted or manipulated to result in increased budgets for those who come out on top in the furious internal political squabbles that surround all such measures.

The Cemmbiner Republic is offering Cr100000 for a small team of independent military experts to conduct an audit of their armed forces. The team will also be expected to provide recommendations for equipment disposal and purchase. A bonus is payable based on the savings that will be made by the armed forces.

No combat is expected.

Referee's Information

The fee for this ticket is high for a small-unit job because it requires significant knowledge. The Tactics skill will be useful as well as Admin and Broker. There is also the factor that a successful review could save the government hundreds of millions of Credits and may cut through the internal politics of the bloated military establishment.

The upper echelons of the military establishment are wracked with corruption and graft, with most senior officers skimming the budget or pursuing political ambitions in various underhand ways. The worst among them is the director of the overgrown aerospace defence contingent, who has built an empire within the military and its supporting industries, and has gained control over some areas that should not really be her concern. For example, the army has a small grav tank contingent but somehow these are all controlled by the aerospace defence forces 'for the protection of vital aerospace defence installations'.

Hostile Review

The Travellers' mission is known to the entire defence establishment long before they arrive and they will face resistance from all sides. Often this will come in the form of cordial invitations to a mess dinner or a weekend at a senior officer's private estate. Influence and charm will be brought to bear along with subtle and not-subtle bribery. This is all accompanied by mass obfuscation, feet-



dragging and delaying tactics. The military establishment does not want a clear picture to emerge of where it is spending its vastly inflated budget and will conspire to derail the review if at all possible. If that fails, the next step is an attempt to ensure the cuts fall on other little empires within the military.

The Travellers could go along with all of this, enjoying the hospitality and wringing the biggest bribes they can out of factions in the military. If they do, they will have to find a few token savings here and there but the hoped-for reorganisation of the military will not happen. The faction leaders will be happy, the client will pay the fee and everyone can go about their business.

If the Travellers are diligent they will not make any friends among the factions. They will soon see that exercises are being scripted to produce a false image of competence and that the faction leaders are directing contracts to favoured suppliers at an inflated price in return for kickbacks. The military is highly inefficient when not following a pre-prepared script and indeed

is beginning to struggle to do even that. Troops are demoralised, burdened by the wrong equipment and badly trained. The whole rotten mess needs to be reorganised with an iron fist and supply contracts realigned with the Republic's actual needs.

If the Travellers do present a plan to do this they will have to justify it, especially as they are more or less accusing the nation's generals and colonels of mass corruption. This might take the form of a negotiation or a court of inquiry if rules mechanics are required and could lead to some adventures as the Travellers try to covertly obtain damning evidence. Along the way, there is a more sinister secret to be uncovered.

Treason at the Top

The head of the world's aerospace defence forces is the richest and most powerful of the military fat cats. She controls not just the entire aerospace defence system and all its personnel but also segments of other sectors including equipment procurement and disposal. Not content with kickbacks for new equipment at inflated prices she has also been manipulating the disposal process. Typically this has meant disposing of equipment in far better condition than the official documentation claimed, selling it on the underground mercenary market. She was never very careful about who the client was and the Travellers may discover that one of her regular customers is a front for an insurgent movement on a nearby world.

This goes beyond graft, since the arms have been used against the forces of an allied government. The aerospace commander faces possible treason charges and certainly a criminal investigation. To avoid this she begins by trying to discredit the mercenaries or get them fired but when that fails she is quite willing to have them killed. This is not a go-to option however. The Travellers will get some warning in the form of intimidation, threats or a straight offer of a fat bribe to just go away. Only as a final resort will the aerospace commander send some of her minions to take out the Travellers and they will try to do it in a deniable manner or put the blame on another faction.

The Travellers may have to survive multiple assassination attempts in order to carry out their mission. Fortunately, the people available to carry out these attacks are little more competent than the local forces. By demonstrating the incompetence of the local military, the Travellers have made incompetent enemies. The irony of that might be lost on them, however.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Aerospace Hit Squad	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	7	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	1	-2
CEI or DEI	6	-1
Morale	8	0
Reputation	9	+1

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Visit a variety of units and installations, conducting a thorough appraisal of each.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Do not antagonise the factions by overtly refusing their 'hospitality'.
- 3: IMPORTANT:** Expose the aerospace commander's corruption and insurgent connections.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Do not permit all the blame to be placed on one faction.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Present a meaningful appraisal of the situation and recommendations on how to remedy it.

Three Important and two Routine objectives create a possible maximum TSI of 13. If the Travellers expose the level of corruption within the military they will be paid a bonus of Cr100000 or more.

ADMINISTRATING DEFENCE REVIEW

This mission takes the form of an investigation rather than a fight, although there may be one towards the end. The Travellers will be attending functions and having drinks with high-ranking officers, trying to tease out information among the platitudes and amusing anecdotes. There may be some adventures to be had along the way, however. The Travellers will be visiting troops in the field or on training exercises and might be exposed to all manner of natural hazards, badly driven vehicles and the like. They may even have to rescue some local troops from a disaster of their own making, which might spark suspicions about how differently the military performs in the field to official reports of its activities.

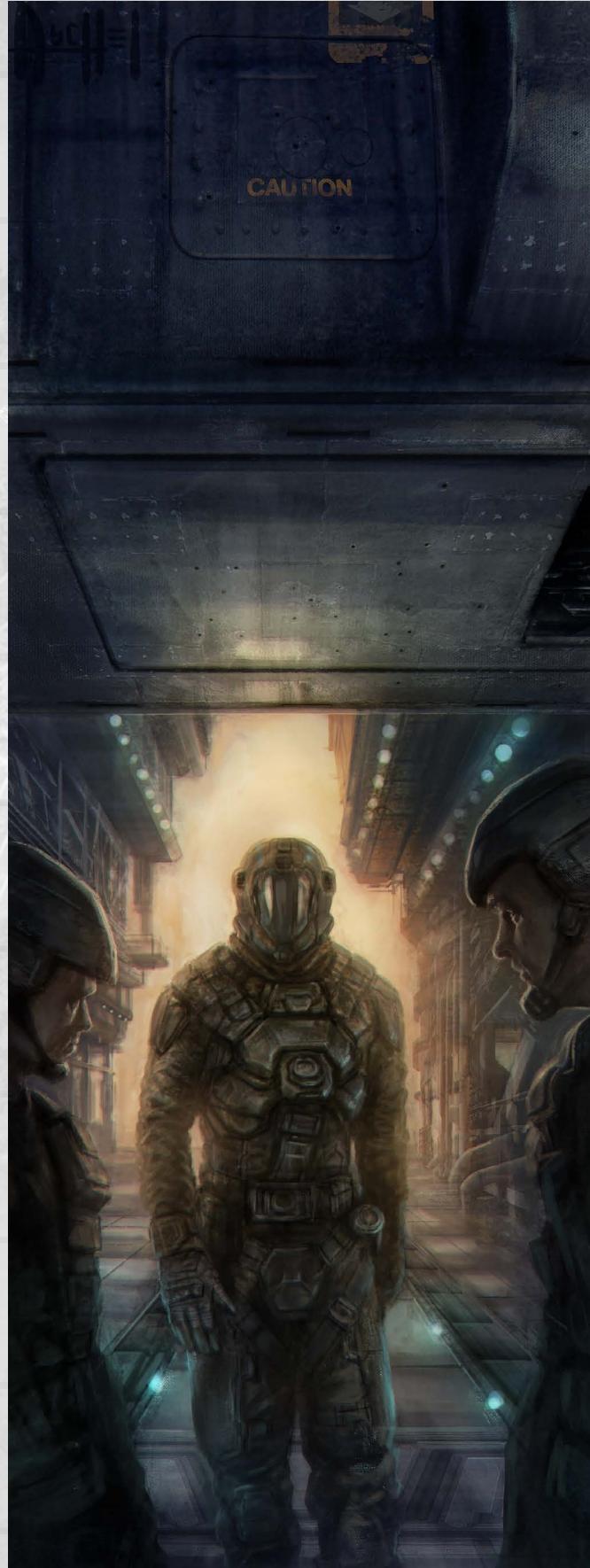
ILLEGAL EAGLES

**Specialist, Section. Cr50000 per month plus bonuses.
Ongoing.**

The civil war on Krikyan has been sputtering on for several years, with neither side gaining an advantage for long. A multi-world peacekeeping force is on-planet in accordance with an agreed intervention five years ago but its backing consortium has long since given up trying to persuade the combatant factions to negotiate. Instead the level of violence is kept down by forbidding the import or use of weapons above TL5, the world's native Tech Level. Mercenary ground forces are also not allowed. The regulations surrounding equipment use in this conflict were hastily drawn up and have inconsistencies and loopholes that can be exploited by inventive lawyers.

The Eastern Confederacy is offering Cr50000 per month plus bonuses for a small group of aviation-warfare advisors to improve the efficiency of its air force. Pilots are necessary but the force can include technical personnel and a small security contingent if necessary. Bonuses are payable for successes in air-to-air combat directly attributable to the mercenary force.

The mercenaries will be expected to demonstrate techniques in a practical manner and may be engaged by enemy forces intruding into Confederacy airspace. Combat may therefore occur.



Referee's Information

The war on Krikyan is a particularly desultory affair. The world is sparsely populated, with wide areas of wilderness separating its small cities. Air travel is commonplace, since ground-level links are difficult and expensive to maintain. A dispute between some of the cities and the world government has gradually expanded into a low-intensity conflict, which drains resources without providing any benefit. Ideologies have gradually hardened, to the point where both the Eastern Confederacy and the Central Republic consider themselves the legitimate planetary government and are willing to drive their economies into the ground to prove it.

Ground forces must operate over long distances in order to reach their targets. Resupply is possible by sea or river in some cases but in the continental interior it is necessary to fly supplies to temporary airstrips. Control of the air has become the most important factor in this war but with the small bases on both sides it has not proven possible to obtain a decisive advantage. In recent months the Republic has made some gains, largely through the deployment of a new design of cheap fighter, and now has airbases within striking distance of the Confederacy's cities. The balance seems to be finally tipping.

Advisors... Mostly

The Confederacy has found an exploitable loophole that might counter the recent shift in the strategic balance. Mercenary ground forces cannot be deployed and large units cannot be brought in for any purpose. However, a group of 'advisors' who just happen to get attacked by enemy aircraft whilst 'demonstrating techniques' can be justified and will not trigger intervention.

The Confederacy's air force is composed mainly of TL5 civilian aircraft fitted with whatever weapons are available. Light aircraft and trainers have been converted into crude fighters, with transports serving as ground-attack platforms. Most weapons are manually aimed machineguns and basic bomb or rocket racks. A few custom-built combat aircraft are available to both sides but manufacturing capability is low. As a result a single aircraft or a good pilot can make a real difference.

The mercenaries are expected to find ways to improve the Confederacy's air combat and ground-attack capability but that is mainly a legal fiction to cover their deployment. The Confederacy wants heroes to lead its air force in repelling the enemy advance. The Republic's bases are located in difficult terrain, which will make dislodging them with the available ground forces virtually impossible. They can be attacked from the air or their supplies – which also come in by air – can be cut off. Either or both may force a withdrawal.

The mercenaries will be forced to fly converted TL5 civilian aircraft or rather poor custom-built fighters, battling it out with machineguns and autocannon over the wilderness of Krikyan. Whilst their presence will be questioned by the peacekeeping force, if they make a successful justification of their actions and do not use weaponry or equipment of greater than TL5 they will be permitted to stay.

Leading the Fight

The mercenaries will find themselves alternating between meetings with the Confederacy's military commanders, technical exercises intended to wring a little more airspeed out of a common light aircraft and 'training' or 'demonstration' flights that always seem to involve contact with the opposition's air force for some reason. They might also undertake some operations at ground level, such as infiltrating close to an enemy airbase to carry out reconnaissance or sabotage.

The bonuses payable for downing enemy aircraft or hitting significant ground targets are supposedly for actions on the part of local pilots but attributable to the mercenaries' influence. This is an obvious fiction. In fact bonuses of Cr5000 to Cr25000 will be paid for downing enemy aircraft or making effective ground attacks. This is described as 'demonstrating technique' if there are questions to be answered about the mercenaries' participation and at some point those questions will be asked. The Republic will object to the mercenaries' presence and petition the peacekeeping force to have them removed. The mercenaries will need to justify their position. This could be done using the court of inquiry rules found on page 47 of *Book 2*.

ADMINISTERING ILLEGAL EAGLES

This ticket is a case of mercenaries being hired for their skills but not permitted to bring their weapons of choice. Nobody will care much if they have small arms for self-defence, despite this being a technical violation of the regulations. The Travellers might not realise this but if they do they have the potential to sneak in a few advanced weapons. What they might do with those is an open question, since the mercenaries are hired as flyers and support crew, but it is possible they may have 'problems' during a relocation and land somewhere near enemy ground troops. If the Travellers want to get creative in this manner they can of course do whatever they please – but will have to justify it to an inquiry or be arrested and deported.

The mission could be an interesting change of pace for the Travellers, pottering across the sky in primitive contraptions to do battle with the local fighter aces. There are plenty of opportunities for combat but the Referee should not neglect the legal side of the situation. Creative interpretation of regulation clauses and flimsy legal arguments will keep them in the fight. The Referee might choose to play out an action then immediately have the Travellers justify it, finding alternative ways to describe what they just did in a manner that stays just inside the regulations.

As always, the Travellers might find completely different ways to handle the mission. If the advisors are 'busy preparing reports' for a few days during which an enemy airbase suffers several mysterious explosions it may be blatantly obvious what has happened – but the problem is proving it. Smart Travellers with a good cover story can cut through the whole Gordian knot and defeat the Republic without ever engaging in air-to-air combat.

The ticket could run for years if the mercenaries want; this conflict is not going to end any time soon. However, bonuses will go down after the first couple of months as the client becomes used to success and begins to regret the financial drain. Once the forward airbases are eliminated the client will begin intimating it is time the mercenaries moved on and will terminate their contract whenever the Referee decides the adventure is no longer sufficiently interesting.

Ticket Success Indicators

This ticket has the following success criteria:

- 1: CRITICAL:** Destroy or force the abandonment of the forward bases.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Successfully fend off objections to or questions about the mercenaries' presence.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Score victories over the opposing air force.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Make successful ground attacks to show the locals how it should be done.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Improve the Confederacy's air warfare capability.

The maximum TSI achievable on this ticket is 13. This requires a mix of prowess in the air and creativity in the courtroom. It is entirely possible to fail the mission due to a legal ruling despite winning in the air. If the peacekeepers do decide the Travellers' presence is illegal they can deploy high-tech weapons and grav vehicles against the Travellers' makeshift planes, with predictable results.



TICKET-ADVENTURES

Some mercenary tickets lead to situations more akin to a normal Traveller adventure and will be played out using the standard rules for the most part. There are some differences, however. Any unit capable of taking on a mercenary ticket will be well-armed and highly competent – and most of all more numerous than a typical band of Travellers. The Referee must also keep in mind that the Travellers have spent a lot of time and resources building up their unit. Knocking off several members of the force as plot incidents deprives the Travellers of their investment without giving them the ability to make meaningful decisions. Travellers who leave their people without support in dangerous places cannot complain if some are killed or injured but they must be permitted to make the decisions that lead to this.

For example, if the Travellers put a member of their unit on lookout and they are targeted by a sniper, this is an occupational hazard of being a mercenary. However, it is not acceptable to simply narrate that the lookout has been shot as an immutable plot element. It would be fine if the lookout's role in the story is simply to be shot and killed – a character introduced by the Referee as the victim of a plot element is fair game. For members of the Travellers' unit – and its inanimate assets too – the same rules of agency apply as to the Travellers themselves.

This does not mean the lookout is safe. However, the situation must be adjudicated fairly by the Referee and set up in such a way that the Travellers can make meaningful decisions. If the Travellers decide there needs to be a lookout, so be it. There might be other consequences if none is posted. If the Travellers do not consider the possibility of attack, again so be it. However, the sniper should not automatically kill the lookout. A skill check will be necessary – the sniper might miss the first shot. This check will be modified by circumstances, allowing the Travellers and their enemies to influence the situation.

The opposition might stack the odds but the Travellers should always be able to find a decision chain that led to an event. Better intelligence work, remote sensors or a different lookout pattern might all contribute to the survival of that lookout if the Travellers had made the right choices. It is fair enough if they are constricted

by circumstances or deceived in some way, because that happened in-game. This is the key to all such situations; an event that happens in-game and could possibly have been avoided if the Travellers made different decisions or had more resources is acceptable; taking away one of their assets as a result of an out-of-game plot decision is not. It is acceptable to impose a plot event that potentially removes an asset if the Travellers have a chance to remedy the situation. In that case, the lookout might be hit by a sniper's shot as a plot element but is not dead. They could be saved if the Travellers act in time, which means their survival is dependent on in-game decisions.

RESEARCHING WHAT, EXACTLY?

Specialist, Section. Cr50000 plus bonuses. Ongoing.

The Hattern Corporation is a market leader in the field of specialised pharmaceuticals and health products. Hattern's products have tamed pandemics, cured genetic disorders and improved the lives of millions on underprivileged worlds. This is a result of ongoing cutting-edge research conducted by the most innovative of scientists. Research must, of necessity, be undertaken in secrecy to avoid competitors bringing inferior products to the market whilst Hattern is still developing the definitive version. To this end the corporation has established a number of secure research facilities on sparsely populated worlds. One such facility, located in the Randell Mountains, has reported communications difficulties on several occasions. Contact has now been lost.

The Hattern Corporation is offering Cr50000 for a section-sized mercenary unit to investigate the situation at the Randell Mountains facility and, if necessary, secure the site. It is possible that the facility has been attacked by competitors or some other outside agency or that some other misshape has occurred. If the facility staff are on-site the mercenary force will follow directions as to how best to assist. If foul play has occurred the mercenary force will secure the site and all research materials present and begin gathering evidence if its personnel are capable of doing so. Communications must be restored as soon as possible in either case. The facility is remote, so a unit with its own transportation is preferred.



The situation at the Randell Mountains facility is unknown. Combat is possible but considered unlikely. In the event that the facility is in hostile hands or hostiles remain in the area a negotiable bonus is payable for driving off and/or capturing the intruders.

Referee's Information

The Travellers may detect a fishy odour coming from this ticket brief but strikes against remote research facilities are a fact of life in the high-end corporate world. Indeed, the Travellers may have engaged in something similar during their own mercenary careers. If the Travellers consider the situation from an in-game perspective rather than any similarity to the opening of a horror movie, they will conclude that there is every chance the facility has indeed been attacked by rivals. Or it could just be a downed transmitter.

There are some facts missing from the rather self-important client brief. There is an implication that the research facility is engaged in some kind of pharmaceuticals work but nothing is explicitly stated. If the Travellers think to ask the client will not go into details but will grudgingly supply more information. The

mercenaries do not really need to know exactly what the facility is doing but it is entirely reasonable for them to want to know if there will be biohazards at the facility or what they should be looking for when they get there.

If pushed, the client will venture some basic information about the nature of the facility and its staff but try to avoid giving away any information it does not have to. This may come across as suspicious but it is common for clients to be cagey in the highly competitive research sector. The Travellers may become convinced that the researchers have created or unleashed a monster or that they are going to be used as test subjects for some hideous mutated organism.

In fact, the mission is more or less as presented, although there are complications. The facility was indeed attacked by mercenaries serving a rival corporation. There was, at that point, no monster or sinister experimentation. However, some of the intruders became exposed to an experimental substance grown from lichen and have become addicted to it. They are still at the facility, holding the surviving scientists hostage. The intruders are in an unstable state and becoming increasingly erratic. Once the mercenaries arrive they will have to rescue the survivors and try not to cause additional damage to the facility.

The Randell Mountains Facility

The Randell Mountains research facility is a small, purpose-built installation in a sheltered valley lying over 100 kilometres from the nearest town and far from the planet's starport. There are no roads in or out, although there are tracks in the valley made by the scientists' ground vehicles. Support and supply has been by grav truck since the facility was completed.

The installation houses 10 scientists and research assistants, plus four support staff. These are an administrator, a robotics handler, a 'culinary services consultant' and a single security expert. The facility has operated for over 10 years without incident and during that time the scars left by building work have faded. Local vegetation has grown back although it is controlled by a groundskeeper robot and overall the facility looks like it has always been there.

The location was chosen because of its inaccessibility, in theory ensuring no inquisitive locals wander in. More importantly, the site was selected for the availability of organisms with some interesting properties. A nearby cave formation was found to be home to unusual lichen-like growths. Lichens and similar organisms are symbiotic, combining algae or cyanobacteria and fungi to mutual benefit, and initial research suggested that these growths could be modified into new pharmaceuticals or food products. The facility was set

up to extract and experiment upon these organisms, which have promising applications in a number of fields from disease treatment to high-value survival rations. No patents or marketable products have come out of the facility yet but there is steady and satisfactory movement towards this goal.

The research installation was provided with two ground vehicles – one an SUV and the other a pickup truck built on the same chassis – and a pair of standard air/rafts. The trucks are used for routine work in the valley and have carved out trails over the years as they moved to and from remote sensor sites or points of interest. The air/rafts range more widely, with exploration of the mountains ongoing in the hope of finding more unusual organisms.

The site long ago fell into a comfortable working rhythm, with support staff frequently operating outside their official remit. Thus the 'culinary consultant', normally responsible for running the site's mostly-automated kitchen, frequently piloted an air/raft on sample collection trips or exploration missions into the mountains. The routine of monitoring the local environment with emplaced sensors, collecting samples from the nearby caves and investigating their properties is occasionally broken by exploration of other cave systems. The scientists and their helpers were not expert spelunkers and were careful not to get in somewhere they could not get out, restricting activities to exploration of the easily accessible parts of each cave system.

The Facility: Details

The facility is surrounded by a neatly-kept area of grass, from which most of the shrubs and trees have been removed. The remainder are trimmed and obviously prized for their decorative nature. At the edge of the lawn – there really is no other word for it – is a set of white-painted edge markers. Beyond this the local vegetation is obviously kept under control but is not a garden. A dirt track, which appears to have been levelled off but not otherwise treated, runs away from the installation's buildings. There is a large vegetable patch behind these structures.

The facility consists of four main buildings and five smaller living quarters. All are simple, rectangular buildings with a gently sloping roof, connected by a typical utilities tube carrying water, sewage, power and communications cables. Tubes of this sort are robust and protected against most hazards like nibbling wildlife. As is normal, the tube is half-buried and runs in a ring/star arrangement between the structures. It does not appear to be broken at any point.

The five living quarters buildings are identical, although with different personal items inside. Each consists of an entry hall that doubles as a ridiculously tiny kitchenette, a fresher, a common dwelling room and three bedrooms each with a small stowage space. Facility staff come and go over time but most stay for at least a couple of years, so the living quarters tend to take on the character of those who use them. Most are fairly cluttered but orderly, sometimes with bits of dismantled scientific equipment on the coffee table or other evidence of work-brought-home.

The primary structure is a command and utilities centre. It is the only multi-level building in this facility, with an underground level containing the reactor and a small upper floor housing the communications and monitoring equipment. A large antenna on the roof seems intact, suggesting the problem may not be a downed transmitter. The ground floor is the base's nerve centre. It has general-purpose offices that see intermittent use, a briefing room and a security office with what passes for an armoury built into it. In addition to the security expert's advanced combat rifle, the facility was issued a carbine and a shotgun, plus four semi-automatic pistols. Until recently they never left the armoury.

Alongside the primary structure is the social centre of the facility. This contains a dining room and semi-automated kitchen plus a large storage area for preserved food. The scientists long ago began augmenting their diet with home-grown vegetables and fruits collected from around the valley. Someone has created quite an inventive array of pickles and preserves from the local produce, most of which are quite good. The social centre also has a gym and a configurable chamber which seems to have been turned into a tiny cinema.

The equipment and vehicle garage stands close to the end of the trail but as is common with such buildings it has been used less and less over the years. Vehicles are normally parked on the grass outside unless they are in for maintenance. There is a reasonably well equipped vehicle workshop inside the building, which also serves as a robot maintenance bay. The base's cleaning robots are housed in charging pods along with the much larger grounds maintenance robot. This rather threatening device is equipped with interchangeable saws, spikes and digging blades and runs a regular tidy-and-improve circuit on the grounds. It has been reprogrammed to grow vegetables as well as decorative plants and will continue to sally forth with strimmer and hoe until someone cancels its task.

The fourth major structure is the scientific centre. This large building has several labs, all of them biosecure, and a central conference/working area. There are decontamination facilities at the entrance and an internal hazmat area as well as a small medical bay. The labs are all working on various aspects of the curious lichens discovered nearby. In some cases this is sample analysis or culturing of batches, whilst other labs seem to be trying to create drugs of foodstuffs. The scientists have a ration-block production machine and a set of protein vats growing foul-smelling grey paste familiar to anyone who has prepared survival or military rations. This high-food-value paste is the basis for most super-compact rations and if treated correctly it can be made more or less edible.

If the Travellers get the chance to look over the project notes they will not be able to figure much of it out. There is no simple summary at the top of the page – this is an ongoing project run by experts who know very well what they are trying to achieve. However, buried in the science-speak are indications that the scientists think their lichen extract could be added to ration blocks to give them additional benefits. At present these barely-edible blocks are sufficient to keep someone alive, but there is a real possibility the lichen extract will promote healing and general well-being. This would be of great benefit to someone in such a predicament they had to survive on emergency rations.

Some of the drug applications are similar. It appears the lichen extract promotes soft-tissue healing and boosts immune responses. Some notes suggest it may have an anagathic effect, slowing or even reversing the aging effect. Experiments are in their early stages, but there are batches of drugs in cryogenic storage ready to be shipped out for trials at a more extensive medical laboratory. Anyone with even a basic knowledge of drug development should realise it would be unwise to try any of these – they are experimental preparations, not pharmaceuticals ready for the field.

The Drugs

The pharmaceuticals being developed do indeed show great promise but it is early days as yet. There are some serious side effects that need to be examined and hopefully eliminated. One of these is a tendency to be extremely addictive. This is particularly obvious in the edible version. Someone who ate the ration blocks currently stockpiled for testing would see positive health benefits but would also become completely dependent on them. This is unfortunate, since someone did eat them.

The drug preparations will not have any significant benefits in their present form but will probably be harmless. A small percentage of people might have an allergic reaction and some others might experience a craving for the ration blocks but the drugs themselves are not likely to cause a problem if taken. They are in low concentrations for testing, so a huge amount would have to be consumed to have any real effects.

The drugs require a regular supply of fresh lichen, necessitating regular trips to the caves. It will survive for a time in the artificial environment set up in the lab but something is not quite right for it there. This is one reason the scientists are so interested in the local environment. Constant monitoring of the air, water and other conditions might eventually lead to an understanding of how the lichen can be grown artificially.

The Attack

The 14 people at the installation were going about their normal business as they had for years when two air/rafts entered the valley. They set down on the grass outside the facility and disgorged half a dozen gunmen. Two more remained behind to protect the transports. The gunmen were professional mercenaries, in body armour and armed with military weapons. They stormed towards the control and lab buildings, whose occupants locked the doors and tried to call for help. Their transmissions were jammed.

The doors held for a couple of minutes, after which the gunmen were inside. They rounded up everyone they could find and detained them in the leisure building. The transmitter was put out of action, personnel were identified and the mercenaries began collecting samples and research material. No shots were fired.

Up to this point the operation had gone perfectly; clean and efficient. The mercenaries' orders were to kidnap two critical scientists who were to be interrogated for a few days then released – this was a corporate espionage mission, not a trade war – whilst data would be conveyed to the competitor that had authorised the mission. There was no reason why anything would go awry but somehow it did.

The mercenaries were at the installation for a few hours, during which time two of them were exposed to a compound derived from the lichen. One of the researchers deliberately permitted herself and two of the mercenaries to come into contact with a concentrated form of the lichen's active ingredient. Two more of the mercenaries were inadvertently exposed soon afterward.

Within a few minutes all five were acting strangely, displaying increasing levels of paranoia and, after a time, a craving for the lichen extract. It is not clear what the researcher was trying to achieve; perhaps she hoped to disable the mercenaries so they could be overpowered. The Travellers might find this idea laughable but a scientist with no clue how the world of violence works might think it possible.

The effects of intoxication with the extract grew worse, eventually leading to a violent confrontation between the exposed mercenaries and some of the scientists. Intervention by the other mercenaries – to protect their prisoners – left one of the infected mercenaries dead and one of the non-infected wounded. At this point the mercenary leader decided to withdraw with the data his team had already gathered. Unable to get their colleagues to leave, the uninfected mercenaries withdrew in their air/rafts and abandoned their comrades. They did not take any scientists with them.

The infected mercenaries tried to force the scientists to cure them or give them more of the compound, eventually killing some of the installation staff. They resorted to eating vast quantities of the prepared ration blocks. Unable to get to those, the infected scientist took one of the facility's air/rafts to the caves and began eating the lichen found there.

The Current Situation

At present, about half the installation staff are still alive. They are being held in the leisure building or forced to work in the labs, always under the guns of paranoid and confused mercenaries. The lab is badly trashed and efforts to reverse the infection have come to nothing. There has been a side effect that might be of interest under other circumstances; the infected mercenaries (and the scientist but she is rather less dangerous) are extremely resilient and will heal from non-fatal injuries in an incredibly short time. This is not 'regeneration' of damaged tissue; it is a greatly accelerated form of the body's own functions, which imposes enormous stress on the subject's life processes. A broken bone will begin to heal before it can be set; a wound will clot and lost blood will be replaced but this can happen only by breaking down other tissues. The effects are grotesque and irreversible.

The scientist might perhaps be saved if her colleagues can find a way to expunge the intoxication. In the meantime she is deranged and combative, desperate to claw as much lichen off the cave walls as possible. She cannot be reasoned with but is not much of a physical threat if the Travellers locate her. The mercenaries are a much more serious threat and there is something none

of the survivors at the installation know. The 'dead' infected mercenary was placed in one of the living quarters buildings but is in fact not deceased as such. Despite wounds that would have killed a normal person – and which appeared to have done so – the mercenary's body has been cannibalising its own tissues to repair the damage. He is now a mass of scar tissue, functioning on instinct alone, but is still capable of using weapons.

Playing out the Ticket

The Travellers' remit is vague, since the client does not know what is happening at the facility. It should be obvious to them that they need to rescue as many of the scientists as possible, secure the facility and deal with the intruders. How that plays out is very much up to the Travellers.

There is little outward sign of the attack when the Travellers arrive, although the installation may seem a little too quiet. The mercenaries might have a brush with the grounds-keeper robot if the Referee wants a red herring or an embarrassing reaction fire incident. The intruders at the facility are paranoid but not really very rational. They may monitor the external sensors out of habit and will certainly be aware of the Travellers if they make contact by radio. If this happens the intruders will lock up the facility staff and take up defensive positions. They will open fire without warning.

It is possible that the Travellers may have to deal with a situation where an unknown number of hostiles are in the installation, with hostages – or captives; the intruders are not really rational enough to bargain or threaten the staff. The staff might get loose and try to escape or take on the intruders, which could lead to all manner of complications.

Alternatively, the Travellers might catch the intruders by surprise and take them out easily. This is their reward for good preparation and reconnaissance. Even so, they might be surprised by the emergence of the 'dead' intruder, shambling around like some kind of disfigured mutant. The other intruders might – just possibly – be persuaded to surrender if the Travellers can get through to them somehow. The 'dead' one cannot be reasoned with.

Once the installation is secure, it is a simple matter to call for assistance. The planetary authorities will arrive in due course but in the meantime the Travellers might consider going after the escaped scientist and capturing/rescuing her. This is part of their remit to secure the facility and its personnel but could be left to the authorities if the Travellers are feeling lazy.

Ticket Success Indicators

Although it is meant to be played out like a standard adventure, this contract does still have a set of Ticket Success Indicator criteria. The Travellers will need to satisfy these if they are to get paid

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Eliminate or capture the intruders.
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Secure the facility and save the staff.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Do not cause additional damage to the facility.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Locate the missing scientist and recover her alive.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Establish exactly what happened here.

The maximum TSI achievable on this ticket is 12. Trigger-happy mercenaries might cause more damage to the facility than the original attack, which will greatly displease the client.

Opposition

The Travellers will be up against heavily armed mercenaries who are paranoid, irrational and capable of taking much more damage than a normal person would without going down. This is reflected in an inflated END value and reduced INT and EDU.

THREE PARANOID INTRUDERS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	—	—
STR 9	INT 4	SKILLS
DEX 8	EDU 2	Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee
END 21	SOC 6	(unarmed) 1, Recon 1
EQUIPMENT		Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope), Autopistol (3D-3)
ARMOUR		Rigid Torso Protector, Helmet, Limb Plates (+8)



SLIGHTLY ALIVE INTRUDER

SPECIES	GENDER		AGE
	Male		—
STR	11	INT	2
DEX	4	EDU	1
END	28	SOC	6
SKILLS			
Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1			
Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope), Autopistol (3D-3)			
EQUIPMENT			
Rigid Torso Protector, Helmet, Limb Plates (+8)			
ARMOUR			

This intruder regains 1D END each round of combat once injured, for 2D rounds. After this the strain is too much for the intruder's body and he collapses for 1D hours, appearing to be dead. He will then rise once more, with END reduced by 2D permanently. Once END reaches a permanent value of 0, death finally occurs.



STRAY SCIENTIST

SPECIES	GENDER		AGE
	Female		—
STR	3	INT	4
DEX	9	EDU	2
END	11	SOC	9
WEAPONS			
Broken Nails (D3)			

The stray scientist has been exposed to the lichen compound and desperately craves it. She is in a similar state to the paranoid intruders and cannot be reasoned with. Fortunately, she is no fighter. Anyone scratched with a broken, lichen-covered nail might be exposed to the raw form of the compound but this is unlikely to have any effects unless the Referee wishes to extend the adventure.

OBSERVE AND REPORT

Warfighter, Company. Cr500000 per month plus bonuses.

Ongoing.

The conflict on Merrain is going through another ‘hot’ phase, with skirmishing in several regions as the Merrain Federation consolidates its hold over them. The situation is well in hand but the forces of the Federation are stretched thin. This may give its enemies a chance to strike. It has therefore been decided to turn over the pacification of the target regions to mercenary forces whilst the army of the Federation refits, trains and prepares to repel any acts of aggression against its new or traditional territories.

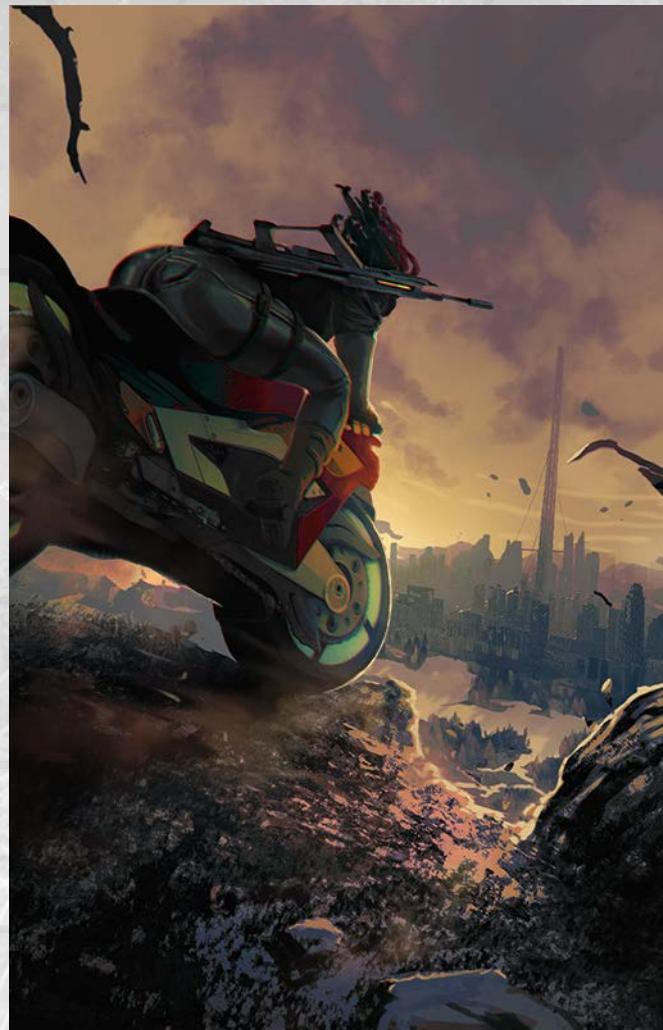
The Merrain Federation is offering Cr500000 per month plus a completion bonus of Cr500000 to MCr1 for company-sized forces to operate for at least three months in each of the troubled regions. In this instance the contract relates to the region within 250 kilometres in all directions from the city-state of Bildake, which contains several small towns but only one city. Forces will be expected to locate and eliminate the remnants the Bildake military and ensure the city itself remains secure.

The city-state of Bildake originally fielded an infantry battalion with artillery support, three mobile companies with some light armoured vehicles and a citizens’ militia with no significant fighting power. These forces were broken and driven from the city. Some have dispersed but a remnant of unknown size remains at large. Combat is to be expected wherever these remnants are encountered.

Referee’s Information

Apart from the fact that this was another of the Merrain Federation’s wars of expansion, most of the information given is correct. The city-state was provoked until an incident occurred, then invaded in a ‘defensive retaliatory action’. The city is currently under occupation by a battalion of Merrain infantry that is due to pull out when the mercenaries arrive. The city itself will be secured by a specialist formation – the Federation has discovered a need for such units in its recent wars of conquest – and the mercenaries will share a base with this force. Their remit is to mop up the surrounding countryside and assist as necessary in the city.

The Travellers will have to carry out their mission but the adventure presented here focuses on an incident that occurs along the way. The wider picture will be resolved like any other ticket whilst the actions of the reconnaissance party will be resolved using the



standard *Traveller* rules. At the end of the contract the unit’s success is based upon its ability to do what the client wants, rather than the outcome of the adventure. However, failure in the adventure can have consequences for the unit as a whole. Overall, this adventure is an example of how a standard *Traveller* adventure can be woven into a mercenary ticket.

Bildake City

The situation in Bildake is tense but on the whole quiet. The Merrain Federation has long experience at pacifying its conquests, using a balance of incentives and deterrents. At present it is working through the usual system, announcing investment and fixes for problems that have plagued the city for years. Money has been dumped into the local coffers to pay for a programme of infrastructure improvements and already there are crews out fixing roads and restoring power. A distinctly illegal but highly effective purge of criminals who are known but cannot be prosecuted for lack of evidence is underway, whilst popular causes are being championed. The Federation portrays itself as a liberating force,

sweeping in to remove the old ineffectual or corrupt regime and generally making things better for everyone. There is some truth in this but ultimately the measures are about control rather than improvement.

The outgoing force is a standard motorised infantry battalion, slightly degraded by combat during the fight for the city. Its personnel are experienced, professional and a cut above the usual backwater-planet soldiery the Travellers may have met in the past. They took some losses capturing the city and did some damage but the war was already won when the force arrived. A token defence was swept aside without difficulty. As a result the city is not heavily damaged. It has not been shelled or bombed and most of the damage to its power distribution network stemmed from a surgical strike to take out the main substation. This is under repair and will be operational in a few days. In the meantime, power is patchy and prone to brownouts.

There will be little resistance within the city whilst the Travellers are there, although there is always the possibility of a small raid or a riot. Mostly these matters can be left to the occupation company, which arrives just before the Travellers' unit. This force is also highly professional and specially trained to win over an occupied population whilst stomping hard on any resistance. The Travellers should not need to get involved.

The Countryside

Bildake City is located at a natural crossing-point for the river Agade, with road and rail bridges connecting the city to a small settlement on the far bank. The links that run through the city are important to other city-states and the Merrain Federation itself – which was one reason for the conquest. The bridges are intact but closed for the time being. Nobody really wants to take a train ride through a war zone.

The armed forces of Bildake City made their stand a few kilometres short of the city, on a natural defensive line formed by rising ground. Most of the force was committed here and rapidly overrun by the more mobile and highly experienced Federation brigade sent against them. If the Travellers want to study the engagement they can but there is little to be learned. It was a typical kerb-stomping carried out by a more powerful and larger force that could afford to put as much around each flank as the defenders had in their entire position.

The battle was over in four hours, with virtually the whole Bildake force captured. Their personnel are currently housed in a temporary camp about 200 kilometres away from the city. They are not being mistreated and indeed plans are already in motion to use these surrendered forces in a campaign against

a different opponent. This is part of the Federation's masterplan for conquest of the whole planet – serving the Federation is preferable to mooching about a camp with nothing to do and ultimately brings privileges and rewards.

The remainder of the Bildake armed forces are scattered in small pockets, typically no more than a platoon or two and have no overall leadership. Some will try to carry on the fight, some are looking for an excuse to surrender and most are just waiting for direction. Locating these forces will be more of a problem than defeating them.

Fulfilling the Contract

In order to fulfil this contract the Travellers will need to search for the enemy forces then neutralise them. This means sending out reconnaissance groups, using drones or whatever other methods the Travellers decide are most appropriate to the search. Finding any given group can be abstracted as an Operation, in which a serious mishap suggests the reconnaissance group blundered into an ambush or an encounter battle. It is highly unlikely the Travellers will be able to deploy their force en masse for the search as this will take too long for the client to accept and a whole company is likely to be detected by the targets. The Bildake forces will retire or flee if confronted with a superior force.

A more viable tactic is to use platoons or parts of a platoon – perhaps even just one or two vehicles – for reconnaissance with an on-call reserve available to reinforce any that find trouble. It might even be possible to search without the targets realising they have been found, which creates additional opportunities. The Travellers may be able to surround a located enemy force or to cut off its retreat, which has advantages in terms of combat and also in any negotiations that take place. The client would much prefer surrender to elimination, for several reasons. The Federation prefers to be seen as benign and massacres will undermine this impression, which makes it less likely that other enemies will surrender in the future. Similarly, surrendered forces can sometimes be co-opted, which strengthens the Federation – or at least causes the burden of casualties to fall on 'allied' troops rather than the Federation's own units.

In most cases it will be possible to negotiate a surrender, possibly after a token resistance. Clashes between fast-moving forces will make this impossible, so there will probably be some nasty skirmishes during the mopping-up phase. However, the contract is not all that hard to fulfil. It should be largely abstracted but still played out in some detail, not least to conceal from the Travellers that there is an adventure unfolding.

Ticket Success Indicators

The contract's TSI has little to do with the adventure that a part of the force will have along the way but fulfilling these criteria is necessary to completing the contract and getting paid.

- 1: IMPORTANT:** Locate and neutralise at least three significant groups of Bildake troops (platoon-size or larger).
- 2: IMPORTANT:** Do not cause unnecessary casualties.
- 3: ROUTINE:** Create a workable reconnaissance and search plan rather than moving the whole company around in a clumsy manner.
- 4: ROUTINE:** Cooperate with Federation troops where necessary.
- 5: ROUTINE:** Do not antagonise the civilian population.

The maximum TSI achievable on this ticket is 12. Much of the time the mercenaries will be undertaking painstaking cordon-and-sweep operations or searching settlements for signs of enemy forces. The client will expect to see a brisk but thorough search followed by well-planned operations to force a surrender or eliminate enemy forces.

Sensor Ghost

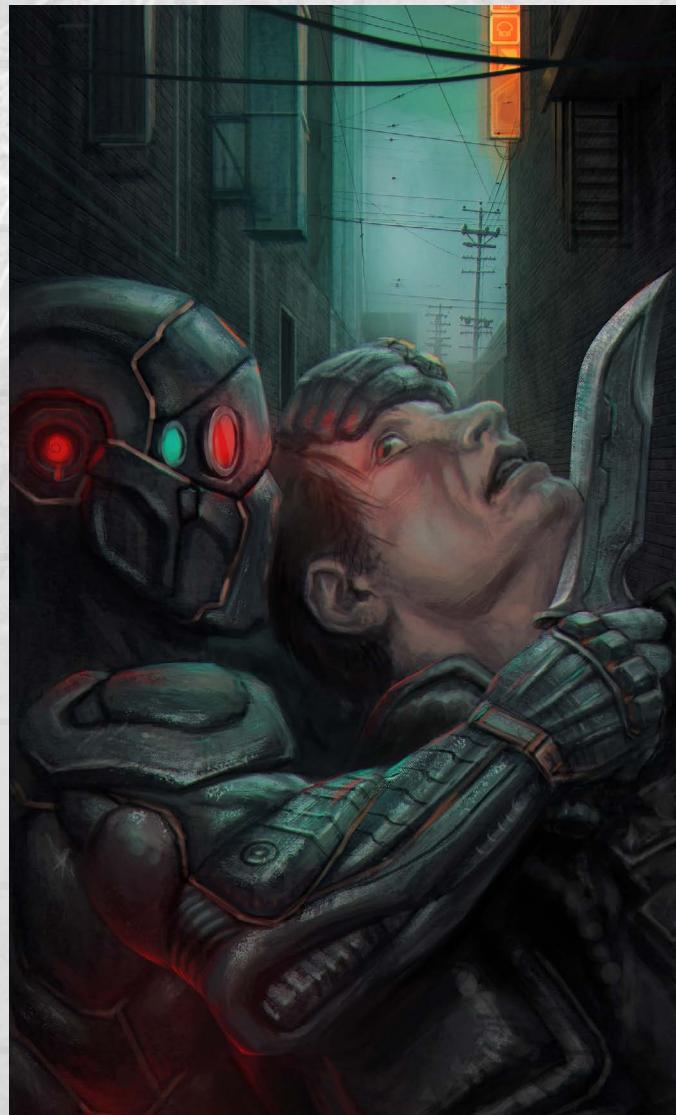
The adventure spun out of this contract will involve a small part of the Travellers' force, possibly a reconnaissance team or a command element on the way to deal with a situation developing elsewhere. The team picks up or is advised of some unusual sensor readings in their vicinity. As the nearest representatives of the Travellers' unit they are in a position to investigate far more quickly than anyone else. Danger should be minimal since this area has already been swept for holdouts early in the campaign. There is always the chance of an encounter but no large enemy forces are thought to be in the vicinity.

Sensor readings seem to be emanating from a disused copper mine not far away. There are intermittent low-power radio emissions as well as what might be a power signature. The mine has been abandoned for decades, since the promising veins near the surface were played out and deeper ore proved uneconomical to extract. The Travellers could just fly a grav vehicle to the mine and have a look around but this is a war zone. Hopefully they know enough to make a covert approach; if not they will run into trouble.

The mine was largely stripped of its machinery when it closed down but some of the equipment was too bulky to be easily removed. Gantry and frameworks remain in place, along with a large ore chute that was once used to fill trucks. This, combined with the large amount of copper fragments in the mine tailings, creates a

cluttered sensor environment. In the immediate context this means that the Travellers' sensors will not work well, for exactly the same reason the site was chosen as a covert arms dump.

Invasion by the Merrain Federation has been on the cards for years now and various initiatives were launched to forestall or resist it. Most came to nothing but one did get to a halfway stage. A few months ago the ruling council of Bildake City arranged for an independent merchant vessel to deliver weaponry. It was deemed unwise to allow the Federation to know about this, since it is prone to use any pretext it can find for an invasion. Even buying defensive systems could be seen as provocation and Bildake did not want to give the Federation a reason to accelerate its plans. It was hoped the weaponry could be landed covertly and picked up by forces in the area 'on exercise' without anyone knowing it was present. The new capabilities of the Bildake military would be showcased when the time was right.



Unfortunately, this plan went awry at almost every stage. The free trader crew who were supposed to be making the delivery ran into unexpected difficulties and have only just arrived, whilst the commander tasked with taking receipt of the equipment was captured in battle on the first day of the invasion. As a result, there is a starship on the ground at the mine, a part-unloaded cargo of weapons and ammunition waiting for pickup, and nobody there to meet them.

The Free Trader Janalonga

The free trader Janalonga made planetfall in the early hours of the morning, following directions to a landing site that should be secure and is hard to mistake. However, since there has been no contact with the recipients the crew are becoming nervous and wondering if they have somehow found a different disused copper mine. They are regretting their decision to start unloading and currently arguing about what to do next.

The cargo consists of 12 tons of TL9 small arms and light support weapons, plus an assortment of fittings and mountings that will permit quick and easy upgrade of locally-made vehicles. Had the weaponry arrived on time, the forces of Bildake might have been able to hold their own. As it is, ownership of this weaponry is... questionable.

The free trader crew were paid up front to obtain and deliver the weaponry. This would not normally seem like a good idea but the city council were getting desperate. Legally, the weaponry belongs to a city council that has been overthrown. A case could be made for it being legitimate spoils of war and thus belonging to the Federation government but the free trader crew might argue that the city council has voided its end of the contract by ceasing to exist, in which case the cargo does not have a legal owner and might count as salvage. The crew could load the crates back aboard their ship and sell it elsewhere.

Whilst the legalities are interesting the real question is one of possession. The free trader crew are currently in possession but perhaps not for long. A small Bildaken force, perhaps a platoon in size, is heading for the drop-off-point. They have been informed of the delivery and intend to take possession. Whilst not a game-changer in the conflict the introduction of TL9 weapons will mean increased casualties among Federation forces and their mercenaries and could fuel a brief resurgence of the conflict. Ultimately there is little chance of liberating Bildake city but having to turn forces around, cancel their refit and rest, and essentially fight the same

war all over again would be embarrassing for the Federation which would impact their willingness to pay bonuses to the mercenaries.

If the mercenaries do not act quickly the Bildake force will reach the free trader and take possession of the weaponry. They will dig in and be soon joined by other remnants of the Bildake armed forces, creating a reinforced company-sized battlegroup. This will be a tough challenge for the Travellers' unit and one they are expected to take on. Preventing the Bildake force from reaching the mine is the logical choice but the only force available is the recon team. They can, of course, call for reinforcements but the initial effort will fall upon them.

Dealing with the Free Trader

The free trader crew are typical small-time entrepreneurs. They do not want to be involved in a gun battle with mercenaries or caught in the middle of one. They can be persuaded – fairly easily – to simply take off and fly away. This is especially so if the crew have some of the weapons still aboard their ship or are permitted to load some aboard. They have done what they were paid for and can sell TL9 small arms as a bonus. This is a deal that will not be difficult to sell.

The free trader crew can also be scared off by a demonstration of force. A few near-misses from a sniper they cannot find will be enough, more than likely. This is a situation where the Travellers will benefit from restraint. The crew will run for their ship and escape if they think they are in danger but if some of them are killed they may decide to turn their vessel's laser turret on suspected enemy locations. The recon party cannot fight a starship and a platoon of TL7 troops and are much better off finding a way to get the ship to retire rather than battling it out.

Dealing with the Bildake Force

The Bildake force consists of stragglers gathered together by an enterprising young captain. She commands most of an infantry platoon, which has been augmented with whatever personnel she could rally. These include cooks, mechanics and a few people orphaned from other units. The force as a whole possesses three trucks, a light off-road vehicle used by the platoon commander and an armoured car equipped with an autocannon. They are short of ammunition but willing to fight and see the acquisition of the weapons drop as a chance to save their homeland. This is a bit optimistic but will drive this rag-tag force to make a determined effort.

A platoon, even without light armoured support, is a lot for a recon group to take on. Even with a good technological advantage the mercenaries might be overmatched. If they just pile in and try to fight it out the battle can be resolved as normal and the Travellers may well lose. They do, however, have other options.

The approaching force can be viewed as a problem to solve rather than an enemy to be overcome. The Travellers do not need to defeat this force and may not need to fight at all. What they do need to do is to prevent it from taking possession of the weapons before reinforcements can arrive. To do so the Bildake force needs to get to the mine site, secure it and unpack the weaponry. This will take time and can be delayed by smart Travellers.

One option would be to harass the enemy as they reach the drop site. Sniper fire, however inaccurate, will make it very difficult to get shipping containers open, extract weapons crates and begin setting equipment up. A sneaky recon group might split up,

some elements making an attack then slipping away whilst others move into a new position. The Bildake force has limited manpower and can be kept rushing around chasing ghosts, severely impact its ability to deploy the weapons. This is a risky strategy, since there is a chance of contact between a handful of the Travellers and a superior force but it can work.

An alternative would be to delay the approach of the Bildake force by harassing fire, booby traps, obstacles on the road and the illusion of a much greater force. The Bildake commander cannot know what level of force she is up against and is unwilling to just charge through to the target. She can be induced to deploy and begin careful fire-and-manoeuvres to remove a blocking force, perhaps never realising there are only a few hostiles in her path. A series of contacts, with the Travellers pulling back in between, could delay the Bildake force for many hours. Each deployment into fighting order will take time, as will manoeuvres against suspected hostile positions. The Bildake force cannot be certain the Travellers have gone once they cease fire, which imposes further delay. The force must then regroup, get back in its vehicles and begin its advance once again.

Other gambits include using powerful weapons to cripple the trucks, perhaps by shooting the engine block. Destruction will also work but a single shot from a gauss rifle or similar weapon could put a truck out of action and force the enemy to reorganise or advance on foot. Obstacles, mines and improvised roadside bombs will have a similar effect.

Resolution

As always, this situation rewards Travellers who think creatively rather than just making combat rolls. They do not have to win the fight to achieve success but do need to prevent the enemy from achieving their goals until reinforcements arrive. Stealth, deception and clever manoeuvres can achieve this with relatively little bloodshed.

If the mercenaries take possession of some or all of the weaponry, there may be questions to answer. The Merrain Federation might consider the shipment to be its property since it has conquered the city that brought it in. It will certainly try to get the Travellers to hand over the weapons if word gets out. The mercenaries could make a good case for 'spoils of war' and keep the lot or they might hand over some equipment and keep the best for themselves. This might take the form of a negotiation between the Travellers and their client, possibly one that requires arbitration by the licensing body.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Scratch Bildake Force	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	7	0
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	4	-1
CEI or DEI	6	-1
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	8	0

BROKERS AND DEALERS

The Referee can invent all manner of arms firms, mercenary licensing agencies and the like. A selection are presented here as examples.

LICENSING AGENCIES

Some licensing agencies exist solely for that purpose but most are business or political entities. Some have political motivations and will seek to further their agenda by influencing where mercenaries do and do not operate.

Mereditia Security Services (MSS)

MSS is a small-scale licencing agency with few other areas of interest. It does have several ‘in-house’ mercenary units, all of company size or smaller, which have proven effective in the past. Most of MSS’ business comes from licensed rather than owned units. Fees to register are about average, at three times the salary budget of an average force of the size and type. The firm provides the usual legal protections and a repatriation bond for captured or surrendered mercenaries and has sufficient legal and military clout that its guarantees are respected.

MSS does not supply arms and equipment but does have a web of contacts in the marketplace. Gaining accredited status opens enough doors that a mercenary unit can usually obtain at least basic equipment of most kinds. Accreditation requires a demonstration of competence in addition to the fee. MSS requires an inspection of the unit whilst carrying out basic training such as small arms handling and small unit tactical exercises. This can be abstracted by a CEI check in most cases. Accreditation with MSS does not carry any particular kudos but does indicate the unit is a professional outfit and fit for purpose.

The in-house mercenary units operated by MSS are widely respected for their professionalism and competence. Most are light infantry or security formations but MSS has a small artillery, aerospace defence and communications contingent that can be subcontracted by mercenary forces requiring specialist support. The firm does not provide training services to affiliated mercenary units.



The Division

The Division is more properly named the 1st Independent Lift Infantry Division and is one of the few permanently embodied mercenary forces in brigade strength or greater. The Division itself is a lift infantry force with associated artillery, aerospace defence, combat engineering and armoured formations plus a full array of supporting assets. It occasionally deploys en masse but more commonly detaches battalions or reinforced brigades to trouble spots across the region.

The Division has become a household name in the mercenary marketplace; sufficiently so that it operates as a licensing agency for other mercenary units and even has a full-service training facility. This is used by the Division's own personnel when necessary but also produces drafts of fully trained mercenaries on a regular basis. The best of them find berths with the Division itself, whilst even those who do not make the grade are well enough regarded that they are snapped up by lesser formations.

The Division has strict requirements of professionalism, equipping levels and general competence for its affiliated units and requires regular recertification in addition to an initial accreditation process. Recertification is typically less formal than elsewhere, with a Division liaison team joining a unit on deployment for a couple of weeks and making a simple yes/no report based upon their impressions. There are no formal criteria, on the grounds that the best mercenary unit in the field knows a good force when it sees one. This is enough for most clients and affiliates, and there is no appeals process.

Affiliation with The Division typically impresses clients and opponents alike. The Travellers may claim DM+1 on negotiations where their reputation is relevant. This comes at a price however; the fee for attempting to become an affiliate is – successfully or otherwise – six times the monthly salary budget for the force. The mercenaries will be required to demonstrate a high level of capability, which typically means undertaking a difficult operation with a liaison team looking over their shoulders.

Akasi Shipping Incorporated

Akasi Shipping is best known for its interstellar freighting business but acquired a large security and 'route protection' arm by way of a convoluted process. This required setting up garrisons of corporate mercenaries at key points on its trade lanes and acquiring small warships for escort work. With all the

paperwork and legal filings done, the framework was in place to allow independent units to be accredited. This has become a major side line for Akasi Shipping.

The firm's entry requirements are not high, being little more than a token demonstration of competence and a fee equivalent to a month's salaries. Oversight is loose as well and it is possible to assume the firm does not care what happens so long as the money comes in on time. This is incorrect; Akasi stakes its good name on the mercenaries it accredits and has some of the most aggressive lawyers in the field. A unit that generally gives good service and stays off the radar will be left to its own business but those that attract the wrong sort of attention are thoroughly investigated.

Akasi Shipping normally operates in the legal and business arenas, using the threat of blacklisting or a salvo of lawsuits to paralyse mercenary units that fail to meet its standards. In the worst cases the firm has enough mercenaries on call to shut down a rogue unit but would be more likely to undercut its prices and disrupt activities until the unit was forced out of business. Akasi is a respected accreditor but not one with any special kudos associated with it. Its association with the mercenary trade means that many of its freighters are capable of being rapidly converted into troopships.

The Federated Republic of Rorginn

The FRR is an unpleasant 'democratic people's republic', which is in practice none of those things. It makes extensive use of mercenary forces to do its dirty work, usually drawing them from among the pool of certified and accredited units. The FRR's standards are notoriously low, as is its accreditation fee of one month's salaries. It is one of the few mercenary licensing bodies to take part of a unit's revenue – usually 10% but sometimes more – but otherwise does not care much what its licensed mercenaries get up to.

FRR-registered mercenaries receive the usual legal protections, guaranteed in part by the government's financial and military might. The mercenary units themselves function as a sort of collective, assisting one another out of self-interest. In that, the FRR's licensing agency functions more like an extremely heavily armed organised crime gang than a corporate body. Those who mistreat mercenaries licensed by FRR may face legal action but it is just as common for the FRR's legal teams to fabricate a reason to legitimise a strike against the assets of a state or corporation that has offended them.

As might be expected, FRR-accredited mercenaries tend to be small units with a poor reputation. Those that do well usually distance themselves and find a more respectable backer but it is common to end up locked into a cycle of poorly paid and badly executed operations. Expectations of FRR-accredited mercenaries tend to be low and often clients will seek them out to perform missions more reputable formations would turn down. An FRR accreditation certificate is not meaningless but is usually taken to mean the force is barely competent and willing to take on almost any job for a surprisingly low fee.

Recruiters and Trainers

Only the largest and most affluent mercenary units can afford large-scale training facilities. Everyone else has to make do with whatever they can pull together or outsource to one of the mercenary factors operating in the region.

Full Service, Incorporated

FSI is, as its name suggests, one of the few full-service training providers in the mercenary marketplace. It mostly turns out infantry personnel with a solid grasp of small unit tactics but offers specialist and advanced training to small groups. FSI does not produce paraground soldiers; its personnel are familiar with a few standard drill evolutions but little beyond that. Battlefield skills tend to be reasonable to good.

FSI also supplies a limited selection of TL10 infantry equipment. Personnel use these weapons in training and often take their issued personal equipment all the way from orientation to their first deployment. For convenience, many smaller units obtain equipment packages through the firm. This ensures interoperability when working with similar formations but also means that opposing units typically have exactly the same capabilities.

FSI operates on the principle that it can get any specialist a unit wants, for the right fee. Its in-house training provides the bulk of low-end recruits but the firm also maintains a web of what amount to talent scouts among the militaries of nearby worlds. Some actively work with the scouts, others resent them and try to limit their activities. Those nearing the end of their service are offered guidance on how to invest their mustering-out pay well and where to obtain training in civilian fields, along with the option to take what amounts to orientation training for civilian life. This service is genuine and advice is solid but at the same time it establishes relationships that will sometimes benefit the company. Essentially, for a small fee FSI will help former soldiers make the

transition to civilian life. Those that do not find it to their liking know where to start looking for a job in the mercenary trade and FSI will hook them up with appropriate units.

Universal Training Services

UTS is one of the largest providers of training, operating in sectors as diverse as mercenary work, corporate accounting and starship crews. It mostly operates through offices on high-population worlds, taking in hopefuls who – for a suitable fee – will eventually emerge with much-improved employment prospects. UTS is a highly professional company, although it is painfully ‘corporate’ in most ways. This means mercenaries hired out of its training academies tend to speak in the impenetrable jargon of the business world for the first few months of their new career.

One advantage of such a broad field of interest is the possibility of crossover training. Mercenary units need lawyers and accountants but the majority of people with those skills are a poor fit for the often rather rough world of the interstellar soldier of fortune. Cross-training programmes ensure that legal and administrative experts hired by the mercenary units have a solid understanding of the wider issues surrounding their legal battles and in some cases are capable of looking after themselves in the field. This is important to small units whose leaders require a multi-skillset or those formations that expect their business-side personnel to operate in forward areas if necessary.

UTS also operates a distance-learning and accreditation programme. It is common to find an academic skills package on the portacoms of mercenary units. Usually this is a subject of practical use to the force but occasionally the company marksman will decide to study astrophysics in their spare time. Some of these people make quite a splash when they arrive in an academic institution to begin a higher degree using money earned from doing professional violence. Attempts to haze the new students rarely go well.

Brassard

Brassard was once a mercenary force specialising in cadre assignments, which moved into the pre-service and in-service training sector. There is an apocryphal tale of how the company's founder violently lost patience with the demands of a client and somehow coerced the senior members of a planetary government into joining a class of recruits sent to the force. Whilst entertainingly untrue, the story is based on Brassard's insistence on demonstrating first-hand what is really happening in the

military force it is being paid to create. Many clients find this distasteful but Brassard's leadership firmly believes that those who direct the use of force should understand what it means.

Today, Brassard operates on a three-tier system. Its offices recruit promising young people and feed them into the 'tier 3' training facilities. Meanwhile personnel with experience from mercenary or regular forces are given junior-leadership or specialist training as the core of 'tier 2' training units. These are bulked out with graduates of tier 3 to create training formations. Some of these take the field as complete companies but this is rare. More commonly a tier 2 unit is broken up to provide drafts of personnel to those who need them. Tier 1 training is provided by in-the-field mentoring teams or formal education packages for officers of captain rank and above.

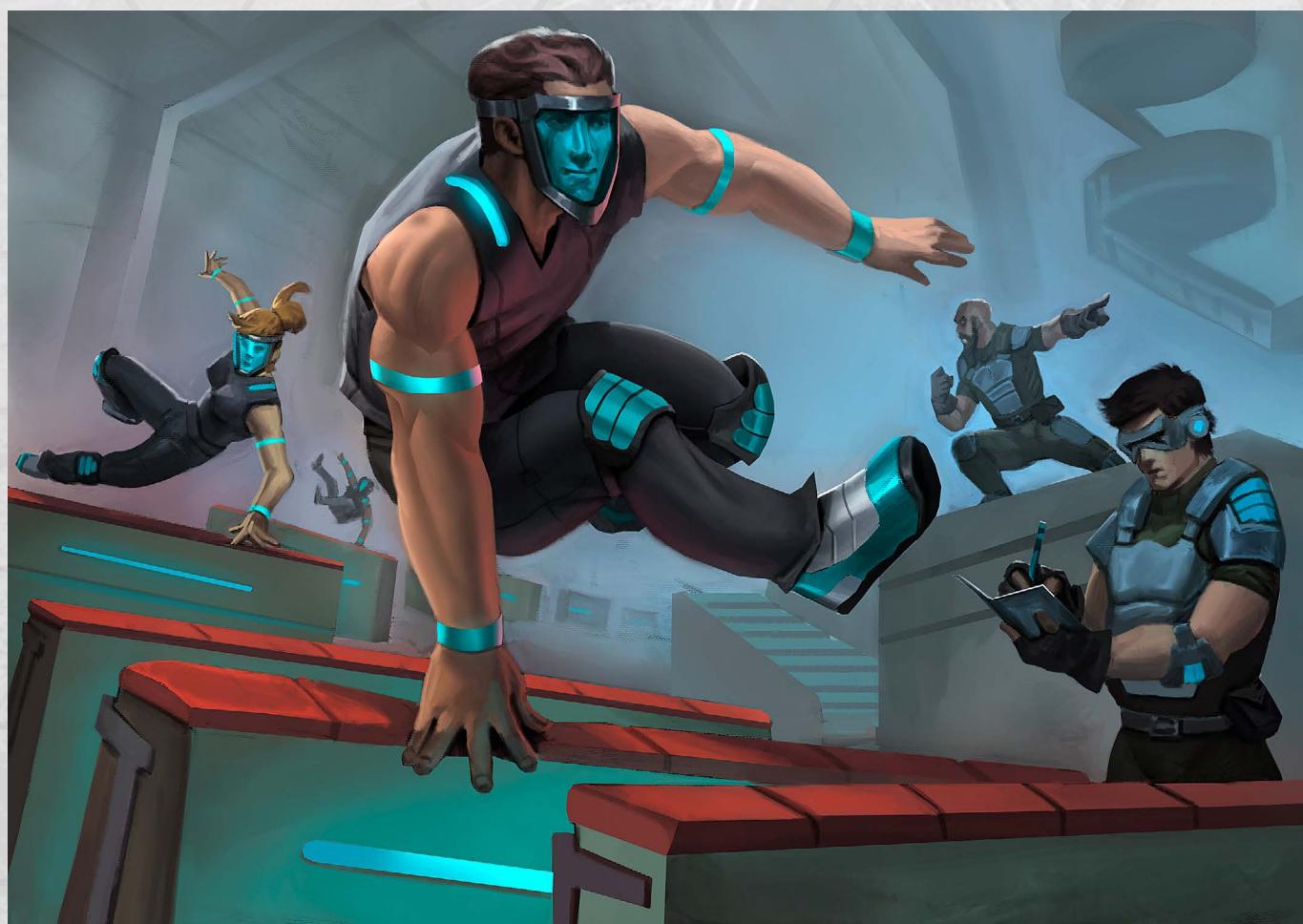
Brassard is capable of forming a complete infantry, light armoured or specialist company to order and can build larger formations at need. Quality may not be high if this is done in a hurry but a client who is capable of planning ahead can place an order, pay a fee and

wait for its mercenary force to arrive. The firm does not supply arms to outsiders but can arrange for a formation it creates to be outfitted at the client's expense.

Brassard still operates a few cadre teams but these are now specialists. In addition to mentoring units sent to mercenary clients, Brassard provides advisors and liaison officers to governments and other clients, often providing liaison with non-Brassard mercenary units. Its investigative branch is respected but not greatly liked in the mercenary field as the go-to independent body when legal matters arise or accusations are made.

The Gariner Academy

The Gariner Academy is more of a staff college and command school than general training installation. It does provide basic training but only to officer cadets destined for the mercenary trade. Those who fail officer qualifications are offered a chance to side line into the specialist and technical training programmes, ending up as mid-level non-commissioned officers. Enlisted specialists are also trained by the academy but only personnel with experience are taken into these programmes.



The Academy does not handle large-scale recruitment but maintains good relations with many units containing its graduates. Personnel who want to enter the mercenary marketplace but who do not meet the standards for graduation as officers or specialists are often recommended to friendly units and offered a short conversion course intended to take them from not-good-enough officer candidates to effective enlisted mercenaries. Some come back later and pick up their studies and in many cases a Gariner washout takes away enough extra skills to be a desirable hire. There are a few quite senior mercenary officers who started out with a Gariner Academy basic training and officer's orientation, joined a unit and learned on the job.

The Academy does not operate mercenary combat units of its own but does hire out staff as advisors to clients and mercenary forces, and as investigators or observers. Security for these personnel, especially observers in dangerous forward areas, is provided by officer cadets on secondment and may be the only practical experience a new graduate has.

Arms Brokers

Most mercenary commanders would agree that after effective communications equipment, the most desirable thing is a reliable source of ammunition. Sometimes a unit is forced to obtain weaponry from wherever it can be found, which can lead to mismatches. This in turn impacts efficiency in the field and both the cost and difficulty of supplying the force. Some brokers will work with anyone but this is not necessarily a good thing for reputable mercenary units. A connection, even through a third party, with unwholesome elements can damage a force's reputation.

Garnet Corporation

The Garnet Corporation produces high-quality military equipment at TL14 standards. Its products are mostly grav vehicles fitted for armoured warfare or support roles, although a range of small arms and support weapons are also marketed. The corporation maintains a chain of outlets, some of which are large enough to actually have grav tanks and similar weapons on display. Most are retail-and-demonstration facilities, however, and require prospective clients to lodge a percentage of the value of larger items before an example is provided for demonstration. The Garnet Corporation is reasonably discerning in terms of its clientele and will not work with a mercenary unit whose Reputation DM is less than +1.

Broadside, Incorporated

Broadside, Inc. is a staple provider of weaponry used by many mercenary units and will deal with any properly accredited formation. It mostly sells infantry weapons up to TL9 but has a range of wheeled combat and artillery vehicles available. These are based on a family of four, six and eight-wheel light armoured cars with configurable armour packages and standardised weapon mounts.

Alvix Armaments

Alvix Armaments is best known as a small-arms manufacturer. It produces basic but reliable hardware at TL9 and also supplies high-quality TL9 specialist equipment including communications gear and battlefield sensors. Alvix has numerous corporate-security clients and acts as a broker for personnel when requested. The firm requires proper accreditation or corporate status for bulk sales but will sell batches of up to a couple of dozen weapons at retail prices to any legal buyer.

Benny's Bazaar

Benny's Bazaar is not an actual arms dealer but a popular term for any small-time weapons seller. Most will sell to almost anyone and rarely have anything more than small arms on sale. However, strange items sometimes turn up in a Benny Bazaar, including top-end grav tanks and even nuclear weapons. It is not usually wise to ask where they came from.

Interstellar Ordnance

Interstellar Ordnance is one of the larger arms manufacturing firms operating in the region. It produces an array of equipment at a variety of Tech Levels and sells mainly in bulk to government clients. Interstellar has contracts with some of the more prominent mercenary formations but tends not to sell in small quantities. Nevertheless, its equipment is an industry standard in many areas and may be purchased in bulk by other dealers for resale at inflated prices. Interstellar Ordnance does not offer mercenary training or recruiting.

Janissary Heavy Ordnance

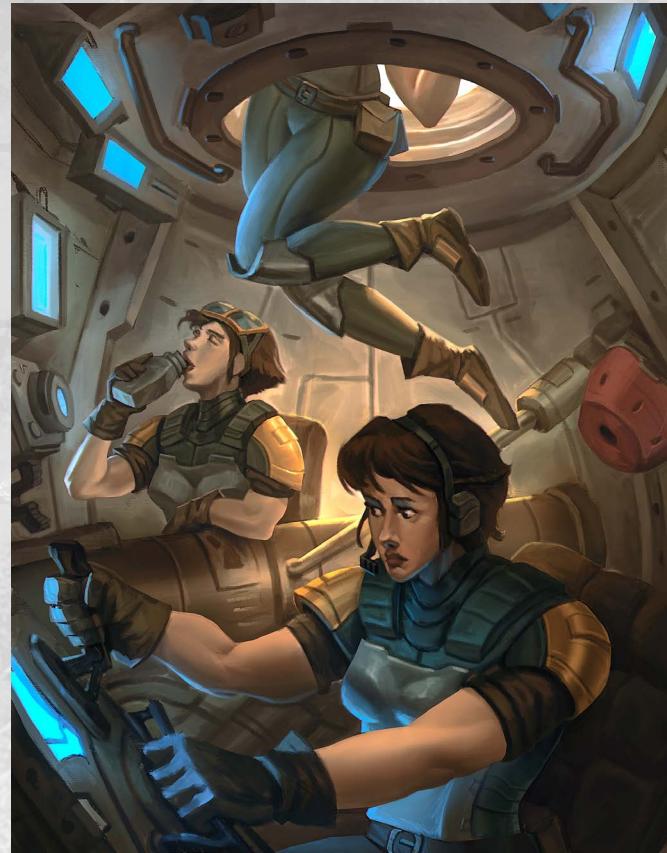
Janissary Heavy Ordnance is a specialist firm producing artillery and aerospace defence weapons. It does not produce standard infantry equipment but can obtain it by subcontracting and Janissary produces some heavier infantry weapons such as shoulder-fired missiles and laser sniper rifles. The firm requires proper accreditation before it will do business.

Erquart Gravitics and Aerospace

Erquart produces grav vehicles and aerospace craft. It does not deal in infantry weapons or the like, and does not act as a broker for them, but does have a ‘tank and crew’ service whereby it will find personnel to operate the vehicles it provides. Erquart requires licensing and accreditation but in general its activities are limited to those who can afford its expensive equipment – which typically restricts clients to high-end mercenary units and governments.

Halrod, Fabian and Sons

Known as the ‘gentleperson’s outfitter for well-off mercenaries’, HFS provides high-quality personal equipment to those who can afford its prices. The firm will only deal with units that have Reputation DM+1 or better and provides a personnel recruiting service to its loyal clients. Despite its oddball hunting-fishing-shooting image, HFS gear is in general excellent in terms of performance and practicality. According to persistent rumours, the firm has agents in many starports who buy up military equipment for resale on less strict terms and is in fact a front for a cynical ‘anything you can pay for’ service.



ARMS DEALERS

Dealer	Max. TL Available	Infantry	Artillery	Combat Vehicles	Aerospace	Support and Specialist
Garnet Corporation	14	Quality	Basic	Quality	Quality	Quality
Broadside, Incorporated	9	Basic	Basic	Basic	None	Basic
Alvix Armaments	9	Basic	None	None	None	Quality
Benny's Bazaar	8	Basic	None	None	None	None
Interstellar Ordnance	10	Quality	Basic	Basic	Basic	Basic
Janissary Heavy Ordnance	12	Basic	Quality	None	Quality	Basic
Erquart Gravitics and Aerospace	13	None	None	Quality	Quality	Quality
Halrod, Fabian and Sons	10	Quality	None	None	None	Quality

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

It is likely that the Travellers will find themselves working alongside another mercenary unit at some point or opposed to one. The Travellers might develop a relationship with another unit – good or bad – as a result of such interactions. They might also find themselves as part of a composite force made up of mercenary units or working with a specialist support formation. The following are examples of mercenary units, which might be encountered in the course of the tickets in this book or in a wider campaign.

ROCKETRY SERVICES, INC.

Rocketry Services is a platoon-sized artillery unit often found working in support of other mercenary formations. With all assets considered the unit is a reinforced platoon, with a reconnaissance and observation element and a bombardment element but its marketable capabilities are based only on the bombardment element. It is fully grav-mobile, although none of its vehicles can be considered a combat asset. The two air/rafts of the recon element are standard civilian models fitted with a pintle mount, whilst the weapons carriers are grav trucks retrofitted with sufficient armour to defeat most small arms but nothing heavier.

The unit is not known to be unreliable but has never achieved tremendous success in the marketplace. This might be due to the nature of its work – artillery might facilitate victories but it is those who occupy the objective that get the credit. Vehicles and equipment are well maintained and reliable, mainly using commercially available spares. The multiple-launch rocket system used by the unit is commonly available and passably accurate for its type. Several other units use the same design, which is essentially a military bombardment system mated to whatever transport is available.

Rocketry Services, Inc
(Captain Felycca Weston)

Bombardment Element (Capt. Weston)

- 1x Command Vehicle (ground truck)
- 3x Bombardment Vehicle (ground truck with multiple-launch rocket system)
- Recon Element (Lt Hassin)
- 2x Air/Raft



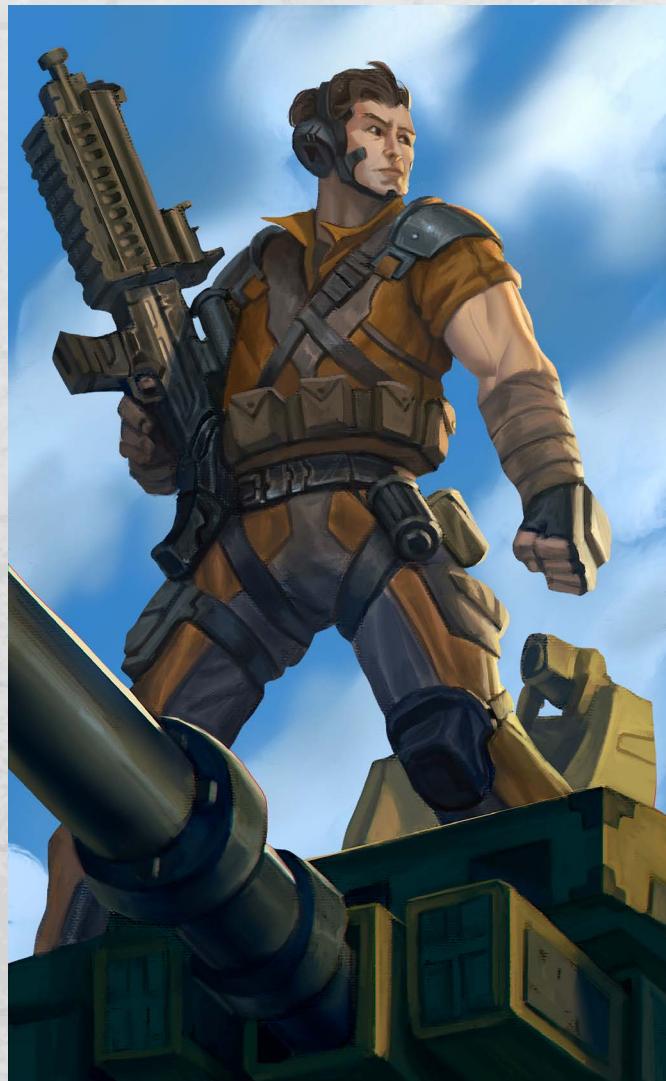
ROCKETRY SERVICES INC

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Rocketry Services, Inc	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Platoon	—
Unit Type	Artillery	—
Unit TL	9	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	3	-1
Bombardment	8	-2
Aerospace	1	-2
Support	5	-1
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	9	+1

GRAVSTRIKE

GravStrike is a small formation specialising in high-tempo operations against targets in the enemy rear or supporting other formations making a strike. Its combat arm consists of a grav armour platoon, with four light grav tanks and a command vehicle. The latter is an APC converted to a command platform, with limited electronic warfare capabilities and excellent sensors. It mounts an aerospace-defence laser in a co-axial mount with a multipurpose anti-armour/anti-aerospace missile system.

The formation is supported by a small workshop contingent housed in three more grav APCs. These are not combat vehicles. One is a mobile workshop, one carries spares and one transports the mechanics and a couple of security personnel. Standard practice is for the workshop element to remain far outside the combat zone, with the combat arm fighting as a reinforced grav armour or armoured reconnaissance platoon.



The unit has a solid reputation for reliability and professionalism. It is in a solvent and well-supplied state and can afford to choose which contracts it takes. Captain Morrisse is known for her dislike of some rival units and can be reluctant to work with them. This manifests in higher fees rather than any unwillingness to provide support in the field but she and her people can be abrasive when they run into personnel from 'lesser' units when on R&R.

GravStrike (Cpt Elixa Morrisse Commanding)

Combat Platoon (Captain Morrisse)

- 1x Grav APC command vehicle
- 4x Light Grav Tank

Support Platoon (Lt Ivrian)

- 1x Workshop Grav APC
- 1x Logistics Grav APC
- 1x Transport Grav APC

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	GravStrike	—
Unit Size	Reinforced Platoon	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	11	+1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	4	-1
Support	6	0
CEI or DEI	10	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	11	+1

THE ALRAANI RIFLES

The Alraani Rifles is an overgrown company-sized formation, which has become rather notorious for taking on almost any job and struggling to complete it. The force's troubles stem from over-recruiting, creating a force too big for its supply base. The unit's commander stubbornly refused to downsize, reasoning that a few successful contracts would provide enough income to fully equip and oversized unit, which would then be a potent fighting force and attractive in the marketplace. Instead, the Rifles have struggled endlessly to maintain their present status, more or less completing contracts and forfeiting bonuses. This force is unpopular to work with as its personnel are under-trained and prone to mistakes in the field but the Rifles are cheap relative to the number of boots they can put on the ground.

Organisation is along the lines of a standard infantry company, with overgrown platoons containing more personnel than their leaders can handle. Most people in leadership positions are over-promoted and inexperienced, further compounding this problem. Nevertheless, the unit's commander styles himself lieutenant-colonel; a rank more suited to someone leading a battalion-sized force.

The unit is equipped with low-end TL8 small arms for the most part. It is short of support weapons and vehicles, relying on the client to provide transportation much of the time. Those vehicles available are civilian models converted to military use and are not in good condition. Most of the unit's vehicles are concentrated in a provisional – and greatly oversized – platoon led by the unit's second in command. The vehicle crews act as mechanics and maintenance facilities are minimal.

The company has about twice as many platoons as normal and is unmanageable as a result. Likewise the platoons themselves are oversized. They are built around eight soldier rifle sections with small arms only, eight strong support sections that nominally contain a machinegun team and a squad equipped with shoulder-fired unguided anti-tank weapons and four soldier aerospace defence sections, which typically contain two low-quality shoulder-fired guided missile launchers. The only significant support weapons are two pairs of 100mm battlefield mortars comprising most of 6th Platoon.

The Alraani Rifles (Lt Col Tell Reibern)

Command Platoon (Lt Col Reibern)

- 1x Command Section
- 1x Rifle Section
- 1x Aerospace Defence Section
- 2x Off-road Vehicle
- 1x Off-road Truck

1st Platoon (Maj Arbenic)

- 5x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section
- 1x Aerospace Defence

2nd Platoon (Cpt Anvri)

- 4x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section

3rd Platoon (Cpt Orell)

- 4x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section

4th Platoon (Cpt Pavinne)

- 3x Rifle Section
- 1x Support Section

5th Platoon (Cpt Gandry)

- 2x Rifle Section
- 3x Support Section

6th Platoon (Cpt Denn)

- 1x Rifle Section
- 2x Mortar Section

Transport Platoon (Maj Exeter)

- 5x Light Off-road Vehicle
- 8x Off-road Truck
- 1x Aerospace Defence Section

In the field, standard practice is to break up 5th and 6th Platoons to create support groups, fielding 2nd, 3rd and 4th Platoons as the main fighting force with 1st Platoon in reserve. Although unwieldy, with twice as many personnel as a typical infantry platoon, the Alraani Rifles is capable of defeating a mid-tech infantry force on equal terms. Its main problem is that equal terms are hard to come by. More commonly, mercenary forces are outnumbered and must outclass their opponents. The Alraani Rifles would be hard pushed to find such an opponent.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	The Alraani Rifles	—
Unit Size	Oversized Company	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	0
Mobility Type	Partial Motorised	0
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	1	-2
Aerospace	2	-2
Support	2	-2
CEI or DEI	3	-2
Morale	6	0
Reputation	5	-1

RAVELL'S DEFENDERS

Ravell's Defenders is a specialist aerospace defence unit, which operates either independently or as the aerospace component of a heavy security force. The unit is self-contained with its own maintenance and support contingent, and can offer a secondary electronic warfare capability to its clients.

Organisation is along standard company lines, with a headquarters platoon and defence platoons. Each of the latter contains four vehicles. Two are equipped with medium-range aerospace defence missiles and a

point-defence gatling laser turret; two with short-range missiles and a fast-slewing laser. Typically vehicles operate in pairs; one of each type. All vehicles use the same lightly armoured six-wheel chassis.

The command second uses an eight-wheel version of the same vehicle. It contains one command vehicle with very good electronic warfare and communications equipment, a maintenance vehicle, an APC version carrying the security contingent and mounting a short-range aerospace defence fit and long-range missile launcher mounted on the same chassis. This vehicle can deliver boosted missiles capable of intercepting starships in low orbit but more commonly carries a multi-submunition missile that can deal with several incoming missiles or craft at once. It is very slow to reload but offers a surge capability when necessary and allows the unit to tackle very high-flying targets or spacecraft.

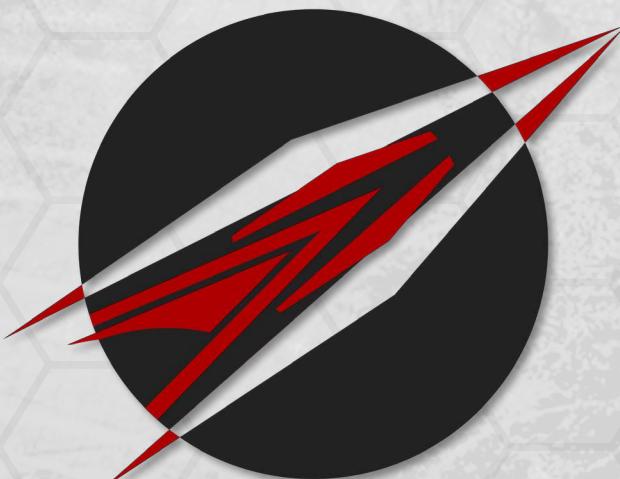
Ravell's Defenders (Major Charles Ravell)

Command Platoon (Maj Ravell)

- 1x Grav APC command vehicle
- 4x Light Grav Tank

Support Platoon (Lt Ivrian)

- 1x Workshop Grav APC
- 1x Logistics Grav APC
- 1x Transport Grav APC



RAVELL'S DEFENDERS

The unit does not deploy as a field combat asset but may accompany ground forces in proximity to the enemy. Its capability to intercept battlefield missiles and even some artillery projectiles acts as a force-multiplier, as does its communications assets. Occasionally the aerospace defence vehicles may get close to the enemy and engage ground targets with their lasers. On a mid-tech battlefield this is highly effective but the unit's commanders strongly resist requests to 'move up and offer fire support' from the client as this is beyond the force's remit.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Ravell's Defenders	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Aerospace Defence	—
Unit TL	11	+1
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	3	-2
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	9	+1
Support	8	0
CEI or DEI	8	0
Morale	9	0
Reputation	8	-1

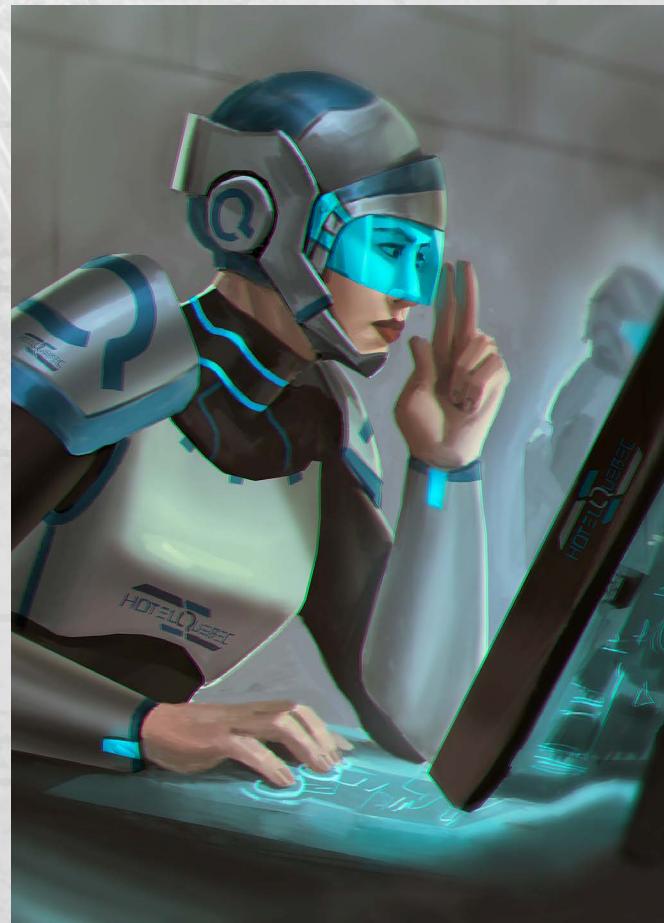
HOTEL QUEBEC

Hotel Quebec takes its name from its function. It is a headquarters-for hire, providing communications, electronic warfare, intelligence analysis and command-and-control functions to the end client. The majority of the unit is carried in off-road trucks, with a few air/rafts for liaison and security work. This is not sufficient for the force to be considered partially grav-mobile.

The force is organised as a provisional company and set up to slot into large formations or even function as an army command centre on a mid-tech world. It has security and aerospace defence elements but cannot be considered a fighting force.

Unusually for such a small force, Hotel Quebec is commanded by a full colonel. Normally this would be pretentious but Colonel Meikala Turgenyev actually held that rank during her service in the homeworld's military. Her specialism was intelligence and war planning, and it remains so. Day-to-day operations are run by her executive officer and subordinates. Hotel Quebec has a high proportion of officers and technical specialists, along with liaison personnel and non-military experts such as negotiators, lawyers and accountants. These normally remain outside a combat zone, advising the client and the unit remotely.

Vehicles are paramilitary in nature for the most part, typically of a sort widely available on the security market. All are armoured against small arms fire and mount light support weapons for self-defence. Other than a single light armoured car only the aerospace defence vehicles carry heavier weapons and those are specialised to their role.



Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Hotel Quebec	—
Unit Size	Small Company	—
Unit Type	Specialist	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	5	-1
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	4	-1
Support	12	+2
CEI or DEI	10	+1
Morale	12	+2
Reputation	10	+1

Hotel Quebec has an excellent reputation as a force-multiplier and is sometimes hired to oversee military exercises. Although this is expensive it generally yields good results. When a large mercenary force is being put together for a major operation, this unit is usually at the top of the list for potential command elements, although sometimes Hotel Quebec plays host to a specialist commander, providing communications and intelligence services without being a link in the chain of command.

WARDELL'S VICTORS

Wardell's Victors is a rarity in the mercenary marketplace; a battalion-sized unit. It is capable of detaching one or more of its companies for an assignment but does not generally do so. More commonly the force fights as a single integrated formation. The core fighting power of the force is lift infantry, with organic fire support and transport, achieved by using relatively inexpensive grav vehicles, which are still vastly more capable than anything a TL7-8 opponent might field.

The Victors typically operate in the upper-mid-tech segment of the marketplace, where their firepower is sufficient to tip the balance of a planetary conflict. When the unit has to take on higher-tech forces its light equipment can be a liability but good tactics and years of experience render the force surprisingly effective even when outgunned.

The grav tanks used by the Victors are, with one exception, only just worthy of the name. They are super-light reconnaissance vehicles that can wipe the floor with TL7 armour but cannot stand up to TL9+ anti-armour weapons. The single medium tank is quite old but is a source of much pride within the unit. It was captured long ago, fixed up and put into service, and has saved the bacon of both armoured and infantry elements more than once. The other fire support vehicles are a mix of lightly armoured fast-response platforms and tank destroyers with much heavier armour but limited mobility.



Wardell's Victors (Lt Col Jean Wardell)

Command/Support Company

- Command Platoon
- 1x Grav Command Vehicle
- 1x Nuclear Damper Vehicle
- 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
- 1x APC (security contingent)
- 3x Air/Raft (liaison and security)

Field Workshop Platoon

- 1x Grav-mobile field workshop
- 1x Grav Armoured Recovery Vehicle
- 3x Grav Truck

Artillery Platoon

- 3x Grav Sled (Rocket Artillery)
- 2x Grav Sled (Tube Artillery)
- Logistics Platoon
- 1x Grav APC
- 5x Grav Truck

1st Company (Lift Infantry)

- Command Platoon
- 1x Grav Command Vehicle
- 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
- 2x Grav Sled (Fire Support)
- 3x Lift Infantry Platoon
- 3x Grav APC
- 1x Grav Sled (Fire Support)

2nd Company (Lift Infantry)

- Command Platoon
- 1x Grav Command Vehicle
- 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
- 1x Grav APC
- 3x Lift Infantry Platoon
- 3x Grav APC
- 1x Grav Sled (Fire Support)

3rd Company (Grav Cavalry)

- Command Platoon
- 1x Grav Command Vehicle
- 1x Aerospace Defence Vehicle
- 1x Light Grav Tank
- 1x Medium Grav Tank
- 2 x Grav Cavalry Platoon
- 3x Grav APC
- 1x Light Grav Tank
- 1x Armoured Recon Platoon
- 3x Light Grav Tank
- 1x Grav APC

Tactically, the Victors normally operate in a classic 'two wings and a reserve' formation, with the two lift infantry companies as the main fighting force. The grav cavalry company will send forward a reconnaissance element or conduct rapid strikes in support of the wings, and stands ready to flank, exploit or cover a retreat. The command element has very limited fighting power but can deliver rocket and shell bombardment in support of the other companies. Its capability to recover and repair grav vehicles is limited but sufficient to keep the force in action even where there is no local technical support available.

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Wardell's Victors	—
Unit Size	Battalion	—
Unit Type	Lift Infantry	—
Unit TL	10	+1
Mobility Type	Grav	+8
Combat	9	+1
Bombardment	5	-1
Aerospace	6	0
Support	8	0
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	13	+3
Reputation	11	+2

