

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY ADVENTURE 3: MUST TRAVEL, NEED GUNS



SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE IN THE FAR FUTURE

TRAVELLER

MERCENARY ADVENTURE 3: MUST TRAVEL, NEED GUNS

CREDITS

CLASSIC TRAVELLER

Marc Miller

Loren Wiseman, John Harshman, Frank Chadwick, Darryl Hany, Winston Hamilton, Tony Svajlenka, Scott Renner, Doug Poe, David MacDonald, Wayne Roth, Paul R. Banner.

MONGOOSE TRAVELLER

Author

M J Dougherty

Editor

Matthew Sprange

Layout

Cassie Gregory

Cover art

Nikita Vasylchuk

Interior Illustrations

Nikita Vasylchuk, Cassie Gregory, Mark Graham, Xavier Bernard, Gowra Hari

TRAVELLER INNER CIRCLE

Andrew James Alan Welty, Colin Dunn, M. J. Dougherty, Rob Eaglestone, Sam Wissa, Joshua Bell, Maksim Smelchak

Special Thanks

Marc Miller, Loren Wiseman

Traveller ©2021 Mongoose Publishing. All rights reserved. Reproduction of this work by any means without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden. All significant characters, names, places, items, art and text herein are copyrighted by Mongoose Publishing.

This game product contains no Open Game Content. No portion of this work may be reproduced in any form without written permission. To learn more about the Open Game License, please go to www.mongoosepublishing.com.

This material is protected under the copyright laws of the United Kingdom and of the United States. This product is a work of fiction. Any similarity to actual people, organisations, places or events is purely coincidental.

Traveller is a trademark of Far Future Enterprises and is used under licence.

Printed in China.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
REFEREE'S INFORMATION	4
RHUBARB SORTIE	14
HIVE OF INACTIVITY	21
OFF THE BOOKS	26
CHARACTERS AND OPPPOSITION	29
HARDWARE	34



INTRODUCTION

Must Travel, Need Guns is set on the world of Kolan, in the Farina subsector of Gateway. The adventure is suitable for a mercenary unit of almost any size and composition, since the Travellers will detach a suitable number of personnel and equipment to carry out the mission. A typical band of Travellers could also play through the adventure, although they will need to be rated as a mercenary force in order to resolve some actions.

The adventure assumes the mercenaries are on contract to a client operating out of the Megusard Corporate and that the campaign they are part of is not going well. The Travellers will have a chance to rectify this or at least get out of a difficult situation with some seriously upgraded firepower. A mercenary unit that already possesses tremendously powerful weapons might not be so impressed with what they manage to seize but then such a force might not be in this position in the first place.

The situation is driven by events beyond the control of the Travellers. It is possible they will not figure out why these events have occurred, although astute Travellers should be able to at least take an educated guess. In short, a group of human insurgents have come to the conclusion that a takeover of their homeworld (and many others) is inevitable and will be accompanied by atrocities. Certain that defence is pointless, they have resolved to earn a place in this new world by assisting their new masters.

The mercenaries are being exploited by the Lords of Thunder, a K'kree faction that does indeed intend to claim the region. By feeding a little cash and some weaponry into situations like that on Kolan, the Lords of Thunder weaken potential targets and derail countermeasures. In this case, a miscommunication has created the illusion of opportunity and a K'kree leader has tried to take advantage of a situation that does not exist. Fearful of retribution, the insurgents need to engineer a victory in short order.

Balance in a Mercenary Campaign

It is necessary to make some assumptions when creating adventures. The central assumption in each mercenary adventure is that the mercenary force is powerful enough to get the job done (otherwise nobody would hire them or their careers would be violently short) but not so overpowered that they can simply stride through the opposition in minutes. The weapons captured in this adventure could propel an otherwise modest mercenary unit into that category if the Referee is too generous, so the Referee must be cautious when handing out rewards.

This applies throughout any campaign. If the Travellers or their mercenary company start out overpowered or gain too much in terms of rewards and battlefield salvage the only way to challenge them is to create equally overpowered opposition. This begs the question: Where are these super-powered enemies coming from and why are they involved in such minor events? A mercenary campaign could revolve around the adventures of the best of the very best as they deal with problems nobody else can but running that sort of game should be a deliberate choice rather than an accidental result of too much loot.

A relatively modest mercenary force can have interesting adventures without the Referee needing to introduce universe-changing threats and it is this sort of force the adventures are aimed at. Typically such a force will be no larger than a reinforced company and composed of infantry with a few vehicles and support systems. This force can be challenged by threats that could plausibly exist, whereas an entire battalion of battle dress equipped assault troops with grav tanks in support can stomp anything short of a major world's military.

The Travellers are caught in the wrong place at the wrong time, hamstrung by contradictory instructions from a weak-willed client. Becoming aware that their contract is about to be closed down and payment withheld, they too need to produce a result of some kind. This leads to a clash with insurgents and reveals the presence of K'kree on Kolan. Winning a victory against these interlopers will protect the Travellers from accusations of defaulting on their contract but it will have to be done off the books as officially the unit is in the process of standing down.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The Travellers are, more than likely, part of or associated with a mercenary unit. If not, there is no need for the Referee to create one at the beginning of the adventure because the focus is on a small group that must be rated as a detachment in its own right and this will be carried out during the adventure.

Elements of this adventure draw heavily on the additional weapon characteristics described in the *Mercenary* rulebooks and *Field Catalogue*. The Referee is advised to become familiar with the alternate initiative mechanics making use of Quickdraw to resolve sudden encounters as well as the concepts of Signature and Knockdown.

Involving the Travellers

This adventure assumes the Travellers are already on Kolan and engaged in mercenary operations. Their involvement in the events of the adventure, is made necessary by circumstances and desirable by an opportunity they discover. Since this is a close-focus adventure which does not involve large-scale military operations the Travellers' parent unit could be of any size and composition. The Referee should create a set of payment terms suitable for the Travellers' unit. The mission was a warfighting ticket, albeit a low-intensity one.

The default backstory for the ticket is as follows:

The Travellers' unit was hired by the planetary government of Kolan, to undertake punitive military operations against an insurgency in the Enslet Coast region. This turned out to be a complex and rather tedious business, especially since the client did not appear to be sure exactly what they wanted. After several weeks of changing rules of engagement and varying levels of support from unenthusiastic and often inept local allies, the Travellers begin to realise their client is considering terminating the contract. This is not disastrous but it does mean the Travellers' unit will have a failed ticket on their record. Payment might or might not be made in full, leading to legal wrangling and additional hassle. The Travellers have a short period in which to turn things around, perhaps even handing their client a victory despite the client's lack of commitment.



REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The following information is for the use of the Referee. How much of it is made available to the Travellers, and in what manner, is for the Referee to decide. Much of this data is commonly known or available through data terminals, info feeds to Travellers' comms and so forth. However, the commonly available version may be incomplete, dumbed-down or wildly inaccurate for all manner of reasons. The Referee has the whole story; if the Travellers want accurate information they may have to search for it or use inventive means.

GATEWAY

The Gateway sector was colonised before and during the early years of the Long Night and has multiple minor powers. It lies between the Third Imperium and the Two Thousand Worlds of the K'kree but sees little K'kree activity other than at its trailing side. Many worlds are independent but there are multiple small human and non-human powers vying for control of at least some of them. The overall situation is one of cross-cutting agendas in a loose and unregulated environment. This provides many opportunities for mercenary forces, although conditions are sometimes very dangerous due to a lack of enforced standards and practices.

MEGUSARD CORPORATE

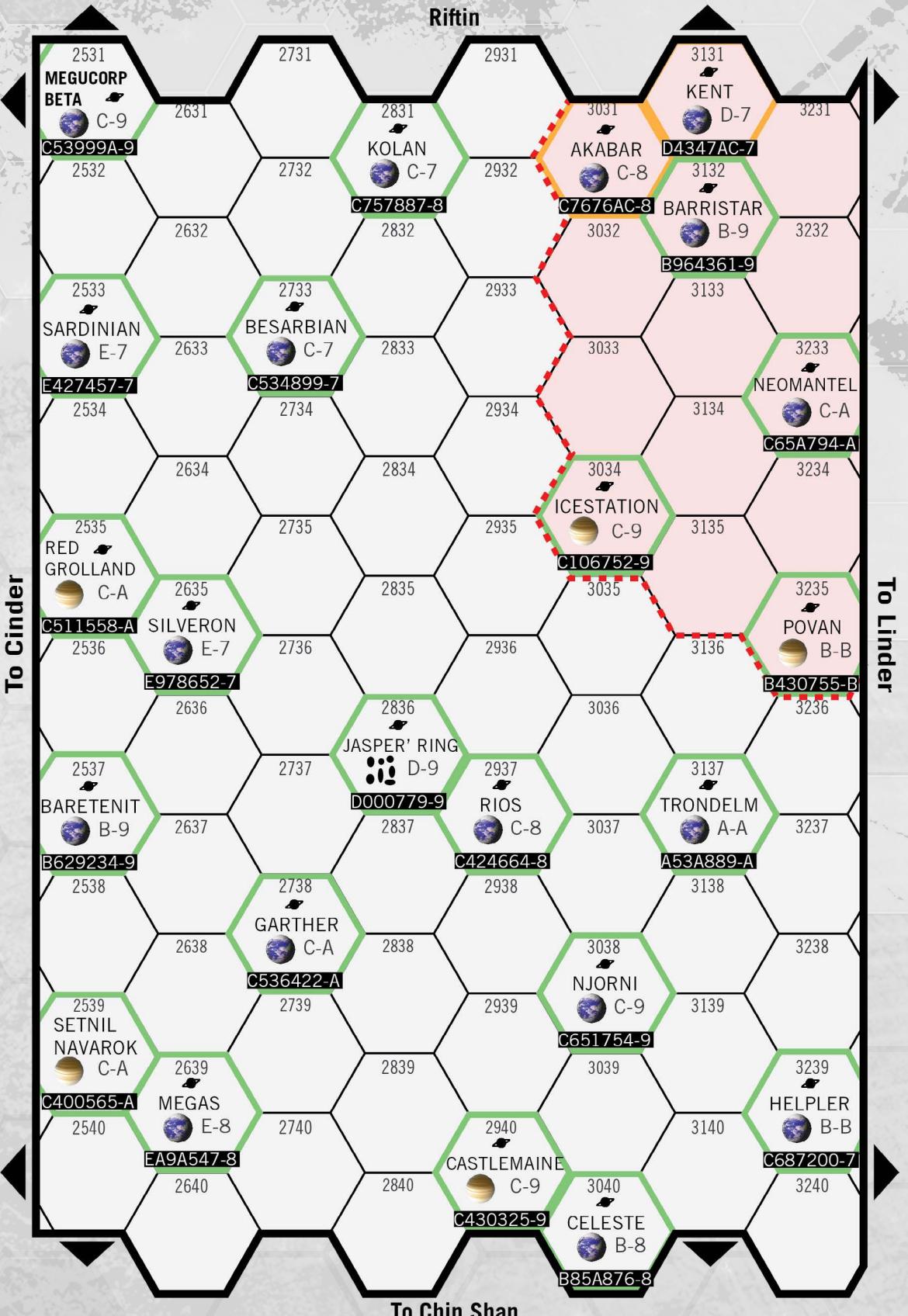
The Megusard Corporate was once a large corporation – Megusard Interstellar – based out of Sardis. At its peak the Corporate had holdings across the sector, although its assets were primarily concentrated in the region of the corporation's headquarters at Sardis. Changing conditions resulted in a shift from corporation to interstellar state, albeit one with many corporate trappings. All services, including the military, are run on corporate lines and obsessed with getting the most value from their budget. In the case of the military, this has resulted in a force with too many complex rules and equipped for long-term budget stability rather than military capability.

Each world of the Corporate has its own government, with the capital at Sardis. The corporate has an extensive TL9 industrial capability at Megucorp Alpha and Beta and smaller TL11 manufacturing facilities at Sardis itself. These goods are traded across the sector and many mercenary units are outfitted with 'Megusard-Standard' TL9 weaponry.



P
Gateway

FARINA SUBSECTOR



Gas Giant
B-6 Starport Class & Tech Level

Secure System
Amber Zone
Renkard Union

Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
Asteroid Belt

RENKARD UNION

The Union comprises 20 systems on the border between Gateway and Luretir!girr to trailing. A loose organisation based upon trade and mutual interests, the Union's member worlds also paid lip service to a vaguely-worded mutual defence treaty – until recently. The expansionistic nature of the Lords of Thunder in Luretir!girr has forced the Union to close ranks and begin presenting a unified front in the hope of deterring K'Kree expansion. This has in turn led to the creation of a Union Navy and a central defence policy.

The Union maintains strong trade links with the Megusard Corporate to spinward and conducts long-distance trade with the Two Thousand Worlds. This has recently been stepped up, in the hope of improving relations and influencing the Two Thousand Worlds to exert some restraint over the Lords of Thunder. This hope is thought to be wildly optimistic but nevertheless the Union is trying.

THE LORDS OF THUNDER

The Lords of Thunder are a faction of K'kree so militant they were driven out of the Two Thousand Worlds. They openly state their intention to wipe out all G'naak (vermin or meat-eaters) and have been expanding their territory for years. The Lords of Thunder are poised to move into Gateway and thought to be engaged in what could be described as softening-up operations. These typically take the form of support for insurgencies and dissident groups, usually by way of intermediaries, although bribery and economic coercion are also widely used. Despite cries from the most threatened worlds for unified resistance, little has emerged. This suggests the Lords of Thunder are succeeding in sowing division and dissent in human space.

FARINA SUBSECTOR

Farina contains 23 star systems, most of which are, at least in theory, independent. The strongest economic and political influences come from the Megusard Corporate and Renkard Union, with the more distant Viyard Concourse generally occupied elsewhere. Viyard-registered trade ships are not uncommon in the subsector but it is not an area of great political interest.

The average Tech Level of worlds in the subsector is 8 and whilst the highest Tech Level is officially 11 – at Povan – this world exports little in the way of high-tech goods to the independent worlds of the subsector. The highest commonly available Tech Level is 10, sourced from Trondelm in modest quantities. There are no heavily industrialised worlds in the subsector, making it a market for goods from the Renkard Union and Megusard Corporate.

The population of the subsector is almost universally human, with some small enclaves of other species. As yet there are no known populations of K'kree in Farina, although the steady encroachment of the Lords of Thunder might result in some worlds being taken over in the coming years. Conquest by the Lords of Thunder is a real fear for the humans of the subsector but as yet there is no unified resistance to their advance.

THE WORLD OF KOLAN

Kolan lies midway between Sardis, capital of the Megusard Corporate and Akabar in the Renkard Union. As such it is an important trade stopover and claimed by the Corporate. This claim is not recognised by the Renkard Union but this has more to do with internal Renkard politics than any major dispute. For all its name, the member governments of the Renkard Union are prone to disagree about almost everything. No consensus has ever been reached about Kolan but this is not a bone of contention between the polities as a whole. Those who do object to the Megusard claim can do little about it.

C 7 5 7 8 8 7 – 8

Starport	C	Routine
Size	7	11,200km
Atmosphere	5	Thin
Hydrosphere	7	70%
Population	8	Hundreds of millions
Government Type	8	Civil Service Bureaucracy
Law Level	7	Shotguns prohibited
Technology Level	8	Quality Computers

Kolan's starport is officially rated Class C, which accurately describes the public component. There is a large orbital support terminal for Megusard ships but it is not available to outsiders without a special license. Likewise, the downport has a significant segment reserved for Megusard ships and license holders, and a smaller generally available downport. Facilities there are of a high standard as the port benefits from passing trade. Local astrography results in few ships using the port other than those from Megusard or Renkard but some traders will make the journey in order to take advantage of goods passing through.

Kolan itself is a warm, well-watered world with a thin atmosphere prone to dense fogs and persistent mist, particularly over its dense forests. The population is for the most part concentrated in and around the cities of the large northern continent. Many of the smaller land masses are uninhabited, at least officially. Ruins have been found on some land masses, suggesting attempts at colonisation – perhaps in the later stages of the Long Night – and there are records of population migrations during the world's colonised history. Some were successful, some not, and others remain dubious. Those 'unofficial' populations that come to the attention of the world government are either integrated or ignored as they prefer. So long as these outlier communities do not cause trouble they are of little consequence and on the whole the government considers integrating them too expensive and time-consuming to bother with unless incorporation is requested.

As a result there are significant numbers of people living at TL6 on the southern land masses. There is little need for conflict, so contact is limited to trade missions undertaken by maritime vessels. Starships are not permitted to visit these unofficial communities, largely to protect the Megusard Corporate's control of trade. Conditions vary considerably from the culture and governmental style of the majority population.

The official population numbers around 300 million people, mostly dwelling in city clusters that form distinct regions. Like many worlds colonised from space, settlement grew outward from widely separated initial colonies rather than creeping across the continents. As a result there are significant wild areas that have never been deemed worth developing. The city clusters are internally linked by road, rail and water transport, with most movement between clusters carried out by way of maritime vessels. Cities with a port capable of accommodating the big merchant ships act as hubs, with smaller local craft serving nearby cities. Large-scale canals are common, allowing heavy goods to be moved cheaply to the trade hubs.

Kolan is governed by an overgrown and highly inefficient bureaucratic apparatus, which has strangled itself into near-immobility. Most activities undertaken by citizens require licenses, qualifications, safety audits or similar hoops-to-jump-through and not surprisingly a variety of back channels exist for getting things done. Some are outright illegal, such as institutionalised bribery, but most are exploits of loopholes and special conditions that have become the norm. Outsiders frequently become enmeshed in the tangles of bureaucracy, whilst those who know how the system works neatly circumvent it at every turn. This in turn has led to the rise of the 'facilitator', who will navigate the bureaucratic sargasso in return for a fee.

The military forces of Kolan are at present over-large and absorb an excessive proportion of the budget. The expansion was initiated as a response to a perceived threat from the Lords of Thunder, a militant K'kree faction expanding into the region from trailing. The expansion was carried out as a series of initiatives, most of which were amended multiple times or left unfinished.

The original armed forces were typical of the region – lightly equipped and best suited to internal security operations. These were adequate to deter or deal with offworld raids or the very occasional clash with an unofficial community but could not defend the world against invasion. The focus shifted several times, resulting in half-built aerospace defence bases, over-expanded ground forces still waiting for critical equipment and several batch purchases of vehicles and heavy weapons, which did not always work well together. The military has also had to move from a security mission to a real planetary defence.

The best units in the Kolan military are maritime formations, operating ocean-going vessels optimised for intervention against light resistance among the unofficial population. The force has a few imported grav vehicles but for the most part relies on conventional aviation and ground troops supported by light wheeled vehicles. Larger vessels have flight decks, whilst smaller combatants have pads for a helicopter or two. These pads are sometimes used by grav vehicles.

The maritime navy was not expanded and has not decreased in efficiency, although some of its technicians were reassigned to land-based units and had to be replaced with inexperienced personnel. Ground units associated with the navy were selected as the basis for expanded forces, with the inevitable result that officers were over-promoted and still inexperienced in their new roles when the time came to find someone for an even higher post. Although expansion has been going on for

a few years the army is still weak in terms of experience and command capability. Most units are still awaiting the equipment they need to move to a new role.

For example, the 12th Field Battalion was expanded from a maritime infantry company and supposed to receive sufficient light armoured vehicles to convert it into a mechanised infantry force. It still has insufficient transport and only about half the combat vehicles required, so either has to detach a company or two, or remain static. This sort of problem is repeated throughout the military of Kolan to a greater or lesser degree, and attempts to sort out the mess just adds new layers of bureaucracy to a stalled project.

THE ENSLAN COAST REGION

The Enslan Coast is located on the northern continent and is the territory of the world government. There are no known unofficial populations there. Like many other areas of Kolan it is a self-contained region with natural barriers between it and other city groupings. A chain of small cities lies along the coast itself, with others further inland. Communications are primarily water-based, with canals running inland to carry heavy goods to and from the coastal cities, which are connected to other areas by ships using the ocean-port at the city of Marine Lia.

Marine Lia is a major city, largely by virtue of its deep-water port. It is also the seat of local government for the Enslan Coast and a significant industrial centre – at least by local standards. The city has shipbuilding yards, which mostly construct civilian merchant ships but occasionally secure a contract to refit military vessels. In addition the city has a diversified light industry base and a little heavy industry.

Marine Lia is home to a significant fishing fleet, much larger than other cities on the Enslan Coast. Some vessels are very large, operating on an industrial scale in distant waters, but most are modest family businesses. Fish and seafood naturally forms a large part of the local diet, with land-based foods coming in via canal. This has been disrupted by recent events and whilst shortages can be offset by shipments from other regions prices have been forced up. The vagaries of the supply chain and behaviour of people means that certain items may suddenly be in short supply. There have been periods of a few days in which there was no cheese to be had in Marine Lia, then the shelves were full of it but another foodstuff or item was hard to get. This is made worse by rumours of shortages leading to panic-buying.

The region as a whole is habitable, although occasionally battered by storms coming off the ocean. Although the Enslan Coast is temperate, the thin atmosphere tends to produce rapid changes of temperature that cause weather conditions to vary rapidly. Gusty conditions are normal despite the thin atmosphere, along with high rainfall. The overall result is a very damp climate that is good for crops but feels colder than a dryer region would. This can make military operations and outside work rather miserable at times.

THE CONFLICT-ish ON KOLAN

The Enslan Coast is suffering from an insurrection of sorts. There have been armed clashes but the troubles vary between civilian discontent expressed through rioting, large-scale criminal actions, such as attacks on fishing vessels, and outright violence. At times the insurgents seem to want to control the area, yet later they retreat and return to more political troublemaking. Robberies of trade barges or farming estates are commonplace and there is an ongoing dispute over fishing rights, which sometimes spills over into violence.

The situation is confusing and local city administrators seem unsure whether they are victims or supporters. At times a city will provide active support to insurgents – apparently voluntarily – but on other occasions it will request assistance in securing territory. The overall pattern seems to be that cities support disaffected citizens who are causing trouble but when the problem grows into armed insurgency they distance themselves. A common complaint is that the city administration is being coerced into supporting the insurgents, although often there is no evidence this is the case.

The reality of the situation is that there are multiple local issues, all of which are being exploited by insurgents who are in turn being used by offworld agents provocateur. In fact the Lords of Thunder are behind the present situation, along with many other minor troubles throughout the border zone. Their agents – who are human – are working to exacerbate every minor dispute and source of disaffection. In the case of the Enslan Coast they found a local troublemaker to work with.

The insurgency revolves around a small group of ex-mMercenaries and their immediate followers. They have an agenda and are entirely willing to co-opt other issues if it furthers their aims. The insurgents have ‘discovered’ connections between the various causes for disaffection and managed to create a core of determined adherents. Around these are less committed insurgents, criminal

groups seeking to profit from the situation, corrupt politicians and various unhappy but not militant groups. Among the latter are farmers from inland cities who have been convinced they are getting a raw deal at the trade hub, fishing boat operators who feel they are being edged out by industrial trawler operators and so forth.

The end result of this is that outside Marine Lia, and to a lesser extent within the city, there is a considerable amount of passive support for the insurgents. The amount of active support varies, with most people content to spew angry status updates onto social media or criticise the latest government initiatives. However, the overall level of disaffection is such that many feel justified in taking actions they would normally consider unthinkable. Thus a group of otherwise law-abiding people might try to set fire to a corporate trawler or take part in a street brawl against the current target of their outrage.

In the middle of this is a real insurgency, which takes the form of attacks on soft targets such as the big fishing vessels or remote infrastructure. Local security forces have not made the connection but these insurgents are careful to attack only targets likely to be considered 'fair enough' by the dissident part of the population and on the whole they are successful in avoiding loss of life. Indeed, there have been incidents where an armed band of insurgents have politely robbed a courier truck whilst bystanders cheered or impeded responding security units.

Governmental response has been patchy and at times contradictory. In general the policy has been to contain the insurgency and treat those involved as criminals rather than combatants. Some success has been achieved at times but over-complex and unrealistic rules of engagement have resulted in several arrest operations being aborted or ending in an embarrassing retreat. Military engagements with insurgents have not gone well either, largely due to a lack of competence and equipment. A unit that on paper possesses overwhelming strength might actually only be able to deploy a small fraction of it to a battle zone for lack of transport.

The solution was to bring in mercenaries who would hit the insurgency hard and break it up into manageable pieces for the authorities to deal with. Yet no sooner had the mercenaries arrived than their orders were changed... and again soon after. Repeatedly redeployed and reassigned, the mercenaries found themselves hamstrung by political interference and were unable to do more than win a few skirmishes. Authorisation to go into the main insurgent-held areas and clear them has been 'imminent' for weeks now, and in the meantime the insurgents seem able to avoid contact with those patrols the mercenaries are allowed to mount.



The political wind is changing once again, mainly due to the influence of offworld agents. The planetary government has decided the mercenaries are not worth their fee, since they have completely failed to produce any meaningful results. The fact that this is the fault of the government will not occur to them and they will not be told. The mercenaries are to be shipped out and it is likely part of their fee will be withheld since their mission has been a failure.

THE KOLAN TICKET

Warfighter (size and fee appropriate to the Travellers' unit)
The Enslan Coast region is located on the northern continent of Kolan, forming a discrete economic region with a local governmental apparatus. The region has been troubled by an insurgency for some years and the planetary government has decided to engage a mercenary force to bring the situation under control.

An appropriately sized mercenary force will deploy at the regional capital of Marine Lia before undertaking operations at the discretion of the local government. These may include security and reconnaissance missions but ultimately the aim is to identify and eliminate key areas controlled by the insurgents and their major assets. Direct action is anticipated.

Support is available from local forces including air assets and offshore support from maritime vessels. Opposition is thought to be light, comprising for the most part poorly organised and equipped insurgent bands.

Referee's Information

At the time the ticket was generated this was a reasonable appraisal of the situation. Since then political will has diminished and the overall aims of the government have varied.

Ticket Success Indicators

The criteria for ticket success are as follows:

- 1: CRITICAL: Inflict serious losses on the insurgents and drive them from at least one of their strongholds.
- 2: IMPORTANT: Ensure the security of Marine Lia.
- 3: IMPORTANT: Avoid collateral casualties among noncombatants.
- 4: ROUTINE: Remain within Rules of Engagement and follow instructions from local government.
- 5: ROUTINE: Cooperate with local forces and assist when necessary.

With one Critical, two Important and two Routine criteria the maximum TSI for this operation is 14. However, since the client is dithering and has not

authorised major offensive operations against the insurgents it is not possible to fulfil the Critical objective without ignoring one or more of the others and potentially violating the terms of the ticket.

THE INSURGENCY AND THE K'KREE

The insurgency centres around Captain Andrew Valax, a former mercenary who saw far too much action against the K'kree in the past decade. He was present when worlds fell to the Lords of Thunder, only just escaping each time and has come to believe that resistance is ultimately pointless. The Lords of Thunder will drive into Gateway when they choose, overrunning worlds that do not surrender. Valax has witnessed wholesale massacres as K'kree warriors, their blood still hot from combat, rampaged among the civilian population. He knows why it happened – the K'kree smelled the odour of meat-eaters and were enraged – and is troubled by the thought it could happen on Kolan, his homeworld.

In Valax' combat-fatigued mind, an idea was born. The only way to survive the inevitable K'kree assault was to welcome it. He had seen populations that did not eat meat absorbed into the K'kree state. Vegetarian humans might be second class citizens but they would be alive and there was an honourable place for such outsiders – or so Valax believed. And so he began to build a core of faithful followers. Giving up animal products was easy enough; there were plenty of alternatives available. With no reason to hate his followers, Valax believed the K'kree would accept them as allies when they finally began the conquest of Gateway.

What began as a survival measure grew, little by little, into a grander plan. Valax would take control of a region on his homeworld, welcoming the K'kree when they arrived. If the world government resisted or was massacred, his people would assume the mantle of government on behalf of their new K'kree overlords. He reached out to the nearest K'kree diplomats and to his surprise his scheme gained instant approval.

For some years now Valax and his followers have been receiving funds from the Lords of Thunder, by way of deniable channels. Human intermediaries carry messages back and forth, and sometimes deliver arms and equipment. Valax has even travelled to the court of a K'kree Steppelord where he was graciously received. He has come to view the Lords of Thunder as an inevitability, with humans in the position of choosing between destruction and a place in the new order.

The situation on the Enslan Coast is not entirely the doing of Valax and his followers but he has been exploiting local grievances and the strange apathy that seems to have descended on all arms of the government. He has quite a following among the villages and towns of the Enslan Coast, although few realise it. To them, it is more a matter of supporting local causes exploited by the insurgents. A smaller proportion of locals actively support Valax and some are willing to leave their homes to fight. Only those at the very core of the insurgency know of Valax' plan to save them from K'kree atrocities by assisting invasion, although others suspect there is a reason why vegetarianism is so popular in the region.

Valax is partially correct. His plan might actually work and he might well be permitted to become a puppet ruler for the Lords of Thunder – or their human 'liaison' – after the conquest. However, Valax is being used. The mind behind this scheme is a K'kree clanlord by the name of K'ghiita, who is charged with finding humans to exploit as intelligence assets. His human agents make contact with people like Valax and take advantage of their weaknesses. Some are greedy, some fearful like Valax and others hope to be given positions of power after their home regime is overthrown. K'ghiita cares little for any of them but plays the gracious host when someone it is privileged to visit him. Assets are used according to their talents; some simply provide information but others create opportunities for their masters.

K'ghiita and others like him are tasked with weakening the human states and worlds of Gateway. The planned conquest is perhaps long in the future but foundations have been laid and the work of weakening resistance goes on constantly. Valax was a promising asset, perhaps even capable of doing what he said. If the K'kree assault on Kolan – when it finally is launched – decapitates the world government, perhaps Valax can seize control of a region and save the Lords of Thunder the trouble of overrunning it... at least until they are ready.

To this end, K'ghiita has increased the assistance being sent to Valax. If he succeeds in carving out a pro-K'kree (or at least pro-surrender) enclave then he will be a most useful asset. Even if he merely absorbs resources and causes economic damage he has still served K'ghiita's purposes. The chance was worth sending extra funds, arms and advisors, and having agents within the government interfere in operations against the insurrection.

Unfortunately, Valax has over-estimated the chances of success and intermediaries sent by K'ghiita have accepted his appraisal. The result was a rather awkward covert diplomatic visit, in which K'kree dignitaries were sent to show support for what was assumed to be a successful pro-Lords of Thunder insurgency. Instead they have found a group of desperate-to-please wannabees and a confused situation in which it is not clear what level of support exists. Valax wants to impress his visitors and ensure his place as K'kree regent over the Enslan Coast. The visitors are losing patience and unlikely to be placated by assurances. Valax needs to make quick decisions and demonstrate his capabilities, resulting in an escalation of the insurgency and a potential crisis.

Valax and the Insurgents

Captain Valax and his immediate followers believe in their mission. They are willing – although reluctant – to take extreme measures in order to prevent a massacre when (not if) Kolan falls to the Lords of Thunder. If the local population or government are too dumb to see reality, then Valax and his people will have to make them. It is ironic perhaps that this band of insurgents is prepared to fight to the death against their own people in order to be able to surrender to invading aliens but they genuinely believe this is the only option.

Valax has been charmed by K'ghiita, who is not a Steppelord but allows his pawns to think he is. K'ghiita is in fact a clanlord, a lower level of nobility and is acting on the orders of his own overlords. He cares nothing for Valax and his allies but is forced to tolerate them in order to do his duty. Only Valax had met K'ghiita until recently, but the innermost members of the insurgency were all aware they were funded by the K'kree.

Not all insurgent leaders, and few of its personnel, believe as Valax does. Some have personal grudges or ambitions and see the insurgency as a means to an end. Few think the K'kree will ever reach this far into Gateway and perhaps believe they are using K'ghiita and his fellows rather than the other way around. All of these people have reasons to be involved with the insurgency and are willing to take some risks for it but ultimately only Valax and his closest associates are truly committed to the cause.

ENSLAN COAST



ENSLAN COAST

Much of the region is covered with damp forests, making navigation off the main waterways difficult. Settlements have a local road network but it has proven far easier to use the rivers and build canals than push long-distance roadways through the forests. There are numerous small villages dotted about the region, some of which are insurgent strongholds.

Hifow Island

Hifow Island is a large, hilly island about 30 kilometres off the coast between Marine Lia and Silic. No significant resources exist there and the land is not suitable for farming. An aerospace defence base was to be built there to protect the Enslan Coast but plans changed several times.

River Fier

The Fier rises in the hills north of Marine Lia, running generally south to the sea. It is the major trade artery for the region. The only major tributary is the Ithon, which meets the Fier in a low-lying area known as the Ithon Basin. This area is relatively clear of forest and populated mainly by small villages surrounded by farmland or cattle ranches.

Marine Lia

Marine Lia is the most important city of the region and seat of its local governmental apparatus. The immediate area around the city is well secured, with maritime patrols along the coast and outposts up to 10 kilometres upriver.

Fierton

The village of Fierton is notable as the last point to which ocean-going ships can navigate. It is also the junction of the River Fier and the Onigi Canal.

A: Onigi

Onigi is an agricultural town of no great significance, other than the fact it lies on a low coastal plain with good growing conditions. The region has historically shown little support for the insurgency or the government's attempts to oppose it.

B: Aorroud

Aorroud lies to the north of the Ithon Basin. It is a small city with a mixed economy. In addition to farming, the city is a base for mining operations in the hills to the north and has some minor industry positioned to exploit nearby resources. Aorroud has been troubled by dissent for some years, with a series of strikes and labour disputes causing serious disruption. This has at times been exploited by the insurgency, with many of the core members thought to be from Aorroud. The town itself does not openly support the insurgency.

C: Harrayd

Harryd rivals Marine Lia for status as the region's main fishing port, although it lacks a deep-water port for use by ocean-going vessels. The city is in open dispute with the local government over perceived poor treatment of the local fishing workforce and the industry as a whole. This stops just short of open support for the insurgency; the city administration typically expresses mild disapproval of the insurgents when they do something violent, coupled with recognition of their 'many grievances'.

D: Silic

Silic is a modest city whose economy is based on fishing and coastal agriculture. It has little industry and has been campaigning for years to be granted investment funds from central government. Support for the insurgency is open but not strong. Citizens are quick to criticise the central government but unlikely to do much about it other than being surly towards officials.

E: Cerayc

Cerayc is connected to the Fier by the Cerayc Canal, which is in disrepair. Navigation is a difficult business and little has been done to improve the situation. For this and other reasons, access to Cerayc is largely controlled by insurgents, who halt passing ships at choke points created by damage to the canal or at its locks. Vessels are searched for 'contraband' – essentially a euphemism for extortion. Despite its vulnerable situation the city is strongly opposed to the insurgency, although this might change if nothing is done to clear the canal.

RHUBARB SORTIE



The adventure opens after the Travellers have been deployed to Marine Lia for a few weeks. Their time at the city has not been uncomfortable – and they are getting paid warfighter rates to do nothing – but the experience overall has been frustrating. This applies to personnel as well as leaders; minor discipline infractions are on the rise, which is a sure indicator that the troops are getting restless.

The mercenaries arrived planetside to a brisk welcome and were quickly deployed to the Enslan coast. Briefings with their client suggested the unit would be in action almost immediately, to the point where deployment had to be expedited. Then... nothing happened. A set of vague and sometimes contradictory orders arrived, each time outlining an

impending operation, but the go command never followed. Untangling the mess caused by the rushed deployment has caused irritation among the troops, which has been amplified by long days of doing little whilst on the alert for an operation that almost certainly will not happen.

The only safety valve is a standing order for the unit to conduct security patrols and reconnaissance missions around Marine Lia. Creative interpretation of this order allows the force to remain active, although contact with hostiles is rare. Some patrols are vehicular but often detachments from the unit are put aboard local riverine craft. The patrols create at least the illusion of activity but no real progress towards completing the ticket.



A few days ago, a patrol detected signs that insurgents were building strength near the village of Fierton. Permission was requested for a strike against this stronghold, resulting in the usual mess of assurances that instructions were being prepared and would be issued imminently. Nothing actually happened, as usual, but the tone of communications from the capital abruptly changed. The Travellers are receiving almost daily demands for action and requests for explanations as to why they are not crushing the insurgency. These are coming from the same government that is withholding permission to undertake offensive operations, although pointing this out will get the Travellers nowhere.

It will be apparent to the Travellers that their client has had a change of heart and wants to get away with paying the mercenaries as little as possible. The endless hurry-up-and-wait orders were not deliberate but now the Travellers' lack of results can be presented as evidence they did not fulfil the contract and did not make a credible effort to do so. At best the Travellers can expect a long legal battle to get their full fee and more likely they will lose a significant proportion of it. They will also have a failed-to-complete on their record. The obvious solution is a successful strike against the insurgents but combat missions require client approval and that is not going to be forthcoming.

RHUBARB

The term 'rhubarb' comes from an ancient Terran conflict. Forbidden to operate outside friendly airspace, fighter pilots would sometimes disregard their instructions or 'become somewhat lost' and cross into enemy-held territory in search of ground targets to strafe. The practice was known but generally ignored by senior officers and a self-generated mission of this sort became known as a 'rhubarb mission' or 'rhubarb sortie', presumably since the exclamation 'rhubarb!' was at the time used to indicate disbelief. Later, these impromptu ground-attack missions became accepted and pilots were specifically trained for them but in this context 'rhubarb' refers to an unofficial mission carried out under a flimsy pretence that contact with the enemy was somehow accidental.

If the Travellers simply launch a mission against the insurgents without permission they are in breach of contract, giving the client an excuse to withhold payment. However, there is a loophole they might exploit; the mercenaries are permitted to conduct security and reconnaissance patrols, and more importantly have permission to respond to an emergency without waiting for specific orders. This creates the possibility of a 'rhubarb' operation. If a patrol or observation element got into trouble the mercenaries would have to react and that might just lead to a large-scale fight with the insurgents. A victory could be used to demonstrate the mercenaries' willingness to carry out their contract and make it more difficult for the client to stiff them.

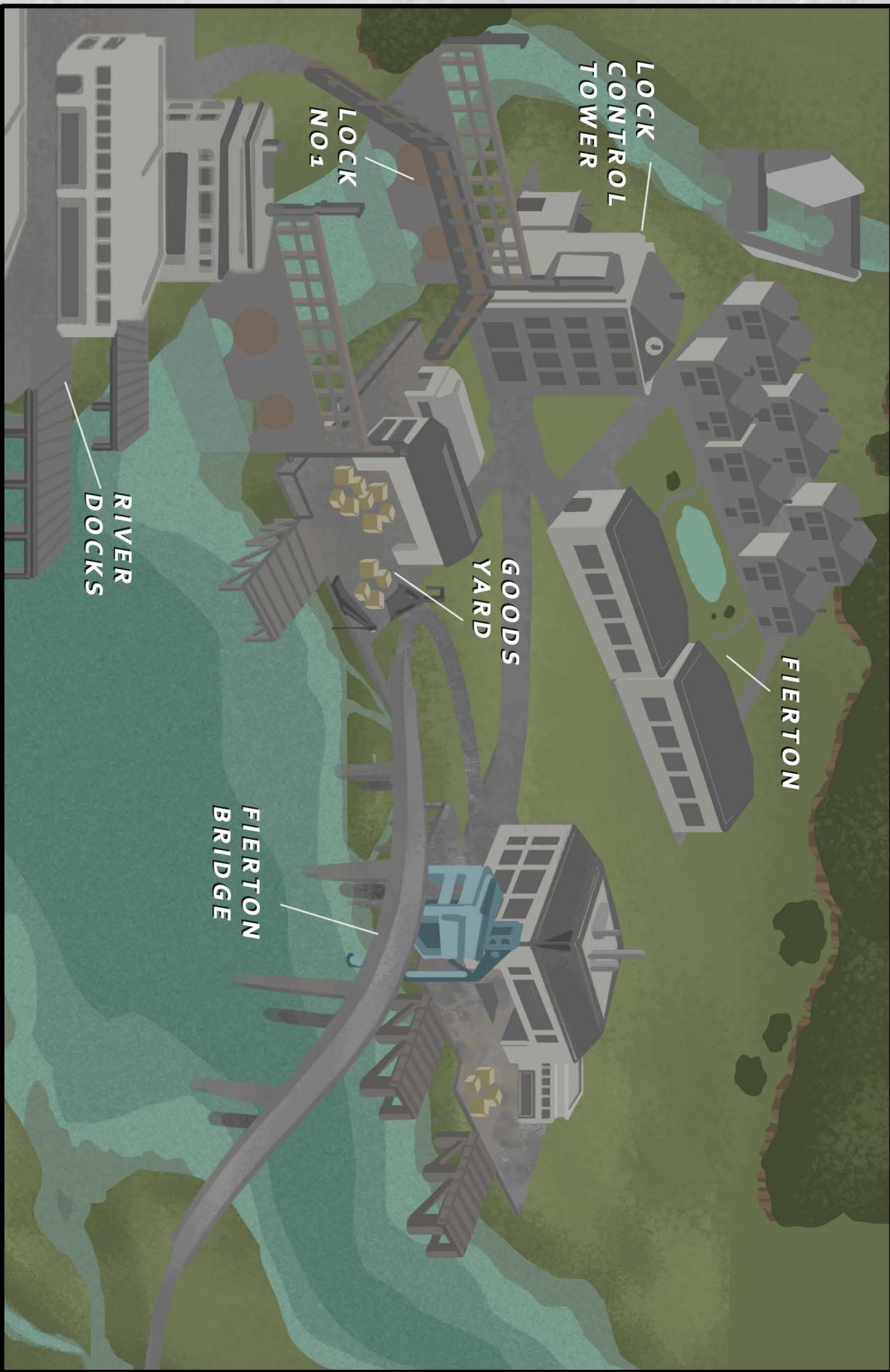
SETTING THE ENCOUNTER

If the Travellers do not think of using this method to provoke a fight, one of their personnel might suggest it or even implement it without orders. Tricks of this sort are well known in the mercenary trade, after all. Thus, if the Travellers come up with the idea or accept a suggestion they can set up an encounter with the insurgents however they like. If not, one of their patrols finds itself mysteriously out of position and under attack, with the after-action report rather vague about how this happened.

The village of Fierton lies inland of Marine Lia, on a navigable stretch of the River Fier. The insurgents are being unusually bold in deploying there, which may indicate a move against shipping using the river and its associated canals. The most likely target is Onigi, either for a direct attack or an application of pressure. Control of Fierton allows the insurgents to extort or simply block transportation, perhaps forcing the town to support the insurgency more directly.

Fierton is close enough to Marine Lia that a security patrol or observation post could be mounted near the village without moving too far out of the mercenaries' area of operations. The Travellers do not have permission to engage the insurgents unless fired upon first but it should be possible to provoke an attack or simply lie about who fired the first shots. The current rules of engagement are such that even a perceived imminent threat of attack is not sufficient justification for opening fire; the mercenaries must actually be fired upon, or believe they are being fired upon, and may only engage those enemy personnel actively engaged in hostilities. This creates the frustrating situation where

FIERTON



someone can run up to a patrol to throw a grenade and can only be lawfully fired upon until the weapon leaves their hand. However, smart Travellers may be able to concoct a version of events whereby they ‘genuinely believed they were under fire’.

OTHER FLAVOURS OF RHUBARB

It is generally best for the Travellers to make the decisions that drive an adventure but this incident is critical to the plot and must happen. If the Travellers do not cotton on to a way of forcing the client’s hand, the Referee can use an alternative way to get things moving. In this case, some of the Travellers’ mercenaries are bored and frustrated, and start interpreting orders rather creatively. This might be a genuine attempt to obtain more information about a concerning situation or a blatant disregard for the rules born out of a desire for action.

In the first case, some of the Travellers’ mercenaries operating in the general vicinity of Fierton decide to get closer and undertake a little speculative reconnaissance. In the latter, they claim to have become lost and had a sudden encounter with hostiles, who opened fire. Either way, a shooting incident takes place, which escalates beyond what was intended. More insurgents begin rushing to the combat area, forcing the patrol to either make a fighting retreat or hole up somewhere and call for help. Either way, elements of the mercenary unit are engaged and heavily outnumbered. In such a situation the Travellers are free to assist them as necessary.

A: Fierton Bridge

Fierton Bridge carries a local road across the Fier, from outlying communities to east and west. A spur of the road swings north, rising on an embankment and crossing above the docks. A gantry crane system runs on the underside of the bridge and is used to quickly unload river vessels. The bridge will usually be covered by a small group of insurgents, typically two to five, who harass local drivers and extort ‘bridge tolls’ from anyone who looks like they can pay.

B: Lock Control Tower

This four-storey tower controls the locks between the river and the canal and between the canal and the river-docks. Locks further up the canal can also be controlled from here. Monitoring cameras at each lock feed to the control room, which is still operated by local personnel. They are ‘supervised’ by insurgent gunmen.

C: River-Docks

The river-docks are primarily for loading and unloading cargo vessels. Typically goods come down the canal and are transferred to river ships, and vice versa. The locks between river and dock can be closed in sections but would normally be left open to allow convenient access. Since the insurgent occupation the locks are often closed to control local riverine and canal traffic.

D: Goods Yard

The goods yard is mainly used to move cargo from barges to road transport or back again. There are some small warehouses but it is rare for much to be stored or for anything to be stored for long.

E: Fierton

The village of Fierton lies north of the goods yard. Other than evicting some of the locals from their homes to accommodate personnel, the insurgent takeover has not changed much about village life. The people are fearful but not inclined to challenge the insurgents.

F: Lock No 1

The first (or last) major lock on the canal marks the edge of the Fierton village area. Some attempt is usually made to keep vegetation down up to this point but beyond the banks of the canal are overgrown and rarely cut back.

ENGAGEMENT AT FIERTON

Fierton is not held in great strength by the insurgents but then it does not need to be. With the central government lacking the will to act, a small armed presence is sufficient to control the area. There are enough insurgents in the area to prevent the authorities simply walking in and liberating the village but this is unlikely to be more than a platoon-sized force. Other insurgents are at large in the countryside.

Fierton Bridge and the lock control tower are always garrisoned, although only by a handful of personnel. Other insurgents will be busy with day-to-day tasks. They are not expecting a fight, since the weak-willed central government has not permitted much in the way of action against them. Instead, the insurgents are busy preparing for a visit by some offworld dignitaries. They hope to impress a visiting party of K'kree with the progress they are making, demonstrating how they have blocked access to the town of Onigi.

Onigi is significant to the insurgents' plan since it is a breadbasket area. They want to ensure the visitors know they are sincere about converting the local population to vegetarianism. They also need to keep those members of the local community who have eaten meat recently – this includes fish and seafood – away from the visitors. At any given time most of the insurgents will be busy ensuring the locals are safely in their homes.

The engagement may begin on the Travellers' terms or might be an encounter between patrols. After some inconclusive firing, the engaged force pulls back and calls for help... giving the Travellers a pretext to act at last. If the Travellers are with the advanced force they witness first-hand what will otherwise be reported – the advanced force is taking unexpectedly heavy fire. At least some of the weapons in use seem to be powerful lasers rather than the TL8 small arms thus far encountered.

This is developing into a situation where the mercenaries really do need to act. Their standing orders allow for a support or rescue mission without client approval, although the level of force used needs to be proportionate. In short, this means the Travellers cannot throw their entire force at the enemy and claim they were just extricating their people from a bad situation and must be able to explain how matters escalated so much.

The Insurgent Response

The timing of this engagement could not be worse for the insurgents. A party of K'kree warriors is about to arrive at Fierton. If the interlopers spot them there may be repercussions, so the only option is to drive them away. Additional forces are summoned, coming in from the surrounding countryside in civilian trucks and cars and joining the firefight south of the village. Soon the advanced force is in real trouble and the insurgents seem determined to pursue rather than breaking contact, which is unusual to say the least.

In addition to a platoon-sized group at the town itself, there are many more insurgents in the countryside. Most of these are being kept away from the visiting K'kree on make-work assignments. The result is the piecemeal arrival of insurgent reinforcements along the roads south of the village and into its northern side. If pressured, the insurgents will try to hold the Fierton Bridge and experienced mercenaries will be able to see it is critical to the action. If the bridge is held against them the insurgents' forces will be split.

The defence of the bridge is in part a matter of getting enough personnel onto and around it but insurgents will also position shooters in the lock control tower and on the bridge over the docks. They have a couple of mortars deployed in the goods yard. The intent was to show these off to the visitors but they can be brought into action quickly. Their fire is not accurate but still a threat.

The Travellers may realise they have a chance to win a stand-up fight and show a result, which they need. If so, they will have to clear the docks and village against unexpectedly heavy resistance. If not, they may be content to extricate their people and fall back. In this case the Travellers may notice their personnel are reluctant to quit the fight and indeed some may urge their leaders to let them advance. If the Travellers still do not take the hint, the K'kree party will enter the fight as the mercenaries begin to disengage.

Assuming the Travellers advance, they will need to fight a set-piece action for the village. The obvious tactic is to capture the Fierton Bridge and position blocking forces east and west, then force entry to the docks over the bridge or the tops of the river-locks. The Travellers will need to clear the lock control tower, which will not be relinquished readily but once they penetrate into the goods area the insurgents will begin to pull back.

It is not necessary to fight the whole battle, as up to this point it is a foregone conclusion. Instead, the Referee should run some close-focus combats on critical points such as the tower and bridges. The insurgents are not fanatics, and will retreat if hard pressed, but will sometimes rally and come back from another direction. Overall, this is a situation where a trained mercenary force can drive off stubborn but not very effective insurgents and soon the Travellers find themselves entering the goods area.

Cavalry Incoming?

As the Travellers are starting to win (or disengage if that was their choice), they will become aware of strange noises, like stampeding cattle perhaps or... cavalry? It is possible that some of the unit's members have fought K'kree in the past, in which case they will quickly identify a K'kree charge. Where the attack comes from depends very much on what the Travellers are doing. The most likely direction if the Travellers are winning is from the north-east, past the end of the village. The K'kree may attack from elsewhere if the Travellers are attempting to disengage.

The standard model for a K'kree charge is to get as close as possible using dead ground or cover, then go hell-for-leather at the target. K'kree warriors are not suicidal but the excitement of the headlong charge en masse can carry them through heavy fire. As they close, they fire their weapons at the gallop but the ideal is to get into close combat with lance and hand blade.

The K'kree are attacking in warring-band strength, equivalent to a platoon. The force is deployed as a 'head', with the 'body' and 'loins' behind and the 'hands' out on each flank. The effect is repeated shocks as the three main elements strike home one after another, coupled with fast-moving warriors shooting from the flanks or sweeping into the rear. Robotic weapon platforms provide support fire against centres of resistance.

The charge is more than a bunch of guys rushing the Travellers; there is a visceral, terrifying *intent* to it that can unnerve even hardened mercenaries. The Referee should play up the pounding of hooves, strange alien cries, the colourful and decorative K'kree armour spattered with blood and the sheer chaotic hatred pouring over the Travellers. This is not just-another-fight; it is an experience the Travellers should remember.

The K'kree will try to run down and lance anyone in the open. They shoot, often at the gallop, but their preferred tactic is to pin a small group with fire whilst others slash in from an unexpected direction to use hand weapons. Firepower, shock and confusion are the best defences the K'kree have in such combat. Personnel may need to make morale checks to carry out sensible actions, when their instinct is to run into the nearest building and hide.

The attack is vicious and swift, and may scatter or kill some of the Travellers' companions. Amid the chaos they may realise that some of the insurgents made off, apparently terrified, when the K'kree made their appearance. Others gave covering fire or launched their own attacks and some insurgents will retire (in off-road vehicles) alongside the K'kree when they are driven off.

REFEREEING THE FIGHT

The battle for Fierton is best run as a roleplaying rather than skirmish-game experience. The Travellers will have to make tactical decisions based on patchy information, with the action zooming in on various crisis points. It may be that part of the force is caught in scanty cover in the goods yard, with K'kree warriors dashing in from all sides and fire coming from the village – which is known to have non-combatants inside – whilst other mercenaries are fighting for the lock control tower or trying to hold the Fierton Bridge against attacks from east and west.

This situation would be a difficult tactical puzzle to solve – pressure on the line of retreat and heavy fighting at the furthest point of advance. How the fight turns out for the Travellers depends very much on their choices but there is no need to play the fight as a 'fair wargame' – this is a dramatic scene with as much opposition as necessary to make life difficult for the Travellers. If they are holding the lock control tower and Fierton Bridge, and are not obviously getting creamed in the goods yard, their opponents will lose heart and fall back. These locations can be considered 'plot tokens' rather than key objectives. More than anything else, the Referee should ensure the Travellers encounter the fury of a K'kree charge and know they have been in a stiff fight.

AFTERMATH

The Travellers may or may not end up in control of Fierton. If they do, the populace will in general be grateful – to the point where attempts to set up defensive positions are interrupted by well-wishers bringing food and drinks for the weary mercenaries. The insurgents will pull back, although they might leave a few observers to watch the village from a safe distance. They will not try to harm the village folk but retreating K'kree will trample them or straight-out murder anyone they get a whiff of meat from.

Even if the Travellers retreated, they will now know there are K'kree warriors on Kolan working with at least some of the insurgents. This may explain the presence of advanced weaponry among the insurgents. Failing to drive insurgents from Fierton could be used by the central government as further evidence that the Travellers did not make sufficient efforts to complete their contract, despite the operation never being authorised and the government has no right to expect such a result.



If they took control of Fierton, the Travellers at least have a victory to their name. They may also be able to gather intelligence. Captured K'kree warriors will not divulge information but will try to escape and/or harm their captors. They will become increasingly desperate as they are isolated from the herd, quickly going from pronouncements that the herd will come to free them and slaughter all G'naak in sight to sullen and fearful silence. This proceeds to frightened screaming and eventually a catatonic state that is occasionally a sham. Isolated K'kree will go mad over just a few days; how long it takes depends largely in how fervently they believe the herd will come back for them.

There is still information to be obtained in Fierton. Locals willingly tell the Travellers what they know and captured insurgents are likely to take a deal. The information is contradictory in places due to conflicting knowledge but some facts emerge. The most obvious is that the insurgents have been given K'kree weapons modified for use by humans.

- Some of the insurgents had absolutely no idea there were K'kree present until they attacked. Of those, many are alarmed by the implications.
- There was tension with the K'kree and a confrontation between their commander and some of the insurgent leaders. The K'kree seemed angry and disappointed about something and the insurgents were playing up their achievement in capturing this undefended village.
- Insurgent attacks seem to be directed towards the fishing fleet and cattle ranchers, whilst agricultural farms are generally left alone. Some insurgents believe this is due to local grievances – which is true in many cases – but there is a pattern of attacks on meat-related businesses.

There are strong clues here that at least some of the insurgents are trying to force the local population into a vegetarian lifestyle, perhaps to persuade the K'kree to spare the region when they attack Kolan. A small minority of the insurgents believe this is imminent.

Soon after taking possession of Fierton the Travellers receive orders to return to Marine Lia. They are vaguely assured that government forces will move up to secure the village. If they obey the Travellers will learn the relief force was still forming up when insurgents took possession of the village once more. This could be forestalled by leaving a force at Fierton under some pretext or other. The insurgents can be kept at bay by almost any armed presence as they do not want a repeat of the beating they just received.

HIVE OF INACTIVITY

The sudden outbreak of violence around Fierton is troubling for the planetary government. At the present time an unofficial policy of not doing anything about the insurgency is in place, not least due to the urgings of officials in the pocket of the Lords of Thunder. These officials have to tell their controllers what has happened and are worried about the consequences. Even those unaware they are being manipulated by the Lords of Thunder are concerned about losing the support of their benefactors, having sensitive information released or whatever other hold their masters have over them.

On the other hand, the government does not want to be seen to be ineffectual and there are many whose agenda may be furthered by decisive action. Thus after an awkward pause, a rather vague message of congratulations arrives from the planetary ministry for security and a local unit is ordered to move up to secure Fierton. This is the 12th Field Battalion, supposedly composed of four companies of mechanised infantry with light armoured support, plus a small artillery and aerospace defence component. In

practice it has one understrength mechanised infantry company, three rifle companies with inadequate vehicles and for some reason a plethora of TL8 signals and electronic warfare equipment. There is nothing suspicious about this; it is merely an artefact of how the procurement process operates on Kolan.

The Travellers will see first-hand how inept the local forces are. The mechanised infantry company makes a brisk if rather chaotic deployment to Fierton, whilst the static companies are brought up by river transport in an equally disorganised fashion. They begin setting up a camp and some basic defences, all of which is done inefficiently but not with lack of effort. A serious attack by a credible military force would carve up these amateurs but fortunately the insurgents are not up to the task. Fierton will be secure for the time being, allowing additional patrols to be pushed up the canal aboard rivercraft. These land parties to crash around ineffectually in the countryside looking for insurgents who are long gone. Meanwhile, the Travellers have other problems.



THE INQUISITORIAL SYSTEM

The Travellers will be called upon to account for their actions when they arrive back at Marine Lia – or their officers will be summoned to a ‘conference’ there. At this conference the Travellers face a panel of three officials. This is a roleplaying situation, with no need for skill checks on the part of anyone but the Travellers. Even these can be waived if a sufficiently good response is made to a difficult question.

Minister Marinna Helliados chairs the meeting. She is part of the Ministry for Security within the planetary government and not someone the Travellers have dealt with before. This is further evidence that something has changed within the government. Helliados is not quite hostile to the Travellers but clearly dislikes the idea of foreign mercenaries on her homeworld.

Colonel-General Blaine Elis represents the planetary armed forces. The Travellers have met him before and found him to be generally competent. However, like many of the world’s senior officers he is over-promoted. Elis was, until recently, commander of the local maritime brigade, consisting of a few coastal combatants and transports, with half a dozen maritime infantry companies. Now those companies are battalions, more or less, and Elis is trying to coordinate a much larger force than he is used to. He is frustrated at the lack of will on the part of central government yet apprehensive of what might happen if over-expanded units get into a serious fight. He is more likely to argue with Helliados than probe for answers from the Travellers.

Gerd Emil is a rather puzzling individual. She is the owner-operator of an industrial trawler and some smaller fishing vessels and does not hold any official position in the city administration. Her role on the panel is vague but it seems she was selected as a representative of local business. She wholeheartedly approves of any harm done to the insurgents and presses for more action, to the annoyance of the other panellists. If the Travellers dig a little they will find that Emil’s fishing fleet has been attacked more than once and her second large fishing vessel was pirated a few months ago. Little has been done to locate or recover it, to her frustration. She wields little actual power but has some influence in the business community and is very noisy about it.

The panel has been convened to determine if the Travellers’ actions were appropriate and in line with their contract, by the inquisitorial method. Rather than advocates for and against the legality of the

Travellers’ actions, the panel is supposed to work together to establish the truth of what happened and why, at which point the legal issues will be obvious. At least, that is the theory. In practice the panel members will ask endless variations on the same questions, usually slanted towards their own agenda or field of interest and are as likely to argue with each other as question the Travellers.

The Travellers do have to go along with all of this, as their contract requires it. Refusing to answer questions (no matter how dumb or biased they seem) will be taken as an indication of bad faith on the part of the Travellers and a further reason to withhold their fee. The panellists want to establish a mix of facts and reasons.

- How did the engagement at Fierton come about?
- Are the Travellers prepared to take full responsibility for the actions of their subordinates?
- What measures were taken to avoid collateral damage at Fierton?
- Why did the Travellers not simply extricate their people? (or why did the Travellers only extricate their people instead of pressing the attack on an enemy force?)
- What have the Travellers learned about the insurgency?
- Why have the Travellers chosen to antagonise the K’kree?
- Why were the K’kree at Fierton? (And why do the Travellers not have an answer to this question?)
- What will happen now that the Travellers have picked a fight with the Lords of Thunder/given those damnable K’kree a bloody nose?
- How did the local forces perform? (And can they protect us from the K’kree?)
- What is going to happen next?

The Travellers can present any arguments or evidence they like but even a very good answer does not preclude someone asking a modified version of the same question in the hope of getting an answer more to their liking.

It will become apparent to the Travellers that whilst all three panel members have an agenda, they are all extremely worried about the presence of K’kree on Kolan. They are fishing for reassurance as much as demanding answers about what the Travellers have done but at the same time the Travellers’ actions have forced them to confront the frightening possibility of invasion by the Lords of Thunder and there is a natural tendency to blame the Travellers for creating the situation.

The inquisition should be roleplayed rather than resolved with a few checks. It is not possible to change the attitude of the planetary government with a single Diplomat or Persuade check and that is not the purpose of this incident. In addition to roleplaying opportunities, the panel's questions should make the Travellers reflect on their own actions and think about what might be happening on Kolan.

AUDIENCE WITH CLANLORD K'GHIITA

Just when it seems the Travellers' interview with the panel will go on forever, an urgent communication is channelled to the huge bank of screens on one wall of the chamber. The panel are as surprised as the Travellers to find they are being called by a powerful K'kree. This is Clanlord K'ghiita – mistakenly referred to as Steppelord by some of the insurgents.

Clanlord K'ghiita is striding across an expanse of grass, accompanied by his favoured warriors, some of his wives and senior advisors. All are richly dressed and bearing weapons or symbols of office. K'ghiita

begins haughtily speaking in his own language, automatically translated for the benefit of lowly non-K'kree. He begins with a ritualised demand that all bow down before the Lords of Thunder and their representative, Clanlord K'ghiita, followed by a long list of achievements and titles. Presumably at least some of these are associated with his ancestors but no distinction is made.

The clanlord finally gets down to business, demanding the immediate release of any prisoners and recompense for the terrible mistreatment they have endured. It is not clear if Clanlord K'ghiita believes this to be the case or whether he is making the accusation regardless. The demanded recompense of the Travellers' unwarranted attack on his diplomatic party runs to several million Credits, along with the handing-over of everyone responsible so they may face justice.

Clanlord K'ghiita cannot be reasoned with or sweet-talked, although he can be flattered and perhaps appeased by someone who treats him with the enormous deference he demands. His broadcast has gone to city administrators and military commanders



as well, but he will ignore their representations in order to communicate with the Travellers. This is not out of respect – they are meat-eating vermin, after all – but the Travellers command an effective fighting force where the locals do not and as far as Clanlord K'ghiita is concerned that makes them worth talking to.

The K'kree demand for the Travellers to be handed over is not open to negotiation. Clanlord K'ghiita considers the defeat of his force an insult that must be avenged. He is not in a position to attack Marine Lia – although he is quite happy to allow the city's administrators to think he is – and in fact is not even officially on-planet. If this subject is raised, K'ghiita waves it aside with a vague comment about going where his hooves take him, even to the dwellings of his enemies. This translates as contempt for anyone but the Lords of Thunder; he goes where he pleases and locals can resist if they want... but that will bring down the wrath of his people. This attitude is in part the arrogance of a K'kree clanlord and in part the reality of interactions with the Lords of Thunder.

Whilst the Travellers endure the pontifications of Clanlord K'ghiita, the panel members are making 'keep-him-talking' gestures. Some furious activity on their portacoms takes place and at some point Gerd Emil starts making angry noises. If the Travellers do manage to keep the clanlord talking – which is not hard, all they have to do is let him – they will see humans in the background along with a large maritime vessel. Eventually Clanlord K'ghiita winds down after repeated demands for reparations, prisoner release and the surrender of the Travellers, then abruptly terminates the transmission.

Analysis of the transmission reveals a few facts. Clanlord K'ghiita and his entourage are on Hifow Island, along with significant numbers of human insurgents. They are in possession of a large maritime fishing vessel, which looks suspiciously like the one pirated from Emil's fleet and by the look of things they are fitting armament to it. K'kree starships can be seen grounded on a wide expanse of concrete identified as the foundation zone of a projected aerospace defence installation. Crates of weaponry can be seen some of them open. The contents are mostly laser rifles of the sort already seen, but technicians can be seen trying to rig a field mount for a battlefield plasma gun, with others still in their crates.

Soon after the transmission is made, the K'kree ships lift off and climb to orbit. They were on Kolan illegally but nothing will be done other than the usual diplomatic protests. The demand to hand over K'kree prisoners must be complied with immediately or not at all, or else they will suffer for being separated from the herd. For humanitarian and practical reasons – not wanting to antagonise the Lords of Thunder – the release has already been agreed by the city authorities. The matter of the Travellers is rather more complex. The city government does not want to tell a band of heavily armed mercenaries they must surrender but at the same time they need a resolution. Smart Travellers may realise what is about to happen and take action to forestall it.

PRAGMATIC TREACHERY

The world government has already come to a decision. Nudged by those in the pocket of the Lords of Thunder, they have decided to cave in. This solves all but one of their problems. It appeases Clanlord K'ghiita, gets rid of the mercenaries without paying them and creates a scapegoat for the situation. The only problem is getting the mercenaries to comply, which will not be easy.

The solution is to inform the mercenaries that their contract is terminated, effective immediately. The reasons cited are a little contradictory – inaction against the insurgents then unauthorised action against them, causing a diplomatic incident with the K'kree and so forth. This is grossly unfair and may outrage the Travellers but the government may well be able to make it work in the courts if the matter comes to that. The mercenaries are ordered to return to base and surrender their arms to the local security forces.

The latter should be a red flag. The standard mercenary contract contains no provision for disarming mercenaries at the end of a ticket. Indeed, repatriation conditions explicitly protect ownership of the unit's equipment, although it may be necessary to 'make safe' major weapon systems during transit to the repatriation point. If the Travellers comply they will be disarmed, left to stew in their base for a while 'until transport can be organised' then conveyed to Hifow Island rather than the starport. Once in the hands of the insurgents and the small K'kree force left on the island their fate is sealed.

Immediate violence on the part of the Travellers would be an over-reaction and a hostile act against the city authorities. This would place them at war with the planetary government and is not in any way a desirable outcome for anyone but the Lords of Thunder. However, the mercenaries will need to protect themselves.

Calls for instructions soon start coming in from the Travellers' force and any detachments in the field. Local forces are requesting they stand down and hand over their weapons, which is a violation of the mercenaries' own standing orders. Wise mercenaries never make themselves helpless, even among presumed friends.

At this point, local forces will not push if the mercenaries refuse to hand over their weaponry, unless they can trap a small detachment with a hugely more powerful force. Even then, the armed forces of Kolan are well aware they are no match for tough offworlders and will be reluctant to start anything. Standoffs might occur but overall the local authorities still hope to talk the Travellers into surrendering their arms. The Travellers should be encouraged to give instructions to their troops, perhaps guiding a detachment through a difficult situation, whilst appraising the overall situation.

HOSTAGE NEGOTIATIONS

If the authorities can catch any part of the Travellers' unit in a vulnerable state, local forces will attempt to disarm them. The government wants to avoid escalation so personnel will not be detained or arrested – at least not as such. Instead they are to be 'given accommodation whilst transportation is arranged'. The Travellers may find themselves in such a situation or hear about a detachment that needs assistance. Depending on circumstances the detachment may have had to hand over their weapons or may be involved in a standoff.

This is a ticklish situation. Fighting any part of the local forces means essentially declaring war on the whole planet. The mercenaries might be able to win such a fight, given the state of the opposition, but there would still be consequences and a long legal battle. If the Referee deems it desirable, the Travellers may have to defuse a standoff or have some of their people released from the custody of local forces. In this case the locals are caught between their orders and a desire not to get into a fight. If the Travellers can present a face-saving solution the local commander on the spot will be only too glad to comply.

In the middle of this complex situation, Gerd Emil approaches or contacts the Travellers. She has a solution to the problem; her colleagues among the mercantile and industrial community wish to place a maritime vessel (or several if they have a large unit) at the Travellers' disposal. This will facilitate their withdrawal from the combat zone without coming into contact with government forces or being placed in a position where friction is possible. Emil is frank in saying she thinks the situation stinks, the mercenaries are being messed about and the problem is only going to get worse... but for now she thinks this is the best way to defuse the tensions around Marine Lia.

And...

Emil adds that the mercenaries might feel a bit vulnerable aboard unarmed merchant ships, so she has persuaded the local commanders to loan them escort craft. There are a couple of large patrol/strike boats at the docks right now, which could be used to, 'you know, prevent interference' by insurgents known to be operating out of Hilow Island. In fact, if there was a danger the insurgents might attack the mercenaries' transport it might be best to strike a pre-emptive blow. Clear the flank, or whatever soldiers call it...

If innuendo and euphemism will not get the message across, Emil will finally speak plainly. The Travellers' contract is terminated and they are going to be stiffed by the central government for non-completion despite the fact this was the fault of the central government itself. But... supposing the mercenaries had to deal with a threat to their withdrawal and just happened to smash the insurgency in the process? This would be legal, as self-defence on the way to repatriation is a standard contract clause.

At that point the Travellers would have actually completed their contract. Also, it is one thing to be difficult about payment when the force is far away and possibly disarmed but quite another if the Travellers are negotiating at the capital with weapons to hand. As to her interests, Emil would be very pleased if the Travellers recaptured her vessel and returned it but if it were to be proven sunk whilst in the hands of the insurgents her insurers would quit their damnable stalling and pay out. That would also please her greatly.

All the Travellers need to do is load up their people and set off for the capital, diverting the escort boats to clear a threat from their flank along the way. If necessary, Emil can even find a couple of crewmembers to help operate the vessels.

OFF THE BOOKS



The Travellers have an opportunity to bring their ticket to a successful conclusion after all. There are stocks of weaponry at Hifow Island, including plasma guns, which could transform the insurgency. Eliminating this threat, even in an off-the-books mission, is sufficient to demonstrate the mercenaries' sincerity in trying to fulfil their contract terms. If weapons can be captured, they are legitimate spoils of war and could seriously increase the Travellers' fighting power.

The insurgents have no reason to suppose they are to be attacked. Hardly anyone lives on Hifow Island and they have control of the small population of fishermen who live at the part-built aerospace base. Indeed, had Clanlord K'ghiita been a little more discreet in his transmission the insurgents' base would have remained secret. The insurgent leadership have not yet realised their security has been compromised, so whilst they have some guards in place they are not prepared to repel a determined assault.

How many insurgents are present on Hifow Island is up to the Referee. If the Travellers decide to make a small commando raid then a company-sized force of disorganised insurgents is sufficient opposition. If the Travellers go in with their whole unit the Referee should assume there are far more gunmen present in order to give the Travellers a challenge. There

may also be a contingent of K'kree left behind as 'advisors' to the insurgents. If so, this will be at least a fighting-band of about eight warriors, plus some servants and additional hangers-on sufficient to form a small herd.

Even with these extra people, members of a fighting-band left behind on a planet of G'naak are likely to be nervous and irritable. Their deployment is only meant to be for a few more days but it will be a stressful time for them all the same. If the Travellers land a bigger force, the Referee can assume the K'kree contingent is a warring-band with about 40 members and some additional herd-members who are not combatants.

THE AEROSPACE DEFENCE BASE

One of many projects green-lighted then closed down by the planetary government, Hifow Aerospace Defence base was intended to house a battery of powerful Planetary Aerospace Defence (PAD) missiles in reinforced silos. These were to be protected by a small security contingent, all supported by regular supply shipments into the base's small dock. The concrete apron and docks were completed but little more than that. Buildings stood empty until some enterprising fishing-boat operators moved in and co-opted the base some years ago.



A: Concrete Docks

The docks are more or less complete but lack cranes and other machinery. The area was dredged when the base was begun but has begun to refill with silt. It is still deep enough to dock an industrial trawler, but only on the outer side of the main jetty.

B: Storage Building

Ordinarily a temporary structure housing construction equipment, this building has been taken over by the insurgents to conceal vehicles and equipment from orbital photography.

C: Outer Ditch

The outer faces of the base are protected by a deep concrete ditch with a low wall on the inner side. This is a significant obstacle to vehicles but a person on foot can scramble over the wall with some effort. The ditch is bridged near the K'kree camp.

D: Missile Pits

An ovoid depression, some three metres deep, houses uncapped concrete silos for large missiles. At the bottom of these are access tunnels to control and maintenance areas that have never been outfitted. Access to the bottom of the depression is by way of a walkway over to a concrete structure, which would have housed support equipment including loading cranes for the missiles. Their base anchor points are present but nothing more.

E: Accommodation

Rows of temporary timber buildings were set up to accommodate the construction workforce and were later taken over by the island's residents and now house insurgents.

F: K'kree Camp

The K'kree contingent has erected a cluster of brightly coloured tents on the grass outside the base. They are more likely to be here than on the concrete apron unless necessary.

Vessels at the Base

In addition to the industrial trawler, anchored a short way off the docks, there are also several fishing vessels at the base used by the insurgents as transportation and patrol vessels. The smaller vessels are likely to have a machinegun or a couple of laser rifles on improvised pintle mounts. The industrial trawler is better armed and is deployed

as a guardship, although there is little expectation of attack. As soon as the Travellers are sighted the trawler will raise anchor and begin manoeuvring, albeit slowly, and the improvised plasma gun on its deck will be brought into action.

ATTACKING THE BASE

The Travellers might be clever, landing up the coast and approaching under cover of darkness. If so, they are unlikely to be detected until close to the base. The insurgents are not maintaining lookouts or patrols on their landward sides. An encounter with a band of K'kree warriors is possible, out on patrol or just running across the grass for the joy of it – or a bit of both. They will be unsure at first who any encountered humans might be but a whiff of meat-eater will send them into a fury regardless. Once detected, the Travellers might have a difficult time gaining entry to the base.

The alternative is a blatant charge onto the docks from the sea. If so, the Travellers will have to get past the industrial trawler and its plasma gun. The boats can be treated as positions in a land fight if this is convenient for the Referee but there is a possible additional dimension. Racing across the harbour exchanging fire with armed fishing boats might be a new and memorable experience for the Travellers.

Torpedoes

It is for the Referee to decide whether the Travellers' escort boats carry missiles or torpedoes but torpedoes are the default option. A 5DD warhead will not outright destroy the industrial trawler but the Travellers do have more than one. These are heavyweight homing torpedoes, designed to detonate under a ship and break its back rather than punching a hole in the side and a vessel that survives such an attack will have serious leaks, equipment damage and all manner of other problems to deal with.

Inventive Travellers might find other uses for their torpedoes. A hit on the docks will destroy anything or anyone nearby and given the range of these weapons it might even be possible to take out part of the defence before the Travellers' boats are in visual range.

How the finale plays out depends entirely on the Travellers and their plans. A rapid assault, destroying the boats and hitting the docks running, will overwhelm the few alert defenders. Resistance will firm up as insurgents come from the dwelling and the K'kree put in an attack from their camp but it would be quite possible to grab crates of weapons, blow up the rest and skedaddle before the stunned defenders can figure out what was happening. If the Travellers decide to fight it out they are up against superior numbers but their enemies are in confusion.

The fight might take the form of small groups shooting at one another in the dark, with the Travellers pretty sure some of their enemies are fighting one another. The insurgents are not completely inept; they will try to flank and seize good positions and at least one credible attack will be made against the Travellers' landing party.

Captain Valax

While his less skilled troops are running around shooting at shadows, Captain Valax rallies his faithful followers and launches a charge across the concrete apron towards the Travellers' position. This will be made aboard light civilian vehicles – typically SUVs and farm trucks – with insurgents firing from improvised positions. At least one of the vehicles has a K'kree plasma weapon mounted on its top. If there are K'kree present they will charge alongside their allies, weaving in and out among the vehicles to use them as cover. Heartened, some of the insurgent infantry begin to advance as well.

This is the moment the insurgency could be broken. If Valax and his followers are repelled, the Travellers will be able to rob them of at least some of their weapons and more importantly the insurgents will be disheartened. Many of them will just leave or surrender if they have to. The Lords of Thunder will be deeply displeased with Valax, assuming he survives the fight and will withdraw their support for the insurgency.

AFTERMATH

The Travellers may be in possession of the base at the end of the fight, in which case they will be ordered to hold it – the government seems to have forgotten they terminated the contract – until a warship arrives with troops. The government will also try to take possession of the K'kree weapons but will settle for a split with the Travellers so long as they get some weaponry as 'evidence of offworld interference'.

As to the contract, if the Travellers smashed the insurgency the government acts as if this was the plan all along, pays them a bonus and expedites their departure. There are

Refereeing the Climax

Everything depends on what the Travellers choose to do. A stealthy band might spirit away some of the weaponry without anyone realising something has happened but more likely there will be a big climactic firefight – this is a *Mercenary* adventure, after all!

The desirable outcome is for the Travellers to face escalating odds, culminating in Valax's charge and the moment of decision, after which the insurgents break and fall back. The Referee should give the Travellers a stiff fight, with fire coming from unexpected directions and problems to solve like a sniper in a high location. The fight is best played for drama and tension rather than trying to keep track of every single hostile. Ultimately this is a military roleplaying adventure, not a tournament skirmish game. It should be exciting but need not be fair.

hints that the insurgents intended to give some weaponry to the 'unofficial' populations on Kolan and to build a powerbase there but this is beyond the Travellers' remit. Unless of course they are open to a new contract, hunting down the remaining weapons for the government...

The Lords of Thunder will continue to weaken human worlds in the region and the Travellers have come to the attention of Clanlord K'ghiita. He does not resent their opposition as such, since it is an inevitability when preparing a campaign of conquest. Indeed, he looks forward to the day he clashes with the Travellers once more and tramples their corpses under his hooves. There may even be some faint glimmer of respect between the clanlord and his foes. They are clearly formidable enemies, which bodes ill for their future. To a K'kree, a G'naak whose cunning and fighting power is worthy of respect is a priority target.

The Referee must decide how much weaponry the Travellers are able to salvage. A few plasma guns and crates of laser rifles is a big addition to the firepower of a small mercenary unit and as noted earlier too much firepower can make life too easy for mercenaries. They are entitled to a reward, however, so the Referee may be justified in being just a little generous... especially since possession of captured weapons is a great way to provoke even greater enmity from their former owners.

It may be that victory at Kolan leads to other adventures in the near future and the undying enmity of a K'kree clanlord... but that is a story for another day.

CHARACTERS AND OPPPOSITION

THE INSURGENTS

The insurgents are quite a mix. Most are angry citizens who have received a little training from people who did not really know how to deliver it, or troublemakers who found themselves a way to legitimise (in their own eyes at least) their tendencies. These groups are willing to bully unarmed civilians or shoot at outnumbered security patrols from ambush, but will scatter if things start to go against them. There are some low-level leaders who can keep a band together in adversity but for the most part these part-time insurgents are little direct threat to an organised military force. That does not rule out planting roadside bombs or other actions that are more or less safe for the insurgents.

There is a harder core to the insurgency, made up of those with deep grievances or other motivations. Some of these are ex-military or have gained enough experience to be considered competent in the field. Not all believe in any of the causes the insurgency claims to champion; some just hate the government or some faction within local society or hope to profit from the troubles. There are some who are in it for their ego's sake and nothing more – in the insurgency they are a respected leader whereas before they were just another citizen. These more determined insurgents are competent enough in a small-unit firefight and confident enough to fight rather than flee but should not be a match for regular forces.



The reason the insurgents are able to avoid defeat is twofold. The government response is scatter-brained and dislocated but more importantly the insurgents have offworld support. Up to now this has taken the form of a little hardware and a lot of advice but as governmental will fails the time is coming to make a decisive move. This will be the capture of Marine Lia itself, hopefully discrediting the central government. The believers at the core of the insurgency genuinely believe they can set up their own state – with themselves as its leaders – whilst the backers do not care.

The insurgency's backers are not interested in who wins in the end; what they want is a drawn-out conflict that absorbs resources and weakens the planetary economy. If the capture of Marine Lia succeeds the situation may escalate and even if it does not their work will have paid dividends. They may continue to feed the insurgency or move on to some other trouble spot – the fate of the people involved means nothing to them.

The insurgents operate in small units of 6–10 individuals, usually referred to as 'crews'. This has a fishing-vessel connotation, as many of the original members came from disaffected fighting boat crews. Weaponry is, for the most part, limited to TL8 small arms put together locally or stolen from government forces. There is a preference for submachineguns and shotguns among most insurgents as they frequently operate from boats and barges. A typical crew contains one or two personnel with assault rifles and the rest with close-range weapons. Support weapons of any kind are uncommon among most of the insurgents.

However, there are crews far more heavily equipped. These have military small arms similar to those of the planetary armed forces but which are manufactured offworld. This will not be apparent unless the weapons are closely inspected – they use higher quality components and materials. This is because they are made to TL8 designs but at TL9–10. The insurgency's backers do not want it to be obvious they are trickling weaponry in – at least not yet – and are only equipping the most effective crews.

An effective crew will typically contain three to six personnel equipped with assault rifles plus a grenadier with a rifle and under-barrel grenade launcher. There will also be a support gunner with a general-purpose machinegun and loader. These weapons are perhaps not employed as effectively as they would be in a true military formation but the effective crews are a match for local forces under most conditions. However, they are not well coordinated. If larger formations are thrown together, CEI is reduced by -1 plus -1 for every force level above section. So a company-sized force would have ECI 4 rather than the 7 associated with its member sections.



INSURGENT CREW MEMBER

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE		
STR	6	INT	6	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	5	Gun Combat (slug) 0,
END	7	SOC	6	Recon 1, Drive (wheel) or Seafarer (personal or ocean ships) 1
WEAPONS	Submachinegun (3D, Auto 3) or Shotgun (4D, Bulky)			

EFFECTIVE INSURGENT CREW MEMBER

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE		
STR	7	INT	7	SKILLS
DEX	7	EDU	5	Assault Rifle (3D, Auto 2)
END	9	SOC	6	or Light Support Weapon (3D, Auto 4)
ARMOUR	Flak Jacket (+5)			

Effective Insurgent Crew

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Crew	—
Unit Size	Section	—
Unit Type	Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	—
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	7	0
Bombardment	0	—
Aerospace	0	—
Support	1	-3
CEI or DEI	7	0
Morale	9	+1
Reputation	7	0

Captain Andrew Valax

Valax is in his early 50s, mentally and physically weary from long years fighting against the Lords of Thunder on various worlds. Despite the best efforts of his comrades and local troops, it always ended the same way – wholesale slaughter as defences collapsed and a desperate scramble to be on the last transports out. Valax sincerely believes in what he is doing, trying to save his own people even if they are too stupid to let him. He is saddened by casualties on either side but simply cannot stop – one day the Lords of Thunder will come to Kolan and only complete surrender will save the population.

Valax is clever and ruthless, despite him feeling that he is selling his soul. His example inspires those closest to him, most of whom were saved from the fall of other worlds. Whilst he is at large the insurgency will be rekindled again and again. If captured or if the Travellers otherwise interact with him they will find he is no fanatic, just a sad and desperate man willing to do terrible things for the greater good.

If Valax could be convinced there was a chance to stop the K'kree, he might join or ally with the Travellers and would be wholehearted in his allegiance. This would be a very difficult task however, as Valax has witnessed so many attempts by better organised and more determined forces than the government of Kolan.



CAPTAIN ANDREW VALAX

SPECIES	GENDER		AGE
Human	Male		50
STR	8	INT	9
DEX	11	EDU	8
END	9	SOC	8
SKILLS		Gun Combat (energy) 2, Heavy Weapons (portable) 1, Leadership 3, Recon 1, Tactics (military) 2	
WEAPONS		Laser Carbine (4D)	
ARMOUR		Flak Jacket (+5)	

LOCAL FORCES

Local forces are over-expanded and generally inept. Officially, all combat personnel are equipped with a flak jacket and helmet but many have still not received these. In most cases, companies have been expanded into battalions either as maritime marines without vehicles or motorised infantry with their own transport and light support vehicles. In practice, most battalions have one company fully equipped with vehicles, plus an assortment of others that could be used to transport a couple of platoon-sized detachments.

Organisation is conventional, with battalions made up of four field companies and a headquarters/support element. There are few armoured vehicles and those are for the most part up-armoured APCs fitted with support weapons. Infantry are equipped with assault rifles and light support weapons. There are few anti-armour weapons in the field companies, although specialist formations intended to defeat an armoured assault exist – at least on paper.

Kolan Field Company

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Field Company	—
Unit Size	Company	—
Unit Type	Motorised Infantry	—
Unit TL	8	—
Mobility Type	Motorised	+4
Combat	8	0
Bombardment	1	-2
Aerospace	2	-1
Support	2	-2
CEI or DEI	6	0
Morale	7	0
Reputation	7	0

GOVERNMENT INFANTRY

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	—	—
STR 8	INT 6	SKILLS
DEX 7	EDU 6	Gun Combat (slug) 1,
END 7	SOC 6	Heavy Weapons 0, Recon 1, Tactics 0
WEAPONS		Assault Rifle (3D, Auto 2) or Light Support Weapon (3D, Auto 4)
ARMOUR		Flak Jacket (+5)



K'KREE WARRIOR

The K'Kree forces on Kolan are intended as guards for dignitaries and 'advisors' to the insurgents. Nevertheless they are as combat-capable as any other K'kree warrior. K'kree never operate in numbers smaller than a fighting-band, which typically numbers 4–10 K'kree led by a 'fighting-leader' who is of the merchant caste. K'kree prefer to fight as infantry/cavalry, making headlong charges or sweeping around the flanks. Fighting-bands may be backed up by robotic combat platforms. Multiple fighting-bands are grouped as a warring-band under the command of a noble-caste leader known as a warring-leader. A warring-band is the equivalent of a platoon-sized force and almost always incorporates robotic weapons platforms.

Trait: Big and Tough

K'kree are much bigger than humans and can soak up a lot more damage unless a vulnerable location such as the head is struck. Whenever a K'kree is subject to an effect that reduces END, whether although physical damage or exertion, END reduction is halved, dropping any fractions. For example, a K'kree who is hit for seven points of damage loses three points of END. END is also treated as being doubled for the purposes of determining the duration (but not effectiveness) of physical activity.

K'kree Warring-Band

Characteristic	Value	DM
Force Name	Warring-Band	—
Unit Size	Platoon	—
Unit Type	K'kree 'infantry' (cavalry)	—
Unit TL	12	+2
Mobility Type	Mounted	+2
Combat	10	+2
Bombardment	1	-2
Aerospace	3	-1
Support	6	0
CEI or DEI	9	+1
Morale	10	+2
Reputation	8	0



K'KREE WARRIOR

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	—	—
STR	15	INT 3
DEX	7	EDU 2
END	9	SOC 6
SKILLS		
Gun Combat (slug or energy) 2, Melee (blade) 1, Recon 1		
WEAPONS		Assault Rifle (3D, Auto 2) or Light Support Weapon (3D, Auto 4)
ARMOUR		Warrior Panoply (+2)

HARDWARE



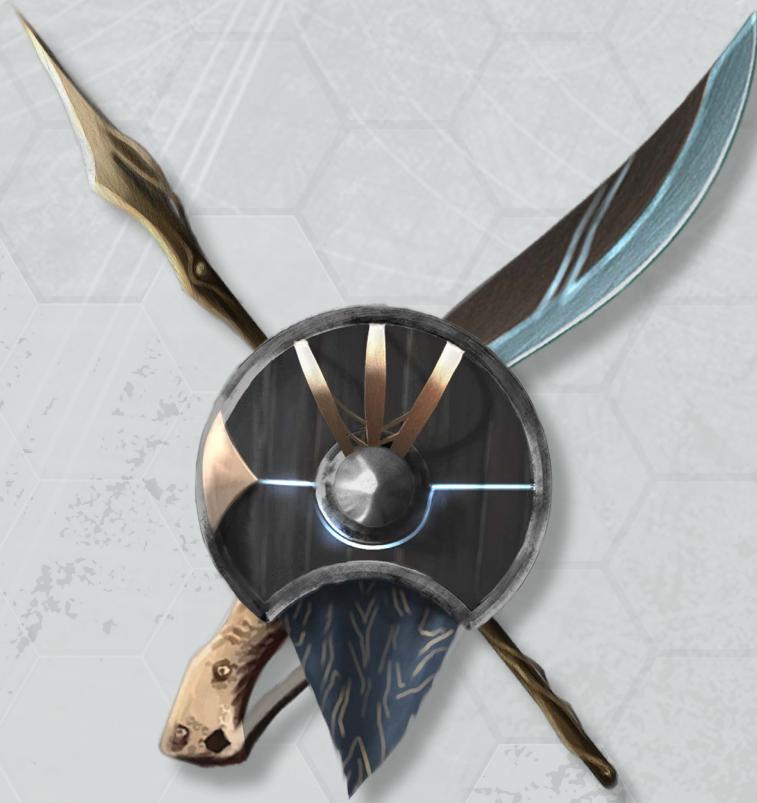
The hardware and equipment presented in this adventure is specific to the region and combatants but very similar items are available elsewhere under different designations. The military environment

is such that if a problem exists in more than one location, multiple ways will be created to solve it – but the end results may not differ all that much.

K'KREE WEAPONRY

TRADITIONAL WEAPONRY

The traditional weaponry of the K'kree warrior consists of a lance, a small shield and a weapon known as a hand-blade, which resembles a curved and deeply bellied machete. The hand-blade is almost useless for thrusting but delivers a devastating cut optimised for a ‘running pass’ style of attack. The K'kree shield is a little larger than a human buckler but covers only about half the forearm when held in the hand. It is otherwise treated as a standard shield. Both the lance and hand-blade require the Melee (blade) skill for use. The shield requires Melee (bludgeon) if used as a weapon.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Traits
Lance	1	Melee	2D	2	Cr15	—
Shield	1	Melee	1D	2	Cr20	—
Hand-Blade	2	Melee	2D+2	1.5	Cr120	—
Ceremonial Hand-Blade	2	Melee	1D+1	0.6	Cr250	—

WEAPON-OF-LENGTH

Warriors are equipped with a laser rifle known as a Weapon-of-Length. If the Referee has access to *Aliens of Charted Space: Volume 1*, additional K'kree weapons may be present. Laser rifles in use by insurgents are likely to be converted Weapons-of-Length.



Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Power Pack Cost	Traits
Weapon-of-Length	10	300	5D	9	Cr4000	200	Cr2000	Zero-G

WEAPON-OF-DESTRUCTION

The K'kree on Kolan have access to some heavier weapons, which are not deployed during the skirmish at Fierton. These are versions of the K'kree Weapon-of-Destruction, converted for use by humans. A Weapon-of-Destruction can be fired on the run by a K'kree but humans will need a tripod or vehicle mount.

The standard heavy squad support weapon in most K'kree forces is equivalent to a PGMP-12. The K'kree version is just as bulky as human TL12 plasma weapons but the mass is distributed such that it can be used by a K'kree without the need for battle dress, providing the gunner adopts a braced stance. The weapon-of-destruction uses a backpack power supply good for 40 shots and is only considered Very Bulky if the user is trying to fire on the move.



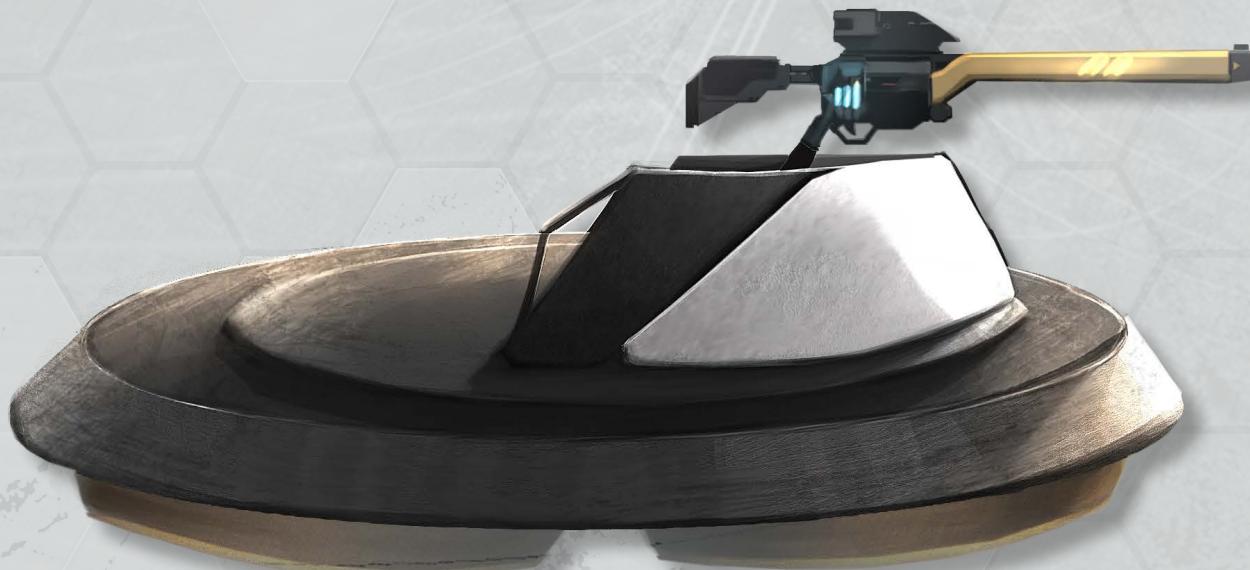
Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Power Pack Cost	Traits
Weapon-of-Destruction	12	250	1DD	14	Cr22000	40	Cr5000	Very Bulky

WEAPON CARRIERS

The K'kree make extensive use of robotic weapons carriers, enabling them to operate with good fire support without using armoured vehicles. If *Aliens of Charted Space: Volume 1* is available additional models can be assigned but if not the most basic version will be available.

FRIEND-OF-THE-LOWLY

The Friend is the most basic of standard K'kree weapons carriers, using the same ovoid body shape as most others, with a laser rifle along the main axis. The unit is neither agile nor quick, and cannot keep up with a band of charging K'kree if firing at the same time, but does provide accurate light fire support on the move. Internal fuel cells provide an effectively infinite number of shots but movement rate is halved while the weapon is fired. The Friend has only basic visual and thermal sensors.



Robot	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Friend-of-the-Lowly	20	12m	10	Cr25000
Skills	Gun Combat 0, Recon 0			
Attacks	Laser Rifle (5D)			
Traits	Armour (+12)			
Programming	Hunter/Killer			

DUSHKA SAREL SURFACE ACTION CUTTER

The Dushka Sarel was developed as a general-purpose patrol and combat craft to be carried by larger maritime combatants or operated out of a wet-naval installation. It is overpowered for its most common use, as a fisheries protection and law enforcement vessel, but can be effective as a fire support craft in riverine or littoral operations.

The vessel is capable of open-water navigation but is optimised for shallow coastal areas and hydrofoils are used for high speed runs in calm conditions. The vessel can be operated by two people but has a standard crew of four – commander, helm, propulsion technician and electronic warfare operator – plus gunners and additional personnel as needed.

The Dushka Sarel has two four-Space turrets, located fore and aft, with associated fire control systems. In addition there are four Spaces of bays, which can be configured either for torpedoes or missiles. A torpedo takes up two Spaces, as does a missile equivalent to the anti-tank missile found on page 39 of the *Vehicle Handbook*. Some vessels are set up for smaller missiles, depending on their intended role and primary armament can also vary. The standard loadout is a 60mm heavy autocannon on the front mount – equivalent to the AC-60H found on page 159 of the *Field Catalogue*

– and a twin 25mm autocannon, plus two light anti-air missiles on the aft mount. The standard 25mm cannon is equivalent to the AC-25 found on page 157 of the *Field Catalogue*.

In this configuration the vessel can engage water or land targets with guns and has a measure of self-defence capability against airborne threats. Torpedoes offer a powerful anti-ship capability but missiles are more common as standoff attacks against land targets are more likely to be necessary. The cost of the vessel does not include weapons as other configurations are possible. No underwater sensors, other than basic navigational sonar, are fitted as there is no submarine threat on Kolan.

With a full operational crew and gunners for each turret plus the missile or torpedo armament, a Dushka Sarel would normally run with seven personnel on board. A total of 24 Spaces are assigned for crew use, allowing a rather crowded maximum of 12 personnel. Four pintle mounts are provided for additional light support weapons, though these extra personnel are more commonly employed as boarding or landing parties. A very basic fresher and galley allows the crew to remain on station for an extended period but there are no sleeping facilities aboard. Deployments are rarely longer than 12 hours on-station or away from the parent vessel.



ARMOUR

FRONT	12
REAR	12
SIDES	12



DUSHKA SAREL

Autopilot (skill level)	0	TL	8
Communications (range)	500km	SKILL	SEAFARER (PERSONAL)
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1	AGILITY	-1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-1	SPEED (CRUISE)	MEDIUM (SLOW)
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—	RANGE (CRUISE)	400 (600)
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-1	CREW	12
		PASSENGERS	—
		CARGO	—
		HULL	80
		SHIPPING	20 TONS
		COST	CR468000

TRAITS

Hydrofoil

EQUIPMENT

Autopilot (basic), Camouflage (improved), Communications Systems (improved, encrypted), Control Systems (improved), Decoy Dispenser, ECM (improved), Fresher, Fire Extinguishers, Galley, Navigation Systems (basic), Sensors (improved, hardened), Stealth (basic)

WEAPONS

WEAPON	TL	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	COST	MAGAZINE COST	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
AC-60H (frag)	9	3	1DD	50	Cr50000	Cr12000	Auto 3, Blast 10	+2
LC-60H (anti-armour)	9	3	1DD	50	Cr50000	Cr12000	AP 10, Auto 3, Blast 5	+2
AC-25 (explosive)	8	2.5	9D	100	Cr10000	Cr6000	Auto 3, Blast 3, Lo-Pen 2	+2
AC-25 (AP)	8	2.5	6D-3	100	Cr10000	Cr4000	AP 7, Auto 3	+2
Torpedo	8	50	5DD	1	Cr12000	—	AP 50, One Use, Smart	—
Anti-Tank Missile	8	6	8D	1	Cr18000	—	AP 30, One Use, Smart	—
Light Anti-Air Missile	8	5	6D	1	Cr5000	—	One Use, Smart	—

ARMED TRAWLERS AND OTHER CRAFT

The typical trawler has Hull 80 and Armour +2 and is likely to be encountered as a platform for personal weapons only. The industrial trawler is much larger, with Hull 400 and Armour +4. It has been fitted with four sponsons that mount machineguns and there is a crude

mount on the foredeck for a K'kree plasma weapon (weapon-of-destruction). This ramshackle mount traverses unevenly and not always freely, imposing DM-2 on attack rolls against a moving target. It is still a threat to the Travellers' craft, however.



