

Centauri Knights

Written by **David L. Pulver**

Artwork by **Ed Northcott**



BESM

Centauri Knights

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First Printing — March 2001. Printed in Canada

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ISBN 1-894525-13-2
Production Number 02-103

FOREWORD

This project was in the making for a very long time. It is with exuberance that we present you with the final product.

When David first started working for the company in 1998, his first task was to write a mecha sourcebook for the first edition of *BESM*. *Big Robots, Cool Starships* was the result, which was received warmly by those anxiously awaiting *BESM*'s first supplement. The first published adventure for *BESM* was included at the back of *BRCB*; "Red Planet, Blue Helmets" was set on Mars during the extraction of an alien vessel buried beneath the surface. David suggested to me that he'd like to expand on the ideas presented in the adventure, and turn it into its own campaign world. *Centauri Knights* would fast forward in history over 100 years after "RPBH"; the Alpha Centauri star system would serve as the setting. I gave David's project a green light and expected the book to be published in mid-1999.

What I didn't expect was the company's rapid growth throughout 1999 and 2000. I pulled David away from *Centauri Knights* to write the *Dominion Tank Police* and *Demon City Shinjuku RPGs*. Then came *Tenchi Muyō!* Then *BESM SECOND EDITION*. I kept David so busy that he didn't have time to finish *Centauri Knights* until late 2000 (sorry David)! The final product is an exquisitely constructed future, in which player characters can explore the science, sociology, and morality of both human and alien cultures. David has created an ideal universe to serve as our first campaign adventure book.

Finally, I ask a small favour from you who are reading this book. *Centauri Knights* only scratches the surface of possibilities for this setting. With support from *BESM* connoisseurs, *GUARDIANS OF ORDER* could turn *CK* into an entire sub-line of products that expands on the when, where, what, and how of the events that take place in the Alpha Centauri system in 2150. We would appreciate hearing your thoughts on this project: do you want to see more products that support *Centauri Knights*? Another book? Another six books? Or are you satisfied with the total presentation in these 112 pages? Drop me a line at mark@guardiansorder.on.ca to share your thoughts.

Mark C. MacKinnon
February 2001

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION



Centauri Knights

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Centauri Knights is the story of Earth's first interstellar colony on Alpha Centauri, the discovery of enigmatic alien ruins, and the struggle that ensued over their control. The year is 2150, and the colonists are under attack, besieged by the ruthless terrorist group Eye of Re. To stop the bloodshed, Earth dispatches troops to Alpha Centauri. The United Nations Peace in Alpha Centauri Force (UNPACFOR) consists of elite counter-terrorist and servopanzer units from the European Union, India, Japan, and the United States, equipped with the most advanced military hardware the 22nd century can provide. It might not be enough. Their enemy is no longer merely human, and the Fog Witches and xenomecha of Eye of Re may presage the rebirth of an ancient alien power strong enough to menace Earth itself. The forces on either side are tiny compared to a Terrestrial battlefield, but the stakes are high: the fate of an entire solar system. It is up to the player characters to make a difference in a pivotal point in history, a moment in time when the actions of a few individuals have a chance to reshape the future of humankind.

Centauri Knights is the sequel to the adventure "*Red Planet, Blue Helmets*" that was featured in the *BESM* sourcebook, *Big Robots, Cool Starships*. Familiarity with the earlier adventure is not required; while the stories share the same future history, *Centauri Knights* is set 121 years later.

ALPHA CENTAURI: 2011-2150

The following archival documents were selected to provide a snapshot of the events that have led up to the present crisis in Alpha Centauri.

SEP 19, 2011

NASA's Terrestrial Planet Finder satellites today used infrared interferometry to resolve the first images of Earth-sized planets orbiting two stars in the nearby Alpha Centauri system, 4.35 light-years away.

Alpha Centauri is a binary system, whose two components are the yellow, sun-like Alpha Centauri A and the smaller orange star Alpha Centauri B. The companions orbit one another just far enough apart to theoretically permit the formation of planets, a theory that NASA confirmed today. Four planets have been discovered orbiting Alpha Centauri A and three orbiting Alpha Centauri B. Six of these worlds are airless rocks or too hot to sustain life, but one of the planets, Alpha Centauri A IV, shows spectroscopic lines that indicate the presence of an oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere and water vapour.

"This is a strong indication that plant and animal life may exist on the surface of Alpha Centauri," said NASA scientist, Dr. Victoria Cameron. "The possibility of intelligent life cannot be discounted, although no radio signals of artificial origin have ever been detected originating from the Alpha Centauri system."

Alpha Centauri A IV is Earth-sized, and while it is on the cold outer edge of its star's habitable zone, the atmosphere is slightly richer in carbon dioxide than Earth's. However, the planet is cool enough that rather than triggering a runaway greenhouse effect, the carbon dioxide has formed clouds of dry ice in the upper atmosphere that, NASA believes, are acting to moderate the climate. These same clouds also make remote observation of the surface difficult.

NASA Director Norman Crane said the agency has no immediate plans for any mission to Alpha Centauri. It is so far away that any spacecraft launched today would take centuries to reach it, even for a one-way fly-by mission. NASA's Advanced Propulsion Laboratory has been researching new space drive technologies, such as antimatter and fusion propulsion, but these remain decades in the future. The agency is currently focused on what Crane calls a more attainable, near-term goal: the exploration of Mars.

— "*Earth-Like Planet Found Around Nearest Star*," Kimberly Jones, World Vision News Special Report

JUL 7, 2016

Sources at NASA today confirmed that the Mars Floater aerobot had transmitted a picture of what may be an artificial structure near the Olympus Mons region of Mars. Olympus Mons is a giant, extinct volcano, or caldera. The object is 17 kilometres from the caldera, half-buried in a nearby canyon.

NASA Director Norman Crane is at the White House to discuss implications of the discovery. Speaking off the record, a senior NASA official indicated that M4, the Multinational Manned Mars Mission, cancelled under the previous administration, is almost certain to be revived.

— “Aliens on Mars?” WVN headline.



MAR 3, 2027

“Pan the camera over to the right — yeah, the ground-penetrating radar was right. It really does look a bit like a giant blue-black stingray. Pity the tail is broken — that must be the drive exhaust. Where’s that ranging laser, Boris?”

“I am checking — ah. According to the laser, it is 70.35 metres wide at the wingspan, and 53.93 metres long. The tail is another 30.2 metres, excluding the damaged section.”

“A big fish we hooked. Hayakawa, could those spines on the tail be radiators?”

“I think so, Dana. Look how far apart the tail and the main body are. That may be for radiation protection, especially if it’s an antimatter drive. Boris, how much do you think it masses?”

“I do not know. If the hull was not made of synthetic diamond ... a few thousand tonnes? Perhaps much less. The tail section was surprisingly light, even in Martian gravity.”

“Okay, Hayakawa — you got that cable attached? See if you can bring the servoshell over here.”

“Hey, I hear that the UN is going to bring some troops over to protect the artifact. They afraid it’s going to attack us?”

“Afraid of what we’ll find, maybe. What with the Siberian crisis and the Indo-Pakistan incident, I guess nobody trusts anyone. What if this is a warship?”

“They should send more engineers — and some new equipment. We don’t need soldiers.”

“Look on the bright side. They’ll probably bring powered armour — we can get some help with all this digging.”

— Extract from Olympus Base audio archive

MAR 14, 2029

“I am Captain Arkady Varenkov, of the 1st Assault company, 3rd Russian Guards Regiment. My comrades and I have risen against the fascist officers of the reactionary Moscow government and proclaimed ourselves soldiers for Siberian Liberation. We have seized Mars Base and the Japanese warship *Musashi*. Now we stand in solidarity with our Siberian brothers on Earth. Until the General Assembly votes to recognize Siberia’s nationhood and condemn the brutality of Moscow, the UN is unworthy to hold the artifact!”

— Broadcast from Mars

Centauri Knights

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MAR 16, 2029

"We fought, we held, we kicked their asses back to Siberia. After a day of heavy fighting, I can report that the Dragoons have recaptured Mars Base from the mutineers, and freed the imprisoned Japanese and Russian officers. List of casualties follows...."

"The alien vessel is still intact. Dr. Sayla was able to assist us in aborting the self-destruct sequence that Varenkov triggered. Most of the memory core is unrecoverable, but there may be a silver lining. When we used the SQUIDS to get into the alien cyberbrain, Sergeant Taylor got a few other impressions — he thinks it was navigational imagery."

"Dr. Sayla is contacting the science boys at Geneva, but you need to know first: there's a good chance the alien ship came from Alpha Centauri, and it wasn't on any science mission."

— Captain Mackenzie, 1st Royal Canadian Dragoons, Mars Observer Force

JAN 23, 2031

In summary: Mars Object was a robotic space vehicle of extrasolar origin, propelled by a slower-than-light antimatter photon engine. The depth it was buried indicates it crash-landed on Mars between 1,500 and 2,500 years ago. It is possible that the vessel found on Mars may simply be a component, parasite, or stage of a larger starship. In any case, it would certainly have outperformed all current human interplanetary spacecraft.

Mars Object was heavily damaged, but not solely from the crash. In particular, we discovered thermal shock and radiation damage that is consistent with high-energy laser and particle beam fire — not the result of the recent fighting on Mars. This suggests that before or after entering our solar system, the object came under deliberate attack. The national security implications of this cannot be understated. It must be emphasized that the mission of the Mars Object and its theoretical parent remains unknown. There were no biological passengers aboard, nor provision for life support. Launch bays were found that could have held anything from science probes to escape pods — or missiles. They were empty.

The object's builders were more advanced than us in the fields of material science, exotic matter, antimatter, and nanotechnology. Mars Object's propulsion system has already led to multiple breakthroughs in antimatter containment and propulsion (see Appendix 12) as well as spin-offs such as ultra-high resolution anti-proton imaging microscopes.

Its molecular electronics are completely beyond our present comprehension. Its primary computer brain is non-functional and nearly inexplicable in its construction, especially its Higgsino-proton crystal circuits, potentially a million times faster than our own, representing a technology we can barely understand, let alone duplicate. However, Dr. Deki Sayla and Dr. Kim Jin Soo's initiative in using Superconducting Quantum Interference Detector (SQUID) probes were able to retrieve some fragmentary data from what may be a holographic backup memory system. This has included navigational imagery that suggests a probable origin: the Alpha Centauri system.

— Excerpts from Executive Summary, "*Project Olympus: Interim Report on the Mars Object.*"

JUN 5, 2032

The US Navy today removed a veil of secrecy over one of its most closely held black programs, unveiling the M27 Sea Lion. The volunteers who chose to be integrated into each Sea Lion were selected from critically injured....

— "*Pentagon Unveils Cyborg SEAL,*" Military Cybernetics Bulletin, No. 437

DEC 6, 2035

"My fellow Americans, you have heard my opponent call Star Driver and *Emissary* a pair of Quixote projects, a waste of money and effort. That's a lot like what they told Columbus. I'm even sure that's pretty much what they told some folks in Siberia, when they wanted to cross the Bering Straits.

"However, that's just my opinion. Here are some facts.

"We know alien robots visited Mars — in Biblical times! We know that they are far more technologically advanced than us, although we have learned much from their starship.

"We know that they got into some kind of trouble, that something attacked their ship. I hope and pray the aliens are friendly, but we must remain vigilant. The Star Driver constellation will have the power to propel *Emissary* to the stars, but those same stations are also a shield, ready to focus their enormous energies to protect our planet, should it be necessary to do so. We now know interstellar travel is possible....

"What we don't know — well, that would fill a much bigger book. Why did they come here? Were they beings like us or beings unimaginable? Did they come as friend or foe? Did they visit Earth? Have they vanished into the mists of time, or do they watch us, silently, even now?

"My opponent may not think these are important questions. I do. I know many of you do as well. Ask yourselves this: If we turn our backs on these questions, as some would have us do, how can we look up at the sky and feel secure? How can we ever face the legacy of the brave pilgrims and pioneers who have gone before us? How can we face ourselves?

"Let me say to you now: We must go to Alpha Centauri. We can go to Alpha Centauri! And when I become President, I will ensure that we will go to Alpha Centauri!

"Thank you and good night."

— Excerpt of speech by Governor Megan Wallis, campaigning for the US presidency

AUG 30, 2041

Tokyo, AP — The Japanese Space Agency has announced their crew selection for *Emissary*, the spacecraft that Star Driver will propel to the stars. She is Kaori Nagumo, an experienced astronaut and marine xenobiologist, who participated in the Europa expedition.

"I am very excited to be chosen," said Nagumo, 29. "It is my dream to be able to discover life among the stars. I am grateful to everyone who supported me, especially to my parents. To the students of Sakura Elementary School, thank you for the drawings you sent me. Yes, if I find a cute pet, I will send a picture to the school, though I am afraid you may have graduated by then! Thank you, everyone! I will not let you down."

The possibility of the *Emissary* encountering live aliens is the primary reason why the first mission is to be manned, rather than automated by a robot. Nagumo is now off to Geneva, for training in diplomatic and first-contact procedures.

—AP Newswire

AUG 5, 2047

"*Emissary* has now cleared star dock. Ion manoeuvre thrusters are shut down, and she is preparing to unfurl her magnetic sail."

"Magnetic sail at full expansion and fully charged."

"*Emissary* flight crew are in nanowomb brain pods. Vital signs flat. Bio-stasis nominal."

"Stardriver One is focused on the sail."

"Stardrivers Two through Ten are focused on the sail. Total beam power is 123 terawatts."

"Particle beam cluster firing in t-minus 20 seconds. All systems nominal. Beginning countdown..."

"20, 19..."

"— with the magnetic sail deployed, *Emissary* resembles a gigantic spider web..."

"All stardrivers still nominal. Power available at 123 terawatts and holding."

"3...2...1... fire! Star Driver Control, we have co-ordinated particle boost. *Emissary* is away."

"Look at her go, riding the proton stream! In just four hours time, *Emissary* will be out past Pluto and beyond range of the Star Drivers, at which point she will furl the magnetic sail and begin coasting. Now back to our science advisor, Dr. Bob Goldberg. What happens next, Bob?"

"Well, Jill, *Emissary* will cruise for seven years at 52% of the speed of light. As she approaches Alpha Centauri, she will once again charge her magnetic sail, which will begin reacting with charged particles in the interstellar medium. This will create a bow shock wave that functions as a kind of cosmic speed brake. In 2060, if all goes well, *Emissary* will enter the Alpha Centauri A system, and establish a space station. After the crew is awakened, they will begin exploration, starting with the fourth planet, Osiris."

"Truly a historical day. We now go to Strasbourg, where the President of the European Parliament is addressing..."

— ISN special coverage, "Countdown to the Stars"

AUG 20, 2065

There are four planets circling Alpha Centauri A: Horus, Isis, Sekhmet-Hathor, and Osiris. These worlds, however, were not *Emissary's* first destination. Instead, she sailed through the belt of comets and dirty asteroids on the outer edge of the system, until her sensors detected one of the thousands of common C-type (carbon-rich) bodies. Such asteroids are a treasure trove of volatiles and metals, containing everything from nickel iron to water ice. In 2060, *Emissary* picked out a 23-km wide asteroid on an Osiris-crossing orbit, retracted its sail, and used its ion thrusters and harpoons to make a soft landing. She had arrived: the first human spaceship to ever visit an extra-solar body.

No humans stirred aboard *Emissary*. Its crew were seven disembodied human brains, still held in their bio-stasis brain pods. However, a swarm of robots also lived inside *Emissary*, most no larger than insects, and they went busily to work.

The robots began by cannibalizing her, transforming *Emissary* from a starship into a factory. Parts of the spaceship were used to construct specialized mining robots, which began burrowing into the asteroid's surface. Gopher-sized mine shafts were dug. Raw materials were collected and refined. Mini-factories began to operate. Tiny robots built small ones. Small robots built bigger ones, and they built things that are not robots at all. Larger tunnels and chambers were dug, and on the outside of the asteroid, antennae and docking bays sprouted.

The last messages from *Emissary* — sent four years ago in 2061 — tell us this construction is nearly complete. Soon we should be receiving reports of the crew's successful awakening. If all has gone well, the brain pods housing the expeditionary crewmembers should already have been transferred into newly-built, fully-functional cyborg bodies. They will have awakened, to discover a shiny new space station awaiting them, ready to begin their historic exploration of Alpha Centauri. We can expect the first messages from them in 2066.

— "Mini-Robots Build Star Station," by J. Corey, *TeenSpace* magazine.

JUN 2, 2062 (REACHED EARTH IN 2066)

I hate this station. There's all these odd noises in the walls — I think some of the mini-bots have a glitch in their programming, and they keep trying to repair things that don't need fixing, 'cause the circuits always look different every time I trace them. I saw how they goofed up the revival sequence, and I ended up with a defective spine. I'm still not fixed. I've spent six days attached to a wheeled cart while George and B.J. mess about with the software. At least I'm better off than Lee. We can't get his brain pod integrated, so we had to just shut him down. That was a downer. The one thing that's kept me going is that there might be alien ruins to explore, if those things on the radar aren't just oddly-shaped rocks.

— Starborg: the Uncensored Diary of Katrina Timoshenkova (Novagrad, 2099)

DEC 12, 2066

"The first high-resolution images of Osiris are now reaching us, and shock is the best way to describe the reactions here at the International Space Centre at O'Neil Station. These pictures were taken as starborg Felicity Anderson took the *Emissary* shuttlecraft under the planet's dry ice clouds. Far from being the green, life-bearing world we had all hoped to find, the surface of Osiris appears to be as dead as Mars or the Moon.

"What *Emissary* has shown us is a world of naked hills, barren plains, vast, empty equatorial deserts and great seas of dust. Yet it has a breathable atmosphere and plenty of water: waves lap against rocky shores, and clear blue lakes glitter like jewels high in the stark, treeless mountains. It is a cruel disappointment — and one many planetologists say is all but impossible.

"An oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere is the product of the complex biochemical processes of plant and animal life. If Osiris is a lifeless world, where did the free oxygen in its air come from?

"We will learn more as *Emissary* continues to study this baffling enigma. In quest of answers, *Emissary's* Osiris Lander has deployed several swarms of micro-rovers, swimmers and flyers equipped for wide-spectrum bio sampling. So far, the initial reports from Nekhebet — the southern continent — are disturbingly negative: no life at all, even microorganisms. Just dust. More probes have been dropped in Edjo, the northern continent. Analysis is continuing — has continued — and reports are expected shortly.

"However, one source at the space agency tells us that the heavy fog that covers much of the planet's surface is very strange, and may not be fog at all.

"There is hope that there might once have been life here. Some of the radar plots show objects on the planet's surface that may be structures, although they are heavily shrouded by fog. *Emissary* has also begun imaging several bodies located in the LaGrange 4 and LaGrange 5 points, although their size suggests they are probably captured asteroids."

— Richard Wagner, ISN "Mystery on Osiris" Special Report

JUN 7, 2062 (REACHED EARTH IN 2066)

"First the good news: Osiris air is breathable, and there appear to be no microorganisms we have to worry about. In fact, there doesn't seem to be any life at all, from virus analogues on up. Kaori's feeling pretty bad about that, by the way.

"Now the bad news. Felicity and Vikram have tested the pervasive fog, and it is not water vapour: it is composed of trillions of tiny robots. They have polyhedral bodies, 12 arms, and seem to signal each other with tiny quantum-dot lasers.

"They aren't doing anything — we don't know exactly what they're here for. Felicity thinks they might be part of a climate-regulation system. They could control planetary temperature by linking together to form thick clouds, for example. I wonder if what we're seeing is some sort of failed alien terraforming experiment? I'm recommending Kaori clone up some mice, and see what will happen if you breathe them...."

— Report of Mission Commander Katrina Timoshenkova

DEC 15, 2066

"Welcome to Horizon's Edge webcast: I'm Amy Blair. Tonight's guest is Dr. Candice Tsang, professor of nanoengineering at MIT, and author of the best selling brainvid *Go, Go Nano! How We Can Terraform Mars in 90 days.*"

"Glad to be here, Amy."

"Dr. Tsang, the results of *Emissary's* anti-proton imaging of the fine dust and thick fog covering much of Osiris have come in. Can you explain the results?"

"Sure. The media has concentrated on the fog, but I find the dust more interesting. What we thought was a carbon-silicon-metallic powder turns out not be natural at all. The dust is the inert bodies of trillions and trillions of microscopic robots. They appear to have been universal disassemblers, programmed to do nothing but break objects into their components and reproduce themselves. Osiris once had life, but these disassemblers literally took apart the biosphere."

"Scary stuff, Dr. Tsang. So the fog and the dust are nanomachines?"

"Yes and no, Amy. The disassemblers certainly were. The fog robots are much bigger, merely microscopic. They're mite-sized robot airships, what I'd call nanostats. Each one has a tiny turbine, a vacuum-filled body, and a bunch of manipulator arms and sensors. We have no idea what they do, but Dr. Anderson's theory of climate-control seems plausible. You know, this whole thing is the opposite of what I discuss doing on Mars — using nanomachines to create a biosphere."

"In your brainvid, you mention how early nanoscientists debunked just such a Grey Goo disaster, but isn't that what we're seeing on Osiris? Is nano dangerous, and should we stop using it in our factories?"

"Heavens, no! Amy, our industrial nano can only survive in a special fluid feedstock environment. Making a nanomachine that can eat anything is much more difficult. It's generations beyond what we've got now, and you'd pretty much have to do it deliberately — or get some pretty weird mutations. Of course, this is just speculation. We need a full-scale science lab on Osiris."

"Dr. Tsang, we're almost out of time, but I have one last question. How long ago did this nanoclysm happen, do you think? Can we tell based on how much oxygen is left?"

"Good question, Amy. Well, on Osiris the oxygen has been slowly vanishing, but it will take centuries more for it to become so thin that you can't breathe it. I'll check my datavisor. Let's see — hold on a sec. Okay, based on the remaining oxygen level, and assuming an Earth-like oxygen-nitrogen percentage to begin with, I'd estimate it occurred two to two and half thousand years ago."

"The same time as the Mars Ship was buried on Earth."

"Hey, you're right! Give or take a few centuries."

"Thank you, Dr. Tsang. The brainvid is *Go, Go, Nano!*, only \$999.98 from Scope's Monkey Press. Our next guest is the Reverend Simon Cody, here to talk about the theological implications of the disaster."

AUG 3, 2067

"Hans, come over here a second. Look at this message from *Emissary*:"

ASTEROID AB 2057-DY IN THE LAGRANGE 4 POINT HAS A ROTATION OF 0.492 RPM. THIS IS HIGHLY ANOMALOUS. I HAVE THEREFORE REDIRECTED SEKHMET-HATHOR EXPLORER PROBE TO EXAMINE THE BODY.

"What? AB 2057-DY's an asteroid. They all spin. Damn, we're going to lose the Sekhmet-Hathor mission! What was Timoshenkova thinking?"

"Hold your horses, Hans. Take a look at the asteroid's length and diameter."

"So? Just under 30 km by 6 km. Irregular body, big deal."

“Okay, now imagine that AB 2057-DY was hollow — and you were standing inside it. What would the artificial gravity due to centripetal force be — I mean, exactly.”

“If you insist. Let’s see, the radius is 3.21 and the rotation — God in heaven!”

“Right. That’s precisely the exact same gravity as Osiris, down to three decimal places. That’s no asteroid. It’s a space station.”

“Say — if there’s one, maybe there’s more.”

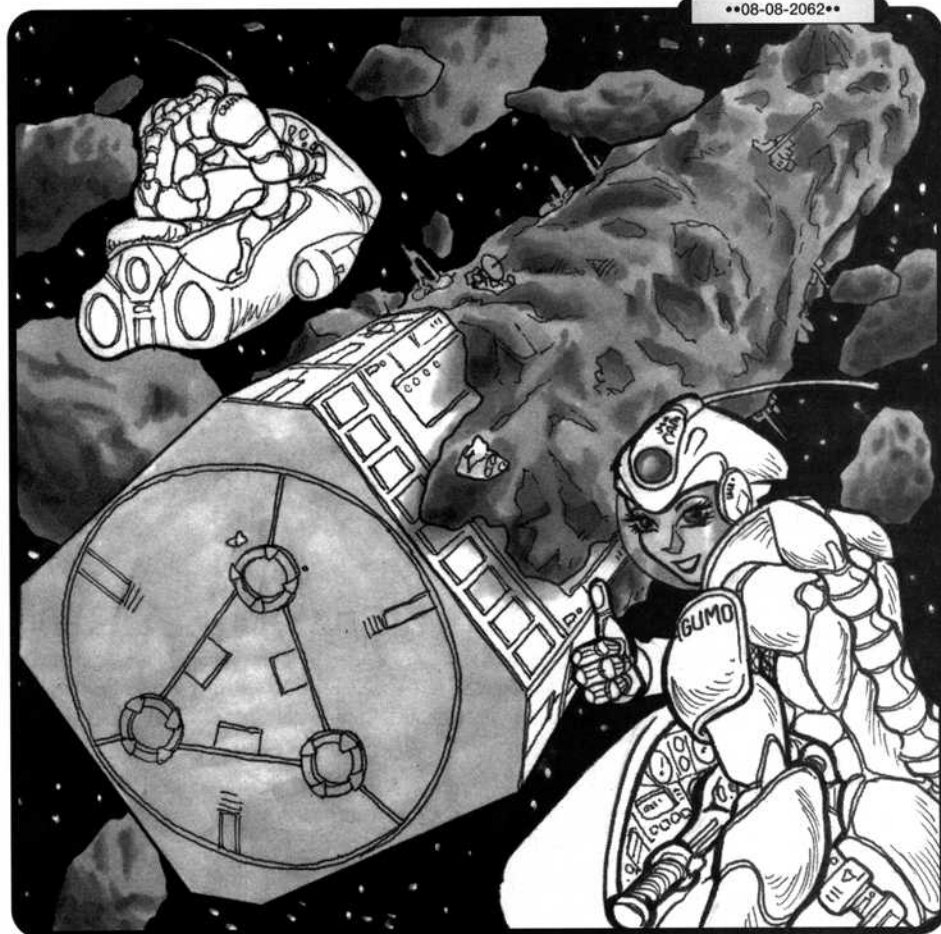
“I wonder if they’ve found them yet. I hate this four year time lag!”

— International Space Centre, O’Neil Station

AUG 8, 2062 (REACHED EARTH IN 2066)

“The largest station, which we have named Bast, is a cylindrical body roughly 30.8 km long and some 6.4 km wide, slowly spinning at about 1/2 RPM. A box-like counter-rotating structure is located on the south pole, opposite the side facing the sun. We have found three silver-grey indented circles, each one 36 metres in diameter, which may be docks. A mirror focused a beam of light down a shaft leading into the interior. Felicity will be taking George, Vikram, B.J. and Kaori over to investigate in OTV-1.”

— Voice of Mission Commander Katrina Timoshenkova



AUG 10, 2062 (REACHED EARTH IN 2066)

"We've named it Bast Station.

"The grey circles are a form of liquid metal membrane, that permit passage while retaining atmosphere. Passing through was an interesting experience. Beyond it was a large docking bay. Sensors showed the air was chilly but breathable to ordinary humans, although of course that's not a problem for cyborgs like us! We found four vaguely beetle-shaped objects in the bay that may be spacecraft. Each is 42 metres long. George is working on getting into them. From the docking bay, the rest of us entered a zero-gravity section. We found storage tanks that may have once held reaction mass or water, and many empty rooms. One led to a window that looked into the station.

"Katrina was right. Bast is an O'Neil-style colony. The entire interior of the station is hollow, sculpted into over 600 square kilometres of hills, valleys and rivers. It's a complete alien ecosystem. From the window, it is as though you are atop a three-km high mountain, looking down into an alien world. The interior is large enough that there's a blue sky and clouds, but the terrain below is nothing like Earth. Instead of green, it is a landscape of orange, crimson, pink and grey. Hanging over much of the land is this thick fog — I'll tell you more about it in a minute.

"We found a cable car system that led down into the interior, but we didn't trust it. We rappelled down and are now exploring on foot. So far, we have found a wild abundance of vegetation, and many species of animals. Kaori is in heaven! The vegetation resembles Terrestrial fungi, with fat orange, red, and grey toadstool-like growths two to four metres high. There are great crimson reefs of what looks like coral, but growing on land rather than underwater.

"There are many, many animals. The creatures we spotted so far range from insect-analogues that look like tiny dragons with butterfly wings, to a giant crimson serpent the size of a rhino. The larger animals seemed to share certain characteristics: either no limbs or a pair of limbs, a long serpentine tail, and three eyes. Most appear to be very skittish, but one species that resembled a cross between a cat, a squirrel, and a snake has been watching us with what appears to be curiosity. Kaori says it is 'kawaii' and she's transmitting an autographed picture to Sakura Elementary School. However, we have found nothing that appears to be capable of using tools, or communicating — they all seemed to be simple animals.

"The fog is just like what we found on Osiris. The same microscopic nanostats, just hovering in the air. The nanostats haven't reacted to our presence at all, and it doesn't seem to affect the animals, which must be breathing them in all the time. It just makes me a bit nervous — if I had real skin, it would be crawling. However, we can't let it interfere with our exploration.

"Anyway, we've spotted what might be some structures by a lake. I'd like you to have *Emissary* build some light aircraft, so we can get around faster. They'll be useful when we explore the other stations, if they're anything like Bast."

— Mission Pilot Specialist Felicity Anderson

AUG 12, 2062 (REACHED EARTH IN 2066)

"While Anderson's team explores the Bast habitat at L4, we've been sending robot probes elsewhere. There are several other alien stations in the L4 complex, and we believe all of them may hold or have held habitats, though the exteriors of several of the stations are holed. This strongly suggests that any life forms inside must be dead.

"The planetary explorer aerobots on Osiris have found a number of structures that resemble flat-topped pyramids and cubes, some partly buried in the dust. Many are intact. As soon as we finish the Bast survey, we will send a team down to the planet to explore these structures.

"Biological experiments are proceeding well. Kaori's report is attached, but in brief, the alien animals possess a form of DNA analogous to our own, but with three instead of two strands. They are definitely not

Centauri Knights

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just came through it. I guess I screamed — B.J. was yelling on the radio for Felicity to pull out, but it was too late. The Scorpion fired its laser, and I saw it go right into the starboard engine. She was hit bad, but I guess she chose not to eject. Felicity aimed directly at the alien machine, in a kamikaze dive. When the fireball cleared, the creature was wrecked, there were bits scattered all over, one just missed hitting B.J. I don't think it was alive. That didn't look organic. It was definitely a robot."

"I was acting on auto-pilot. I called First Base, told them what happened, calmly. Then B.J. grabbed my arm and pointed — it was the Scorpion. Its wreckage was beginning to reassemble itself. Yeah, that was me on the recording with the expletives — see, Felicity, she had died to kill it, and — sorry. Okay, so I ran forward and shoved the laser cutter into it and set it for full power, and B.J. went at it with a bit of the Hummingbird's hull. I think it was already pretty dead, and we finished it."

"Any recommendations? Aside from stay the hell away — Uh, yeah. Sorry. Kat, when you lase Earth, just tell him to make sure the next expedition is armed. I guess someone's going to want to explore the other star tombs. If they're all crawling with these things....

— Mission debriefing of xenospecialist, Kaori Nagumo

••13-08-2062••



FEB 1, 2067

... The most immediate effect of the news has been to put a damper on the latest international crisis, a confrontation between NATO and India over the release of self-replicating artificial life ecologies within the global datasphere. Optimists point to the example of the Osiran nanoclysm as exerting a sobering effect on mankind. Cynics suggest that the chance to exploit a new solar system full of alien technology has made squabbles over the national security implications of self-aware spam seem like small potatoes. What's wrong with that? If these Scorpions are just ancient machines running on auto-pilot after some forgotten war, there's no reason we can't deal with them. It's time we faced facts: Osiris is furnished, but the tenant's deceased. There's nothing to be afraid of. Let's clean up the place and move in.

— "The Three Bears Syndrome" by syndicated columnist Samantha Sparling

—THE ALPHA CENTAURI TREATY—

The Contracting Powers (132 national signatories),

RECOGNIZING that it is in the interests of all mankind that Alpha Centauri shall forever be used exclusively for peaceful purposes and not become the object of international discord,

ACKNOWLEDGING the contributions to scientific knowledge that will result from international co-operation in scientific and commercial activities in Alpha Centauri,

CONVINCED that the international co-operation over Alpha Centauri should continue,
Have agreed as follows:

Article I: To relinquish any present or future claims of territorial sovereignty over any planets or other celestial bodies within the Alpha Centauri system.

Article II: To engage in peaceful scientific and commercial activities within Alpha Centauri. No national military bases shall be established, nor shall military manoeuvres or weapons testing be carried out.

Article III: That the foregoing Article II shall not restrict the use of military personnel or equipment for peaceful activities, nor shall it prohibit UN-sanctioned military operations to enforce the Alpha Centauri Treaty or ensure interstellar peace and security.

Article IV: To promote scientific investigation of Alpha Centauri through a spirit of openness and international co-operation. The Contracting Parties therefore agree to inform one another and the international community of planned and ongoing scientific and commercial activities, and make new archaeological discoveries available to all.

Article V: To protect and preserve the unique flora, fauna, and cyberbiotica of Osiris, Bast Station, and other artificial satellites or colonies yet unexplored. Therefore, commercial or other activities may not be undertaken which will unduly endanger the survival of Osiran flora, fauna, or cyberbiotica, or result in undue contamination with Terrestrial life forms.

Article VI: To prohibit the deployment of nuclear or antimatter explosions, self-replicating robot or nanomachine weapons, and bio-chemical weapons within the Alpha Centauri system.

Article VII: To preserve the archaeological heritage of Alpha Centauri. Therefore, any salvage or removal of Osiran relics shall be preceded by archaeological survey of the site in question. The discovery of any unique Osiran relics are to be reported to the international scientific community within 30 Earth days of said discovery. Unique relics are not to be damaged or destroyed unless said activity is required for self-defense.

Article VIII: To establish an international body, the United Nations Special Agency for Interstellar Development (**UNSAID**) to monitor compliance with the treaty. UNSAID's Executive Council will consist of two representatives from each of the Treaty Powers, and will report to the General Assembly and Security Council. UNSAID is empowered to establish inspectors to ensure that the terms of the ACT are carried out.

Article IX: The Contracting Parties assign UNSAID the power to establish Special Protective Areas and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, in which commercial activity will be prohibited or regulated. UNSAID may designate individual relics as Relics of Special Scientific Interest, requiring they not be damaged or disposed of, and that access to them be permitted to the international scientific community through UNSAID.

Article X: To accept these clauses as binding on the signatory governments and their citizens, as well as all other individuals or organizations operating in Alpha Centauri.

Centauri Knights

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MAY 18, 2071

Grail Technologies, Neurodynamics, and UHK today announced the joint formation of the Centauri Consortium (CENCOR). The corporation's goal is to establish a commercial research station on Alpha Centauri. CENCOR will rent the star driver constellation from UNSAID to send the proton clipper *Starseed* to Alpha Centauri. It will carry genetic material and artificial wombs capable of establishing a permanent R&D colony, in a manner similar to the Ceres project. A major goal of the CENCOR research station is to understand the Osiran xenomechs and nanostats, particularly the so-called ghost fog. Some scientists now believe that the ghost fog may in fact be what nanotheorists call utility fog — robots that can link together to form almost any kind of object or structure. This could explain the lack of furnishings and other tools found in the star tombs.

— Skyweb: Space Financial News You Can Use

JUN 23, 2088

CENCOR xenotechnicians at Port Anderson made a breakthrough in the ongoing studies of Ostech, the alien technologies found in the Alpha Centauri star tombs. The enigmatic skull jewels first discovered by the *Emissary* expedition have long been known to contain neural nanonics, probably similar to our own mind-interface implants. However, a team led by Dr. David Kwan has discovered they are far more than that. Kwan probed the skull jewel's structure with both SQUIDS and anti-proton imagers, and has discovered that it contains actual data patterns. As the jewel is a direct interface to the brain, Kwan has speculated on this data being a mind echo — a form of residual sensory data belonging to the Osirans who wore the implant.

— CENCOR-Neurodynamics Press release

APR 2, 2089

... She squatted in the warm blue gel, straining. She was supposed to focus, but her mind kept drifting — Scent-of-Coral was in orbit, and there the news feed was spiced with the blood-tang of a skirmish with Synthesis, the fear-desire of coming war. That must be why she had been early: taste-of-battle always triggered fertility, atavistic reflex. But now ... her warm clutch-sisters surrounded the pool, tendrils brushing against her paps, letting her taste their helpful advice, their reassurance, that she was being silly. This was her first Time. A scent-machine was wafting a classical piece — mother had insisted on it. It was old fashioned, it was also comforting, the same scent-symphony had played at her sister's Time. She felt the pressure building within her, her tail gone rigid — and then with a sense of release, she expelled her first egg...

— “Osiran Giving Birth: Mind-echo N-37-12,” reported by brain diver Ahn Chae Sun

JUL 26, 2101

Have you considered a voyage to Alpha Centauri? It could be faster — and cheaper — than you think. Grail Technologies has just finished installation of the Phase III Star Driver constellation, which will begin commercial service next Monday. The Phase III expansion is expected to dramatically facilitate travel to both the Oort Cloud farm habitats and the extrasolar colonies at Alpha Centauri and 61Virginis. This is because the 480 new star drivers will circle the sun at the same distance as Mercury, taking advantage of solar power seven times more intense than in Earth orbit. Fast proton clipper velocities of up to 0.9 C will now be possible for urgent courier flights. The danger of RICE (relativistic impact catastrophe events) is likely to keep commercial traffic to a more sedate 0.71 C, but payload capacity will increase dramatically, and ticket prices are expected to begin dropping shortly as well.

— “New Star Driver Constellation Operational,” Tranquillity Times

JUN 12, 2102

"I'm Shinji Ogami."

"And I'm Maiko Ikeda. We are Genki News! What's up, Shinji?"

"Space news, Maiko! In our top story, the UN General Assembly voted to open up the Alpha Centauri territories to unrestricted settlement. It's welcome news for the many people eager to emigrate, and especially for CENCOR Resident Vice-President Sebastian Rein, who fought hard for this bill. However, not everyone's smiling."

"That's right Shinji! The Resurrectionist movement are completely opposed to widespread settlement, claiming it will mean an end to their Isis Project."

"Maiko, the majority has spoken. It looks like Sebastian Rein's dream of a New Earth is going to win over the Resurrectionists plans to bring back the Osiran ecosystem. Stay tuned for more on this developing story as we receive webcasts and reaction from our affiliates in Alpha Centauri — four years from now!"

"In other news, a controversial bill to give Thinking Artificial Intelligences full human rights is currently up before the European Parliament, and is said to have support of the major unions."

— Genki News, Osaka Newsweb

MAY 8, 2107

Under two suns, beneath a pastel sky, on ground no human foot has trod

Help us discover the secrets of an ancient alien race.

Join us in shaping a new world for mankind.

Secure your place in history, and be able to say:

I was there, at the beginning, a pioneer.

Alpha Centauri

Green Osiris.

The ultimate human adventure™

CENCOR requires archaeologists, civil engineers, robotics engineers, genetics engineers, nanosystems engineers, pharmlers, servoshell operators, terraformers, software testers, and xenobiologists. Chartered Archaeological Team (CAT) positions are also available for former combat soldiers, with preference to those with servopanzer, OTV, or tilt rotor experience. Excellent pay and benefits. 5 and 10-year contracts. One way ticket provided. Contact your nearest CENCOR office for details.

— CENCOR Alpha Centauri recruitment campaign

Nov 30, 2113

CAT Artemis salvage hunters have cleared the Osiran star tomb complex at Nekhebet 14. They report confirmed zaps on five Cobras and one Scorpion xenomech. One Artemis hunter, Angela Jaio, suffered damage to her panzer, and is now recovering at Centauri General Hospital. Construction teams are moving into the site, and it should be ready for settlement this autumn. Recovered were eight live dream jewels, as well as four of the highly valuable assembler eggs. These have been turned over to CENCOR labs for analysis.

In other news, a small crowd of Resurrectionist demonstrators protested outside the UNSAID building, demonstrating against CENCOR's Green Osiris program. Some were members of the Selket cult, whose membership is growing among young Alphans....

— AlphaWeb: News at Nine

FEB 11, 2118

What is SELKET?

SELKET is a goddess, a healer, the lady of scorpions, the protector of children,

SELKET is a means to bring a new paradigm into our lives, to help us become a part of the Osiran biosphere, heal the wounds left by the Invaders, to form a new symbiosis that bridges cosmic death,

SELKET is about taking a moral stance against the established, formalized rules of so-called human society and for freedom to choose one's own genetic and neurological expression.

SELKET is not about being part of a crowd or movement, or flying on xenodreams (though that's okay too). It is about learning to listen and taste and smell the true soul of Osiris. It is about accepting changes to yourself, and bringing changes to others.

SELKET is about accepting the glittering angels, the Scorpions and Cobras, as messengers and partners, not as things that go bump in the night.

SELKET is about taking Direct Action when necessary and where needed, in defense of the experience temples, to prevent desecration of the world soul, and to protect those who seek the truth.

— *"What is Selket?"* info-spider bite

DEC 19, 2125

Maria, let's get moving ASAP on the Selket issue, before this sort of thing gets out of hand. We can't tolerate these idiots interfering with our salvage operations or Green Osiris. We've got another generation coming out of the tanks, and we need to do the housing. I think I've brought Koslev at UNSAID around to our position, i.e., this squatting is an obvious violation of ACT; as these are non-archaeologists, they risk damaging priceless relics, exposure to xenoplagues, they are endangering themselves, etc., etc. That leaves it legally clear for you to post a freelance police bounty. I'm sure some of the salvage teams will be willing to clear them out for a sizeable bonus. Call it \$400,000 each?

— S. Rein, CENCOR internal memo: VP Sebastian Rein to Oversight Director Maria Cortez

JAN 27, 2126

Deputized salvage hunters and members of the ACES security firm today moved in on squatter camps at six star tombs in the Edjo region. The raids are at the behest of UNSAID, who are worried the occupation may damage irreplaceable alien relics, as well as exposing the squatters to Osiran xenomechs and biohazards.

A total of 67 arrests were made. Many were obvious Alexandrians, probably members of the Selket cult. Most were tagged, fined, and turned lose, UNSAID officials told ACBC. Sixteen face criminal charges, ranging from resisting arrest to assault.

Among the detainees was at least one ghost fog hacker, or "Fog Witch" as the kids call them. These are radical Alexandrians who use black-market neurosurgery to implant live dream jewels in their skulls. With practice, this gives them a limited ability to manipulate the ghost fog, to alter its density, materialise solid objects, influence xenomechs, and pass through smart matter.

Lynn Makarova, 23, found herself facing one such fog hacker. "It was at Edjo 42. We were still in the tomb, getting them under control, when this skinny Asian kid in shimmersilks starts trying to organize them to resist arrest," said Makarova. "Yeah, he had a jewel implant — a lot of them do. We had no idea it was live, you know? We're about to sort him out, when this knife just appears in his hand, out of nowhere. He cuts Roy, then dives right through what I thought was a solid wall. That was a Fog Witch, all right."

— AlphaWeb: News at Noon

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MAY 8, 2127

"Hi Jen. I'm awake in Alpha Centauri, and I'm okay. It's still me, so don't listen to Rev. Thomas, okay? I'm not dead. It's just cheaper to ship a brain pod than the rest of you, even in a nanowomb. Anyway, I'm back in a body now! Here's a picture of the body I woke up in. I look 17, huh? I'm going to use my first week's pay to get it nanosculpted into something that's more me. Don't worry, I can afford it.

"We docked at Bast Station and they gave us an orientation tour. After we got back to the hotel, I slipped away and hit the freemarket. I found a real coin-belt, and a shimmersilk scarf like the salvage hunters wear in the brainvids. I was trying to tie it CAT-fashion when I overheard these two Alexandrian kids talking about a cheap face clinic. They let me tag along. It was actually in an apartment. They mostly did xenomods, but the woman was pleased I had credit, and agreed. She tried to talk me into a dream jewel like she had, but I know CENCOR frowns on them. I don't want to make a bad impression, so I said I'd be back for just the face job.

"I caught up with the rest of the orientation group in time to take the cable car tour of the interior. Bast Station is kind of like O'Neil, except the vegetation is orange and red and pink — remember that ice cream flavour you liked? That's what it reminded me of. I think I saw a cat-serpent glide by — its head looks more like a squirrel than a cat. It's the last I'll see of Osiran life for a while, though. My job's on the planet.

"Osiris is a weird place. The gravity's just like Earth, but the sky is gloomy and dark, and there's dust and fog everywhere. The air tastes funny — they say it's the ghost fog. I'm stationed in Edjo, helping build the new CENCOR terraforming complex. It's hard, dusty work, but satisfying. I think coming here was the right thing to do, after the divorce.

"Give my love to Sue, mom and dad,"

"Your brother, Eric."

— Starmail transmission from Eric Polanski to his sister, Jen Polanski

DEC 10, 2132

ACES freelance police on UNEXT warrant today raided an "experience temple" located inside Nekhebet 109, an abandoned star tomb. After receiving intelligence that armed cultists were occupying the tomb site, an SV-7 Kestrel full of ACES enforcers swooped down. Three freecops in Panther servopanzers mouseholed in and found themselves in a wild xenogarden. As they approached a cluster of alien buildings, they were blinded by ghost fog and attacked by four xenomechs summoned by the cult's Fog Witch. In the firefight, freecop Dave McCoy zapped straight and true, but was semi-dissolved by Cobra nanospit before his partner put the last xenomech down. Zap count was three Cobras and a Scorpion, plus two Tinkerbells who got in the way. With their xenomechs down, the outlaws rabbited unsuccessfully.

Bagged and tagged were ex-medical student Natasha Cole, 21, of Anubis Station; Fog Witch Chimoa Rose, 19, of Anubis Station, and 13 minors, all of whom had undergone various xenomodifications. Cole faces charges of attempted murder, possession of H-class relics and unlicensed medical practice. Rose died following surgical removal of her brain jewel. Injured freecop McCoy is in Centauri General, regrowing his skin.

— Alpha Centauri Executive Security press release

MAR 7, 2135

Emissary Plaza was standing room only, as 350 to 400 young xenopunks paid to hear singer Alice Century perform at the Freedom '35 benefit concert. The 16-year old idol wowed them with sentimental favourites "Goodbye, Earthguy" and "Far Centauri," then segued into her signature xenobeat material, which this reviewer admits he lacks the bio-mods to fully appreciate. That may not be true of the majority of her audience, as the tall guy standing in front of me definitely had Osiran ear grafts. Century ended the concert with the ballad Red Lady, which some say was written about her lover. If so, I will stay out of her bed.

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Freedom '35 is officially a benefit for the Centauri Democratic Organization, and afterward, Century gave the obligatory membership pitch. A.C. also announced that she was dedicating her next album to the Sakura Seven, and went on to detail several instances where Selket believers and Alexandrians are victims of freecop abuse or official discrimination from the "CENCOR-UNSAID police oligarchy." I didn't know there was a law on the books that would prevent people with radical xenomods from getting cloned. Look it up.

Following the concert, I looked for a chance to interview her. Unfortunately, she was in a bad mood — the drones hovering over the concert were not, as I had surmised, her camera crew, but instead belonged to ACES security. They were holographing everyone, in what Ms. Century called a "[expletive] crude attempt to intimidate us." Either that or they're planning on bootlegging the video.

— *"The New Alice Century"* by Charlie M., in Newsweek Osiris.

Nov 5, 2136

"Hi, this is Natalie Lorraine with the AlphaWeb morning news. At least 20 people are horribly dead in what is the worst incident of terrorist violence so far. At 1800 hours, a Scorpion Egg hatched inside a crowded monorail car that had docked at the Financial District of Timoshenko. It released a cloud of metamorphic nanites which immediately began transforming the monorail car and its two dozen passengers into a Scorpion xenomech, which then proceeded to wreak havoc in downtown Timoshenko until security forces eradicated it."

"Within moments of the attack, anonymous v-mails were received at AlphaWeb and elsewhere in which the Eye of Re faction claimed responsibility. Eye of Re is a radical splinter of the Selket cult that believes that humanity should abandon Osiris and go back home to Earth. Last year they claimed responsibility for an attack on the Big Dish antennae complex. This is their most violent action to date."

"CENCOR is offering a 12 million dollar reward for information leading to the arrest of these terrorists, or double that for any freelance police who bring them in. If you have any information, please contact Oversight or your local freecops office immediately."

— AlphaWeb: News at Nine

MAY 17, 2137

"Over at 10 o'clock — no, in the canyon — here, I'll zoom in."

"That's not Labyrinth Culture — it's Invader. We'll get a bonus for Invader stuff. Looks like a Scarab, but...."

"Hull seems intact. That's good. I'm taking us round. Watch out for kangaroo mines."

"What do we care? Damn. It's a military relic — class H. We got to bug out now and report it."

"So ... what if we don't?"

"Are you crazy? Regs say we report any military finds to UNSAID, or we lose our salvage license. Anyway, we'll get a bonus for Invader stuff."

"Yeah, a whole \$400,000, split two ways. That'll go a long way. Look — last c-shift, you remember Andrea?"

"The radical Alexandrian babe you were hot for at Bast Station?"

"Yeah. She introduced me to some of her friends, okay? A little more radical than her, if you get my drift. Once they found I was a CAT, they had a proposition. I find something that's on the Class H list, maybe we erase it from the log, then pass them the co-ordinates."

"These friends of Andrea's — they wouldn't be Eye of Re, would they?"

"You don't want to know. Made a good offer, though — a lot better than UNSAID."

"How much better?"

— CAT Bagheera

JUN 22, 2138

"I'm sorry, boss. It was a computer glitch. We meant to hit that Eye of Re safe house at New Hope 23, but somehow we got the wrong bubble."

"You were fired upon, and returned fire."

"After we executed a forced entry, boss. A lot of the farmers are carrying guns now."

"However, they did fire on you."

"Yessir. Hankerson's suit was damaged. But we had already shot their cat-serpent, and ..."

"You found guns, and some Selket brainvids. We'll edit the log."

"Uh, boss, I'm not sure ..."

"Listen, Drake. This is a war. Eye of Re killed those people simply by being in the area."

"Uh, boss, I'm not really sure if Eye of Re were in the area. That intelligence wasn't exactly ..."

"Don't fool yourself, Drake. They were there. Now get me CENCOR Oversight. I'll have to clean up your mess."

— ACES regional headquarters

JUN 23, 2138

This just in. ACES freecops raided a bubblefarm in New Hope, which had been covertly occupied by Eye of Re terrorists, who were holding two innocent hostages. Unfortunately, the terrorists were alerted by a Fog Witch, and brutally executed both hostages before the ACES personnel could secure the farm. Dead are Peter Schutz, 24, and Laura Schutz, 27. All terrorists were killed during the assault, and details will be released when their bodies can be identified.

ACES freecops recovered several heavy weapons, and a cache of Scorpion Eggs that were about to be used in an attack on New Hope's town hall. Due to the danger of premature Scorpion Egg release, ACES is maintaining a cordon around the site, until CENCOR specialists can perform a clean-up.

A funeral for the Schutz family will be held on June 27 at New Hope centre.

— Alpha Web: News at Nine

JAN 7, 2139

"This is Raol Lucas, reporting live from Oasis township, Osiris. Rescue teams assisted by local salvage hunters are trying to free what may be as many as 40 victims, who remain trapped in the half-dissolved rubble of what was once the main CENCOR terraforming laboratory."

"It began late last night at 1900 hours Osiran Standard Time, when a heavy crawler supposedly laden with farm machinery stopped at the security gate of the CENCOR Oasis laboratory complex. As a security guard moved to check the crawler, out leapt five glittering, half-humanoid forms. He barely had time to sound the alarm — but he did."

"CENCOR's security force was the Steel Falcons, a tough outfit, mostly ex-salvage hunters. Their captain was Andre Fochs, 33, a hardened veteran of the French Foreign Legion. He had a dozen servopanzers and para-cyborgs, and was confident he could stop the guerrillas. It was his last mistake. The xenopanzers' massdriver weapons spat fat grenades that burst into clouds of shimmering fog. The Falcons recoiled in horror when they saw their comrades engulfed, for the clouds began eating them alive. In a matter of seconds, they devoured armour, flesh and bone; nothing was left. A few broke and ran. The rest died to the last cyborg."

"After dealing with the security team, the terrorists surrounded the lab complex and ordered the evacuation of the building. This was half-completed when two tilt-rotors from CAT Growltiger, a local salvage team, were spotted heading this way. Acting with total ruthlessness, the terrorists salvaged their weapons directly into the building, then scattered, vanishing into the maze of water tanks and chemical refineries surrounding the complex. As the building began to dissolve, its structural cohesion gave way — a merciful ending compared to what might otherwise have befallen those inside."

"As rescue teams comb through the rubble to extract the dead and injured, everyone is asking one question: where did Eye of Re get their terrible weapons, and where will they strike next?"

AUG 11, 2141

"JEN POLANSKI, we regret to inform you that your brother ERIC POLANSKI is dead. He and six co-workers were killed on Feb 3, 2137 during a nerve-spider attack on the Nekhebet 184 construction site. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by the terrorist faction Eye of Re, an alleged arm of the Selket movement."

"ACES have taken on this terrorist incident, and we promise to provide you with full report of the investigation. We are confident the criminals will be brought to justice."

"As you are designated as ERIC POLANSKI'S heir, your brother's back wages, \$7,200,373, plus an insurance payment of \$12,047,234 has been deposited in your account at BANK OF TRANQUILITY."

"On behalf of CENCOR, we extend you our greatest sympathy at your loss."

(Signed) Sebastian Rein, resident Vice-President, CENCOR

— Form letter generated by CENCOR Legal Department AI

JUL 21, 2144

"Mr. President, Peter Finn, Voice of Reason. The Earth Beanstalk is two years behind schedule, and 12 million Americans still lack proper immortality plans. It's going to cost at least a 110 billion dollars to translate military forces to Alpha Centauri. Why are we sending American fighting robots there?"

"Peter, we may be separated by four light years, but we still have responsibilities to our citizens there. As of 2140, terrorist violence between the CENCOR paramilitaries and Resurrectionist radicals has killed 623 people, of which 143 have been American citizens. \$162,000,000 in property damage has been inflicted, and priceless alien relics have been destroyed. Without intervention, it will only get worse."

"Mr. President, Judy-Lynn Jaio, Seattle Spider. Is it true the Russians are also sending troops, but are refusing to support the NATO-led coalition? How will that affect the proposed operation?"

"One of my sub-personas is meeting with the Russian ambassador as we speak, Judy. Although we differ on who is responsible for the present situation, we both have a shared goal of enforcing the peace in Alpha Centauri, and I am sure that these mutual interests will prevail. Yes Tom?"

"Tom Wembley, Martian Enquirer. Mr. President, you're the first Artificial Intelligence in the White House. Many of the Green Osiris settlers are Human Redemptionists, fleeing the so-called Machine Age that they see as dominating the Earth. Does this colour your views on intervention?"

"Not at all, Tom. Humans programmed me — gosh, I have a human bio-daughter, Tiffany. I'm here for the best interests of all Americans, whether human or digital, on Earth or in the stars."

SEP 25, 2144

—UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 6960—

The Security Council,

ALARMED by ongoing acts of banditry, terrorism, and the unlawful occupation of archaeological sites allegedly encouraged by Selket and perpetuated by Eye of Re,

DISTURBED by alleged human rights violations committed by Centauri Consortium (CENCOR) sponsored paramilitaries known as "freelance police,"

DETERMINING there exists a grave breach of interplanetary peace and security in the Alpha Centauri system,

ACTING under Article 7 of the Charter of the United Nations, and Article III of the Alpha Centauri Charter,

DEMANDS an immediate cease-fire between all parties in the Alpha Centauri system, and end to terrorism, and negotiations to resolve outstanding issues,

INSISTS that CENCOR replace its current Oversight Director, and execute a thorough review of police operations and procedures under UN supervision,

CREATES a United Nations Peace in Alpha Centauri force (**UNPACFOR**) composed of volunteer contingents from member nations under unified command;

EMPOWERS an Interstellar Commission on Peace and Security in Alpha Centauri (ICOPSAC) to investigate a peaceful settlement of the present situation,

ORDERS the CENCOR Directorate, UNSAID, and Selket to provide full and unconditional co-operation with UNPACFOR and ICOPSAC.

AUTHORIZES the UNPACFOR forces to proceed to Alpha Centauri, and use all necessary means to enforce and implement Resolution 6960.

AUG 8, 2150

Osiris Downport is buzzing like a beehive. There are Gurkhas, Russkis, and Indians all camped around the main landing strip, not to mention us Rangers. TAVs are taking off or landing every few minutes — the noise is deafening. A couple of hours ago, General Morgan inspected the port, surrounded by Special Forces bodyguards, but he didn't stick around.

We're on the terraformed part of Osiris, so at least we're not choking on dust like the 10th Mountain are down at Edjo. Still, it's pretty hot, and it feels like today's been going on forever. No joke: Osiris has a 32-standard hour day. I was looking up to see if I can see Alpha Centauri B, but it's hard enough to spot just the main sun. The sky's kind of a pearly glow, like when it's snowing heavily at winter. The ghost fog's everywhere. We can't do anything about it, but it frightens me — they say the terrorists have specialists, Fog Witches, who can interface with the stuff. I talked with a couple of Russian Spetnaz info-war pukers, who think maybe they can jam it. I hope so. I hear there was talk of just EMPing the whole hemisphere, but I guess we can't do that.

As usual, priorities are screwed up. This isn't a hot LZ, so all morning, we sat on the tarmac waiting for our heavy weapons to be shuttled down. We watched as latrines and bubble shelters for the REMF's were landed and unpacked first. I got my platoon dug in by the strip, but we've only got small arms — what if Eye of Re hits us with xenopanzers? I traded my spare comlink with this Gurkha captain who came by, and he gave us two Snapdragon launchers, so that's something. We're promised air supremacy and there's supposed to be a Bright Star airborne laser orbiting overhead, but I can't figure how they'll target through

those clouds. If the terrorists catch us with our pants down, I want close air support, but the only tilt-rotor I've seen since we got here was from AlphaWeb news.

There's a steady stream of refugees arriving by crawler and hovercraft, from the Nekhebet bubble farms that Eye of Re have been hitting. They're cueing up for the sub-orbital relief flights to the safe haven we've set up around Timoshenko City. Some of the refugees have obvious xenomods, like cat-like eyes adapted to the darker conditions, and I hear a few can eat the wildlife on the stations. Seems sensible to me. A couple of the civilian security guards — ACES freecops — were giving the xenos a whole bunch of abuse, not letting them on the same flight as the others, and body-searching them at random.

I guess some of the xenos do support the terrorists, but I had the men put a stop to it.

— Lt. Ken Barton, 3rd platoon, Able Company, 4/75th Rangers, personal diary

OCT 25, 2150

General Morgan did not need to watch the video imagery again. He saw it again every night as he slept. 13 UNPACFOR soldiers dead in the mountain ambush, along with the civilian aid convoy they were supposed to protect. The guerrillas had got away. The carbon dust storms played havoc with sensors, and now Intelligence told them that some of the salvage teams they'd been relying on as guides might be Eye of Re.

It was time to take the offensive, show them what UNPACFOR could do. Maybe a show of force would convince the moderates in Selket to talk some sense into the guerrillas. The Russians had identified a suitable target, Nekhebet 71. It was a star tomb, which they believed concealed a small Eye of Re base, possibly an arms factory. The General hoped that a show of force there would convince the guerrillas of the price of further attacks, as well as providing prisoners and intelligence on the rebel group. What were they really planning? The enemy's cell structure was conventional, but hard to break — and no members of their "evolutionary council" had been taken alive.

The target occupied a hilly region just west of the Djed Mountains. The tomb was a 17-metre high flat-topped pyramid resting on a 280-metre wide base; like all Osiran pyramids, it was made of Osiran smart matter, a self-repairing composite that resisted the ravages of time. The ghost fog made visual reconnaissance difficult, but sideways-looking radar from a Delta Hawk fly-by provided a clear picture of activity near the site.

It looked like a typical freelance CAT base: there were two parked Dustcats with Mobile Lab trailers and occasional foot activity in and around the star tomb pyramid itself. Intelligence estimated the base held perhaps 20 personnel, and possibly, one or two of the Cobra or Scorpion machines that had ambushed the convoy.

They were wrong....

— "*UNPACFOR At War*" by Jacob Sparks (Martian Free Press, 2176)

OCT 28-NOV 2, 2150

The mission was assigned to Captain Eric Taylor, Charlie company, 4/75 US Army Rangers. He had three platoons of six soldiers, each of them in M-82 Merrill servopanzers, a stealth model with thermoptic camouflage. Fire support was provided by a detachment of British Army battle robots: Baker Troop, 1st Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars. Commanded by Warrant Officer Asrai Baker 121 (who went by its call sign, "Mary Shelly"), the Hussar troop consisted of three MARA robot tanks and four ASRAI scout/recon spiders, plus the usual horde of MAV and UGV mini-drones.

Taylor rejected the idea of a direct aerial assault. The guerrillas had railgun snipers and missile traps, and as soon as his aircraft crossed the horizon, they'd take hits. If they smeared the site from orbit, they'd have no chance at taking prisoners. That left a land assault, and going in fast and sneaky. He planned to infiltrate his forces close to the base, then take it with a sudden, furious assault. The nearest bubble farm was 260 km away, but there were five other star tombs within 100 km of the tomb, two of which hosted digs. Intelligence spread a deep cover story that a freelance salvage team had made a find at Nekhebet 102,

an unexplored tomb site 60 km north of Nekhebet 71. There, an advance Special Forces deception team set up a fake archaeological site and the Rangers and Hussars were ferried by UV-88s. Two days later, Taylor and Shelly were good to go — and then UNSHAC pulled the plug.

The deception operation had worked too well. Satellites showed a real salvage hunter team closing in on Nekhebet 71: CAT Cheshire, pirates planning on muscling in on the “big find,” were on their way, and their appearance could mess up the whole operation. A RF-70 Delta Hawk was hastily scrambled. The stealth fighter shadowed the pirate salvage hunters’ tilt rotor and an invisible microwave beam fried its engine electronics. It crash-landed 170 km east of Nekhebet 71, the salvage hunters cursing the bad luck that an “engine malfunction” had prevented them from making their smash-and-grab.

The attack was underway. A few hours before dawn, the Rangers and Hussars advanced on Nekhebet 71, using thermoptic camouflage to get within four kilometres of the star tomb without being detected by the gueillas. The three MARAs took up positions covering the star tomb. One Ranger platoon remained in reserve, forming a skirmish line around the other side of the star tomb complex, in case the enemy tried to break out there. The other two Rangers platoons together with the ASRAI armoured scouts began bounding forward, one platoon at a time.

Taylor and Shelly had hoped that their advanced thermoptical camouflage plus the alien ghost fog would allow them to reach the tomb entrance before they drew fire. However, the star tomb’s occupants had their own ace in the hole: present in the base was Fog Witch Natasha Timoshenkova, who knew exactly how to bend the ghost fog to her will. Every night she stayed up, weaving the fog into a sensor web whose touch would warn her of intruders. As the Rangers and their ASRAI scouts entered the fog around the tomb, it whispered to Timoshenkova that she had uninvited guests. Now it was time to greet them.

The troops had the star tomb’s main door covered, but they forgot the entire complex was made of smart matter. As the Rangers advanced across the base of the Pyramid, holes opened in the ground under their feet, and out swarmed three large Scorpions and a dozen smaller Cobras. Seconds later, the Scorpion’s lethal lasers had burned down three Rangers, whose return fire barely dented the tank-sized Osiran robots’ diamondoid armour. However, Timoshenkova had not reckoned on the MARAs. Hidden beyond the ghost fog, they locked onto the Scorpions and fired, their long-barrelled railguns accelerating hypervelocity slugs that blasted all three alien war machines into wreckage. However, the fight was not over. The smaller dog-sized Cobras had got in among the Rangers, spitting gobs of disassembler venom. An ASRAI dissolved into goo, and a Ranger was forced to eject as her suit was eaten alive. Then the remaining Cobras fell, blown apart by close range railgun fire from the Rangers.

Nekhebet 71 now lay open. The Rangers eschewed the door, and used tank fire and demo charges to blast their way through the walls. The interior corridors were too small for the MARAs, but the ASRAI scout robots were the first through the breach, followed by the second and third Ranger platoons, as the half dozen remaining troopers moved in to clear the complex room by room. The defenders were tenacious, but they were only human: a dozen fighters in Ocelot servoshells, plus several unarmed technicians. These irregulars should have been no match for the cutting-edge UNPAC force, but Eye of Re still had a joker in their deck. The interior of Nekhebet 71 was densely packed with ghost fog, and under the mental control of Timoshenkova, it could do much more than just pinpoint the enemy. Interior walls constantly shifted and reformed, allowing the Selket fighters to make repeated ambushes. By the time the Rangers fought their way into the inner catacombs, half their force was dead or wounded, including three of the four ASRAIs. Captain Taylor was on the verge of ordering a withdrawal and calling for reinforcements, when ASRAI Baker 121 “Mary Shelly” blasted its way through a wall and into a bubble garden, and found a teenage girl crouching in the bushes, dream jewel implant in her skull. As she tried to meld through the smart matter floor and escape, ASRAI 121 fired a single burst of pulsed microwaves. It was over.

With their witch down, the defenders lost heart. They were barricaded in a medical lab. They said they had children, and would surrender if the UN commander gave his word they would not be harmed. Captain Taylor agreed, and he and his men entered the inner chamber. They were shocked at what they found. They had expected to discover arms caches and barracks. Instead, they found several incubators, and cribs holding a dozen babies. They were not human children. They were Osirans.

TIMELINE

- 2011:** Discovery of Osiris (Alpha Centauri A IV).
- 2014:** Mars Floater Aerobot mission launched.
- 2016:** Mars Floater discovers the Mars Object.
- 2018:** First mind-interface technology developed.
- 2020:** First humans walk on Mars.
- 2023:** Discovery of potentially habitable planet around star 61 Virginis.
- 2025:** Siberian insurrection.
- 2027:** Mars ship partially uncovered.
- 2028:** Large "Project Olympus" expedition, including troops, arrive on Mars.
- 2029:** Mars ship fully excavated. Russian troops mutiny and are defeated.
- 2031:** Project Olympus interim report released.
- 2032:** Project Sea Lion develops pioneering brain pod technology.
- 2035:** European and Japanese Space Agency endorses Star Driver project.
- 2036:** NASA endorses Star Driver project.
- 2038:** Star Driver asteroid-based particle beams begin construction.
- 2041:** Final crew selection for Emissary starship is complete.
- 2042:** First asteroids for Star Driver are moved to LaGrange points.
- 2045:** 10 Star Drivers are operational.
- 2046:** Starblazer precursor mission launched to Oort cloud.
- 2047:** Emissary mission is launched.
- 2050:** O'Neil Station fully operational at LaGrange 4.
- 2055:** Launch of unmanned Odyssey star probe to 61 Virginis, 28 light years away.
- 2060:** Emissary reaches Alpha Centauri system, landing on asteroid ACA 2060-JY.
- 2061:** Emissary robots begin construction of space station.
- 2062:** Space station is operational and crew brain pods are embodied. The explorers land robots on Osiris and visit the Bast star tombs, encountering animals and xenomechs.
- 2064:** Emissary crew establish Osiris Downport on Osiris.
- 2066:** Reports of Emissary's discoveries reach Earth.
- 2070:** Alpha Centauri Treaty (ACT) is signed.
- 2071:** The Centauri Consortium (CENCOR) is formed.
- 2074:** Mars terraforming project begins using lessons learned from Osiran nanomachines.
- 2077:** Phase II of Star Driver completed, with 102 stations operational.
- 2080:** First habitat, Snowball, is established in the Oort cloud.
- 2083:** First of many follow-up expeditions arrives in Alpha Centauri.
- 2084:** CENCOR establishes laboratory complex in Alpha Centauri.
- 2085:** Star probe Odyssey reaches 61 Virginis.
- 2088:** CENCOR lab discovers "mind echoes" in Osiran "dream jewels."
- 2090:** Reports from Odyssey reach Earth, revealing a barely habitable planet whose apparent atmospheric water vapour and oxygen was the result of a recent comet impact.
- 2092:** First sapient AI developed, based on Osiran computer technology.
- 2095:** "Resurrectionist" vs. "Green Osiris" debates on the future of Alpha Centauri.
- 2098:** Formation of the Selket movement.
- 2100:** Population of Alpha Centauri exceeds 1,000.
- 2101:** Phase III Star Drivers operational.
- 2102:** UN General Assembly approves plans for full scale settlement of Osiris.
- 2103:** AIs are granted citizenship in the European Union.
- 2107:** Population of Alpha Centauri reaches 3,000.
- 2109:** UNSAID licenses first "Chartered Archaeological Team."
- 2110:** Nekhebet terraforming begins.
- 2112:** Alpha Centauri Population reaches 10,000.
- 2115:** AIs granted citizenship in the United States.
- 2117:** UNSAID relaxes licensing restrictions on freelance salvage teams.
- 2120:** Population of Alpha Centauri reaches 30,000.
- 2125:** Selket begins occupying star tombs. CENCOR plans a crackdown on Selket.
- 2126:** Freecops begin raids on Selket-organized squatter camps in star tombs.
- 2131:** Population of Alpha Centauri exceeds 100,000.
- 2132:** Freelance police raid a Selket experience temple at Nekhebet 109.
- 2135:** Freedom '35 concert raises money for CDO and Selket.
- 2136:** Eye of Re scorpion egg attack at Timoshenko City.
- 2137:** Eye of Re nerve spider attack on Nekhebet 184.
- 2138:** Freecops intensify sweeps of bubblefarms believed to house suspected terrorists.
- 2139:** Eye of Re xenopanzers attack terraforming lab at Oasis.
- 2144:** UN Security Council Resolution 6960 passes.
- 2144:** UNPACFOR expedition launched to Alpha Centauri.
- 2148:** Eye of Re begin all-out offensive in the Nekhebet.
- 2150:** UNPACFOR starships arrive. Evacuation of civilian non-combatants from exposed bubblefarms in the Nekhebet to safe haven in Timoshenko. Eye of Re ambushes UN convoy in the Mouth of Djed pass. UNPACFOR raids Nekhebet 71.

CHAPTER TWO: CHARACTERS & ORGANIZATIONS



CHARACTER POINTS

Characters are created for *Centauri Knights* using the normal rules from *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* (page 13). Player characters have 30 to 40 Character Points, but can assign no more than 21 points to Stats. Characters also start with 20 Skill Points. At the GM's option, much higher character point characters can be played — if the GM would like PCs to play ASRAI or MARA battle robots or powerful special ops cyborg warriors, build PCs on 75 points.)

Players may create characters from scratch, or alternatively, select one of the occupational templates (page 37) and then customize it as desired.

CHARACTER OUTLINE

The type of characters created will depend on the adventures that the GM intends to run using this setting. Are the characters going to be UNPACFOR soldiers, freelance police, Selket guerrillas, or Eye of Re terrorists? Alternatively, they might be salvage hunters, reporters or other civilians caught in the middle. All characters in the group should be on the same side. If they come from different backgrounds, they may be friends or allies who are brought together by a shared goal. Examples of suitable teams are provided below.

CHARTERED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEAM

CATs are "salvage hunter" teams who make their living by exploring the alien ruins and discovering Osiran relics found within them. This is very dangerous work, since a ruin is often home to leftover xenomech robots from the Osiran Apocalypse ... not to mention human outlaws, such as guerrillas or ghost jackals. CATs are chartered by UNSAID. They are expected to follow UNSAID regulations, which includes having a trained archaeologist aboard, adhering to regulations concerning the disposal of relics, and treating the ruins and any alien bodies found with respect. Major relics found by CATs are usually bought by CENCOR or science institutes, but minor relics can often be sold at Alexandrian markets (or illegally, to black marketeers).

CATs are armed and ready for trouble. A typical CAT will have a UV-88 tilt rotor aircraft (page 57) or Dust Cat crawler (page 52) for transport, along with a number of Ocelot (page 54) or Panther (page 55) servopanzers. The team typically consists of a pilot, a mission controller, a mecha-technician, and two to four servopanzers. At least one will be a trained xenoarchaeologist, and another will be a paramedic. Some CATs include a Fog Witch as well.

FREECOPS

The Alpha Centauri Charter did not permit CENCOR or UNEXT to field military forces. As an expedient, it began recruiting salvage hunters to act as hired security guards or bounty hunters. Gradually these evolved into what are now called "Freelance Police" companies. Freelance police are accused of ignoring civil rights as CENCOR and UNSAID's hired guns, but this has obscured the regular patrol and security work that Freelance Police do. Neighbourhoods and bubblefarm townships hire them to perform patrols. UNSAID hires them to track down relic smugglers and "ghost jackal" tomb robbers. People hire them to find missing persons, solve murders, and act as negotiators in domestic disputes. They are cops, detectives, and SWAT teams all in one. The only difference is that they charge for their services.

Freecops must be licensed by UNSAID, and may have either a Provisional License or a Solo License. A Police License requires an extensive background check (by UNSAID inspectors) and a test that covers both colony law and police procedures; this costs \$100,000, and only about half of those applying pass. This grants a conditional license, allowing the freecop to operate when directly supervised by a fully licensed freecop. An unconditional license is granted after two or more years if the supervisor approves and the probationary freecop has an unblemished record.

A freelance police team will include freecop enforcers and info-warriors.

GHOST JACKALS

The characters are tomb robbers who loot the star tombs and sell what they find on the black market. Dream jewels containing mind echoes are especially valuable. Ghost jackal teams are similar to CATs, but are likely to have more extra-legal contacts and skills. Some CATs “cross the line” and act as tomb robbers on occasion.

GUERRILLA CELL

The characters are dedicated members of Selket or Eye of Re, fighting the freecoops and UNPACFOR for biological freedom and the right of the Osirans to have their own planet. Eye of Re members are blatant terrorists, while Selket members attempt to win popular support by fighting against ghost jackals (and Eye of Re) and punishing those freecoops or corporate executives that exceed their authority. Guerrillas can come from any non-military background; a guerrilla cell might include an ex-salvage hunter, an archaeologist, a xenobiologist, and a rogue freecop. Guerrillas may have a safe house in a settled area, or a hidden base located in the wilderness.

NGO TEAM

Alpha Centauri has attracted the attention of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These range from ecological groups worried about the Osiran environment, to aid agencies such as the Hermes Society (page 102), to groups like Amnesty Interplanetary (page 102). An NGO team may gather information, publicize injustices, and help people by providing medical assistance, distributing aid, etc. It may also be accompanied by hired or volunteer local guides, space crew, bodyguards, and reporters. A small group of UNPACFOR soldiers is occasionally assigned to an NGO team to protect it as it does its job.

UNPACFOR PLATOON

The characters are an air or space-mobile platoon of servopanzer troops or special ops commandos. They perform various military tasks such as patrols, raids, convoy escorts, and humanitarian relief missions, and mix with the population while on R&R. Soldiers may all come from one unit, but there may be attached personnel, which allows diverse character types. For example, a US Army Ranger platoon could include five servosoldiers (one an officer), a GROM or Special Forces commando to liaison with locals or foreign troops, a tilt rotor pilot (25 Squadron, Indian Air Force) for tactical air transport, and a tag-along reporter.



STATS

All Stats are equally useful in this setting. Characters in active military duty should not have any Stat lower than 4. Members of special operations units usually have Body, Mind and Soul Stats at 5 or higher.

NORMAL ATTRIBUTES

All Normal Attributes are available to characters. GMs desiring a realistic campaign may restrict characters to two Levels each of Damn Healthy!, Massive Damage, and Mechanical Genius.

ORGANIZATIONAL TIES (BESM, PAGE 36)

Levels above 4 are disallowed, except for CENCOR, which can have up to Level 6. Police companies and UNPACFOR members may not require the Organization Ties Attribute unless the character wields significant power.

Here are suggested point costs for the organizations in this setting:

1 POINT/LEVEL

ACBC, AlphaWeb, Amnesty Interplanetary, Centauri Democratic Organization, Green Osiris, Hermes, Hermes Foundation, ICOPASAC, Ozymandius Institute, Timoshenko Academy, special occupations

2 POINTS/LEVEL

CENCOR, Eye of Re, Selket, UNSAID

PERSONAL GEAR (BESM, PAGE 37)

All characters should have at least one Level of Personal Gear. See Chapter 3 for an appropriate shopping list as well as mundane items that do not count as Personal Gear.

SPECIAL ATTRIBUTES

Centauri Knights is a setting where paranormal powers do not exist, and the majority of individuals are human. Characters may possess strange abilities, but they are the result of technology. PCs should not take Special Attributes other than those described below.

ITEM OF POWER (BESM, PAGE 108)

An Item of Power may be an advanced portable technological device (like a nanodoc) or an exotic Osiran relic. The GM must approve all items.

MAGIC (BESM, PAGE 111)

A colonist (not an UNPACFOR soldier) character may take the Magic Attribute, indicating that he or she is a Fog Witch who has a live dream jewel implant (page 67) and understands how to think in the Osiran language to command ghost fog (page 68). The character must take the Special Defect Magical Restrictions (requires ghost fog, 2 BP). A Fog Witch is limited to the Attributes shown below as Magic Powers, and all must have the magic options Focus (the dream jewel), Silent, and Still.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL (PARTIAL OR FULL DARKNESS)

The ability to concentrate ghost fog. It is limited to Levels 1-3.

FORCE FIELD (WALL)

The ability to conjure solid walls by binding utility fog together. The ability is limited to Level 1 due to the limited structural strength of ghost fog. The Fog Witch may not take any Force Field Abilities or Disabilities.

ILLUSION

This is the ability to sculpt images out of ghost fog, or to make the foglets vibrate to produce sound. Utility fog illusions may fool sight, sound, and/or touch, but not taste or smell. It is thus limited to Levels 1-4.

MELO

The ability to order solid fog to part when the character touches it. It costs 2 points/Level and only functions on Osiran "smart matter" structures. Using this ability, a Fog Witch can walk through Osiran smart matter or solid fog walls, sink through floors, etc.

MIND CONTROL (OSIRAN XENOMECHS)

This is the ability to control Osiran robots that possess A.I. It costs 2 points/Level.

MIND SHIELD

This is the technological ability to block unwanted contact through Fog Witch Telepathy (see below). It has no effect on actual "psychic" powers.

PERSONAL GEAR

This is the ability to shape ghost fog into specific objects. When the power is designed, specify the objects he or she can create: this represents the codes the character knows. It can only be taken at Level 1 or 2. If desired, the character may substitute four mundane items for one minor item.

SHIELD

This represents the ability to suddenly solidify ghost fog to block attacks. It can only be taken at Level 1.

SENSORS (INDIRECT)

This is the ability to use ghost fog as a sensory spider web, perceiving when objects disturb it by motion.

SIXTH SENSE (DETECT MAGIC)

This allows the Fog Witch to detect the concentration of ghost fog and determine when someone else is manipulating it.

TELEKINESIS

This is the ability to use the ghost fog's manipulators to lift and move other objects. A visible cloud of fog will surround the object when it is moving. Since the fog is not very strong, Telekinesis can only be taken at Level 1. Specialized telekinesis (ice, water, etc.) is not available.

TELEPATHY (OSIRAN MECHA AND FOG WITCHES)

This represents the ability of a dream jewel to interface with Osiran mecha and other dream jewel wearers. It costs 2 points/Level and is restricted to Osiran mecha and characters with live dream jewel implants. Since the communication is electromagnetic, it is limited to direct line-of-sight, and ranges not exceeding one kilometre, and can be affected by ECM as well as a Mind Shield. At Level 6 and higher, a character who "alters memories" within a xenomech can reprogram it to obey his or her commands, or assign it to another person. This is how Selket and Eye of Re obtain xenomechs.

OWN A BIG MECHA (BESM, PAGE 123)

In *Centauri Knights*, mecha are factory-produced or salvaged items. It is suggested that they be based on the machines described in Chapter 3, or represent similar designs created by the GM. All Mecha may be limited in availability, as described in Chapter 3. PCs should only have mecha that fit their character outline as approved by the GM.

SERVANT (BESM, PAGE 134)

This could represent a pet animal or robot servant such as a Tinkerbell. Larger combat robots are best taken through the Own a Big Mecha (see above) Attribute.

NORMAL DEFECTS

Any Normal Defects are possible for characters. Physical disabilities, scars, or Physically Unappealing are very rare since nanosurgery is available in 2150.

AGEISM

People live longer in 2150. A character is still considered a young teenager at 15-19 years and subject to 1 BP ageism; 2 BP ageism is 14 years or less.

MARHEO

A dream jewel implant (page 67), live or dead, is 1 BP. A cyborg body (page 66) or xenomods (page 36) may also qualify.

OWNED BY A MEGACORP

Taken at 1 BP, this is appropriate to anyone working for CENCOR. Military life in a warzone for UNPACFOR soldiers is equivalent to this at 2 BP.

RECURRING NIGHTMARES

A character with a live dream jewel implant may have this at 1-2 BP. For more information, see dream jewels (page 67) and xenodreams (page 47).

RED TAPE

CENCOR execs and most military outfits may have this at 1 BP.

SKELETON IN THE CLOSET

This is most appropriate for a Selket or Eye of Re member who is secretly a freelance police informer, or any colonist or soldier who is actually working for Eye of Re.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENT

Some people are addicted to various brainvids, such as xenodreams. This can represent addiction.

WANTED

Any known guerrilla or ghost jackal should take this at 2 BP. Freecops, CENCOR executives, UNSAID officials, and UNPACFOR soldiers can take this at 1 BP (2 BP if senior) to represent that they are targets for Eye of Re assassins.

SPECIAL DEFECTS

Special Defects are only appropriate for cyborgs and Fog Witches. A Fog Witch should have the Magical Restriction (requires ghost fog) Defect at 2 BP.

SPECIES TEMPLATES

There are three main types of "post-human" characters in Alpha Centauri: cyborgs, artificial intelligences, and humans with xenomodifications.

CYBORG CHARACTERS

Half of UNPACFOR's soldiers and one in six Alpha Centauri natives are cyborgs.

The CENCOR Genesis (6 character points, page 66) is a typical body worn by civilians and soldiers alike, while the BMK-7 (20 character points, page 66) is an example of an exotic military models.

GMs may allow characters to create cyborgs that have undergone custom modifications. The following Special Attributes are suitable for cyborgs: **ECM Levels 1-3**, **Features or Accessories Levels 1-3** (built-in radio, built-in computer, night vision, hidden pouches, etc.), **Heavy Armour Levels 1-3** or **Light Armour Levels 1-6** (may be concealed or obvious), **Heightened Senses Levels 1-6** (any), **Jumping Levels 1**, **Life Support Levels 1-2**, **Natural Weapons Levels 1-6**, **Sensors Levels 1-2** (may be underwater, indirect or analytic if desired), **Shape Change Levels 1-2**, **Special Defense Levels 1-2** (ageing, toxins), **Weapon Attack Levels 1-3** (handheld).

A character with a cyborg body may have the following Defects: **Awkward Size** (1 BP), **Hangar Queen** (1-2 BP), **One-Way Transformation** (1-2 BP), or **Volatile** (1 BP). See Cyborgs, page 66.

THINKING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES

In a high point campaign, players may take autonomous battle robots such as the ASRAI (60 Character Points, page 64) and MARA (75 Character Points, page 65) as PCs. A.I.s that do not have Soul Stats have Attack Combat Values equal to their (Body + Mind) ÷ 2.

XENOMODS

These are nanosurgery buds, transplants, and cell grafts that are intended to adapt people to Osiran environments or adopted as part of Alexandrian (page 81) philosophy. Xenomods are common on Bast Station but less so on Osiris. Types of xenomod include:

XENOEYES

The eyes are altered to see in spectrums that match those of the Osirans, seeing farther into the red and infrared than human eyes can. This enables easy identification of patterns on Osiran animal life, control consoles, etc. The eyes resemble those of a cat. This is Feature Level 1 (infrared vision; 1 point).

XENOFUZZ

This symbiotic fungus causes blue or red fuzz to grow on the character's body. This provides protection from Osiran nerve spiders, fire-fleas, and other nasty predators. This is Feature Level 1 (xenofuzz, 1 point).



XENO GUTS

The stomach and intestinal flora are modified to enable the subject to subsist on Osiran proteins instead of Terrestrial proteins. This costs no character points, since the character can no longer digest human proteins.

XENO NOSE

This mod enhances the subject's sense of smell. The actual modifications are internal and affect the brain as much as the nose. There are serious side effects, notably a loss of visual acuity. This gives Heightened Sense Level 1 (smell) but adds Easily Distracted (strong smells, 1 BP) and Sensory Impairment (vision, 1 BP).

XENO TAIL

This prehensile tail with a stinger adds an extra limb while working in zero gravity, and the ability to easily use Osiran suits which have powered tail sockets. It requires brain tissue grafts as well. This is Extra Arm Level 1 (1 point) and Natural Weapons Level 1 (Tail Striker, 1 point).

XENO TONGUE

This replaces a human tongue with a cluster of sensory tendrils, and alters the brain to deal with the new sensory impressions. This is Heightened Sense Level 1 (taste).

Anyone with XenoEyes or XenoTongue qualifies as Marked (1 BP) if the character has no other Marked Defects, while XenoFuzz or XenoTail give the character the Marked Defect (2 BP).

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATES

These templates are intended to help the GM and players design suitable PCs and NPCs. They are intended as an aid rather than a straitjacket — feel free to modify them. In particular, many represent "average" Levels of Attributes or Defects; the PCs may be much better.

ACTIVIST

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 4 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Art of Distraction – 3 (3 points), **Organizational Ties** – 2 (Amnesty Interplanetary, Centauri Democratic Organization, Green Osiris, or Human League, 2 points), **Personal Gear** – 1 (1 point)

DEFECTS

Easily Distracted (the cause, 1 BP), **Wanted** (marked for assassination/harassment, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Performing Arts – 2 (public speaking, dance or singing, 4 points), **Social Sciences** – 2 (politics, 4 points), **Urban Tracking** – 1 (academic or residential, 2 points), **Writing** – 1 (academic, journalistic, music, or propaganda, 2 points), **8 unused Skill Points**

This activist for a group such as the Centauri Democratic Organization, Amnesty Interplanetary, or Green Osiris has a "day job" as a xenobeat artist, brainvid star, academic, etc. He or she makes propaganda brainvids, speaks or performs at rallies and demonstrations, and organizes meetings and protests. Unlike the guerrillas, the character operates legally ... but many activists are eventually driven underground. The most famous activist in Alpha Centauri is xenobeat artist Alice Century.

AEROSPACE PILOT

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 12 CHARACTER POINTS (KESTREL) OR 14 CHARACTER POINTS (DELTA HAWK)

FREEPOLICE ATTRIBUTES

Heightened Awareness – 1 (1 point), **Highly Skilled** – 1 (1 point) **Own a Big Mecha** – 3 (SV-7 Kestrel, Less Powerful x 3, 9 points), **Personal Gear** – 2 (2 points)

UNPACFOR ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery – 1 (2 points), **Heightened Awareness** – 1 (1 point), **Highly Skilled** – 1 (1 point) **Own a Big Mecha** – 3 (Delta Hawk, 12 points), **Personal Gear** – 2 (2 points)

NORMAL DEFECTS

Wanted (targeted by terrorists, 1 BP). For UNPACFOR pilots, add **Conditional Ownership** (2 BP) and **Owned by a Megacorp** (UNPACFOR, 1 BP).

SKILLS

Heavy Weapons – 1 (gunnery or launcher, 5 points), **Navigation** – 1 (air, 3 points), **Piloting** – 2 (jet fighter, tilt rotor, or spacecraft, 8 points), **Ranged Defense** – 1 (air, 5 points), **Wilderness Survival** – 2 (desert or xenoforest, 4 points), **5 unused Skill Points**

The elite of the JASDF and USAF fly the RF-70 Delta Hawk, but the real action is down in the mud, where freecops and UNPACFOR squadrons like the Himalayan Eagles, 8th Special Operations Squadron, and 3rd EOS fly SV-7 assault tilt rotors.

BUSH DOCTOR, FACE DOC, XENOSURGEON

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 10 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Item of Power – 1 (nanodoc, 2 points), **Organizational Ties** – 1 (hospital, 1 point), **Own a Big Mecha** – 2 (Aurora, less powerful x 3, 5 points), **Personal Gear** – 3 (3 points)

DEFECTS

Red Tape (1 BP) or **Skeleton in Closet** (1 BP) if "guerilla surgeon"

SKILLS

Biological Sciences – 1 (genetic engineering, 4 points), **Electronics** – 1 (cybernetics, 4 points), **Medical** – 3 (surgery, 9 points), **Visual Arts** – 1 (body art, 1 point), **2 unused Skill Points**

Twenty-second century medicine can perform wonders, to the extent that nanomachines and robots perform most ordinary healing and doctors are more artists or mechanics than healers. "Bush doctors" shuttle between the isolated colonial settlements, making house calls. The "face doc" performs cosmetic surgery, altering the cloned and cyborg bodies of recent immigrants to individual tastes, or creating customs designs for the wealthy or their employees. Many doctors also perform xenosurgical or cybernetic operations, some of which (like dream jewel implants) are illegal. Licensed doctors work for Centauri General Hospital or UNPACFOR, but there are many amateurs and guerilla surgeons willing to attempt black market xenosurgery for Alexandrian devotees, or perform quick body changes for guerillas needing a new identity.

COLONIST

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 1 CHARACTER POINT

ATTRIBUTES

Personal Gear - 1 (1 point)

DEFECTS

None

SKILLS

Varies. If Bubble Farmer, add: **Biological Sciences** - 1 (agronomy, 4 points) and **Wilderness Survival** - 1 (any, 2 points). If Construction Worker, add: **Architecture** - 1 (any, 2 points) and **Driving** - 1 (tracked or servo, 4 points). If a Technician, add **Computers** - 1 (any, 4 points), **Electronics** - 1 (any three specialties, 6 points), or **Mechanics** - 1 (any three specialties, 6 points)

These are the ordinary people of Alpha Centauri. Bubble Farmers operate experimental farms and breed genetically-engineered animals and crops. Construction workers build settlements, dams, pipelines and airstrips, and renovate Osiran ruins. Technicians maintain nanofabricators and factories and keep equipment in running order. An ordinary colonist isn't much fun as a character, but can be spiced up by adding the Guerilla option, or using it as a guide for a colonist turned xenopunk or Fog Witch.

EXECUTIVE

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 10 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Aura of Command - 1 (1 point), **Flunkies** - 1 (aide, 1 point), **Own a Big Mecha** - 2 (Aurora, less powerful x 3, 5 points), **Organizational Ties** - 2 (CENCOR, 4 points), **Personal Gear** - 2 (2 points)

DEFECTS

Owned by a Megacorp (1 BP), **Red Tape** (1 BP), **Wanted** (Eye of Re, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Business Management - 2 (any two specialties, 5 points), **Computers** - 1 (databases, 4 points), **Intimidation** - 1 (business, 3 points), **Law** - 4 (corporate, 4 points), **Sports** - 1 (tennis, 1 point), **Urban Tracking** - 1 (corporate, 2 points), **1 unused Skill Point**

This is a competent, hard-nosed mid-rank executive at CENCOR or another corporation, such as a department head, legal affairs liaison, or roving troubleshooter.

FIELD SCIENTIST: ARCHAEOLOGIST, OR XENOBIOLOGIST

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 9 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Own a Big Mecha - 1 (Dust Cat and Mobile Trailer, 4 points), **Organizational Ties** - 1 (CENCOR, 2 points) or **Organizational Ties** - 2 (Timoshenko Academy, 2 points), **Personal Gear** - 2 (2 points)

DEFECTS

Easily Distracted (scientific interest, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Driving - 1 (tracked, 4 points), **Gun Combat** - 1 (pistol or rifle, 5 points), **Wilderness Survival** - 1 (any, 2 points). Take one of the following: **Biological Sciences** - 1 (any Osiran field, 4 points) and **Wilderness Tracking** - 1 (xenoforest, 2 points) or **Cultural Arts** - 2 (xenoarchaeology, 4 points) and **Linguistics** - 1 (Osiran, 2 points), **3 unused Skill Points**

Xenoarchaeologists study Osiran remnants, while xenobiologists study the ecosystems on Bast and other Garden habitats. They may be affiliated with CENCOR, the Timoshenko Academy, or even a terrestrial university. Many field scientists working in space spend a long time in alien environments and have thus accepted xenomods.

FOG WITCH

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 6 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Energy Bonus – 2 (2 points), **Magic** – 2 (8 points), **Personal Gear** – 1 (1 point)

MAGIC POWERS

Environmental Control – 1 (partial darkness, 1 PP), **Force Field** – 1 (wall, 2 PP), **Meld** – 1 (solid fog only, 2 PP), **Mind Control** – 2 (4 PP), **Sensors** – 1 (indirect, 1 PP), **Telepathy** – 5 (Fog Witches and xenomechs, 10 PP). All have Focus (utility fog), Silent, and Still options, costing two Energy Points for every Power Point.

DEFECTS

Magical Restrictions (requires ghost fog, 2 BP), **Marked** (live dream jewel implant, 1 BP), **Skeleton in the Closet** (Fog Witch, 2 BP)

SKILLS

Linguistics – 1 (Osiran, 2 points), **18 unused Skill Points**; selecting Skills from the xenopunk or activist templates is appropriate

The brainvids say a Fog Witch can conjure objects out of thin air, control the weather, and even walk through walls. What they say is true, but it's not magic. A Fog Witch has had a live dream jewel implant. Through extensive study of xenodreams, he or she has learned Osiran language and figured out how to master ghost fog. Many are Selket or Eye of Re.

This template is for a skilled Fog Witch with a typical range of abilities — normally a teenager or young adult who has joined a Selket experience temple (page 100). Fog witches often become CATS, ghost jackals, or guerrillas. Fog witches often have xenomods (page 36).

FREECOP ENFORCER

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 7 CHARACTER POINTS WITH AURORA, 11 WITH PANTHER

ATTRIBUTES

Heightened Awareness – 1 (1 point), **Highly Skilled** – 2 (2 points), **Own a Big Mecha** – 2 (Panther, 8 points) or **Own a Big Mecha** – 1 (Aurora, 4 points), **Personal Gear** – 2 (2 points)

DEFECTS

Conditional Ownership (1 BP), **Wanted** (targeted by terrorists, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Computers – 1 (databases, 4 points), **Driving** – 1 (servo, 4 points) or **Piloting** – 1 (air car or tilt rotor, 4 points), **Gun Combat** – 1 (pistol, 5 points) or **Heavy Weapons** – 1 (gunnery, 5 points), **Intimidation** – 1 (street, 3 points) or **Interrogation** – 1 (any, 3 points), **Medical** – 1 (emergency response, 3 points), **Police Sciences** – 1 (any, 3 points), **Ranged Defense** – 1 (air, ground or personal, 5 points), **Unarmed Attack** – 1 (holds, 4 points), **Urban Tracking** – 1 (underworld, 2 points), **Wilderness Tracking** – 1 (desert, xenoforest or mountain, 2 points), **5 unused Skill Points**

A Freelance Police enforcer is a combination of bounty hunter, security guard, and detective. He or she is hired to solve criminal cases, protect people and property, and arrest criminals such as terrorists, trespassers, or ghost jackals. Freelance Police contract with police companies such as ACES (page 102), which arrange missions and rent equipment to them. Some are true freelancers, and operate completely on their own.

Centauri Knights

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REPORTER

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 9 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Highly Skilled - 2 (2 points), **Organizational Ties** - 1 (news agency, 1 point), **Own a Big Mecha** - 2 (Aurora, less powerful x 3, 5 points), **Personal Gear** - 2 (2 points)

DEFECTS

Easily Distracted (good stories, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Computers - 1 (databases, 4 points), **Interrogation** - 2 (psychological, 4 points), **Military Sciences** - 1 (analysis, 3 points), **Performing Arts** - 1 (public speaking, 1 point), **Pilot** - 1 (air car, 5 points), **Ranged Defense** - 1 (personal, air vehicle, 6 points), **Seduction** - 1 (any, 3 points), **Stealth** - 1 (camouflage or concealment, 4 points), **Visual Arts** - 2 (video, 2 points), **Urban Tracking** - 2 (any, 6 points), **Writing** - 2 (journalistic, 2 points)

Things are happening in Alpha Centauri, and the people have a right to know! UNSAID and UNSHAC have exercised heavy "media control" of their operations, allegedly for security reasons, but could they also be covering up defeats or blunders they have made? Is the Selket cult really spreading? What happened at the Mouth of Djed? How about getting an interview with a General Morgan or an alleged Eye of Re revolutionary council member? News teams may be stringers for Earthside news organizations, may work for AlphaWeb or ACBC, or be freelancers hoping for a big scoop. Some reporters are elite war correspondents who came to Alpha Centauri with UNPACFOR, while others are natives or "old Centauri hands" who know the territory.

SALVAGE HUNTER

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE POINT COST: 5-13 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Highly Skilled - 2 (2 point), **Own a Big Mecha** - 1 to 3 (Dust Cat, Ocelot, OTV-3, Panther, UV-88, or a combination of mecha jointly owned by several characters, 4 to 12 points)

DEFECTS

If CAT, **Red Tape** (UNSAID regulations, 1 BP). If ghost jackal, **Skeleton in the Closet** (1 BP) or **Wanted** (1 BP)

SKILLS

Cultural Arts - 1 (archaeology, 2 points), **Driving** - 1 (servo or tracked, 2 points), **Electronics** - 1 (any, 4 points), **Heavy Weapons** - 1 (gunnery or launchers, 5 points), **Mechanics** - 2 (aeronautical, armourer or automotive, 8 points), **Medical** - 1 (emergency response, 3 points), **Melee Attack** - 1 (knife, 4 points) or **Unarmed Attack** - 1 (striking, 4 points), **Piloting** - 1 (tilt rotor or spacecraft, 5 points), **Ranged Defense** - 1 (air or ground vehicle, 5 points), **Wilderness Survival** - 1 (desert, 1 point)

Salvage hunters make their living by exploring the alien ruins and discovering Osiran relics found within them. They may operate on Osiris or in Mihos, Pakhet, or Bast habitat. Salvage hunting is dangerous work, since a ruin is often home to xenomechs from the Osiran Apocalypse ... not to mention human outlaws, such as Selket guerrillas.

SERVOSOOLDIER

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 10 CHARACTER POINTS, OR 11 IF OFFICER

ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery – 1 (2 points), **Highly Skilled** – 1 (1 point), **Own a Big Mecha** – 3 (M82 Merrill or M84 Fox, less powerful x 2, 10 points), **Personal Gear** – 2 (2 points). For an officer, add **Aura of Command** – 1 (1 point)

DEFECTS

Conditional Ownership (2 BP), **Owned by a Megacorp** (UNPACFOR, 2 BP), **Wanted** (targeted by terrorists, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Driving – 1 (servo, 4 points), **Heavy Weapons** – 1 (gunnery, launchers, 6 points), **Navigation** – 1 (wilderness, 3 points), **Ranged Defense** – 1 (ground vehicle, personal, 6 points), **Stealth** – 1 (camouflage, 4 points), **Wilderness Survival** – 1 (desert, 2 points), **Wilderness Tracking** – 1 (desert, 2 points). If officer: **Military Sciences** – 1 (tactics, 3 points); otherwise, 3 **unused Skill Points**

The iron fist of UNPACFOR are the servopanzer troops of units like the US Army's Rangers or 10th Mountain Division, the Indian Army's Gurkhas, and the French Foreign Legion.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS "OPERATOR"

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 17 CHARACTER POINTS, OR 18 IF OFFICER

ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery – 1 (2 points), **Damn Healthy!** – 1 (1 point), **Gun Bunny** – 1 (steady hand, 1 point), **Heightened Awareness** – 1 (1 point), **Highly Skilled** – 5 (5 points), **Kensei** – 1 (judge opponent, 1 point), **Own a Big Mecha** – 2 (Panther, 8 points), **Personal Gear** – 2 (2 points). If Officer, add **Aura of Command** – 1 (1 point)

DEFECTS

Conditional Ownership (1 BP), **Owned by a Megacorp** (UNPACFOR, 2 BP), **Wanted** (targeted by terrorists, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Computers – 1 (intrusion/security, 4 points), **Driving** – 1 (servo, 4 points), **Gun Combat** – 1 (autofire, pistol, rifle, 7 points), **Demolitions** – 1 (artificial structures, 2 points), **Heavy Weapons** – 1 (gunnery, launchers, 6 points), **Interrogation** – 1 (any, 3 points), **Linguistics** – 1 (any, 2 points), **Medical** – 1 (emergency response, 3 points), **Military Sciences** – 1 (intelligence analysis, tactics, 5 points), **Navigation** – 1 (wilderness, 3 points), **Ranged Defense** – 1 (personal, ground vehicles, 6 points), **Stealth** – 1 (camouflage, silent movement, 5 points), **Swimming** – 1 (scuba, 1 point), **Unarmed Attack** – 1 (strikes, 4 points), **Unarmed Defense** – 1 (strikes, 4 points), **Wilderness Survival** – 1 (any, 2 points), **Wilderness Tracking** – 1 (any, 2 points), 7 **unused Skill Points**; troops specialize in a particular area, such as demolitions, medic or weapons, with extra points placed in it

The character is an "operator" — a member of an elite special operations military unit such as the United States' Special Forces, Russia's Spetnaz, or Poland's GROM (page 104). He or she is trained in close-quarters battle, hostage rescue, surveillance, infiltration, and commando assault techniques. UNPACFOR is fighting a guerrilla conflict, a war of ghosts and shadows. In order to fight it, you have to become a ghost yourself. That's the way the special ops teams see it. They perform special operations, winning hearts and minds and taking the war to the elusive enemy. Their tasks include retraining the freelance police, infiltration and deception operations, hunting wanted human-rights violators and terrorists, protecting VIPs, and performing hostage rescues.

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Centauri Knights

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UNSAID INSPECTOR

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 9 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Organizational Ties – 2 (UNSAID, 4 points), **Own a Big Mecha** – 2 (Aurora, less powerful x 3, 5 points), **Personal Gear** – 1 (1 point)

DEFECTS

Red Tape (1 BP)

SKILLS

Computers – 1 (databases, 4 points), **Cultural Arts** – 1 (archaeology, 2 points), **Gun Combat** – 1 (pistol, 5 points), **Interrogation** – 1 (psychological, 2 points), **Law** – 2 (civil, 4 points), **Urban Tracking** – 1 (corporate, 2 points), **1 unused Skill Point**

United Nations Special Agency for Interstellar Development is in charge of enforcing the Alpha Centauri Treaty. The elite of UNSAID are the three dozen field inspectors, who visit archaeological sites, corporate research installations, mines, and other operations and ensure they meet treaty obligations.

XENOPUNK

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 1 POINT

ATTRIBUTES

Animal Friendship – 1 (1 point), **Servant** – 3 (pet cat serpent, 3 points)

DEFECTS

Ageism (1 BP), **Easily Distracted** (new xenodream brainvids or Osiran relics or xenomods, 1 BP), **Marked** (live or dead dream jewel implant, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Linguistics – 1 (Osiran, 2 points), **Sports** – 1 (madball, 1 point), **Wilderness Survival** – 1 (xenoforest, 2 points), and any one of: **Cultural Arts** – 1 (xenoarcheology, 2 points) or **Social Sciences** – 1 (xenoanthropology, 2 points) or **Performing Arts** – 1 (xenobeat music, 2 points), **13 unused Skill Points**

A “xenopunk” is a youth who adopts Alexandrian fashions and (if he or she can afford it) often undergoes nanosurgery to acquire xenomods. Most prefer to live on Bast habitat, but there are quite a few on Osiris (saving up to go to Bast habitat). Every xenopunk is different, but the stereotype — a Timoshenko Academy student majoring in Osiran studies but spending most of his or her time zoning out on xenodreams — is not always inaccurate. A sizable minority of xenopunks become Selket activists.

XENOTECHNOLOGIST

OCCUPATIONAL TEMPLATE COST: 7 CHARACTER POINTS

ATTRIBUTES

Highly Skilled – 1 (1 point), **Mechanical Genius** – 1 (2 points), **Personal Gear** – 2 (2 points), **Servant** – 3 (Tinkerbell, 3 points)

DEFECTS

Easily Distracted (cool technology, 1 BP)

SKILLS

Computers – 1 (artificial intelligence, 4 points), **Electronics** – 2 (two specialties, 9 points), **Mechanics** – 2 (any, 8 points), **Physical Sciences** – 1 (chemistry or physics, 3 points), **6 unused Skill Points**

Xenotechnologists study the Osiran technology and determine how it can be reverse-engineered. They can often be found: working in the laboratory; accompanying CATs as field engineers and attempting to remove alien machines for salvage; working for the guerrillas and attempting to repair alien machines for Eye of Re or Selket; or taming alien Tinkerbell robots.

CHAPTER THREE: TECHNOLOGY



HUMAN TECHNOLOGY

The last 150 years have seen great technological changes, many of them driven by human inventiveness, with a few inspired by examples of Osiran technology.

COMPUTERS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Computer technology is currently transitioning between biocomputers (using protein-based DNA systems) and nanocomputers (using trillions of tiny nanomachines packed into a compact space that function as a single super-fast parallel computer).

ALPHAWEB

The Alpha Centauri computer network is tiny compared to the huge, near-sapient networks on Earth. Even so, vast quantities of data, goods, and services are accessible online. People can surf AlphaWeb using mind-interfaces or download brainvids.

BRAINVID

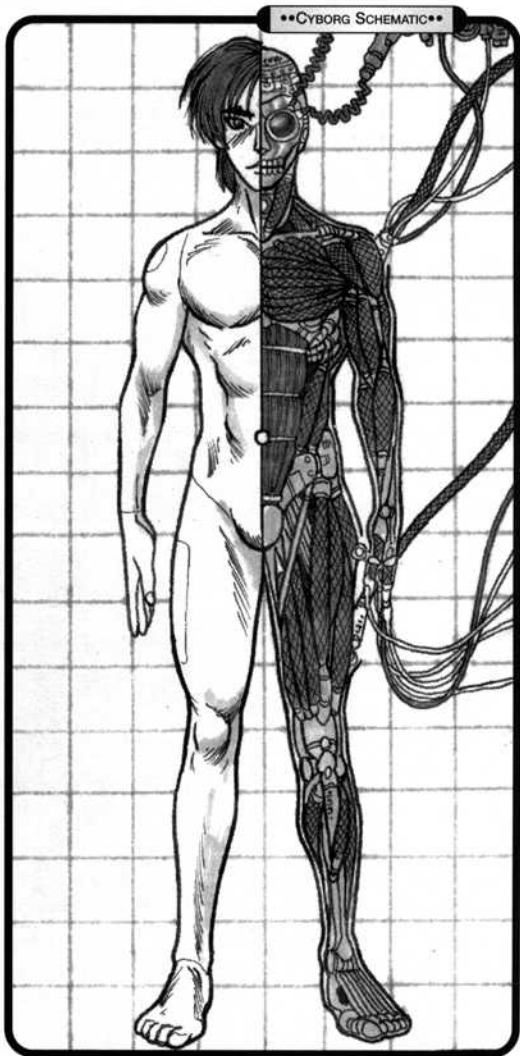
These have replaced TV and books as the most common media. A brainvid is a simulated sensory experience. It can include complex virtual reality environments and interactive artificial personalities. Brainvids are used for educational or entertainment purposes and range from virtual training manuals that take the experiencer through procedures step by step to travelogues, games, and sex. A brainvid will run on any computer with several terabytes memory and 10+ terahertz speed, appropriate brainvid driver software, and a mind-interface headset or helmet.

MIND-INTERFACE

A mind-interface headset or helmet uses neural induction technology to translate thought into digital instructions, allowing direct mental control of equipment. Mind-Interface (MI) is only slightly "faster" than conventional controls, but does allow an individual to operate complex systems while keeping his or her hands free.

ROBOTS

Semi-autonomous personal robot vehicles, pets, and assistants are common. However, sapience-rights legislation restricts ownership of robots to "non-sapient" machines with less than A.I. Level 3 (*BESM*, page 172). With billions of humans around, a lot of the grunt work — like warfare — is done more cheaply by people than machines.



HEALTH AND MEDICINE

The average lifespan is officially “indefinite” as medical nanomachines and artificial organ and tissue transplants allow maintenance and repair of body and brain. Genetic engineering has eradicated all hereditary medical ailments. Any disease can be cured by injected tailored nanomachines on search-and-destroy missions; the major threats are hostile nanoplagues. Almost any injury can be cured through transplants, nanosurgery or cybernetics, save serious brain trauma — the body can be repaired or replaced, but if the brain is severely damaged, memory and personality are lost. Women can transfer developing embryos to artificial wombs if they prefer not to carry a baby.

NANOSURGEONS

These are nanomachines that are sprayed or injected into a living body to perform surgical procedures. Different types can hunt down disease organisms, repair damaged cells, take over cellular metabolisms, or perform genetic modifications.

NANOWOMBS AND BRAIN PODS

Humans cannot withstand the tremendous acceleration of interstellar travel, and starships have little room for life support. Instead, passengers are injected with nanosurgeons, which shut down their metabolisms, and then placed in cold storage chambers filled with acceleration gel. It is common for only human brains and spinal cords to be transported, carried within compact suitcase-sized life support systems known as “brain pods.” Upon arrival, the brains are either integrated into cyborg shells, or surgically transplanted into clone bodies.



POWER AND ENERGY STORAGE

There are no fossil fuels left on Osiris, and the heavy cloud cover is not conducive to solar power.

FUSION POWER

Urban power plants are building-sized nuclear fusion reactors fuelled by heavy water and tritium.

FUEL CELLS

The standard small power unit is a hydrogen-oxygen fuel cell. While not as efficient as internal combustion, they are quiet, non-polluting, and only produce water as a by product.

SUPERCONDUCTORS

Chemical batteries have been replaced by room-temperature superconductors, which power many items. A superconductor bank the size of a car battery can run a car for 12 hours.

HUMAN EQUIPMENT AND MECHA

PERSONAL GEAR

BRAINVID PLAYER

A software driver for a comlink. Minor item; brainvids are normally mundane items.

CAMPING BOX

Pocket-size cube that folds out origami-fashion into a two-person shelter hut complete with amenities. Minor item.

COMLINK

A mind-interface headset that incorporates a 100-terahertz computer, 10 terabytes memory storage, and an radio encryption with 1-km range. It can link to AlphaWeb if within range of a relay system. Minor item.

CYBERNETIC WORKSHOP

The various tools and sensors necessary to build, maintain, and repair cyborgs and robots. Fits in a suitcase. A major item.

LASEACOM

Transmits a signal carried on a modulated laser beam; usually built into a helmet or on a vehicle turret. It is a directional communicator, limited to line-of-sight transmission. Its signal can only be intercepted by someone who is directly in its path, but clouds, fog, dust, or smoke blocks it. Minor item or Accessory.

NANODOC

When someone is sick, they slide into a bathtub-sized nanodoc. Countless microscopic nanosurgeons are pumped into their bodies to locate and fix the problem, communicating back to the nanodoc and each other through sonic pulses. A nanodoc functions as the Healing Attribute at Level 1 and is either Level 2 Special Equipment for a mecha (4 Mecha Points; see *BESM*, page 178) or a personal Level 1 Item of Power (2 Points; see *BESM*, page 108).

NANOFABRICATOR

See page 47. These are large non-portable installations mostly located at Timoshenko City, Bast Habitat, and Emissary Station. They count as Special Equipment Level 6 (12 Mecha Points) but, given time, programs, and raw materials they can build just about anything.

RADIO

A helmet, handset, or vehicle radio; assumed to be encrypted to prevent eavesdropping and capable of data and video transmission. Planetary range. A minor item or Accessory.

SHELTERSUIT

An active survival suit. It adjusts fit, regulates temperature, sheds dust and dirt, displays your choice of video (under comlink control), and provides 5 points of armour (2 points with an unprotected spot when the hood is down). Major item.

SHOPFAC

See page 47. Treat as Special Equipment Level 2 (4 Mecha Points).

SPACE SUIT

A space suit is usually equipped with a cold-gas thruster pack. It includes a radio, and provides Level 2 Life Support (2 Mecha Points; see *BESM*, page 110) and Level 2 Light Armour. A major item.

SQUID

Superconducting QUantum Interference Detector. A portable SQUID can be used in conjunction with a comlink to probe dream jewels and robot brains. The standard field model resembles a helmet with various sensor probes attached. A major item.

TAGS

A small seed-like device; if swallowed it grows a neural structure inside the subject's brain within one hour that allows him or her to be remotely controlled, as a puppet, via mind-interface provided the correct codes are known (use the rules for A.I. Level 1). Designed to allow covert monitoring of Osiran animals, freecops and guerrillas have both used Tags to restrain prisoners or create "suicide" attackers. Tags can be jammed by comlink jamming, detected by SQUIDS, and removed through nanosurgery. Major item.

TOOL POUCH

A collection of small, insulated tools in a handy belt pouch. These allow basic repair, jury-rigging, and maintenance tasks with Electronics or Mechanics Skill. A minor item.

A vast variety of much more mundane personal gear also exists — electronic handcuffs, rope, reconfigurable furniture, and more. GMs should invent whatever is necessary using the guidelines in *BESM* (page 38).

AVAILABILITY

All mecha and personal weaponry have notes regarding their availability.

CIVILIAN

This equipment can be legally purchased anywhere in Alpha Centauri. The majority of products are assembled in shopfacs from parts built in CENCOR nanofabricators.

CENCOR

CENCOR is a Civilian sub-category: the equipment is not illegal, but it is so expensive that only CENCOR megacorporation owns (and operates) it.

RESTRICTED (OCCUPATION)

Restricted (occupation) is a second Civilian sub-category: only members of a particular occupation (or occupation group) can acquire this equipment.

PARAMILITARY

This gear may only be legally acquired and owned by Chartered Archaeological Teams, licensed freelance police, or UNPACFOR. However, guerrillas often acquire it through black market connections, theft, forgery, or outlaw arms factories.

MILITARY

This equipment can only be legally possessed by UNPACFOR. The UNPACFOR starships did not actually bring heavy equipment to Alpha Centauri. Instead, the starships carried troops, software and cutting-edge military nano. Soon after UNPACFOR occupied Emissary Station, the nanofabricators began building state-of-the-art servopanzers, aerospace craft, satellites, and robots. However, UNPACFOR support troops rely on local Dust Cats, UV-88s, and Eurostar TAVs for routine transport of personnel and supplies.

Personal Weaponry

DEMO CHARGE

A fused explosive satchel charge. 35 damage, area-effect, limited shots (one shot), melee, slow, trap. Minor item. Paramilitary, Restricted (construction workers).

HARMONIC KNIFE

A vibrating blade weapon powered by superconducting batteries in the hilt. 10 damage, hand-held, armour-penetrating, concealable, melee. A major item. Civilian.

MAG PISTOL

An electromagnetic railgun that accelerates a steel dart to high velocities. 300-shot magazine (including batteries). 5 damage, armour-penetrating, concealable, short range. A major item. Paramilitary.

MAG RIFLE

A heavier shoulder-fired version of the Mag Pistol. 10 damage, armour-penetrating. A major item. Paramilitary.

SHOCK CARBINE

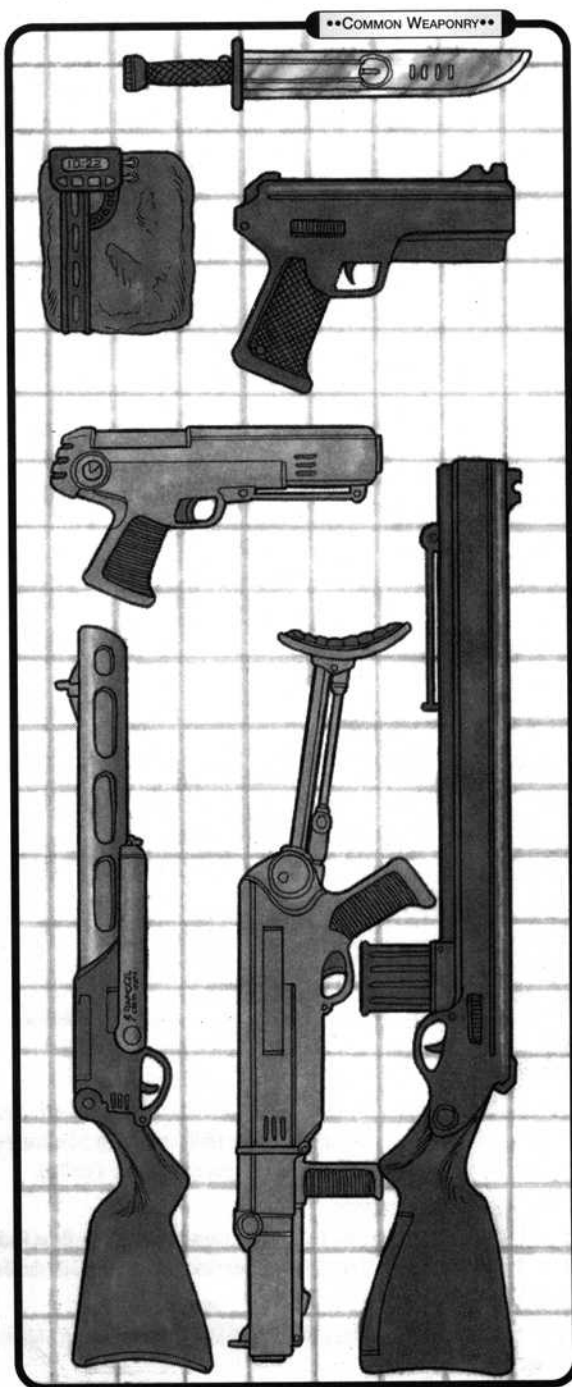
A shock carbine is used for subduing criminals and defense against wild animals. Fires an electrical pulse down a path ionized by a laser beam. 15 damage, incapacitating, limited shots (six), no damage, only in atmosphere, short range. A major item. Civilian.

SMART PISTOL

Fires a tiny, heat-seeking guided missile. 5 damage, concealable, homing, short range. A major item. Paramilitary.

SMART CARBINE

Fires a bigger and longer-ranged missile than the shock carbine. 10 damage, homing. A major item. Paramilitary.



GROUND VEHICLES

These vehicles are used by the colonists and UNPACFOR on Osiris and in the habitats.

GMC DUST CAT

10 MECHA POINTS

As a caterpillar-tracked all-terrain cargo truck, the Dust Cat is slow but reliable. It often operates on remote control from an external computer, but can be driven by a person. Civilian.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

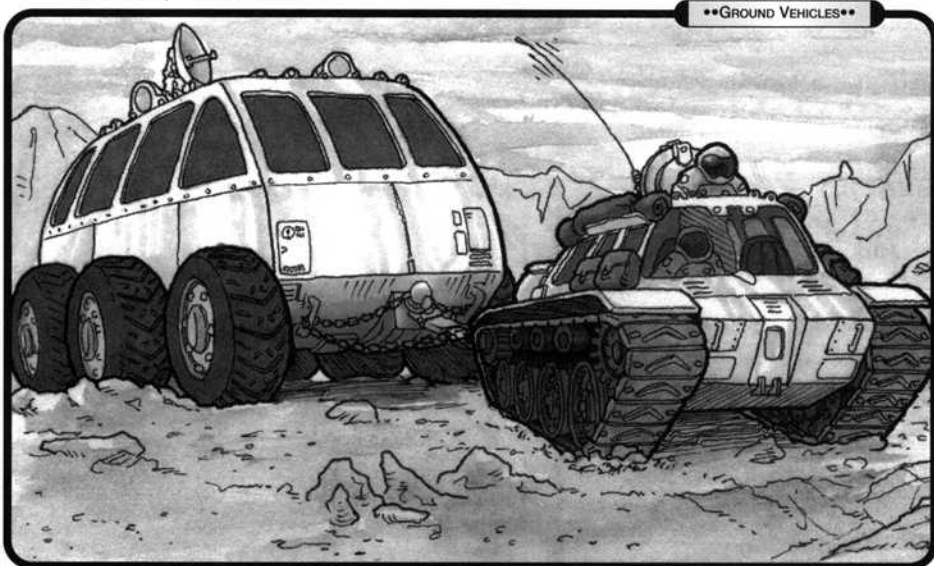
A.I. – 1 (2 MP), **Accessories** – 2 (night vision, radio, satellite navigation, 2 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 3 (3 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 1 (1 MP), **Ground Speed** – 1 (50 kph, 2 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 1 (thin spot, 3 MP), **Life Support** – 1 (1 MP), **Toughness** – 1 (4 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (3 MBP), **Poor Manoeuvrability** (1 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Noisy** (1 MBP), **Weak Point** (engine, 1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 10, Health Points: 60



MOBILE TRAILER

10 MECHA POINTS

This is a balloon-tired wheeled “mobile home” trailer that can be towed by a Dust Cat. It may house labs, field kitchens, sick bays, etc. The trailer normally has living quarters or offices for four people as well as whatever special equipment its function requires. Civilian.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 1 (radio, 1 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 2 (2 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 3 (3 MP), **Light Armour** – 2 (2 MP), **Life Support** – 1 (1 MP), **Special Equipment** – 2 (science lab, shopfac, nanodoc, 4 MP), **Toughness** – 1 (4 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (3 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Not So Tough** (1 MBP), **Restricted Path** (towed, 1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 5, Health Points: 50

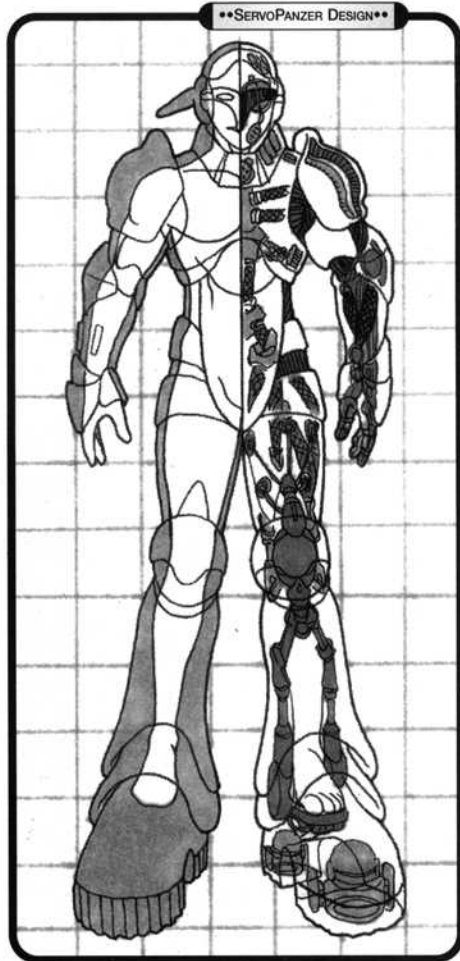
SERVOPANZERS

A servopanzer (or "servoshell") is a humanoid, one-man powered exoskeleton. Its purpose is to allow an individual to advance rapidly under fire or through a hostile environment while carrying heavy weapons and sophisticated electronics. An integral mind-interface helmet controls its functions. Servomotors in the legs allow the wearer to jog at 20 kph, or move faster by making power-assisted jumps. Arm and back servos can lift up to half a tonne. A servopanzer suit is protected against small arms fire and artillery near misses by a ceramic-carbon nanotube-diamond sandwich, along with an inner layer of shock-absorbing aerogel padding. Superconducting batteries normally power the suit's functions for a day or so, but some earlier models use hydrogen turbines.

Getting into or out of a servopanzer takes about 10 seconds. The model typically clamshells open and the wearer steps into it. Some suits have a "fast-eject" system that uses explosive bolts to blow off the suit in one round. To avoid chaffing or shock and allow attachment of life support systems and biometric sensors, a servopanzer is tight fitting; only skimpy clothing (typically a bodystocking or undergarments) can be worn inside. Attachments take care of waste relief, and there is a double reservoir and drinking tube for two different drinks: UNPACFOR uses water and a protein milkshake; free cops and salvage hunters often prefer coffee or booze. Servopanzers can incorporate spacesuit life systems that include air tanks, or may rely instead on nanopore air filters effective against gas, nanomachines and biological weapons. Modern designs may also include "liquid metal" self-sealing systems that can seal any breaches in moments.

A servopanzer's head is studded with antennae, and it is packed with electronic navigation, data fusion, and communication and sensor systems. A radio for broadcast and a lasercom for secure tight beam are used. Servopanzers have a transparent diamond visor that can be opened if desired, but this is normally covered with a blast shield, and instead the wearer views the world through electro-optical sensors. Extra sensors are often mounted on a "rabbit ear" boom to look around corners without exposing the body. Some models incorporate indirect magnetic or seismic sensors (see Sensors, page 47). Various active and passive jamming systems are also installed, for confusing enemy sensors and missile guidance systems. Key to these systems is the suit's surface, which in many military designs is an "active surface" incorporated embedded sensors, electro-active dyes and emitters that can vary the suit's visual, optical, radar, thermal, and magnetic signature.

Servopanzer weapons may be hand-held or built into the suit. All use a mind-interfaced virtual reality aiming display and many draw power from the suit. Weapons are generally railguns (accelerating metal darts electromagnetically) or missile launchers. Lasers, while very accurate, are handicapped by prevailing dust and fog, but high-power microwave weapons possess some utility against robotic targets.



Centauri Knights

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☐CELOT

35 MECHA POINTS

The Ocelot is an obsolete medium servopanzer originally built for the European Union Rapid Deployment Force in 2086. In 2102, CENCOR licensed the design for production in Alpha Centauri, and 542 Ocelots were manufactured for over two decades before production switched to the more advanced Panther. Over 200 Ocelots still remain in use, however, by salvage hunters and freecops, and second-hand models are fairly common.

The servopanzer stands 2.6 metres tall and masses 351 kg, which makes it rather bulky by present-day standards. Its main armament may be either a hand-held Kobra 25mm short-barrelled electrothermal auto-cannon or a Hellstreak hypervelocity kinetic kill missile launcher. For close combat, the Ocelot has a leg-sheathed harmonic knife, which plugs into the suit's power supply. Paramilitary.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (lasercom, night vision, radio, 2 MP), **ECM** – 1 (missile jamming, 1 MP), **Heightened Senses** – 1 (hearing, 1 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 2 (partial, 7 MP), **Jumping** – 1 (1 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus** – 1 (Ground, 1 MP), **Sensors** – 1 (1 MP), **Speed** – 1 (1 MP), **Stealth** – 1 (sensors, 1 MP), **Super-Strength** – 1 (3 MP), **Toughness** – 1 (4 MP), **Weapon** – 3: 25mm auto-cannon firing APHE ammunition (30 damage, area-effect, auto-fire, limited shots: six bursts, hand-held, 12 MP) or Hellstreak launcher (60 damage, homing, indirect, long range, limited shots x 2: 3 shots, static, stoppable, hand-held, 12 MP), **Weapon** – 2: harmonic knife (30 damage, armour-penetrating, melee, muscle-powered, 1 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Hangar Queen (1 MBP), **Mutual Damage** (1 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 20, Health Points: 60



Centauri Knights

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M82 MERRILL AND M84 FOX 50 MECHA POINTS

The Merrill is the US Army's latest light infantry servopanzer. It entered service with the US Army Rangers and Special Forces in 2136, replacing the older M24 Darby. The Merrill stands 2.3 metres tall and masses 240 kg. It is optimized for long-range patrols and designed for ease of maintenance in the field. Its structure incorporates nanobot self-repair colonies and a self-sealing liquid metal layer based on Osiran xenomech technology. The M82's anti-personnel armament is the M32 railgun, a hand-held gun pod firing bursts of 3mm hypersonic darts; the 4,000-round magazine means it rarely runs out of ammunition during a firefight. There is also a detachable backpack-mounted M102 VLOS vertical launch system for Snapdragon (kinetic kill) or Fireflash (explosive warhead) missiles.

There is one variant: the M84 Fox scout/command servopanzer. It is identical to the M82 except that it replaces the VLOS with an expanded sensor and ECM array. Military.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 3 (fast-eject, inertial navigation system, lasercom, radio, 3 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 1 (1 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 2 (8 MP), **Light Armour** – 2 (2 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus** – 1 (ground, 1 MP), **Regeneration** – 1 (4 MP), **Sensors** – 1 (indirect, 1 MP), **Speed** – 1 (1 MP), **Stealth** – 2 (sensors, 2 MP), **Stealth** – 1 (vision, 1 MP), **Super-Strength** – 1 (3 MP), **Toughness** – 1 (4 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 4: M32 railgun (30 damage, hand-held, armour-penetrating, auto-fire, 16 MP).

M82 MERRILL ONLY

ECM – 2 (missile jamming, 2 MP), **Sensors** – 1 (1 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 4: VLOS with Snapdragon missiles (60 damage, homing, indirect, long range, limited shots: six shots, static, stoppable, 2 MP) or **Weapon Attack** – 4: VLOS with Fireflash missiles (45 damage, area-effect, homing, indirect, long range, limited shots: six shots, static, stoppable, 2 MP)

M84 FOX ONLY

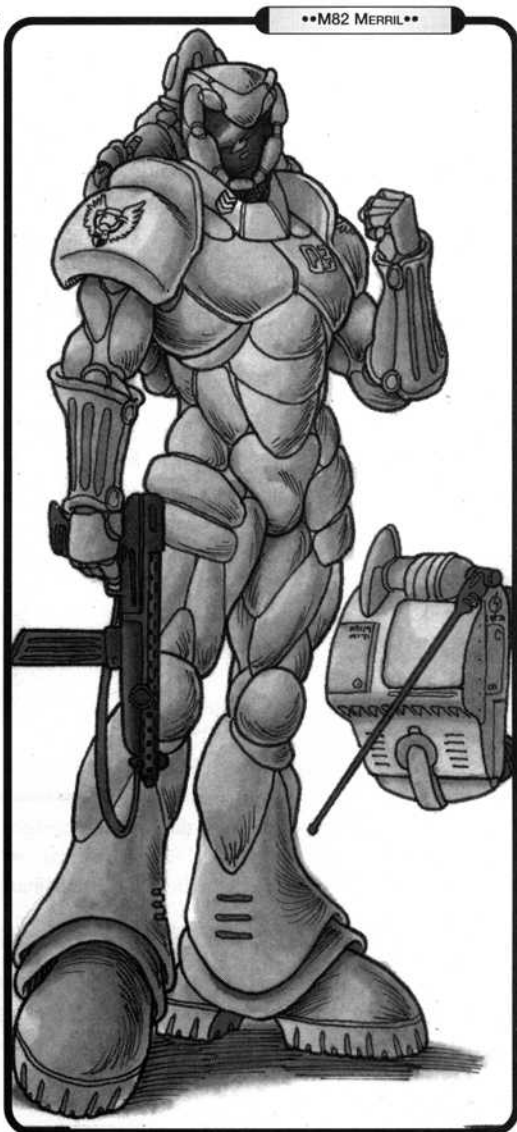
ECM – 2 (sensor jamming, missile jamming, 3 MP), **Sensors** – 2 (2 MP).

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (1 MBP), **Mutual Damage** (1 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (1 MBP), **Volatile** (1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 25, Health Points: 60



AIRCRAFT

Osiris is a largely trackless waste, so aircraft are often the best way to get around.

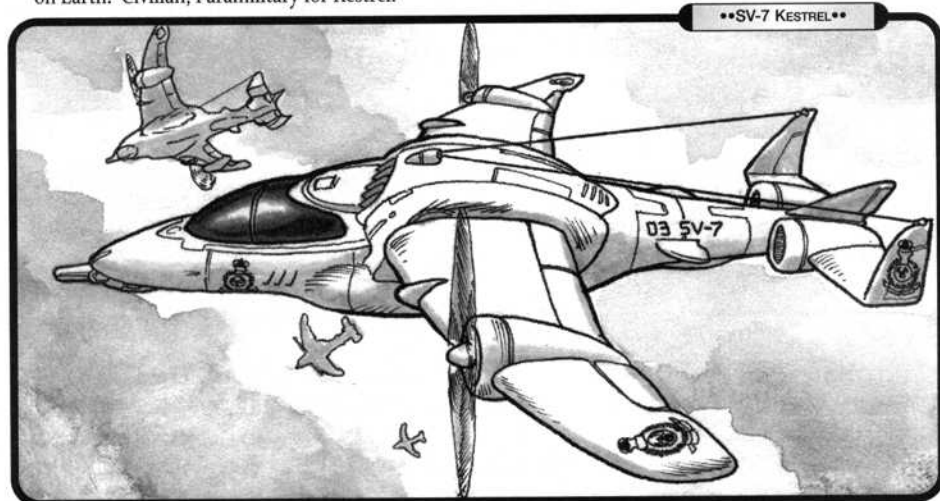
UV-88 ALBATROSS

25 MECHA POINTS, 45 MECHA POINTS FOR SV-7 KESTREL

CENCOR Albatross is an obsolete but simple and reliable tilt-rotor transport aircraft. Tilt rotors resemble twin-propeller turboprop airplanes, but their two hydrogen-turbine engine propellers are oversized and equipped with a swivel system. This lets them rotate in flight from a horizontal position to a vertical position, turning the plane into a helicopter for vertical landing or takeoff. Cruising range is 3,000 km (six hours at 500 kph). It has a large rear cargo ramp and a spacious cargo area; as a tactical transport, it can carry one Dust Cat or MARA, 10 ASRAI or servopanzers, or 22 humans.

Over 100 Albatrosses are in private hands or CENCOR's fleet, where they provide tactical air lift for salvage hunters, transport bio-prospecting, corporate executives, and survey teams and provide regular commercial air service, air ambulance, and courier service between townships. UNPACFOR has acquired 20, mostly serving as logistics transports.

The SV-7 Kestrel is basically a militarized UV-88 with the addition of ECM, a 4.7mm railgun turret under the nose, extra armour, and a layer of radar-absorbing smart paint. About 20 are in use with ACES and a few other well-healed police companies. UNPACFOR has built 17, the majority of which have gone to the Indian Aerospace Force's No. 25 Squadron (Himalayan Eagles) who actually used the same craft back on Earth. Civilian; Paramilitary for Kestrel.



► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 3 (two ejection seats, laser communicator, radio, terrain-following radar, 3 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 4 (22 passengers or 11 tonnes, 4 MP), **Flight** – 3 (500 kph, can hover, 12 MP), **Light Armour** – 4 (thin spot, 3 MP), **Life Support** – 1 (1 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus** – 1 (flight, 1 MP), **Sensors** – 1 (1 MP), **Toughness** – 2 (8 MP)

SV-7 KESTREL ONLY

ECM – 1 (missile jamming, 1 MP), **Light Armour** – 2 (2 MP; in addition to 4 Levels of UV-88 Light Armour), **Stealth** – 1 (sensors, 1 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 4: 4.7mm railgun (30 damage, auto-fire, long range, 16 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (3 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Volatile** (1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 10 (15 for Kestrel), Health Points: 80

Centauri Knights

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CENCOR AURORA

25 MECHA POINTS

This "air car" resembles a sporty, streamlined automobile with a set of tail fins and four pod-mounted, ducted fans. These use thrust-deflection to allow the aircraft to fly at up to 480 kph for a maximum of three hours, hover in mid-air, or take off and land vertically. Aurora also has automobile-sized wheels and suspension, enabling it to drive normally on roads. Air cars are expensive, but are popular with executives. Some are used by freecops as patrol cars, and there are several examples operating in Bast Habitat and Timoshenko as air taxis. Civilian.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories - 2 (bar, night vision, radio, 2 MP), A.I. - 3 (6 MP), Extra Capacity - 2 (1 MP), Flight - 3 (480 kph, can hover, 12 MP), Ground Speed - 2 (4 MP), Life Support - 1 (1 MP), Light Armour - 2 (thin spot, 1 MP), Sensors - 1 (1 MP), Toughness - 1 (4 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

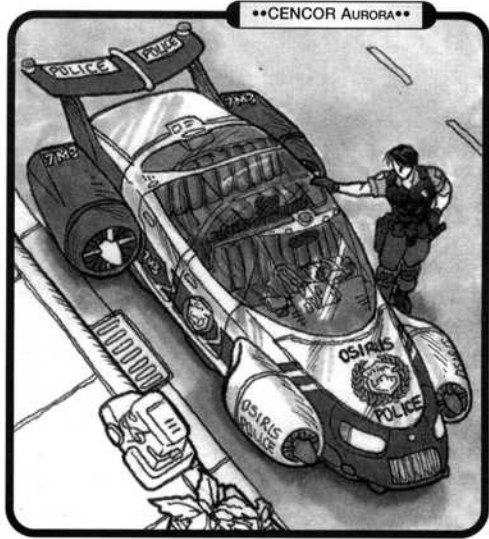
Awkward Size (2 MBP), No Arms (2 MBP), Not So Tough (1 MBP), Noisy (1 MBP), Restricted Ground Movement (1 MBP)

► STATS

Body 8, Mind 2, Soul 0

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 5, Health Points: 50, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3



RF-70F DELTA HAWK

60 MECHA POINTS

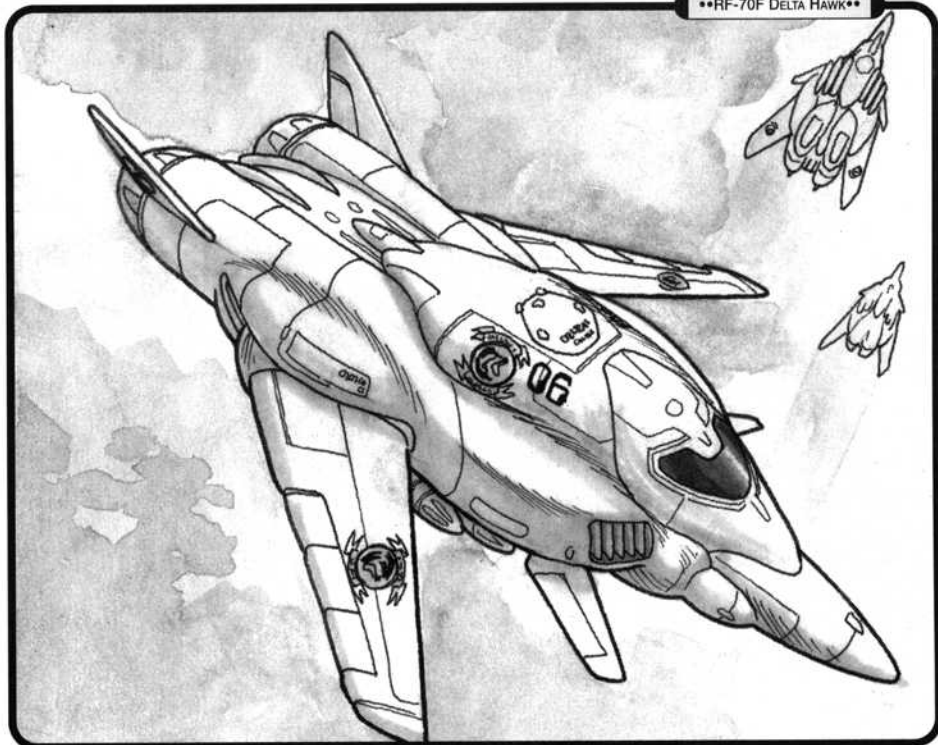
Delta Hawk is the USAF's only remaining manned fighter aircraft. It entered service in 2092, and has been continually upgraded since. Its fuselage is a sleek aerodynamic design with the lack of sharp edges typical of stealth configuration hulls, small forward canards and a third-generation variable geometry wing. The wings are attached to the fuselage at a pivot near the rear of the plane, and can sweep both backward, out, and forward. With wings swept forward, the craft is a highly agile dogfighter. With wings fully extended, the aircraft can make short landings or takeoffs, or perform economic low speed cruising. With wings swept back, the aircraft's now arrow-shaped body assumes a delta shape optimised for hypersonic flight at up to 5,000 kph.

Delta Hawk is powered by a pair of Grail Aerospace AR-50 turbo-ramjet engines whose nanotech design is capable of reconfiguring inlets and turbines for a variety of thrust, air density, and speed regimes. Its hydrogen fuel tank is capable of in-flight refuelling, but the aircraft has a combat radius of 4,000 km. Primary armament is a missile bay, which holds six AGM-27 Mjolnir kinetic kill missiles. Launched when the Delta Hawk is itself at hypersonic speed, each Mjolnir can strike with devastating force. Its secondary armament is a Grail Optics microwave laser in a retractable ball turret. Designed mainly as an anti-missile weapon, it is also effective against lightly armoured vehicular targets or personnel.

Delta Hawk has a sophisticated sensor fit, of which the primary element is an Oberek smart skin sensor web integrated into the skin of the aircraft that transforms the entire fuselage into an antenna that can be used for both detection and jamming. In conjunction with the aircraft's stealth configuration, it is very difficult to detect, although when the aircraft exceeds Mach 3, thermal heating makes it visible to infrared sensors.

The Delta Hawk's pilot rides in a womb tank containing oxygenated crash gel. He or she is connected to a life support unit which effectively takes over circulation and breathing for the pilot (who is "on life support" during the entire flight). The pilot remains fully conscious, however, receiving input through virtual reality displays and controlling the RF-70 through direct neural interface. This allows the Delta Hawk to sustain g-loads that would be impractical for a conventional manned aircraft. Military.

••RF-70F DELTA HAWK••



► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 3 (ejection seat, radio, laser communicator, terrain-following radar, 3 MP), **ECM** – 3 (missile jamming, sensor jamming, 3 MP), **Flight** – 6 (18 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 1 (4 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus** – 4 (flight, 4 MP), **Sensors** – 3 (3 MP), **Stealth** – 2 (sensors, 2 MP), **Stealth** – 1 (vision, 1 MP), **Toughness** – 2 (8 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 6: AGM-27 Mjolnir (60 damage, armour-penetrating, homing, long range x 5, fixed, limited shots, slow, stoppable, unique weapon disability: velocity limited, see below*, 24 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 6: Grail Optics Microwave Laser (30 damage, accurate, irritant to machines **, long range x 2, 2 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (3 MBP), **Hangar Queen** (2 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Volatile** (2 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 10, Health Points: 100

NOTES:

* RF-70 must be cruising at hypersonic speeds to gain its full effect: damage is 45 and Range is only x 4 if launched at supersonic speeds, or 30 and x 3 if launched more slowly.

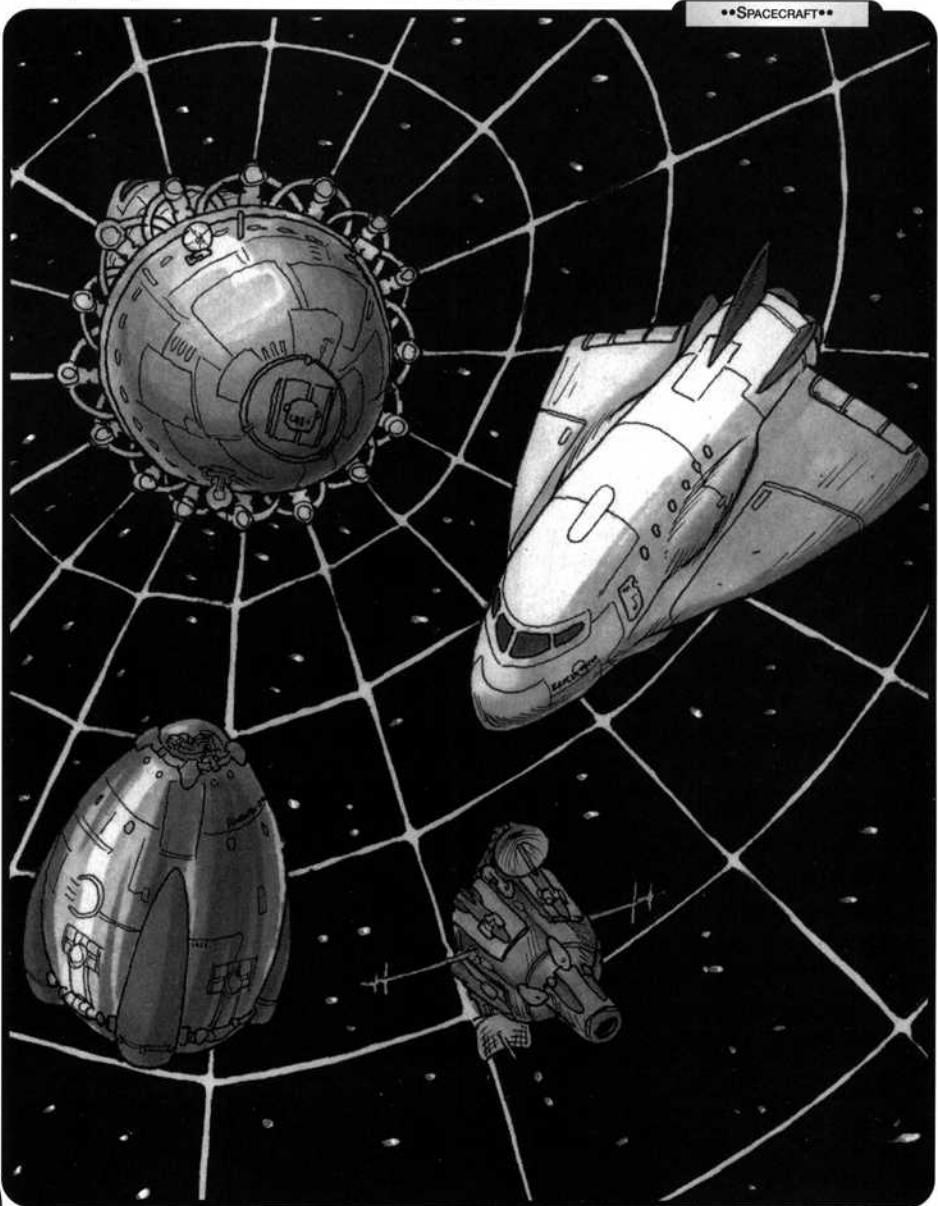
** The microwave beam can short out electronics, such as robot brains and aircraft flight controls. For machines without Body Stats, use one-fifth original Health Points for Irritant Body Stat Checks instead (*BESM*, page 164).

Centauri Knights

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SPACECRAFT

Almost all spacecraft are owned by CENCOR or UNSAID, not individuals. The guerrillas do not have any armed spacecraft of which anyone knows, but on a number of occasions, Eye of Re have attempted to hijack or sabotage TAVs or OTVs. Orbital space over Osiris is filled with hundreds of human-built satellites. The majority are “civilian” weather, global positioning, ground-mapping, and communication satellites. Just about anyone can tap into the satellite network to get accurate images of the planet down to about 0.1 metre resolution — if there weren’t dry ice clouds in the way, which occurs about 99% of the time. The ghost fog also tends to interfere with radar imaging.



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EUROSTAR TAV

35 MECHA POINTS

A sleek delta-winged hybrid of aircraft and spacecraft, the Eurostar transatmospheric vehicle (TAV) uses hybrid engines that can function as turbojets in atmosphere and rocket engines in space. It is also equipped with chemical rocket thrusters for zero-g docking manoeuvres. It is available in two versions, cargo (Eurostar 202: five passengers, 45 tonnes cargo) and passenger (Eurostar 101: 45 passengers, five tonnes cargo). It requires an airport runway for landing and take off, but can dock with an orbiting space station or space ship. Eurostar TAV is used for trips from Osiris and Emissary Station, or fast suborbital intercontinental flights between Edjo and Nekhebet, but can also launch or service satellites.

CENCOR owns seven Eurostar 101s and five Eurostar 202s. Three passenger flights a day operate between Osiris Downport and Emissary, and Osiris Downport and Timoshenko. UNPACFOR has acquired two Eurostar 101s and two Eurostar 202s for its own use as military transports but borrows CENCOR craft when necessary. Civilian.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (airlock, radio, laser communicator, 2 MP), **A.I.** – 3 (6 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 4 (4 MP), **Flight** – 5 (15 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 1 (4 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Sensors** – 2 (2 MP), **Space Flight** – 1 (2 MP), **Toughness** – 4 (16 MP).

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (150 tonnes, 4 MBP), **Hangar Queen** (2 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Noisy** (2 MBP), **Not So Tough** (2 MBP), **Poor Manoeuvrability** (1 MBP), **Start-Up Time** (1 MBP), **Volatile** (2 MBP)

► STATS

Body 7, Mind 3, Soul 0

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 10, Health Points: 120, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

PHOENIX OTV-3

40 MECHA POINTS

The Phoenix resembles a giant egg with a set of landing legs and rocket engines. Powered by a small but efficient nuclear fusion drive, it is the standard Orbital Transfer Vehicle used to commute between Emissary station and Osiran space habitats. It can operate on its own, but normally carries a two-person flight crew and up to 40 passengers. CENCOR.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

A.I. – 3 (6 MP), **Accessories** – 3 (airlock, radio, laser communicator, 3 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 4 (4 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 3 (3 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 2 (8 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Sensors** – 3 (3 MP), **Space Flight** – 2 (4 MP), **Special Equipment** (sick bay, 2 MP), **Toughness** – 4 (16 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (4 MBP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (None, 2 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Poor Manoeuvrability** (1 MBP), **Volatile** (1 MBP), **Weak Point** (nuclear engine, 1 MBP)

► STATS

Body 5, Mind 5, Soul 0

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 20, Health Points: 120, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

PROTON CLIPPER

50 MECHA POINTS

A proton clipper is a magnetic sail-driven starship. The standard model is the CENCOR Starjammer, a 15 metre teardrop hull suspended in the centre of a 150-km diameter web of superconducting cables. Its diamondoid body and sophisticated laser defense system allows it to reach up to 90% of light speed before the risk of relativistic impact collision events exceeds 1%. Typical proton clipper payloads are passengers (usually as brain pods), genetic information, programmed nanomachines, antimatter, and rare alien artifacts. The Starjammer can carry five tonnes of cargo: normally 100 brain pods or 20 nanowombs (page 48). An average of one Starjammer arrives or departs every week in Alpha Centauri, usually docking at either Bast habitat or Emissary Station. They usually stay for a week to undergo maintenance checks and offload. CENCOR.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

A.I. – 4 (8 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 3 (3 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 5 (5 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 1 (thin area, 3 MP), **Mecha Regeneration** – 2 (8 MP), **Sensors** – 4 (4 MP), **Space Flight** – 4 (8 MP), **Toughness** – 1 (4 MP), **Weapon** – 5: active defense laser (15 damage, accurate x 2, auto-fire, long range, 20 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (120 tonnes, 4 BP), **No Arms** (2 BP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Poor Manoeuvrability** (2 MBP), **Unique Defect**: Space Flight drops to Level 2 without star drivers (2 MBP), **Wind Powered** (solar or proton, 1 MBP)

► STATS

Body 7, Mind 5, Soul 0

► DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

Armour: 10, Health Points 60, Attack Combat Value: 6, Defense Combat Value: 4

SOP-5 BRIGHT STAR

60 MECHA POINTS

The Bright Star orbital weapons platform is a robot satellite built to provide regional aerospace defense. UNPACFOR has placed eight Bright Stars in low Osiran orbit; there is usually one within range of any particular point on the planet for about an hour or so every six hours. The dry ice clouds and ghost fog mean the Bright Star's lasers are mostly limited to engaging space targets (such as TAVs or OTVs approaching Emissary Station), however, the kinetic kill missiles that are also mounted on it are quite effective. The inability of the Bright Star's infrared or radar sensors to see clearly through the ghost fog means that someone must be on the ground to act as an observer; if a target's exact co-ordinates can be radioed up, the Bright Star is capable of accurate ground strikes. Military.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (radio, laser communicator, 2 MP), **A.I.** – 3 (6 MP), **ECM** – 4 (missile jamming, 4 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 4 (4 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 2 (8 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Sensors** – 5 (5 MP), **Stealth** – 1 (sensor, 1 MP), **Toughness** – 1 (4 MP), **Weapon** – 8: HEL (30 damage, accurate x 2, long range x 5, only in good weather, 32 MP), **Weapon** – 8: kinetic kill weapon pod (60 damage, area-effect, spreading, long range x 5, limited shots: six salvos, slow, stoppable, 2 MP)

► MECHA DEFECT

Awkward Size (2 MBP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (None, 2 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (2 MBP), **Volatile** (2 MBP)

► STATS

Body 6, Mind 4, Soul 0

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 20, Health Points: 60, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

DRONES

Drones are dumb remote-control robots.

HANGAROO MINE

5 MECHA POINTS

These missile traps are hand-built by Selket activists using salvage hunter munitions to discourage salvage hunters from "desecrating" star tombs. They consist of a remote-controlled missile launcher with a dumb robot brain and sensor that fires a Hellstreak kinetic kill missile at anything approaching in range without giving a correct ID signal. The Kangaroo system is buried with only the sensor extending out; the weapon pops up to fire. The backblast from the launch destroys the robot. It is suitcase-sized and masses 20 kg. Paramilitary.

▶ MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

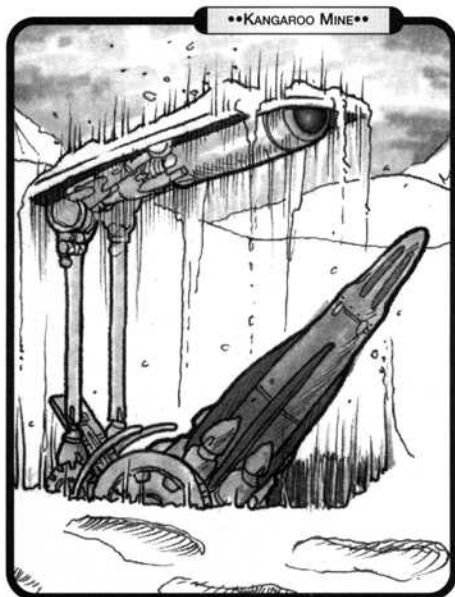
A.I. - 2 (4 MP), **Extra Endurance** - 3 (3 MP), **Sensors** - 1 (1 MP), **Stealth** - 1 (sensors, 1 MP), **Weapon Attack** - 1: Hellstreak missile (75 damage, concealable, homing, indirect, long range, self-destruct, slow, static, stoppable, unreliable, 4 MP)

▶ MECHA DEFECTS

No Arms (2 MBP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (2 MBP), **Volatile** (2 MBP)

▶ DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 20



MAV-4 FLYBOT

2 MECHA POINTS

MAV-4 is a robot surveillance insect. Its cameras can relay real-time video imagery to whomever controls it. A superconducting battery powers MAV-4. It cruises at up to 50 kph, but can only operate for 10 minutes before it runs out of energy.

The MAV-4 is used by UNPACFOR, but everyone has access to similar technology. They can be controlled through any radio data link (such as a comlink). Paramilitary.

▶ MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

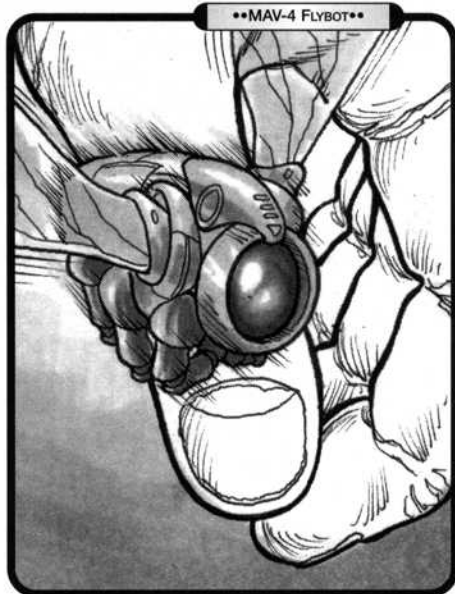
Accessories - 2 (night vision, radio, 2 MP), **A.I.** - 2 (4 MP), **Flight** - 1 (can hover, 4 MP), **Life Support** (1 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus** - 1 (flight, 1 MP), **Wall Crawling** (1 MP)

▶ MECHA DEFECTS

Diminutive (6 MBP), **Limited Endurance** (1 MBP), **No Arms** (2 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (2 MBP)

▶ DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 1



WARBOTS

These are autonomous warbots whose central processor is a CENCOR-Neurodynamics TAI-4 cyberbrain derived from xenomech brain technology. This makes them sapient entities according to law. In order for a warbot to have joined UNPACFOR, its original parent A.I. must have uploaded a copy of itself into a war machine, and the copy must have decided it liked the job. Warbots tend to be fairly similar in personality to human soldiers, but a bit more gung-ho: memory is data backed up on disk at UNPACFOR headquarters, which means they can come back from the dead.

ASRAI

SPECIES TEMPLATE COST: 60 POINTS

The Autonomous Scout Robot — Artificial Intelligence is the British Army's latest reconnaissance robot, first built in 2137. The Eurobot ASRAI models constructed in Alpha Centauri belong to the Queen's Royal Hussars. ASRAI resembles a wolf-sized robot spider, its head studded with multiple antennae. Its body is made almost entirely of synthetic diamond. It has six segmented legs equipped with diamond-tipped claws and nanosuction pads, and two manipulator arms. ASRAI's many electromagnetic sensors are installed on a mast-mounted telescoping sight with electro-optical, laser, and radar sensors. The sensors can extend up to two metres, enabling it to peer over land coral or hillsides without exposing its body. Its head also includes highly sensitive microphones, as well as magnetic sensors and seismic probes that let it detect objects not in line of sight. Its main armament is a chin-mounted Grail Optics microwave laser. Built into its torso is a "hive" for carrying and recharging five MAV-4 Flybots. Military.



► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories - 2 (inertial navigation system, laser communicator, radio, 2 points), **ECM** - 2 (commo jamming, 2 points), **Heavy Armour** - 2 (thin spot, 7 points), **Heightened Senses** - 2 (hearing x 2, 2 points), **Jumping** - 1 (1 point), **Life Support** - 2 (2 point), **Own a Big Mecha** - 1 (less powerful: -10 MP, 2 points), **Reincarnation** - 4 (8 points), **Sensors** - 2 (2 points), **Sensors** - 1 (indirect, 1 point), **Special Defense** - 1 (ageing, 1 point), **Special Defense** - 2 (disease, 2 points), **Special Movement** - 1 (wall-crawling, 1 point), **Speed** - 2 (2 points), **Stealth** - 2 (sensors, 2 points), **Stealth** - 1 (vision, 1 point), **Weapon** - 3: M109 Microwave Laser (30 damage, irritant to machines, 12 points; see Delta Hawk, page 58), **Weapon** - 2: diamond claws (30 damage, armour-penetrating, melee, 1 point)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Marked (2 BP), **Special Requirement** (healing requires mechanical repairs and tools, 1 BP), **Weak Point** (2 BP), **Volatile** (1 BP)

► STATS

Body 5, Mind 6, Soul 4

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 20, Health Points: 60, Energy Points: 30, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

MARA

SPECIES TEMPLATE COST: 70 POINTS

The Mobile Autonomous Robotic Armour is a 10-tonne robotic light tank used by the British Army. First manufactured 2125, it is designed to be easily air and space portable and intended for contingencies (such as counter-insurgency warfare), where heavier armour is inappropriate or simply too heavy to easily transport to a destination.

MARA has a tracked armoured body topped by a two-metre high armoured rotating pedestal on which is mounted a 30mm long-barrel railgun, along with various sensors and antennae. Among them is a small dome in which an anti-missile laser is installed. The MARA is powered by a 500 kW hydrogen-burning engine, which moves it at up to 70 kph. Military.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (radio, inertial navigation system, laser communicator, 2 points), **Damn Healthy!** – 4 (4 points), **BCM** – 2 (missile jamming, 2 point), **Ground Movement** – 2 (4 points), **Heavy Armour** – 5 (thin spot, 19 points), **Life Support** – 2 (2 point), **Reincarnation** – 4 (8 points), **Sensors** – 2 (2 points), **Sensors** – 1 (indirect, 1 point), **Special Defense** – 1 (ageing, 1 point), **Special Defense** – 2 (disease, 2 points), **Stealth** – 2 (sensors, 2 points), **Stealth** – 1 (vision, 1 point), **Weapon** – 6: 30mm railgun (60 damage, armour-penetrating, long range, 24 points), **Weapon** – 5: microwave laser turret (30 damage, accurate x 2, irritant to machines, 1 point; see Delta Hawk, page 58)

► MECHA DEFECTS

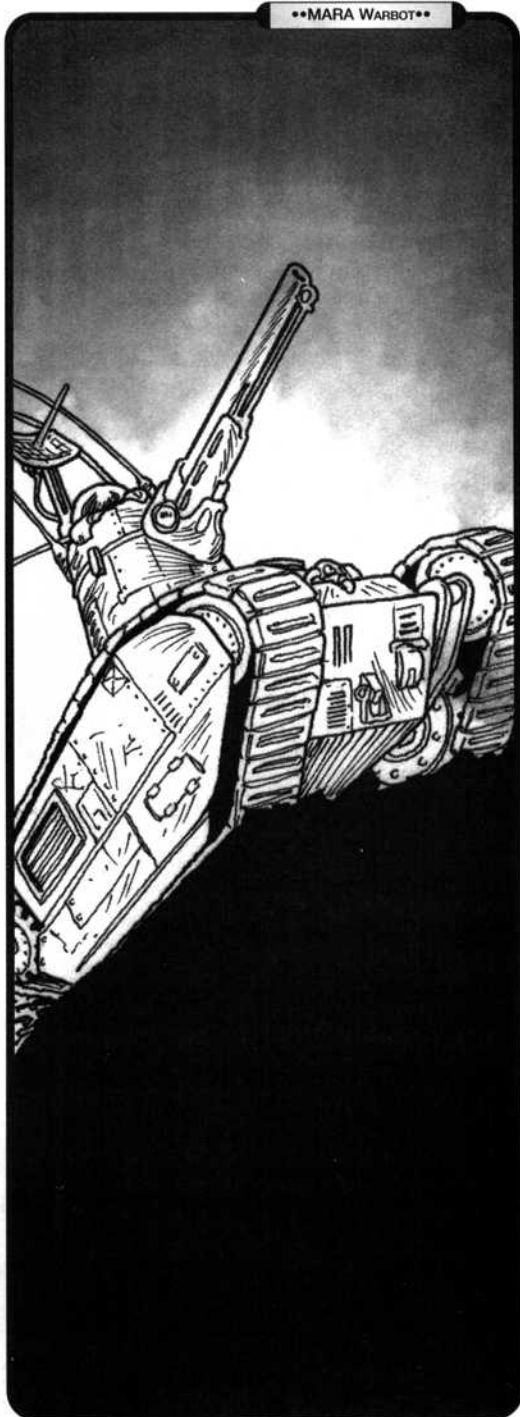
Awkward Size (3 BP), **Marked** (2 BP), **No Hands** (2 BP), **Owned by a Megacorp** (UNPACFOR, 2 BP), **Sensory Impairment** (no sense of taste or smell, 2 BP), **Special Requirement** (healing requires mechanical repairs and tools, 1 BP), **Weak Point** (2 BP), **Volatile** (1 BP)

► STATS

Body 6, Mind 5, Soul 4

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 50, Health Points: 90, Energy Points: 45, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3



Centauri Knights

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CYBORGS

A cyborg is a human brain in a machine body. They are treated as characters rather than mecha.

CENCOR GENESIS GX OR GY CYBORG BODY

SPECIES TEMPLATE COST: 6 CHARACTER POINTS.

This is a general-purpose cyborg body manufactured by CENCOR for use by brain pod colonists; it comes in both male and female models. The Genesis looks exactly like a youthful, athletic human body, and possesses similar characteristics.

A Genesis costs an average person about two year's wages to purchase outright, so most immigrants will rent the body, or lease-to-own from CENCOR. This option amounts to taking the Owned by a Megacorp Defect, since failure to pay can have dire consequences. Various custom options, from an enhanced Appearance Attribute to subdermal pouches are available from clinics. See Cyborgs (page 36) in Chapter 2. Civilian

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 1 (implanted comlink, 1 point), **Appearance** – 1 (1 point), **Life Support** – 1 (1 point), **Light Armour** – 1 (hidden, 1 point), **Special Defense** – 1 (ageing, 1 point), **Special Defense** – 2 (disease, 2 points).

► MECHA DEFECTS

Special Restriction: healing requires repairs (1 BP).



BM-7K "RUSSIAN DOLL"

SPECIES TEMPLATE COST: 20 CHARACTER POINTS

The BM-7K is an undercover para-cyborg used by Kosmos Spetnaz info-war soldiers. It is externally identical to the Genesis GY or GX, but has subdermal armour, boosted senses and reflexes, enhanced carbon-nanotube pseudo-muscles, and a diamondoid skeleton. Similar cyborg bodies are used by US Army Special Forces and ACES undercover operatives, but the MM-7K has one special capability: its built-in IMIS (invasive mind-interface shunt). Finger-mounted nanoprobe can penetrate into a co-operative, restrained, or unconscious subject's brain, allowing the cyborg "brain dive" into a human mind and extract electrochemical information from the subject's short-term memory. This functions as the Telepathy Attribute, but only useful to invade a mind, not to read surface thoughts or send thoughts. Military.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (implanted comlink, night vision, 2 points), **Appearance** – 1 (1 point), **Damn Healthy!** – 1 (1 point), **Heightened Awareness** – 1 (1 point), **Jumping** – 1 (1 point), **Light Armour** – 2 (hidden, 2 points), **Special Defense** – 1 (ageing, 1 points), **Special Defense** – 2 (disease, 2 points), **Speed** – 1 (1 point), **Super-Strength** – 1 (3 points), **Telepathy** – 4 (8 points)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Special Restriction: healing requires repairs (1 BP), **Unique Defect:** Telepathy cannot read minds or send thoughts, and requires touch (2 BP)

OSIRAN RELICS

Salvage hunter teams can discover all kinds of Osiran relics in the star tombs. Every hunter dreams of finding a unique relic and becoming rich and famous, but the vast majority of these have already been discovered. Even so, many remain rare and valuable.

RELIC CATEGORIES

UNEXT is in charge of categorizing Osiran relics. They have divided finds into four categories:

GENERAL (CLASS G)

Relics approved for commercial sale. This category includes coin belts (page 69), dead dream jewels (see below), exo-sleeves (page 69), repair spray (page 69), and shimmersilk (page 69). Commercial relics may be removed from star tombs by any CAT and retained or sold.

CONTROLLED (CLASS C)

These relics may only be sold through licensed dealers with Class C or H licenses. They include live dream jewels (see below), Scarabs (page 74), and Tinkerbells (page 72), and wrecked xenomechs whose armaments are not intact.

HAZARDOUS (CLASS H)

Relics that are considered to be dangerous to society. Hazardous items must be immediately reported to UNSAID and can only be bought by or sold to companies or individuals with a Class H salvage license. Class H items include: Assembler Eggs (page 72), and salvageable Cobras (page 70), Scorpions (page 71), Stingrays (page 75), or Xenopanzers (page 76-77). If discovered by a company without a Class H license, UNEXT regulations require the finder to withdraw from the area and keep the site under observation until the authorities arrive.

UNKNOWN (CLASS X)

These are unique relics whose category or function has yet to be determined. Regulations require that Class X relics be turned over to UNSAID (or their location reported) within one week of discovery.

When a proscribed relic (Class X or H) is turned over to UNSCAT, it will evaluate the relic and then pay the finder a bonus based on its estimated value. This bonus may later be increased if the relic turns out to be exceptionally valuable, or if it is resold to a corporation or government. If the relic turns out not to be valuable and is classed as non-hazardous, it may be returned to the owner, who still retains the initial bonus.

MATERIALS

The Osiran star tombs are described in Chapter 4. One element the tombs share with many Osiran devices is that they are often made of “smart matter” — similar to, but more advanced than, the active microscopic motors, sensors, and computers incorporated into many human gadgets. Osiran smart matter is active down to the molecular level, often self-healing, and occasionally able to meld with other smart matter.

DREAM JEWELS

Dream jewels, also known as brain jewels, are red crystal lenses about 11 mm in diameter with a soft black backing. Each dream jewel is a combination biochip, nanocomputer, and laser communicator. In order to function, it must be surgically implanted in the skull (normally the forehead) and the biochip connected to the user's brain.

The supply of dream jewels comes from those removed from Osiran corpses and tested to be “live” — most have flaws in their nanocircuitry that rendered them inert or potentially flawed. Approximately one out of every 200 dream jewels are still “live” (roll 3 dice: if an 18 is rolled, it is a live jewel). A dead jewel will have no effect. Checking a jewel to determine if it is “live” takes one minute, Electronics (nanotechnology) Skill and a SQUID.

DREAM JEWEL NEUROSURGERY

Implanting a dream jewel requires four hours of neurosurgery, and a Mind/Body-based Medical (surgery) Skill check. Surgery is hazardous: success means the subject recovers within five hours; failure by 1-2 destroys the jewel and causes trauma leaving the subject in a coma for 1-2 weeks; failure by 3-4 also causes a permanent loss of -1 Mind or other significant trauma (such as amnesia or blindness); failure by 5 or more either leaves the victim brain dead or, at GM's option, in a coma that may last weeks, months or years. Removing a dream jewel is a similar process but more difficult — apply a +3 penalty on Skill checks.

MIND ECHOES

About one in six live dream jewels contain multi-terabyte brainvid recordings of Osiran sensory experiences. The prevailing theory regarding mind echo origins is that Osiran dream jewels could deliberately record experiences, and that Osirans did so as a keepsake (like carrying a picture in a wallet). This interpretation is supported by the fact that many mind echoes seem to be of emotionally charged moments such as ceremonies, childbirth, or sexual encounters. A minority of researchers continue to believe what Dr. Kwan, the original discover, thought: that the mind echoes are actually a random snapshot of the original Osiran implantee's memories, captured at the time of his or her death.

A dream jewel can be checked for mind echoes by probing it with a SQUID Brain-Dive Unit. The process takes 15 minutes and requires a Mind-based Electronics (nanotechnology) Skill check. Copying mind echoes into computer media takes about two hours.

If successfully implanted into a human, he or she will certainly begin to experience disturbing alien dreams as he or she sleeps. This may result in a Recurring Nightmares Defect.

GHOST FOG

The atmosphere of Osiris and intact space habitats is filled with a very thin, white mist that restricts visibility to about 1,500 metres. Its existence is the reason why there are few relics in the Osiran buildings, spacecraft, or star tombs. The mist is not composed of water droplets, like an ordinary fog. Instead, it is formed from "nanostats."

Nanostats are microscopic flying robots made of diamond. They can remain aloft because their interior is a vacuum, and hence the bodies are lighter than air. The nanostats have polyhedral bodies, and are equipped with 12 tiny robotic arms, a small air turbine, a simple-minded computer, a quantum-dot laser sensor/communicator, and a power cell. Normally, a cloud of ghost fog floats in the same spot but, on command, the nanostats can coalesce and link arms to fashion a specific solid object. Linking occurs so quickly that the object appears to form magically out of the air. Nanostats come in all primary colours and thus can create objects in a variety of patterns and hues by linking in precise formations.

The objects created by ghost fog are simple solids without moving parts, like a chair, blanket, shelf, screwdriver, bowl, knife, or scarf. Complex machines and electronics cannot be formed, which means that creating things like motors or computers is impossible. It is also impossible for them to create items that require complex chemical compounds, specialized elements, proteins, or biological organisms. For example, ghost fog could conjure gold-coloured coins but not gold coins. Likewise, ghost fog is chemically inert — you could not make ammunition, a hamburger, or a battery. Items are limited to things that do not require high tensile strengths or exotic properties, so no turbine blades or superconductors, but objects can have any colour, pattern, or texture.

The wearer of a live dream jewel who knows how to command ghost fog is known as a Fog Witch. He or she can manipulate ghost fog in ways that seem like magic and can conjure objects out of the fog with a thought. What is actually happening is that the dream jewel's nanocomputer interface reads the user's intent, then sends out an invisible radio or infrared laser signal to ghost fog nanostats telling them how to behave. In some cases, the nanostats then signal other nanostats, further passing on the commands. A Fog Witch needs to be within three metres and in line of sight of a patch of ghost fog to control it. If the fog is inside something (whether it is a person or an object), it does not respond to commands. Control requires

visualising the object that is to be formed or dissolved. An object that has been formed is perfectly solid and can be removed from the area of fog where it was created. If a solid fog object is broken, however, it loses cohesion and dissolves into fog.

There is a limit to how many objects can be solidified from a given patch of fog. 40 cubic metres of fog (the contents of a typical bedroom-sized chamber) can form about 10 kilograms of objects. Most solid fog items are lightweight but reasonably strong (being made of linked diamond), so this actually allows creating workable beds, chairs, or other furniture. Items must be dissolved before they can be changed. They break down in about 12 years on their own accord and transform back into mist if not renewed. This function was designed to eliminate garbage build up, but also explains why there are very few domestic relics.

OSIRAN PERSONAL GEAR

The Osiran preference for ghost fog means few personal items have been found in the star tombs themselves. Corpses, however, are occasionally discovered with items that the individual must have been carrying or were wearing. Evidently, these devices required tougher materials than solid fog.

COINBELT

A belt made of linked platinum disks each about 2.7 cm in diameter, pierced by platinum wire. This Osiran ornament is found worn about the waist. Each coin has a different Osiran face carved on it. A mundane item.

EXO-SLEEVE

This six-fingered Osiran glove covers the hand and arm up to the elbow and is designed to assist with delicate repairs. The glove and sleeve are made of smart matter, and each of its fingers can branch into three smaller fingers, and so on, until the final "fingers" are microscopic filaments. The exo-sleeve is controlled by its own built-in nanocomputers integrated into its structure. The glove provides a -2 bonus when performing Electronics or Mechanics Skill checks that involve micro-repairs. A major item.



GROWSNACH

A chunk of orange protoplasm that tastes like mushroom steak and can be eaten raw. Under sunlight, a chunk will regenerate itself, growing in almost any conditions. Mundane item.

REPAIR SPRAY

This is a small aerosol bulb holding a suspension of nanobots. When sprayed on an object, the tiny robots will go to work, attempting to diagnose and repair any damage detected. A bulb of Repair Spray functions like the Level 2 Healing Attribute (*BESM*, page 99) but is only usable on machines. If used on human-built machines, roll one die. On a 1-4 it works, but on a 5-6 it inflicts damage instead of healing. Each bulb is only good for healing a maximum of 40 damage points before it is empty. A minor item.

SHIMMERSILK ROBES

These ceremonial items, woven by trained nerve spiders, are one of the few things Osirans wore that were not made of smart matter. A mundane item, but robes in good condition can command high prices.

XENOMECHS

A xenomech is an Osiran robot. Some xenomechs have survived for thousands of years, thanks to their built-in self-repair capacity. Others have been newly created as a result of humans discovering Assembler Eggs and accidentally or deliberately “hatching” a newborn alien machine.

Xenomechs are made of Osiran “smart matter” with their intelligence distributed in molecular-sized computers through their bodies. Their bodies have a high degree of self-repair capability, allowing them to regenerate unless severely damaged. They can also interpenetrate Osiran smart-matter walls (much as a Fog Witch can).

Xenomechs are powered by superconducting batteries and will recharge themselves from star tomb power supplies. It can “shut down” into a sleeper mode for centuries, then rapidly reactivate itself using a tiny trickle of power to maintain sensor systems. Upon detecting an intruder the sensors send a “wake up signal,” which activates its main systems.

COBRA

50 MECHA POINTS

This “snakebot” has a triangular head, knobby antennae, a circular “mouth,” and a long serpentine body that coils accordion-fashion, giving it a great deal of flexibility. The machine also has 20 pairs of legs and consequently, it more closely resembles a giant metal centipede than a Cobra. It gained the Cobra name from its ability to spit gobs of disassembler venom, producing an effect similar to the Alkahest (page 78), albeit on a smaller and more localized scale. A Cobra that has used up its venom will require about 4 hours (“per shot”) to remanufacture it, by sucking in ghost fog and transforming it to a more lethal form.



If encountered “in the wild” Cobras will often shadow a target until they can make a favourable attack, strike quickly, use up their venom, and then retreat. Xenotechnologists believe that Cobras may have been infiltration rather than pure combat machines. They are capable of moving through narrow pipes or ducts. A favourite tactic involves using their venom to melt through objects that are blocking their path.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 1 (laser communicator, 1 MP), **A.I.** – 4 (8 MP), **Elasticity** – 2 (2 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 2 (2 MP), **Heightened Senses** – 1 (smell, 1 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 2 (8 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus** – 2 (ground, 2 MP), **Mecha Regeneration** – 1 (4 MP), **Meld** – 1 (Osiran smart matter, 2 MP), **Sensors** – 1 (1 MP), **Speed** – 2 (40 kph, 2 MP), **Water Speed** – 1 (2 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 4: “nanospit” disassembler venom (60 damage, burning, armour-penetrating, spreading, limited shots: six, short-range, unreliable, 16 MP). If hatched from Assembler Egg add: Super Transformation – 1 (hungry fog is the half-powered form, 3 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Reduced Capacity (2 MBP), **Sensory Impairment** (short-sighted, 1 MBP). If hatched from Assembler Egg, add **Involuntary Transformation** (1 MBP), **One-Way Transformation** (2 MBP)

► STATS

Body 10, Mind 2, Soul 0

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 20, Health Points: 40, Attack Combat Value 6, Defense Combat Value 4

SCORPION

70 MECHA POINTS

A Scorpion is the primary Osiran combat robot. It is a low-slung, vaguely insectoid machine that sometimes seems to be carved from a smoky orange-red gem. The head is wedge-shaped, about two metres long and wide, attached to a body formed from three oval segments each with a pair of multi-jointed clawed legs. A single slit in its head houses both an optical sensor and searchlight. It has an articulated tail (a further 2.2 metres long) that is often raised scorpion-like over its body. The tail is tipped with a ball-shaped laser projector, which is both weapon and sensor. A variety of sensor antennae can retract out of the head. Also in the head is a launcher for neural harpoons — tiny darts that burrow into the body and begin spreading lethal nanomachines into the nervous system.

Scorpions are only concerned with defeating their adversaries. A “wild” Scorpion encountered in a star tomb will attempt to eradicate intruders, but will do so with considerable cunning, co-operating with other Scorpions or Cobras. They have been known to use quite sophisticated tactics, such as injuring but not killing a victim in order to lure out other prey. Scorpions in star tombs are normally following orders to defend or quarantine a specific area, and they will usually not pursue prey if that would take them more than a few kilometres from it. Scorpions can communicate in the Osiran language via pulsed laser signals. The vast majority of Scorpions neither know nor care anything of Osiran culture — they were simply grown in nanofabricators (or via assembler eggs) for the war.



► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (laser communicator, searchlight, 2 MP), **A.I.** – 4 (8 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 3 (3 MP), **Heightened Senses** – 1 (smell, 1 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 4 (16 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Manoeuvre Bonus** – 1 (1MP), **Mecha Regeneration** – 3 (12 MP), **Meld** – 1 (smart matter, 2 MP), **Sensors** – 1 (1 MP), **Speed** – 2 (40 kph, 2 MP), **Super-Strength** – 1 (3 MP), **Toughness** – 1 (4 MP), **Weapon** – 4: multi-frequency laser (45 damage, accurate, 16 MP), **Weapon** – 3: neural harpoons (45 damage, armour-penetrating, drain mind, homing, no damage, limited shots x 2: three, 1 MP). If summoned from Assembler Egg add: **Super Transformation** – 1 (3 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (2 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (2 MBP). If hatched from Assembler Egg add **Involuntary Transformation** (1 MBP), **One-Way Transformation** (hungry fog to Scorpion, 2 MBP)

► STATS

Body 10, Mind 2, Soul 0

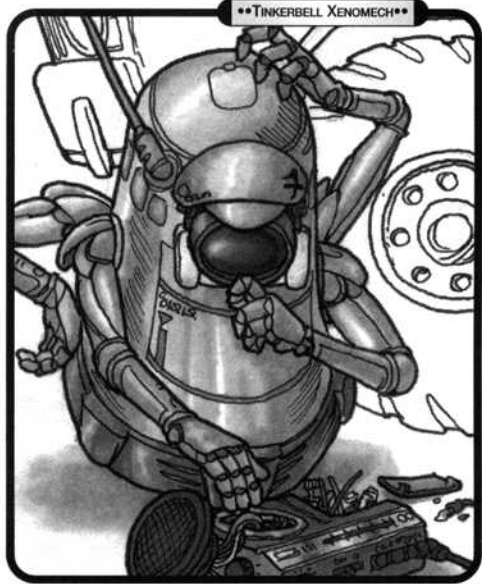
► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 40, Health Points: 60, Attack Combat Value 6, Defense Combat Value 4

TINHERBELL

SPECIES TEMPLATE COST: 15 CHARACTER POINTS

This Osiran technical robot is vaguely bell-shaped, has four arms equipped with exo-sleeve (page 69) fingers and moves on a cushion of air. It masses 40 kg and stands 90 cm tall. On Osiris, Tinkerbells will not leave their star tombs, but Tinkerbells in the habitats can be found wandering through the cities, performing repairs. They are not hostile: if attacked they will attempt to escape, but otherwise they will ignore intruders. If they find untended non-Osiran equipment, they will often examine it, find out that it does not interface properly, and begin dismantling it to see "what is wrong" with the systems. This usually results in the equipment being wrecked, but on rare occasions, human systems have been rebuilt in strange but functional (or even superior) fashion.



► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories (built-in tool kit, 1 point), **Extra Arms** - 2 (2 points), **Life Support** - 2 (2 points), **Light Armour** - 2 (2 points), **Mechanical Genius** - 1 (2 points), **Regeneration** - 2 (2 points), **Special Movement** - 2 (light-footed, water-walking, 2 points)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Easily Distracted (broken gadgets, 1 BP), **Inept Combat** (1 BP), **Marked** (2 BP), **Sensory Impairment** (near-sighted, 1 BP)

► SKILLS

Electronics (robotics) - 3 (12 points), **Mechanics (micro)** - 2 (8 points)

► STATS

Body 4, Mind 5, Soul 0

ASSEMBLER EGGS

These egg-shaped canisters are a mottled orange-red in colour. They contain pre-programmed templates and specialized nanomachines designed to transform other matter into products. Archaeologists believe that Assembler Eggs are stored military equipment, and that Osiran attack vessels would actually drop them on the enemy (or fire them out of mass drivers) much as humans used to drop paratroopers.

Sending a coded laser signal to an Assembler Egg can hatch it — the Osirans used their dream jewels to do this. Since humans do not know these codes, the way people hatch them is to cut or blast them open. An Egg has 5 points of armour. Inflicting up to 10 points of damage (after armour) will crack the egg open and cause it to hatch, without destroying the contents; 11 or more points will wreck the egg and contents. When Eye of Re uses Assembler Eggs as mines, a small explosive detonator is rigged to blow them open.

When an egg "hatches" it releases a "cannibal cloud" of metamorphic nanomachines, both disassemblers and assemblers. These will cannibalize any objects they can find: in a matter of minutes, if they find sufficient material to work with, they will transform them into whatever the egg is designed to build. If they do not find sufficient material, the result will be a half-formed, non-functional creation.

Assembler Eggs are rare. They are usually found only inside Scarabs or one-in-six star tombs. Assembler Eggs are marked with scent-labels that identify their type. Two types of egg have so far been encountered: Scorpion and Cobra.

SCORPION EGG

These are 90 cm long and 45 cm in diameter, and weigh about 45 kg. They are "Class H" salvage. UNSAID has a stockpile of 22 Scorpion Eggs in its high-security warehouse for study. Eye of Re is believed to have found or stolen at least eight eggs, and to have used five of them so far.

COBRA EGG

These are 30 cm long and 15 cm in diameter, and weigh about 10 kg. They are about three times more common than Scorpion Eggs, but are still considered "Class H" salvage. UNSAID has several dozen that they have stockpiled for study. Eye of Re is believed to have found or stolen at least 30.

HUNGRY FOG HATCHED FROM COBRA EGG

25 MECHA POINTS

The Hungry Fog can only transform after it has successfully destroyed or killed people or machines massing at least 50 kg, half or more of which must be machinery (mecha, scrap, home appliances, etc.). When it has done so, a single Cobra will form from the remains in 5-10 rounds. The Cobra is the "primary" full-powered form, while the Hungry Fog is the half-powered form.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

A.I. - 3 (6 MP), **Insubstantial** - 1 (gaseous form, 4 MP), **Life Support** - 2 (2 MP), **Special Attack** - 4: cannibal nanomachines (15 damage, aura, area-effect, 16 MP), **Summonable** - 2 (8 MP), **Super Transformation** - 1 (3 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Cannot Talk (2 BP), **Limited Endurance** (2 BP), **No Hands** (2 BP), **Not So Tough** (2 BP), **One-Way Transformation** (2 BP), **Reduced Capacity** (2 BP), **Summoning Object** (egg, 2 BP)

► STATS

Body 9, Mind 1, Soul 0

► DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

Health Points: 20, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

HUNGRY FOG HATCHED FROM SCORPION EGG

35 MECHA POINTS

The Hungry Fog can only transform after it has successfully destroyed or killed people or machines massing at least 250 kg, and half or more of that mass must be machinery (mecha, scrap, home appliances, or whatever). Then a single Scorpion will form from the remains in 5-10 rounds. The Scorpion is the "primary" full-powered form, while the Hungry Fog is the half-powered form.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

A.I. - 3 (6 MP), **Insubstantial** - 1 (gaseous form, 4 MP), **Life Support** - 2 (2 MP), **Special Attack** - 5: cannibal nanomachines (30 damage, aura, area-effect, 20 MP), **Summonable** - 2 (8 MP), **Super Transformation** - 1 (3 MP), **Toughness** - 1 (4 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Cannot Talk (2 BP), **Limited Endurance** (2 BP), **No Hands** (2 BP), **One-Way Transformation** (2 BP), **Reduced Capacity** (2 BP), **Summoning Object** (2 BP)

► STATS

Body 9, Mind 1, Soul 0

► DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

Health Points: 60, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

OSIRAN VEHICLES

These are piloted craft used by the Osirans.

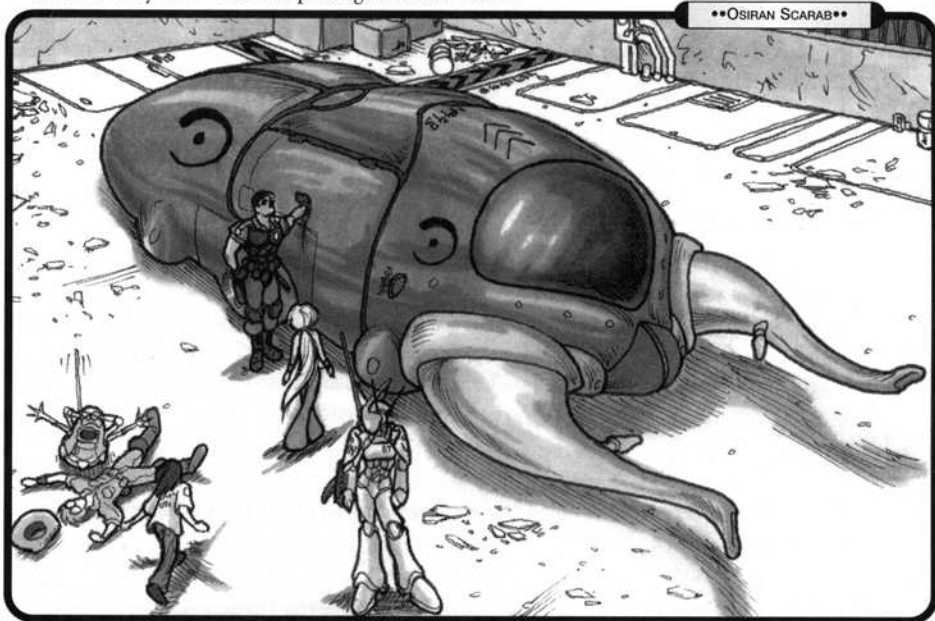
SCARAB

55 MECHA POINTS

Named for its beetle-like shape, this craft is the most common manned alien vehicle found. It is a streamlined, wingless, direct-lift flying transport vehicle. A Scarab has a tri-segmented body nine metres long and up to three metres wide. The shorter ovoid "head" has a cluster of antennae; the cylindrical body contains the crew and passenger section, while the final segment contains the cargo bay. The main engine is mounted under the body. It is a fusion air/ram that sucks in air, combines it with a minute quantity of antimatter, and then expels it as a hot plasma exhaust. There are four thrust vents (two on either side of the body). The fusion reactor can also reconfigure itself to function as a rocket engine for space flight. The engine generates about 40,000 kg of thrust.

The crew area is a "control pool" just large enough for three humans, which is filled with an electro-conductive nanogel that absorbs shock, transmits oxygen, and acts as a mind-interface with the controls. There are no manual controls in the vessel.

Crashed Scarabs have occasionally been found on the surface of Osiris as well as inside star tomb habitats. They sometimes have passengers or crew aboard.



► MECHA ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (radio, laser communicator, 2 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 3 (up to eight people and two tonnes cargo, 3 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 4 (4 MP), **Flight** – 2 (can hover, 8 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 2 (8 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Sensors** – 2 (2 MP), **Space Flight** – 2 (4 MP), **Toughness** – 3 (12 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 4: plasma lance (60 damage, 16 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (3 MBP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 MBP), **Volatile** (1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 20, Health Points: 100

STINGRAY

110 MECHA POINTS

Very few Stingrays — Synthesis aerospace warships — have actually been found. Its body suggests a giant blue-black ray, 70 metres across and 47 metres long. Its spiny “tail” adds an extra 28 metres to its length. The craft uses an antimatter plasma drive (the wings and tail spines are radiators) that emits a flare that is very visible during flight. The craft is unarmed, but a liquid metal portal in the vessel’s belly opens into a massdriver launch bay that can carry up to two dozen Assembler Eggs or other cargo.

••OSIRAN STINGRAY••



► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories – 2 (airlock, radio and laser com, 2 MP), **A.I.** – 5 (10 MP), **ECM** – 3 (commo, sensor, missile jamming, 5 MP), **Extra Capacity** – 2 (10 tonnes, 2 MP), **Extra Endurance** – 5 (5 MP), **Flight** – 4 (12 MP), **Heavy Armour** – 4 (16 MP), **Life Support** – 2 (2 MP), **Sensors** – 5 (5 MP), **Space Flight** – 4 (8 MP), **Stealth** – 2 (2 MP), **Toughness** – 5 (20 MP), **Water Speed** – 1 (can travel underwater, 3 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 7: Anti-particle beam (90 damage, area, armour-penetrating, long range, fixed, only in vacuum, 28 MP), **Weapon Attack** – 7: Nanonic harpoons (75 damage, homing, long range, 2 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (5 BP), **No Arms** (2 BP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 BP), **Volatile** (2 BP), **Vulnerability** (Alkahest, 1 BP)

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Body 7, Mind 7, Soul 0

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 40, Health Points: 120, Attack Combat Value: 7, Defense Combat Value: 5

LIGHT XENOPANZER

40 MECHA POINTS

This device, in dormant form, is a belt fashioned from nine shape-metal disks, each one-two cm across and linked together. The belt is flexible and somewhat elastic; it will fit around any human (or Osiran) waist. One of the disks is slightly larger (3 cm) and has a socket plug in it. Only someone with a live dream jewel implant can use the belt. On mental command, the disks flatten and smear over the wearer's body, effectively covering him or her with a formfitting quicksilver suit. The suit follows the body's contours exactly, with the exception of the face, which is surrounded by the suit's ovoid helmet and display system.

The xenopanzer's main disadvantage is that it is form fitting. Any damage penetrating it fully affects the wearer, and only the skimpiest outfit can be worn under it. The suit can only be worn safely with skin-tight or no clothing — it will destroy any other clothes when activated. The suit feels completely "transparent" to the wearer, whose senses (including touch) are incredibly sharpened. The suit also possesses thermal imaging and radar senses. It can change colour or engage active camouflage.

The suit is not armed. It was designed as a space suit rather than a weapon system. Humans using it for commando operations will normally carry their own additional weaponry (human or Osiran-built). The user can morph the suit's fingers into sharp blades or other small tools (such as screwdrivers), however.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

Accessories - 2 (radio, laser communicator, 2 MP), **Heavy Armour** - 2 (8 MP), **Heightened Senses** - 5 (all but vision, 5 MP), **Jumping** - 2 (2 MP), **Life Support** - 2 (2 MP), **Meld** - 1 (smart matter, 2 MP), **Mecha Regeneration** - 1 (4 MP), **Natural Weapon** - 1 (claws, 1 MP), **Sensors** - 1 (1 MP), **Speed** - 2 (2 MP), **Stealth** - 2 (sensors, 2 MP), **Stealth** - 1 (smell, 1 MP), **Stealth** - 1 (vision, 1 MP), **Summonable** - 2 (8 MP), **Super-Strength** - 1 (3 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Mutual Damage (2 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (1 MBP), **Summoning Object** (1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 20



HEAVY XENOPANZER

80 MECHA POINTS

This is a solid Osiran xenopanzer. It resembles an abstract, slightly insectoid diamond Osiran, only somewhat larger (2.4 metres tall) and made of diamondoid smart matter. There are no openings: the only way to wear it is to use the Fog Witch "Meld" power to integrate oneself with the suit. Moreover, its "tail" weapon system is designed so that a sensor ball and laser can be extended over obstacles or around corners — but it can only be used by someone who has an appropriately prehensile tail or stinger.

► MECHA SUB-ATTRIBUTES

A.I. - 2 (4 MP), **Accessories** - 2 (radio, laser communicator, 2 MP), **Heavy Armour** - 4 (16 MP), **Heightened Senses** - 5 (all but taste, 5 MP), **Jumping** - 2 (2 MP), **Life Support** - 2 (2 MP), **Mecha Regeneration** - 1 (4 MP), **Natural Weapon** - 1 (claws, 1 MP), **Sensors** - 1 (1 MP), **Sensors** - 1 (indirect, 1 MP), **Speed** - 2 (2 MP), **Stealth** - 2 (sensors, 2 MP), **Stealth** - 1 (smell, 1 MP), **Stealth** - 1 (vision, 1 MP), **Summonable** - 2 (8 MP), **Super-Strength** - 2 (6 MP), **Toughness** - 1 (4 MP), **Weapon Attack** - 5: wrist-mounted massdriver with disassembler fog grenades (60 damage, area-effect, burning, armour-penetrating, limited shots: six, unreliable, 20 MP), **Weapon Attack** - 5: tail laser (45 damage, accurate, long range, 2 MP)

► MECHA DEFECTS

Awkward Size (1 MBP), **Mutual Damage** (2 MBP), **Reduced Capacity** (1 MBP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Armour: 40, Health Points: 30



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THE GUERRILLAS AND OSIRAN MECHA

Selket are believed to be in illegal possession of at 30-50 Cobra (page 70) and Scorpion (page 71) xenomechs, divided among several hidden experience temples, mainly located in occupied star tombs. Selket are also believed to have a few dozen Tinkerbells and a half dozen or so Scarabs, and possibly one Stingray. Selket rarely stockpile Assembler Eggs, preferring to hatch them in private to make more xenomechs.

Eye of Re is estimated to have two dozen Cobra, a dozen Tinkerbell, and a dozen Scorpion xenomechs, split among 4-6 cells. Most are believed to be hidden in covert bases in bubble farms and residential areas. Some cells have a couple of Assembler Eggs, which Eye of Re usually prefer to use as time bombs, although they could be hatched and tamed by their Fog Witches. One Eye of Re cell operating in Edjo has four xenopanzers (page 76-77). It is unknown whether Eye of Re has any Scarabs or Stingrays.

Selket and Eye of Re cells make continuing efforts to acquire more relics through exploration of star tombs and illicit contacts with salvage hunters.

XENOPLAGUES

The ultimate weapons of the Osiran Apocalypse were killer nanomachines, microscopic robots that attacked their opponents on the molecular level.



THE ALKAHEST

The desolation of Osiris was not a “grey goo” industrial accident — it was an example of “black goo,” a nanotech weapon system. The Alkahest was a self-replicating nanotechnological disassembler: a swarm of tiny nanobots that took apart living and non-living things, and made copies of itself. Each replication took approximately 20 minutes. It took the Alkahest just under 36 hours to destroy Osiris. The Alkahest was programmed to self-destruct after a certain number of replications (passing on this internal clock each time it replicated). All known examples of the Alkahest are shells with burned-out internal nanocomputers. So far, researchers have failed to duplicate the complex programming that allowed them to reproduce.

DISASSEMBLER FOG

This is a more limited version of the Alkahest or Cannibal Fog. It is an aerosol of nanobot disassemblers equipped with tiny molecular “teeth” that can rapidly chew through matter. It is incapable of reproduction, and only active for a few minutes. Sprays and shells filled with Dissembler Fog are used by some Osiran mecha.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE WORLD OF CENTAURI KNIGHTS



ALPHA CENTAURI

Alpha Centauri, at 4.4 light years from Earth, is the second-nearest star system to our own. The nearest is Proxima Centauri, 4.226 light years away. Alpha Centauri consists of the yellow star Alpha Centauri A and the smaller orange star Alpha Centauri B. They orbit one another at a distance varying between 11 AU and 35 AU. An AU is about 150 million km, the distance from the Earth to the Sun.

Alpha Centauri A has four planets: Horus, Isis, Sekhmet-Hathor, and Osiris. Alpha Centauri B has three planets: Re, Set, and Ptah. The majority of humans live on Osiris or in space habitats near it. There is also small base on Re used when studying Osiran ruins there.

****TABLE 4-1****

ALPHA CENTAURI STELLAR CHARACTERISTICS

Name of Star	Alpha Centauri A	Alpha Centauri B
Spectral Type:	G2 V (yellow)	K1 V (orange)
Surface Temperature:	6,370 K	5,854 K
Mass:	1.09 X Sun	0.9 X Sun
Radius:	1.2 X Sun	0.8 X Sun
Luminosity:	1.54 X Sun	0.44 X Sun
Age (years):	5-6 billion	5-6 billion
Life Zone:	1.18-1.61 AU	0.63-0.86 AU.
Planets:	Four planets	Three planets

Mass, radius, and luminosity are given on a scale where our own star, the Sun = 1. The Sun, a G2 V star, is 1.5 billion years younger than Alpha Centauri A.

****ALPHA CENTAURI****

Alpha Centauri A

- G2 V Yellow star
- 4 planets
 - Horus
 - Isis
 - Sekhmet-Hathor
 - Osiris

Proxima Centauri

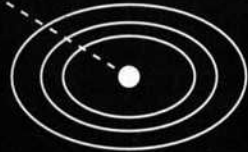
.2055 light years
or 13,000 AU
or 1.95 trillion km
(from Alpha Centauri A&B)

Alpha Centauri B

- K1 V Orange star
- 3 planets
 - Ra
 - Set
 - Ptah

Orbital Distance

11 to 35 AU
or 1.65 to 5.25 billion km



Sol System (Earth)

4.4 light years
or 278,256 AU
or 41.6 trillion km
(from Alpha Centauri A&B)

PEOPLE

Alpha Centauri has a population of 139,400 citizens, divided as follows: Osiris (83,100), Bast Habitat (47,600), Pakhet Habitat (1,200), Ma'at (3,100), Emissary Station (1,800), Anubis Station (2,300), Re Station (300). There are 2,010 UNPACFOR soldiers, most of them on the surface and at Bast and Emissary Station.

76% of the population were born in the Earth system and emigrated to Alpha Centauri, most of which come from the "S-8" space faring powers: Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, Korea, Russia, and the United States. 24% of the population are "star-born" natives. Of these, 15% are cyborgs and 2% are TAIs. All UNPACFOR soldiers or TAI software originated on Earth.

ECONOMICS

Alpha Centauri's standard currency is the System Dollar (\$1). In terms of buying power, \$1 in 2150 is worth about one US cent in 2001. A typical salary is \$4,000,000 a year. Money is encrypted in smart cards or computers, and traded electronically.

JOBS

17% in biotechnology, 16% in education or child care, 15% in information technology, 9% in terraforming, 8% in robotics or nanosystems research, 7% in construction, 4% in manufacturing, 2% health care, 2% in military or security services, 1% in archaeology or salvage hunting, 1% in retail, and 18% in other fields.

EMPLOYERS

73% of people work for CENCOR, 22% for smaller companies, 4% are self-employed, 1% work for UNSAID or UNPACFOR.

GREEN OSIRIS

The "Green Osiris" program run by CENCOR consists of surveying star tombs, eradicating any hostile xenomechs, and then sending in construction teams to repair the tomb reactors, install human controls, and build bubblefarms, shopfacs, roads and pipelines.

ALEXANDRIANISM

The movement takes its name from Alexander the Great, who conquered the Persian Empire but was fascinated by its sophisticated culture. As a result, Alexander adopted Persian dress and customs. Alexandrians are humans who take up Osiran styles and fashions. Casual Alexandrians enjoy xenodreams and wear elements of Osiran clothing or jewellery. Hard core Alexandrians undergo xenomod surgery to adapt themselves to Osiran biospheres.

Alexandrianism originated among salvage hunter teams in the Anubis cluster, who began to wear dream jewels and coinbelts as a badge of status. The impetus for xenomodifications came from bioprosecting teams and the Resurrectionist movement. Its popularity is linked to famed idol, Alice Century, who donned Alexandrian costumes in her brainvids for "Dance of the Scorpions," her second album, and who purchased xenomod enhancements in time for the release of her third album, "Osiris Awakened." High proportions of Alexandrians are xenobeat fans.

Alexandrians often wear replica Osiran jewellery or costume, but most prefer the originals. This helps drive the black market in grave goods, since the demand often outstrips the supply of legitimate items. Likewise, Alexandrians provide an additional clientele for xenosurgery clinics. An estimated 20% of Alpha Centauri population are Alexandrians.

RESURRECTIONISM

Resurrectionists believe that the Osiran ecosystems found in the garden habitats should be transplanted to the surface of Osiris, effectively reseeding the planet. If humans are to colonize Osiris, it should be as gene-engineered xenofoms. Many Alexandrians (about half) are Resurrectionists as well, and tend to be passionate about their beliefs. Some radical Resurrectionists want to use cloning to bring back the Osirans (see Isis Project, page 101). Approximately 12% of Alpha Centauri's population are Resurrectionists.

OSIRIS

Osiris is the fourth planet of Alpha Centauri A. It is similar in size and mass to Earth, and possesses a breathable atmosphere. However, Osiris is no twin to Earth. The biosphere was devastated some 2,000 years ago by nanomachines run amok. All natural life forms were destroyed, along with practically all signs of civilization. The planet's surface was left a wasteland of dusty plains, naked rock, and stark ice. Osiris is now a paradox, a desert world with a breathable atmosphere and abundant water.

The sky is often overcast, due to the thick clouds and ghost fog. Alpha Centauri A is visible as a solar disk, but Alpha Centauri B is simply a bright star. Days on Osiris are about 32 Earth hours, and use a 32-hour clock. Osiris Standard Time (OST) is based on Dustport. As a general rule: 0800 hours is dawn, 1600 hours is noon, 2400 hours is dusk, and 3200 hours is midnight. People usually work 12-hour days.

Osiris is an old world, at least half a billion years older than Earth. The planet is no longer very geologically active: it has few active volcanoes, and earthquakes are rare. Erosion has worn its features; there are more hills than mountains, and those mountains that do exist are smaller and more weathered than the higher ranges on Earth.

There are two major continents: the northern continent of Edjo and the southern continent of Nekhebet. Water covers 63% of the planet's surface. Osiris has two main oceans, Nun and Tet. Nun is the larger of the two, occupying much of the eastern hemisphere. Weather on Nun can be terribly violent, with great storms and tempests raising mountainous waves. Tet is more placid.

OSIRIS AT A GLANCE

OSIRIS

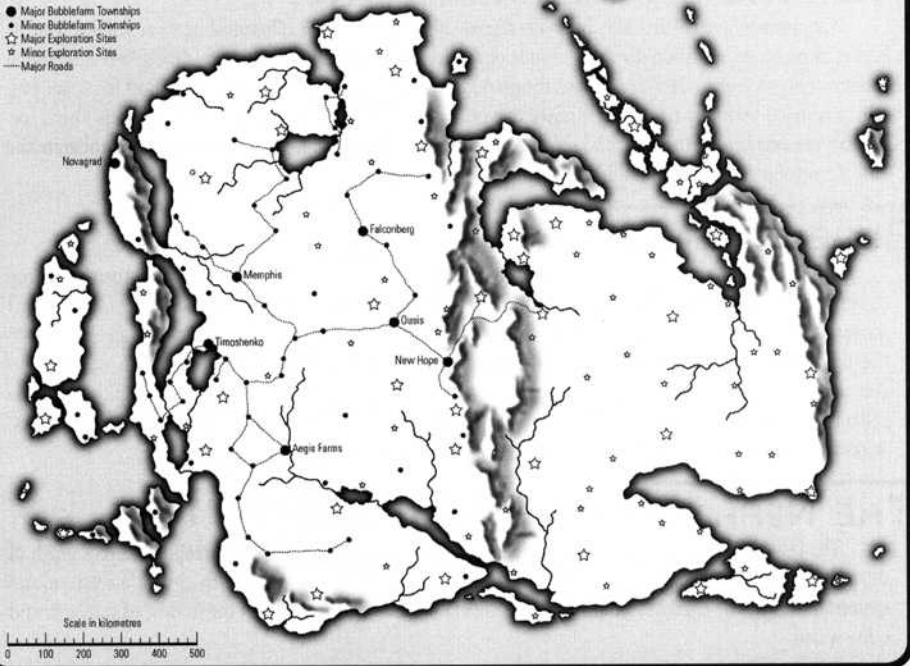
Distance from Star:	1.5 AU
Year:	510 Osiris days (680 Earth days)
Planetary Day:	32 hours
Axial Tilt:	24 degrees (Earthlike seasons)
Diameter:	12,960 km
Density:	5.4 (grams per cubic cm)
Mass:	1.05 Earth masses
Hydrosphere:	Liquid covers 63% of planet's surface
Average Temperature:	297 K (24 °C, 75 °F)
Atmospheric Pressure:	0.95 Earth atmospheres
Atmospheric Composition:	78% nitrogen, 20% oxygen, 2% other gasses
Continents:	Edjo, Nekhebet
Human Population:	83,100 (estimated)

Centauri Knights

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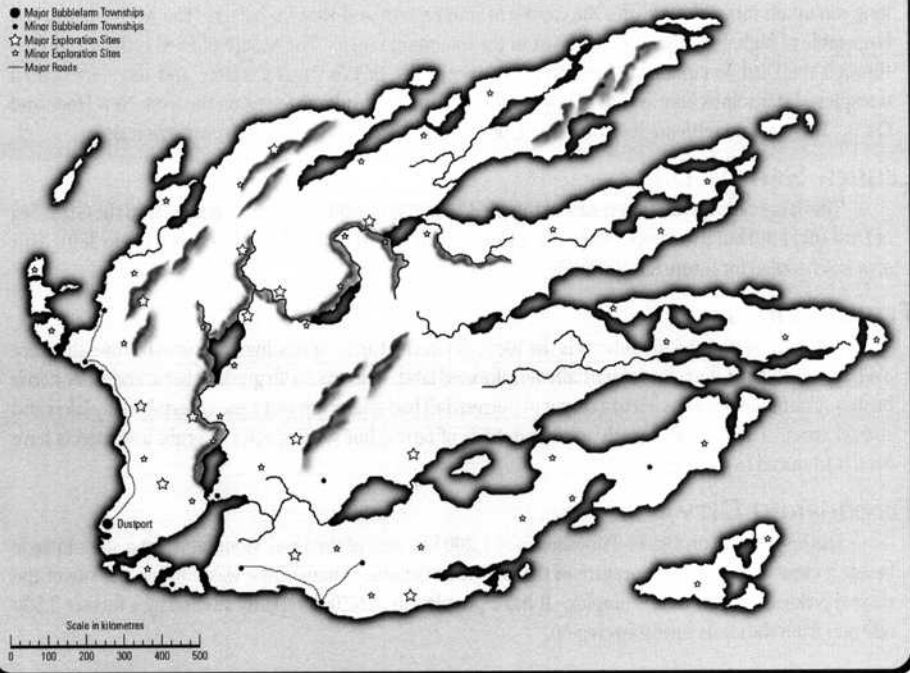
••NEKHEBET MAP••

- Major Bubblefarm Townships
- Minor Bubblefarm Townships
- ☆ Major Exploration Sites
- ★ Minor Exploration Sites
- Major Roads



••EDJO MAP••

- Major Bubblefarm Townships
- Minor Bubblefarm Townships
- ☆ Major Exploration Sites
- ★ Minor Exploration Sites
- Major Roads



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THE ATMOSPHERE AND CLIMATE

The atmosphere is Earthlike, but with slightly higher pressure (1.05 atmospheres at sea level) and a higher percentage of carbon dioxide. Clouds of dry ice crystals form in the upper atmosphere, creating a moderate green house effect that warms the planet's surface. The air is also filled with ghost fog (page 68), which restricts visibility to that of a misty day on Earth. The axial tilt, at 24 degrees, means Osiris has distinct seasons similar to Earth, and similar temperatures. The ghost fog may also sense and moderate the climate autonomously; this is still being studied.

BUBBLEFARMS

These are experimental farms that study Osiran animals and plants to determine their potential commercial utility. They often contain nanopore-filtered "bubbles" (designed to keep dust, seeds, and bacteria) that house experimental gene-modified terrestrial crops or animals tested for their adaptability to the different (less light, different soil) Osiran environments. Bubblefarms grow much of the food consumed on Osiris. Light is a major problem; some farms use fusion power and artificial light, while others experiment with transgenic hybrids of Earth plants and Osiran pseudo-fungi or xenomoss. Successful strains are released "in the wild" in the terraformed zones.

THE NEKHEBET ("VULTURE COUNTRY")

The largest of the two continents, the Nekhebet it is slightly bigger than Eurasia. It covers much of the eastern hemisphere and part of the south polar icecap. The continent is divided into western and eastern halves by the Djed Mountains. At present (December of 2150), it is in the middle of summer, and quite warm.

DJED MOUNTAINS

The spine of the continent is the Djed Mountains, called the backbone of Osiris: a 1,200 kilometre long mountain range that divides the continent into eastern and western halves. The Aegis Plateau is a large table of high, flat ground in the heart of the mountain range. The Mouth of Djed is the major pass through the Djed Mountains. Guerrilla groups are active in this rugged region, and there are several unexplored star tombs here as well. They often attack the nearest large towns on the west, New Hope and Oasis. There are no settlements East of Djed, but there are archaeological and construction sites.

LESSER SEA OF DUST

This large carbon dust desert east of the Djed Mountains exhibits conditions similar to the Great Sea of Dust (page 86) but less severe. There are 43 known star tombs located here (Nekhebet 346 to 389). This area is scheduled for future terraforming.

TERRA-ZONES

The area west of the mountains is the focus of Green Osiris. Spreading out from the townships are over 25,000 square kilometres of partially-terraformed land. There is scrub grass, lichens, and a few hardy bushes. Contamination has led to a carpet of (terrestrial) bacterial scum and algae covering many lakes and coastal areas. There are few Earth animals outside of farms, but some species of grubs and insects have been introduced to the soil.

TIMOSHENKO CITY

The biggest city on Osiris, Timoshenko is 1,200 km west of the Djed Mountains, on a stark hillside beside a clear blue lake, in the centre of the largest terra-zone. Timoshenko was built on the site of the cleared Nekhebet 1 star tomb complex. It has a population of 57,000 recently swelled by a further 3,500 refugees from the Oasis townships region.

EDJO ("COBRA COUNTRY")

Edjo occupies the western and northwestern hemisphere of Osiris. It is named after the Cobra goddess, the guardian of lower (northern) Egypt. Edjo is the second-largest continent on the planet. It is the size of Africa, but shaped like a splayed hand and wrist. Edjo has not undergone any significant terraforming, and much of the surface remains covered with carbon dust — the inert bodies of the Alkabeth.

At present, it is in the middle of winter — northern areas are quite cool and experiencing snowfall, while its southernmost regions are relatively temperate.

GREAT COBRA CANYON

One of Edjo's most impressive geographic features, this is a winding chasm (with a river at the bottom) twice as long as the Grand Canyon on Earth. There are 13 star tombs located in the canyon walls, of which five have been explored.

GREAT SEA OF DUST

This dried inland sea in the southern equatorial region of Edjo is 300 km wide, 870 km long and up to 200 metres deep. Anyone attempting to walk on the surface will sink into the dust — only specially equipped vehicles (such as hovercraft) can operate in it. Anyone breathing the dust-laden air without a filter mask will soon be coughing, while several hours exposure can cause lung damage. The dust gets into machines as well as lungs, which necessitates frequent repairs.

Winds up to 150 kph create dust storms that can easily bury people or stationary vehicles and interfere with radio and laser communication. The atmospheric dust reduces sensor and laser ranges by 50%. In major dust or lightning storms, sensor and laser range can drop by 90%, communications may be totally jammed, and attack rolls suffer a +2 penalty beyond five metres. A storm lasts at least an hour, and covers a few hundred square kilometres. A dust storm also neutralizes ghost fog in the region.

DUSTPORT

Dustport is located on the equatorial southwestern coast of Edjo, and was the first human-built settlement on the planet. Dustport has a population of 22,600 and hosts: a fusion power plant, apartment complexes, UNSAID office, several large bubblefarms, corporate offices, schools, shops, ACES station, and aerospace port. The main employer is the high-security Nanosystems Laboratory Complex. The city's architecture is dominated by large geodesic domes connected by underground walkways.

OCCUPIED STAR TOMBS

Terraforming has not started on Edjo, but only 170 of 882 star tomb sites have been cleared, mostly along the southwest coast. 11 of these sites are the locations of small towns (population 100-200), mines, factory complexes, or bioresearch installations that use of the tombs' fusion reactors.

Selket is believed to have covertly occupied as many as a dozen star tombs, establishing experience temples there. It is also believed to have placed Kangaroo Mines around perhaps as many as one in eight of the other unexplored star tombs.

PLANETARY STAR TOMBS

Satellite radar mapping and air and ground surveys have identified 927 probable Osiran sites (colloquially, "star tombs") in the Nekhebet (half explored) and 832 in Edjo (one-third explored). A few star tomb sites have also been identified on islands. Planetary star tombs are estimated as being roughly 2,000 years old. Some archaeologists believe they post-date the Osiran apocalypse and were built by survivors.

Sites are numbered based on the continent or island and their original order of discovery. For example, Nekhebet 17 is the 17th site discovered in Nekhebet. The majority of sites were discovered within the first five years, but visited in no particular order. On average, 1-3 new sites are discovered annually. These sites are usually found in mountains shadowed from aerial observation, or in desert areas where they had been buried by drifting carbon dust, only to be uncovered during storms or by geological surveys.

A typical star tomb site consists of one to three flat-topped pyramids or cubes, typically 15 to 17 metres high and wide, which are seated on a base 250-300 metres across. They are both made of smart matter. Star tomb walls typically have 30 points of armour and take 20 points of damage to breach, but will regenerate at 1 point/minute. There may be a single liquid metal doorway, usually leading into a garage area. The interior of the star tombs is a maze of passages and chambers (20-100 distinct rooms) that extend underground. The passages are too small to accommodate objects with Awkward Size 2 BP or greater. Machinery in the star tombs includes a nuclear fusion reactor and fuel store. The top of the tomb contains a micropore mesh grid that appears to be used for recharging, repairing, and recycling ghost fog.

Star tombs are populated by Cobras (0-10), Tinkerbells (0-3), and Scorpions (0-2). The interiors of the tombs may contain Osiran corpses. Unlike those in space habitats, they are usually found in small groups of 2-5 in individual cubicals, and there are rarely more than 20 in any given star tomb. Star tombs do not show signs of combat damage.

Osiran remnants are occasionally found on Osiris beyond the star tombs. The most common find is a wrecked Scarab transport, usually abandoned, but in rare cases containing xenopanzers or other relics. These are usually chance findings.

Xenologists believe there were two distinct Osiran cultures, originally dubbed "Labyrinth Culture" (those native to the planetary star tombs) and "Invader" (those from the orbital colonies). Study of artifacts and mind echoes later revealed a single dominant language and culture system-wide, shattered by a violent civil war. Details remain elusive, due to difficulty understanding abstract concepts; there are references to a struggle between groups usually translated as "Synthesis" and "Identity Crusade." Actual mind echoes from the war itself are very rare and fraught with terrible trauma.

EMISSARY STATION

This asteroid was humanity's first outpost in Alpha Centauri. It was moved into Osiris orbit from the belt, and is the main orbital space port for Osiris, as well as a manufacturing centre. The asteroid has six docking ports, dozens of air locks, and numerous antennae and solar panels. A couple of TAVs and OTVs are usually docking, loading, or undergoing maintenance. There is a daily OTV shuttle to Bast as well as daily TAV flights to Osiris Downport and Port Anderson.

Inside it is a cramped, zero-gravity beehive with corridors running everywhere and hundreds of chambers housing nanofabricator tanks, life support hydroponics, and tiny apartments. The heart of the station is Emissary Control, which still has legacy systems of the old Emissary star probe brain buried in its heart, integrated with newer TAI's.

Most of the population serve 100-hour shifts on station, then go over to Bast or down to Osiris. There are many robots and cyborgs working here, and legends of mysterious cyber-critters left over from the early days of colonization. The station recently suffered pseudo-fungi infestations and bioengineered spine snails have been imported to eat it. The station has become even more crowded, since UNPACFOR's logistics troops have taken half of the nanofabricators and a third of the housing space for military operations.

Security is heavy and weapons are forbidden on station. UNPACFOR has taken over from ACES, and all visitors are scanned carefully for weapons, explosives, and eggs.

ANUBIS

Anubis is the moon of Osiris. It is airless and heavily cratered. It orbits Osiris at an average distance of 403,000 km. It has a radius of 1,566 km and a surface gravity of 0.146 G, or roughly one-seventh that of Earth's gravity. Anubis Station is a moon base with a population of 2,100 people, mostly living in underground warrens. The far side is the home of the Big Dish antennae complex which is the main communication link with Earth (and used for radio astronomy).

WRECKED HABITATS

A large object punctured the habitat. The heat and shock wave of impact destroyed everything inside the habitat, leaving a charred, airless husk of dubious structural integrity. There are two wrecked habitats, Tefnut and Shu, as well as lots of debris from what might have been even more powerful collisions.

HABITAT CITIES

The habitats each contain one to three urban complexes. The complexes typically contain 100-300 structures, and are adjacent to a stream or lake, about 15 km from the hub. The buildings and machinery are made of self-healing smart matter. There are shafts that lead to empty rooms and deserted galleries. Some rooms are triangular, while others are square. Ghost fog makes furniture and doors unnecessary.

All streets are extremely quiet, due to molecular motors in the walls and walkways that flex to absorb sound (+2 penalty on dice rolls to hear anyone). This soundproofing does not extend inside buildings, however. In unexplored cities, there may be as many as a half-dozen Scorpions and a dozen or more Cobras and Tinkerbells present.

- **FACTORY CUBES**

These are large square buildings the size of a city block, that stand up to five stories tall. They contain nanofabrication tanks and feedstock vats, but no nanomachinery for them have been found. This technology is more primitive than the assembler eggs.

- **MORGUES**

These hold anywhere from a dozen to a hundred Osiran corpses. The corpses are attached to slabs, dressed in shimmersilk robes, and have dream jewels. There are holes in their skulls that match neural harpoon injuries or some other form of invasive probe.

- **EGG CHAMBERS**

These contain shelves with Assembler Eggs or other relics. They are usually empty; typically no more than one in a hundred buildings holds anything.

- **LIQUID METAL DOORS**

These seal the atmospheres of important rooms, including morgues, without restricting movement.

- **FABRICATION TANKS**

These diamond-walled tanks of various sizes are obviously intended for nanofabrication, but are useless without nanomachines.

BAST HABITAT

Bast was the first habitat to be explored and settled. Bast's cable car system is fully functional, and its docks are busy. A typical day has 600 people working in the docks. On average, 20 OTVs dock or depart from Bast in any given day, and at any one time, two or three spacecraft will be orbiting outside awaiting clearance to enter (a half hour wait is common for unscheduled traffic). Every hour a spacecraft or a work team in spacesuits or servoshells passes through the liquid metal locks.

The hub and its docking bays have been converted into a thriving spaceport, Port Anderson. Centred on the elevator terminus 3, it is convenient for visiting spacers. Port Anderson is the habitat's glittery entertainment district, given over to bars, night clubs, and love hotels, mixed with shops catering to spacer wants and needs such as space suit fitters and tattoo artists.

BUBASTIS CITY

The city is on the shore of the lake, Circle Lake, that runs the entire circumference of Anubis Station. There are waterways that run almost everywhere, even indoors. The buildings are spun carbon domes and low towers composed of stacked blue, mauve, and black spheres, interspersed with occasional larger factory cubes. This is the heart of the station habitat: a converted alien urban complex that is now home

to offices, apartments, hotels, malls, restaurants, and shops ... as well as covert xenosurgery clinics. The Freemarket bazaar is a mecca for Alexandrian teenagers, and contains shops and stalls that sell Osiran grave goods like coinbelts and shimmersilk. This is also home to the Barrie James Gallery, with paintings, sculptures, and other artwork done by colonists, and the Kaori Nagumo Elementary School students.

TIMOSHENKO ACADEMY

Seven kilometres from Bubastis, this combination prep school and college lies in splendid isolation, thanks to the alien pseudo-fungi and a wide belt of coral. The 2,700 students (aged 14 to 22) come here from all across Alpha Centauri, and live in residence. The buildings were designed by famous colonial architect, Otto Rheinhardt, to evoke a deliberate Old World feel, typified by the Xenological Science Building with its spire and clock tower. The teenage students wear school uniforms, but the university students do not.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPLEX

Located next to the northern end of the cylinder, this sprawling human-built complex is devoted to light industry and recycling. Small businesses rent time on the complex's auto-factories to turn recycled or raw materials into consumer products they can sell.

CIRCLE LAKE

This long, shallow lake forms a ring around the interior of the station. On the south bank are sand beaches for swimming, while the north bank has a mix of trees, rental vacation cottages, and wharves for pleasure boats. There are two islands: Catfish Island houses the Best Water Treatment and Purification Centre, while Mew Island is home to the Habitat Power Station, a 2 gigawatt fusion reactor. The Alpha Centauri Hotel is a beachside resort, frequented mostly by station visitors.

THE HUB COMPLEX

Adjacent the terminus at the base of the elevator is the Bioscience Complex. It has quarters and offices for 200 people, mainly xenoscientists and students. A square kilometre around the Compound is fenced off. Its doors have been fitted with airlocks, and strict procedures (decontamination showers, etc.) are enforced to prevent any xenobiological transference.

CRIMSON LAKE

A long, thin lake running the circumference of the habitat. The brackish water is nearly completely covered with a red algae-like growth.

SHARMA TOR

Rising to 400 metres tall, this is the highest hill in the habitat, overlooking Crimson Lake.

GREAT MAZE REEF

25 km into the colony, two "land coral" reefs have intersected and ground together, forming a crazy maze that is 3-4 metres high.

BASE CAMPS

A dozen temporary base camps will be scattered through the habitat. Each has a half-dozen or so scientists conducting observations or gathering samples.

FACTORY CUBES

These are filled with complex pipe-fed machines that connect to vats, which vary in size from a few metres to a few dozen metres across. These are Osiran assembler tanks.

OSIRAN LIFEFORMS

Bioprospecting teams have discovered thousands of different species of Osiran plants and animals, but the survey of Osiran life forms is still in its infancy. Xenobiologists believe the Osiran apocalypse may have exterminated 95% of all Osiran species. This is a degree of biocide that makes terrestrial ecocide look like juvenile delinquency in comparison. It is unknown whether the survivor species represent a population that existed prior to biocide (such as a zoo) or a partial post-disaster resurrection of species through techniques such as genetic replication and cloning.

Osiran protein is not digestible by humans, and vice versa. It provides no nutritional benefit and will usually lead to nausea and diarrhoea. A typical meal will result in the loss of 10 Energy Points and 5 Health Points within an hour of eating.

XENOMOSS

This 5-6 cm thick pink and mauve moss covers soil and rock. Xenomoss seems to be one continuous organism that grows anywhere there is light. A variety of small insects and other creatures eat the moss; in turn, it eats decayed organic matter.

PSEUDO-FUNGI

Osiran "trees and bushes" resemble common Terrestrial mushrooms, but are two to four metres tall, and orange, pink, and grey in colour. Many caps often have patterns of blue and purple veins or bumps on their caps, apparently designed to attract certain species that are used in their reproductive processes. In budding season, tiny needle-seeds grow from the surface of the caps. In larger pseudo-fungi, these needles can be as sharp as rose bush thorns, and could give someone a nasty scratch. Pseudo-fungi propagate when creatures that attempt to nibble on the softer, more succulent caps get the needle-seeds caught in their fur, and carry the seeds far and wide.

LAND CORAL

The crimson land coral resembles the coral reefs of Earth's oceans, but grows on land rather than in water. Osiran land coral is constructed by colonies of tiny hive-dwelling pseudo-insects called Reef Mites. The coral is made from their excreted resin mixed with exoskeletons of those who die. The growth of the reefs are slow but steady, and its study has helped fix the age of habitats. The largest reefs formed over a period of 2,100 years. Land coral often extends a half-metre underground and is hard to clear.

OSIRAN FLORA



OTHER OSIRAN FAUNA

There are a great many more Osiran species, and not all have been catalogued. Biosurvey teams regularly discover new species. Some of the more common species are detailed here.



CAT-SERPENT

These beasts have a long snake-like body, which terminates in a vaguely feline head with rounded ears, large and expressive slit-pupil eyes, and a mouth full of sharp teeth. They are covered in silky black and orange fur. Cat-Serpents are quick and graceful predators, but if they are raised in captivity, they can be affectionate pets. An adult cat serpent can grow to about 2.5 metres long. Like most Osiran animals, they are egg-layers. Their favourite food is Snail Bunnies.

► STATS

Body 4, Mind 2, Soul 4

► ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery - 2, Elasticity - 1, Features - 1 (soft fur), Heightened Senses - 2 (hearing, smell), Natural Weapons - 1 (fangs), Speed - 4

► DEFECTS

Cannot Talk (1 BP), Impaired Senses (sight, 1 BP), Marked (2 BP), No Arms (2 BP), Not So Tough (1 BP), Unskilled (1 BP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 30, Energy Points: 30, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

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CRIMSON LEVIATHAN

This nocturnal creature is a giant red worm with an armoured head. A big two-tonne insectivore, the 10-metre-long Crimson Leviathan likes to mash land coral hives to get the coral mites inside. Crimson Leviathans are solitary except during mating season. The females lay watermelon-sized eggs, and are quite aggressive when protecting a nest.

► STATS

Body 5, Mind 1, Soul 4

► ATTRIBUTES

Damn Healthy - 4, **Elasticity** - 1, **Features** - 1 (soft fur), **Focused Damage** - 1 (crushing jaws), **Heightened Senses** - 1 (hearing), **Light Armour** - 3 (thin area), **Sensors** - 1, **Super-Strength** - 1

► DEFECTS

Awkward Size (2 BP), **Cannot Talk** (1 BP), **Marked** (2 BP), **No Arms** (2 BP), **Sensory Impairment** (vision, 1 BP)

► DERIVED VALUE

Health Points: 85, Energy Points: 25, Attack Combat Value: 6, Defense Combat Value: 4

FASTBALL

A common fresh water "fish," the Fastball is a reddish egg-shaped creature about 30 cm long, with three eyes, a large mouth, a duct just beneath it, and three fins. Like the majority of medium or large Osiran water life, it propels itself like a squid, taking in water and squirting it out behind it through its tail. It eats smaller fish, and can reach quite high speeds (30 kph). It has been known to leap out of the water occasionally. Fastballs are found in schools of a dozen or more.

► STATS

Body 4, Mind 0, Soul 3

► ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery - 3, **Natural Weapons** - 1 (fangs,), **Speed** - 1, **Water Speed** - 1 (breathes water only)

► DEFECTS

Cannot Talk (2 BP), **Marked** (2 BP), **No Arms** (2 BP), **Not So Strong** (2 BP), **Not So Tough** (2 BP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 BP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 15, Energy Points: 15, Attack Combat Value: 5, Defense Combat Value: 3

MOCKINGBAT

Mockingbats look like three-eyed, legless bats the size of pigeons, with mauve fur and a long prehensile tail. They coil around the stems of pseudo-fungi. They are scavengers but have sharp fangs and occasionally hunt smaller animals like Snail Bunnies. Mockingbats can sometimes be found living in a symbiotic relationship with Sharksquids. They can imitate calls of various animals (including human speech). They will lure other animals to the Sharksquids by imitating their calls, then fly away. After the Sharksquids have killed their prey, Mockingbats will scavenge whatever remains.

► STATS

Body 5, Mind 2, Soul 4

► ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery - 1, **Extra Arms** - 1 (prehensile tail), **Feature** - 1 (soft fur), **Flight** - 1, **Heightened Senses** - 3 (hearing), **Natural Weapons** - 1 (fangs), **Speed** - 1

► DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP), **Marked** (2 BP), **One Arm** (1 BP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 BP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 9, Energy Points: 30, Attack Combat Value: 4, Defense Combat Value: 2

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NERVE SPIDERS

These nasty, poisonous, purple-spotted, 10-legged, three-eyed, stinging crawlers are about an inch across. They live in old buildings or ruined land coral, and are attracted to body heat and human sweat. Their sting is treated as Weapon Attack – 2 (damage 30, slow burn, toxic), but they cannot penetrate armour. Eye of Re sometimes uses nerve spiders as “bug bombs.”

SNAIL BUNNY

If a snail was rat-sized, cute, and furry, it might look like this. Its head (on a long flexible neck) looks a bit like a three-eyed bunny rabbit, complete with large ears. It has soft pink fur, with a light-brown and red mottled shell. A Snail Bunny leaves a trail of slime behind it as it moves. It is a herbivore, eating mainly pseudo fungi; if trained, they are good at removing mould from houses and machinery.

► STATS

Body 3, Mind 1, Soul 4

► ATTRIBUTES

Features – 1 (soft fur), **Light Armour** – 2 (unprotected area), **Heightened Senses** – 4 (hearing)

► DEFECTS

Diminutive (3 BP), **Marked** (2 BP), **No Arms** (2 BP), **Not So Fast** (1 BP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 7, Energy Points: 30, Attack Combat Value: 2, Defense Combat Value: 0

SCORPION OWLS

These creatures are about the size of owls. They resemble a Terrestrial bird with feathered wings but, instead of feet, they have a long snake-like tail ending in a poisonous stinger. They have no beak, but possess a circular mouth with sharp fangs. They prey on Snail Bunnies and River Fish by spearing them with their tails. At night they wrap their tails around branches and hang upside-down.

► STATS

Body 6, Mind 2, Soul 4

► ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery – 2, **Features** – 1 (feathers), **Flight** – 1 (can hover), **Heightened Senses** – 2 (hearing, smell), **Natural Weapons** – 2 (fangs, tail striker), **Speed** – 3, **Special Attack** – 1: poison (30 damage, incapacitating, linked to tail striker attack, limited uses x 2, toxic)

► DEFECTS

Cannot Talk (1 BP), **Marked** (2 BP), **One Arm** (1 BP), **Not So Strong** (1 BP), **Not So Tough** (2 BP), **Restricted Ground Movement** (2 BP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 30, Energy Points: 30, Attack Combat Value: 6, Defense Combat Value: 4

SHARKSQUID

The Sharksquid vaguely resembles a dark-green, man-sized, three-legged spider. Its head features three eyes and a large beaked mouth surrounded by three tentacles, each three feet long. These stealthy, amphibious predators are encountered in packs of 2-7. They mostly hunt Leviathan Worms and Cat Serpents, but have been known to attack injured or isolated humans. Sharksquids seem to get along well with Mockingbats.

► STATS

Body 7, Mind 1, Soul 4

► ATTRIBUTES

Combat Mastery – 2, **Elasticity** – 1, **Light Armour** – 1, **Heightened Senses** – 2 (hearing, smell), **Natural Weapons** – 1 (beak, tentacles), **Water Speed** – 1

► DEFECTS

Cannot Talk (1 BP), **Marked** (2 BP)

► DERIVED VALUES

Health Points: 65, Energy Points: 25, Attack Combat Value: 6, Defense Combat Value: 4

THE OTHER PLANETS

The other planets in Alpha Centauri have only been subjected to cursory exploration.

HORUS (ALPHA CENTAURI A-I)

A hot, airless rock ball almost identical to Mercury. It is uninhabited.

ISIS (ALPHA CENTAURI A-II)

Isis was too small to retain much of an atmosphere, and therefore most of its water has evaporated, although some is frozen as polar ice. Its thin atmosphere is too thin to breathe and can cause blood to boil. The planet has a complex and varied topography with high mountains, long valleys, dry seabeds, and remnants of extinct volcanoes.

SEKHMET-HATHOR (ALPHA CENTAURI A-III)

This is not one world but two: a pair of bodies each about the size of Earth's moon, they orbit one another while following an eccentric elliptical path around Alpha Centauri B. The two worlds are prone to violent earthquakes. In any given area, a couple of small tremors can be felt every day, and there is usually a sizeable quake (capable of knocking people over, collapsing buildings, etc.) every week. In 2072, explorers landed and took rock samples. They determined Sekhmet was 1.5 billion years younger than Hathor, suggesting it was a captured extra-solar wanderer that entered the system less than 100 million years ago.

RE (ALPHA CENTAURI B-I)

Named after the Egyptian sun god, Re is a small, airless ball of sun-scorched rock. Its close proximity to the star (half as close as Mercury is to our own Sun) subjects it to strong tidal effects. These have slowed its rotation to the point where its day is the same length as its year. It is now tidally locked to its star, the same way the Moon is to Earth. One face of the planet — the “day side” — is always facing Alpha Centauri B, while the other “night side” is always turned away from it.

The surface resembles Earth's moon. The largest crater is the 720 km-wide Heliopolis Crater on the planet's night side, from which a central mountain, Hawk's Peak, rises. On the day side, the equatorial surface temperatures in sunlight is hot enough that even life-support equipped armoured vehicles may eventually overheat. Anyone exposed to sunlight will take 30 points of damage each round. Armour only protects in conjunction with Life Support Level 2. The ruins of a massive antimatter production particle accelerator powered by solar panels covering much of the day side have been found here. 2,000 years of solar radiation has degraded the self-repair capabilities of smart matter, but there is a small base located in Heliopolis that is studying the ruins.

SET (ALPHA CENTAURI B-II)

Set is half the size of Earth. It has a thick atmosphere of hydrogen and methane gas. Although uninhabitable by humans, Set was of great scientific interest. Its atmosphere was like a calmer version of Jupiter, with dense clouds of hydrogen and methane. Some observers (and computer programs) claim to locate fleeting but oddly geometric patterns in the clouds covering the surface, while others remain sceptical.

PTAH (ALPHA CENTAURI B-III)

A small planet resembling Earth's moon, but slightly larger.

SOL SYSTEM AND EARTH IN 2150

The solar system has a population of 13 billion people. Earth is a 10-year journey from Alpha Centauri by commercial starship (military ships travel faster, but risk collisions), but only four years away by radio. The majority of Alphans have relatives back on Earth or Mars, and stay in touch via electronic mail. The colonists follow news and entertainment from Earth with interest. Earth-based corporations cannot transmit goods to Alpha Centauri, but can sell blueprints and patents. Similarly, discoveries made by the research stations in Alpha Centauri are of great value when transmitted back to Earth.

ORGANIZATIONS

This section describes several organizations that may be important in a *Centauri Knights* campaign, as agencies to which the characters belong, as patrons, or as antagonists.

UNSAID

The United Nations Special Agency for Interstellar Development is charged with enforcing the Alpha Centauri Treaty (page 17). This makes it the *de facto* government of Alpha Centauri. The head of UNSAID is Commissioner Elaine Koslev, age 69, who was appointed by the UN Secretary of Space to serve until replaced.

UNSAID has a 164-person multinational staff based in Alpha Centauri. Its main offices are Dustport (60 employees), Bast Station (40 people) and Timoshenko (64 people). The elite of UNSAID are the three dozen field inspectors, who visit archaeological sites, corporate research installations, mines, and other business operations. UNSAID have no enforcement ability, but it can approve or withdraw Charter status and report treaty violators to UNSHAC.

According to the Alpha Centauri Treaty, all government and commercial sites must provide unimpaired access to UNSAID monitors and give them all reasonable cooperation. Not everyone abides by this. The ongoing violence over the last decade has resulted in the abduction or murder of seven UNSAID monitors (four are still missing) while performing their duties. In 2122, the Timoshenko Mission Office was bug-bombed by unknown parties (UNSAID suspect Spitting Cobra) causing two deaths and several injuries.

UNSAID staff members include bureaucrats, lawyers, ex-police officers, and archaeologists. An UNSAID inspection team normally consists of a pair of inspectors working together. When a major archaeological expedition is planned, an inspection team may accompany it. UNSAID has a few agents who are especially dedicated — these have been known to operate “undercover” and infiltrate suspected tomb robber operations.

LAW AND ORDER

Alpha Centauri’s legal cases are tried by a three-judge tribunal, which is based on the Unity space colony. The criminal laws are similar to most Earth countries: minor convictions result in fines, while major offences (or inability to pay fines) will result in psychological counselling, biochip tagging and forced labour sentences, and loss of privileges such as police, childcare, salvage hunter, or medical licenses. Capital offences result in court-ordered neurosurgery: if it works, the subject has a phobia against committing that crime again. The subject is kept under observation. If the surgery is unsuccessful, the criminal is brainstripped and confined to a brain pod indefinitely.

UNSAID has no police force. UNSAID inspectors may perform arrests, but are authorized only to fire weapons in self-defense. UNSAID currently relies on UNPACFOR and freelance police to perform security functions. Bounties for wanted terrorists can be as high as \$12,000,000, and half that for other criminals.

Some particular laws on the book:

- **TRESPASS IN SIGHTS OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

It is prohibited for civilians to visit a star tomb or alien city unless authorized by UNSAID. This normally limits visits to UNSAID inspectors, CATs, and freecops specially authorized to hunt ghost jackals.

This status is lifted from a site after it has been thoroughly explored and sanitized. \$100,000 fine for simple trespass, increased if intent to violate ACT is demonstrated.

- **UNAUTHORISED POSSESSION, DESTRUCTION, OR SALE OF H-CLASS RELICS**
Sentence is \$10,000,000 fine, confiscation of relics and any equipment used to acquire them, loss of salvage license (if any), and two-year tag.
- **UNAUTHORISED POSSESSION OF HAZARDOUS IMPLANTS**
Owing a live dream jewel implant is illegal. Punishment is a \$1,000,000 fine and surgical removal.
- **UNAUTHORIZED POSSESSION OF DEADLY WEAPONS**
This includes paramilitary gear (unless the owner has a license) or military equipment (UNPACFOR employees excepted). Gear is confiscated and the penalty is a \$1,000,000 fine and six-month tag.
- **VIOLATION OF THE ALPHA CENTAURI TREATY**
Breaking the terms of the ACT by vandalizing or looting an alien site results in a \$1,000,000 (or more) fine and one to three year tag. Harming habitat animals, except in clear self defense, is also punishable.
- **XENOCLONING**
It is illegal for individuals to clone Osirans or Osiran animals. Cloning of humans with Osiran xenomods is also forbidden. Punishment is a \$2,000,000 fine, 2-month tag, and confiscation.

CENCOR

The Centauri Consortium is the main employer in Alpha Centauri. It is a transtellar corporation, with offices both on Earth and in Alpha Centauri. The 4.35-year timelag grants CENCOR's Alpha Centauri office great autonomy in decision making, but its CEO must ultimately answer to the board of directors on Earth. CENCOR has six major divisions, some of which are virtually autonomous companies. Each division has many departments such as personnel, recruiting, marketing, and research-and-development. The current president of CENCOR is Sebastian Rein, age 72.

CENCOR recruits both locally and Earthside. In exchange for a 5 or 10 year contract, it will provide a one-way ticket from Earth (via brainpod) and a leased cloned or cyborg body.

CENCOR COLONIAL

The Colonial division co-ordinates the Green Osiris project under direct contract from the United Nations. Colonial also operates reproductive clinics for cyborg colonists wishing to reproduce. When people travel via brainpod to Alpha Centauri, they may carry DNA, egg, or sperm samples with them. Although the brains are subsequently placed in cyborg bodies, children can be created through cloning or *in vitro* fertilization.

CENCOR HEAVY INDUSTRIES

This division is in charge of nanofabrication and assembly of machinery used in Alpha Centauri. Additionally, it also oversees the operation of major infrastructure, such as the Emissary space station, power plants, water works, and pipelines.

CENCOR NEURODYNAMICS

Neurodynamics specializes in mind interface technology, dream jewel mind echo extraction, and xenodream content.

CENCOR XENOBIOLOGY

This division primarily studies Osiran biology. One of its main interests is commercial bioprospecting. Genes found in Osiran plants and animals are used to produce unique proteins with many medicinal and industrial applications. For example, a natural adhesive secreted by Spinesnails has led to a new form of biological glue that is now used to treat wounds. A recent study of pseudo-fungi spores has yielded aerodynamics insights employed on Earth in the design of sports parawings.

Centauri Knights

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CENCOR XENOTECHNOLOGY

This division researches applications of Osiran technology, especially robotics and nanotechnology.

CENCOR OVERSIGHT

This division co-ordinates the activities of the other divisions, runs company-wide programs (such as insurance plans), and maintains liaison with other agencies, including UNSAID, freelance police, and UNPACFOR. Oversight includes the CENCOR Legal Department and Long Range Planning Department, both of which are staffed by TAIs.

CENTAURI DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATION

The CDO is a political group that believes that the Alpha Centauri Treaty should be altered to give colonists more freedom. Its main activities include publishing propagandist political tracts and studies on the net, organizing peaceful protests and rallies, raising funds, and recruiting members. It also operates various charitable front organizations, such as "space worker's scholarship fund" and the "Bast Station Housing Co-Op," which funnels money to Selket. The CDO is organized into local offices on each major habitat and run by elected Evolutionary Councils. Membership requires nomination by another member and a yearly fee of \$10,000. Joining the CDO is presently legal, but its known members are often harassed or monitored by CENCOR Oversight and ACES.

SELKET

Selket are Alexandrian radicals who oppose CENCOR and UNSAID's vision of a terraformed Osiris, and who consider the star tombs to be sacred sites that should not be desecrated. Selket is essentially defensive: it occupies or booby traps star tombs, and sabotages CENCOR installations, but avoids wanton murder of "unarmed civilians." A sizeable minority of citizens supports Selket. Selket also operates underground "experience temples" where it performs xenosurgery, trains Fog Witches, and engages in other activities in support of freedom. Selket can be considered the militant wing of the Centauri Democratic Organization.

The name Selket comes from a minor Egyptian sun goddess who watched over the dead body of Osiris before his revival. Her symbol was the scorpion, worn as a crown. After completing a successful action, Selket radicals leave behind stylized scorpion images laser-burned into buildings. It was founded by archaeologist Simon Gabriel and xenocologist Megumi Hayama in 2090. Selket principles were articulated in "Time of Ascension: Wisdom from Wadjet", a well-produced brainvid first published in 2094.

Selket was originally devoted to non-violent direct action against CENCOR's destruction of Osiris ecosphere and its rape of Osiran culture. In Jan 26, 2126, CENCOR persuaded UNSAID to hire mercenaries to crush Selket activists who had occupied star tombs as experience temples. These freelance police destroyed seven experience temples and arrested over 220 Selket activists. This brutal oppression could not be born for long. Some Selket temples began arming themselves, taming Scorpions and Cobras to protect the alien legacy. In 2132, the so-called "battle of the tombs" took place when ACES freecops used servopanzers to attack a Selket experience temple, which had armed itself for self-defense. Both sides took casualties, and Selket prisoners were subjected to interrogation and invasive surgical operations to remove dream jewels.

Over fifty Selket members have been killed, several from surgery to remove dream jewels. There is no financial reward in joining Selket. Nevertheless, there is never a shortage of volunteers. Selket has external support from Alexandrian sympathizers in Sol system, some of which provide funding.

Eye of Re

Eye of Re is a terrorist group formed in 2135. Eye of Re is fighting against what it considers the illegitimate and immoral activities of UNEXT and CENCOR, the illegal actions of freecops, and the "occupation" of Alpha Centauri by UNPACFOR. Information on Eye of Re comes primarily from interrogations of captured members and from Selket members disillusioned with Eye of Re's actions. This information cannot necessarily be regarded as accurate, and may represent deliberate mythologizing by Eye of Re.

Eye of Re believes it is fighting an uphill battle against those who desecrate Osiris and crush human freedom. The goal is to make the occupation and terraforming of Alpha Centauri so expensive that CENCOR will go back to Earth. Its primary methods involve attacking UNSAID, CENCOR, and freecop installations and personnel, sabotaging, assembler egg-bombings, and occasional kidnapping. Kidnap victims are sometimes junior or middle-ranking CENCOR executives or their children. Victims are freed in exchange for ransoms or confidential information that support Re's other activities.

Members are referred to as "Volunteers." They keep their identities secret from non-members, since the group is outlawed by UNSAID. The majority of current members come from Alexandrian backgrounds and are individuals who strongly oppose the Green Osiris project. Some were moderates angered by UNSAID's disregard of civil liberties. Some Volunteers openly support or are connected with Selket or the CDO. The reverse association cannot be admitted or supported, however, since CDO would lose its credibility as a viable political party if they were to align themselves openly with Eye of Re.

The organization has an estimated strength of 50-150 core members who perform operations. An estimated 500 to 1,500 sympathizers provide support, safe houses, and occasional recruits. Most sympathizers are members of the Selket movement. Its leadership is the Evolutionary council, seven members, each of whom has an equal vote. Eye of Re maintains three or four safe houses that contain stolen shopfacts, which are used to manufacture ammunition, small arms, and improvised weapons such as Kangaroo Mines. If they can acquire specialty parts (made in nanofabricators), Eye of Re can assemble Ocelot servopanzers.

THE ISIS PROJECT

This is a plan launched by scientists sympathetic to Eye of Re to recreate the Osirans through genetic engineering. It was discovered by UNPACFOR in 2150 when UNPACFOR raided the Nekhebet 71 star tomb. UNPACFOR has moved the Osiran bodies to a secure wing in Centauri General Hospital, where a select team of xenobiologists is studying them. UNPACFOR has determined the base's code name was Isis 5, and that it was one of at least five other stations in the program. The locations and status of other stations are unknown.

INTERSTELLAR COMMISSION ON PEACE AND SECURITY IN ALPHA CENTAURI (ICOPSAC)

ICOPSAC has a 23-member mission in Alpha Centauri that is headed by a retired Swiss ambassador and an ex-US president. They travel throughout Alpha Centauri, accompanied by a few journalists. They investigate alleged human rights abuses, and attempt the delicate task of maintaining a dialogue between all parties. UNPACFOR, UNSAID, CENCOR, and the Centauri Democratic Organization have all pledged to work with ICOPSAC, and do so when convenient. Delegates receive a degree of respect from UNPACFOR and other official bodies, and are far more likely to be held hostage by terrorists than murdered.

SMALLER ORGANIZATIONS

ALPHA CENTAURI BROADCASTING CORPORATION (ACBC)

This company is the main AlphaWeb service provider. Through AlphaWeb, it provides webcasts of news, weather (such as dust storms), data networking, and entertainment, much of it in the form of downloadable brainvids. A lot of ACBC's content is recycled from Earth, but some is locally produced. Its main transmitter is on Emissary Station, but it also controls local habitat and planetary cable nets, and runs the Big Dish site.

POLICE COMPANIES AND ACES

Alpha Centauri Executive Services was founded in 2109. It was the first of what are now a dozen "freelance police" companies, which expanded rapidly in the 2120s. ACES recruits immigrants from Earth with police or military experience as well as ex-salvage hunters. It has four regional headquarters: at Bubastis, Emissary Station, Timoshenko, and Novograd. Staff at its 40 headquarters includes infowar and forensics specialists, 300 police officers, 100 Ocelot or Panther servopanzers, and 20 SV-5 attack aircraft.

CHARTERED ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEAMS

There are currently 47 CATs in operation. Each employs five people on average, most of them salvage hunters. Some are family businesses, while others are business groups. A charter requires a \$10,000,000 licensing fee, a \$1,000,000/year renewal fee, a 1-6 month approval process, and a security check performed by UNSAID. Famous CATs include the tough Growltiger, the law-skirting Cheshire, and the insanely lucky Macavity.

TIMOSHENKO VOCATIONAL ACADEMY

Teenagers attend school to become scientists, biologists, salvage hunters, and freecops. Undergraduate students are trained using realistic brainvid simulators, while graduates may take courses with real hands-on opportunities. There are 600 students cycling through the academy's junior, middle, and senior years. Students wear school uniforms until age 17, after which they may wear ordinary clothes.

SMALLER CORPORATIONS

There are 523 smaller companies who have offices in Alpha Centauri, ranging from the mundane (fast food franchises) to the exotic (independent salvage hunters who own their own ships). Some of them have Sol-side connections, while others are purely domestic creations.

OTHERS

AMNESTY INTERPLANETARY

Investigates human rights abuses. Two dozen AI activists are on the planet.

HERMES FOUNDATION

An association of volunteer doctors and nurses who provide medical care for refugees from extra-planetary disasters. Three Hermes Foundation medical teams (15 people plus local volunteers) are operating in Alpha Centauri.

OZYMANDIUS INSTITUTE

This private archaeological agency personally funded by trillionaire software mogul Kozoh Ishida is dedicated to probing the mysteries of the Osirans. It often hires salvage hunters for specific scientific missions.

UNPACFOR

The United Nations Protection of Alpha Centauri Force is intended to provide peace and security in Alpha Centauri. The military units deployed to Alpha Centauri are relatively small: a total of 2,000 troops including supporting elements, of which no more than half are combat forces. Transport of troops from Earth to Alpha Centauri in large numbers is a logistical nightmare. This places a severe strain on limited space and star lift capacities, especially since these troops must be supported logistically, and cycled back to Earth (as brain pods on a star driver) for replacements.

Medicine and new technologies have reduced the exposure of individual soldiers, since military action is still dangerous, especially in an unpredictable environment. There is general public resistance in most democratic nations (especially the United States) to sending large units. The small number of human military personnel (2,000) is somewhat deceptive, however, since UNPACFOR also uses a large number of robots. Although some weapons systems are now autonomous, the greatest effect has been seen in the support services: equipment diagnoses its own faults, supply trucks drive themselves, hospital beds are automated, and expert systems handle everything from sensor monitoring to paperwork.

UNPACFOR personnel are prohibited from mating or having children while deployed. They may, and do, have romantic relationships, either with other UNPACFOR personnel outside their chain of command or with Centauri civilians. Additionally, personnel must have permission from their chain of command to marry while deployed.

Troops sent to Alpha Centauri are volunteers. The nations sending troops to Alpha Centauri adopt the convention that service is measured in "physiological" years, and consequently, time spent in transit does not count. Troops are quartered in rent-free apartments or barracks. Average weekly salaries are \$65,000 for enlisted troops and \$120,000 for officers.

UNPACFOR ORGANIZATION

General Zachary Morgan, USAF Space Command, leads UNPACFOR. A 20-person operations staff, which includes representatives from the other national forces, advises him; together they make up UN Supreme Headquarters Alpha Centauri (UNSHAC). Each contingent's commander also reports to his or her own national command authorities, which can occasionally create conflicts of interest. UNPACFOR is divided into five commands with distinct geographic areas of responsibility:

SPACE COMMAND

Its HQ is located at Emissary Station. It is responsible for aerospace operations in and around Osiris and on Bast and the other habitats.

EDJO COMMAND, OSIRIS

Its HQ is at Timoshenko. It is responsible for operations throughout the Edjo continent, excluding orbital space.

NEKHEBET COMMAND, OSIRIS

The HQ is at Osiris Downport. It is responsible for operations in the Nekhebet continent and the Chemis Islands.

TYPICAL MILITARY UNITS

The units assigned to UNPACFOR have long traditions and distinct organizations. A few examples of individual military units are described below. The GM should expand, change, or alter the unit composition as desired. Every few months, a proton clipper will arrive with either replacements or an entirely new unit.

201ST HIKOTAI (201 TFS, JASDF)



Japan sent no ground troops to Alpha Centauri, but they did dispatch a reconnaissance fighter squadron. The 201st Tactical Fighter Squadron (Hikotai) is one of the older squadrons in the modern JASDF, having flown F-104 Starfighters as early as 1962, and later F-15J Eagles. It now operates the RF-70 Delta Hawk. The JASDF is lavishly equipped and well trained, but lacks combat experience, since Japanese international policy has previously avoided embroilment in military conflicts in space. JASDF personnel wear blue dress uniforms, white service uniforms, and khaki work uniforms.

The squadron operates six Delta Hawks under Major Takeo Kuribayashi, and is based at Dustport. It has six pilots and 12 technical and support staff. The USAF's 524th ("Hounds of Heaven") Fighter Squadron, based out of Osiris Downport, also flies the Delta Hawk.

GROM (GRUPA REAGOWANIA OPERACYJNO MOBINEGO, POLISH LAND FORCES)



GROM (translated as Mobile Operations Reaction Group) is one of the European Union's elite counter-terrorist and special ops units. Founded in 1991, its record includes nation building in Haiti, war criminal arrests in the Balkans, and bodyguard duty for UN dignitaries. In 2101, it stormed the Unity L5 colony to rescue 37 computer company executives taken hostage by anti-artificial intelligence terrorists. The unit sent to Alpha Centauri was a detachment of 40 operators from the 300-strong force. One of its major duties is bodyguard protection of CENCOR officers, UNPACFOR senior officers, UNSAID inspector, and ICOPSAC delegates.

The commander is Major Krystyna Rydz and Captain Stanislaw Urbanowicz. There are two 20-person sections, one under a captain, the other a lieutenant. Each section is organized into five, four-man teams led by sergeants. Operators use Panther servopanzers or dress in plain clothes (carrying mag pistols). One section is based in Timoshenko, the other at Bast Habitat.

Similar units include: US Army's 11th Special Forces Group (three "Green Beret" A-Teams, one each in the Nekhebet, Edjo and Bast Station), US Navy SEAL Team Nine (Chemmis Islands), and a "Sabre Squadron" of the British Army's 21 Special Air Service (Timoshenko).

HIMALAYAN EAGLES (25 SQUADRON, INDIAN AEROSPACE FORCE)



The Indian Air Force was first formed in 1932, and is the fourth largest on Earth. This veteran squadron was formed in 1963 to strengthen India's presence in the disputed Himalayas where it borders with Chinese-occupied territory. The squadron is trained to perform aerial transport, paratroop drop, and evacuation missions in the "roof of the world" and thus is experienced in operating rugged aircraft in appalling conditions. 25 Squadron's expertise has often seen them deploy beyond India: to the Middle East during the Gulf War, to Mars during the food riots of 2072, and now to Alpha Centauri, where they fly tilt rotors and provide tactical transportation for many UN units.

The 25 Squadron is based at Osiris Downport near the Djed Mountains, but are often deployed to local airstrips. Squadron Leader Satish Nambiar commands the unit of six UV-88 and six SV-7 tilt rotors. Aircraft operate in flights of four, in pairs, or singly. Crews wear tactical body armour (*BESM*, page 218)

and carry mag pistols. Three technician-and-control squads support the aircraft; each squad has six people, a Dust Cat, and a mobile workshop trailer.

Similar units include: USAF's 8th Special Operations Squadron, at Timoshenko and the (French) Armee de l'Aerospatiale's 3rd Escadrille des Operations Speciales (EOS) at Oasis.

HOSMOS SPETNAZ (RUSSIAN SPACE FORCE)



Kosmos Spetnaz are the special troops of the VKS, the Russian Space Force. The unit sent to Alpha Centauri is the special information warfare detachment of the Kosmos Spetnaz (space special troops) battalion, 2nd Spetnaz brigade, subordinate to the GRU (Russian Military Intelligence). Colonel Aleksandr Ganichev is the commander. Known as the Black Knights, the unit has experience operating against Siberian terrorists.

The Black Knights is a 25-person detachment. They consist of a HQ section (eight people) and three teams. Each team consists of a team leader and 3-7 specialists: 1 infowar, 1-2 weapons, 1 demolitions, and 1-3 recon troops (use infowar and special ops occupational templates; 20% of the force are Russian Doll cyborgs).

The Intelligence Support Activity unit team (US Central Intelligence Agency) has similar duties.

QUEEN'S ROYAL HUSSARS, BRITISH ARMY



The Queen's Royal Hussars is the senior Light Cavalry regiment in the British Army, raised in 1685. Its 172 battle honours include Baklava (the Charge of the Light Brigade), El Alamein, and Operation Desert Storm. The regiment converted to robots in 2084, and has since been entirely robotic. A single squadron of the Hussars has been deployed to Alpha Centauri as part of the United Kingdom's UNPACFOR commitment. Their primary mission is armoured reconnaissance, with a secondary mission of providing fire support to other units.

"A" Squadron, Queen's Royal Hussars is a light armoured reconnaissance force. It consists of three troops of robot armour, each with four ASRAI recon spiders and three MARA robot tanks. A headquarters company supports the squadron with a human liaison officer, and numerous technicians and support robots.

The US Army 7th Armoured Cavalry Regiment (robotic), based at Timoshenko, Edjo is similar.

RANGERS (4TH BATTALION, 75TH INFANTRY REGIMENT, US ARMY)



The Rangers trace their history to Roger's Rangers, raised to fight the French and Natives in 1756, and to the Ranger Infantry Battalions and Merrill's Marauders (elite WWII Special Forces). The modern Rangers (the 75th Infantry Regiment) were founded in 1975 as elite light infantry, skilled in long-range patrols and raiding. In the 2050s, the Rangers became the US Army's specialists in extraterrestrial environment, first Mars and Titan, now Osiris. The 4th battalion of the 75th Rangers was sent to Alpha Centauri. Typical missions are reconnaissance of a star tomb, convoy escort, searching a bubblefarm or city building for arms, or garrisoning an isolated base. 2-4 platoons may link up for a company-sized operation.

The 4/75th is based at Dustport on Osiris. The basic unit is a servopanzer platoon of six soldiers (in the M82 Merrill) led by a lieutenant and platoon sergeant (in the M83 Fox). Three platoons make a company, led by a captain; three companies make up the ranger battalion, led by a major. Each company also has an HQ consisting of two Dust Cats, two mobile trailers, and ten support soldiers (infowar, medics, technicians, supply troops). The battalion HQ has 25 battle staff and support troops and six Dust Cats.

Similar units include: US Army's 1st Battalion, 10th Mountain Division based at Edjo; the Indian Army's 5th battalion of the 8th Gurkha (Sirmoor) Rifles based at Djed Mountains, and the 2nd Battalion, Royal Canadian Dragoons, at Bast Station.

Centauri Knights

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20TH SPACE CONTROL SQUADRON (21ST SPACE WING, USAF)



This squadron was founded in the 1968 as the 20th Surveillance Squadron, with the mission of operating the USAF's main space tracking radar array. In 1987, it became the part of US Space Command under the 21st Space Wing. In 2043, it became the 20th Space Control Squadron, manning the Medusa orbital particle beam stations. Its most distinguished action was the 40-Minute War in 2087, when it intercepted six nuclear missiles launched at New Delhi by a rogue Pakistani sub commander, saving millions of lives. The 20th Space Squadron's personnel and TAIs were assigned to Alpha Centauri to provide orbital surveillance and (if necessary) aerospace defense for UNPACFOR.

The 20th consist of two dozen perky computer programmers, infowar specialists, and technicians. Half of them are Grail Technologies defense contractors led by Lt. Colonel Billy-Jean Green. They include three pilots who fly OTVs or TAVs for satellite installation and maintenance. They command, install, and maintain UNPACFOR's Bright Star weapons platforms from their control room and hangar in Emissary Station.

6TH JOINT INTERPLANETARY SUPPORT BRIGADE, UNPACFOR.

This multinational unit (550 strong) provides support services for the rest of UNPACFOR, and is responsible for organizing the manufacturing of much of its equipment. The 6th is divided into three battalions: one based at Emissary Station with a company each at Bast and Ma'at, one at Timoshenko, and one at Dustport.

••CANADIAN DRAGOONS••



GLOSSARY

- ACBC** Alpha Centauri Broadcasting Corporation.
- ACES** Alpha Centauri Executive Security; the largest Police Company.
- ACT** Alpha Centauri Treaty.
- Alkalest** The nanomachines that destroyed Osiris.
- ASRAI** Autonomous Scout-Reconnaissance Artificial Intelligence; a scout robot.
- CAT** Chartered Archaeological Team.
- CDO** Centauri Democratic Organization; a political group.
- CENCOR** Centauri Consortium; the megacorp that runs Alpha Centauri.
- cm** centimetre
- Eye of Re** A terrorist group opposing Green Osiris.
- Ghost Jackal** Pirate salvage hunter.
- Green Osiris** The plan to terraform Osiris with Earth plants and animals.
- GROM (Polish)** Mobile Operations Reaction Group; a Polish commando unit.
- ICOPSAC** International Committee on Peace and Security in Alpha Centauri; a group of diplomats accompanying UNPACFOR.
- Isis Project** Secret plan to bring the Osirans back to life.
- K** Kelvin, a measure of temperature (0 K = -273.15 °C)
- km** Kilometre
- kph** Kilometre per hour
- kw** Kilowatt.
- MARA** Mobile Autonomous Robot Armour; a robot tank.
- MAV** Micro-Air Vehicle; a small robot drone.
- M-82 and M84** The Merrill and Fox servopanzer suits.
- NGO** Non-Governmental Organization, such as Amnesty Interplanetary.
- OTV** An Orbital Transfer Vehicle; a small spacecraft that does not enter atmosphere, but can shuttle people and cargo between the various space habitats.
- Resurrectionist** Someone who wants to revive the Osiran ecology on Osiris, as opposed to supporting Green Osiris.
- REMF** Real-Echelon Mother Fucker; a derogatory term used by combat soldiers to refer to support troops.
- RF-70** The Delta Hawk reconnaissance fighter.
- RICE** Relativistic Impact Catastrophe Event. A polite way of saying "a starship travelling at near light speed crashed into a tiny particle and exploded."
- R&R** Rest and recreation.
- Servopanzer** A humanoid suit of powered armour, usually 2-3 metres tall.
- Selket** A guerrilla group opposing Green Osiris.
- SQUID** Superconducting Quantum Interference Detector; a sensor probe.
- Synthesis** One of two factions in the Osiran War.
- Star Driver** A powerful particle accelerator mounted on an asteroid space station and used to propel a proton clipper.
- TAI** Thinking Artificial Intelligence; a sapient computer or robot.
- TAV** Trans-Atmospheric Vehicle; a space shuttle.
- UGV** Unmanned Ground Vehicle; a robot.
- UNPACFOR** United Nations Peace in Alpha Centauri Force.
- UNSAID** United Nations Special Agency for Interstellar Development; the Alpha government.
- UNSHAC** United Nations Supreme Headquarters Alpha Centauri.
- Xenomech** An Osiran robot, such as a Cobra, Scorpion or Tinkerbell.
- Xenopanzer** An Osiran servopanzer suit.

AFTERWORD: THE FATE OF THE OSIRANS

The species whose corpses were found in the star tombs are the original natives of Osiris. The Osirans evolved from forest pack predators into sapient tool users over millions of years. About 6,000 years ago, they developed industry, electronics, and nuclear energy. They went into space and began building homes in orbit, and later in the LaGrange Points. They also visited the Alpha Centauri B system, but, at first, built no major bases there.

The Osiran developed nanotechnology, and used it to make space flight inexpensive. They created the technology for self-aware artificial intelligence, but feared such minds might overwhelm theirs. Eventually, Osiran communities living in their LaGrange habitats developed a sophisticated computer network (called "Synthesis"), built into their ghost fog itself. The result was a vast computer net into which was uploaded the sum of Osiran knowledge. The dream jewels, mind-interface implants that everyone could wear, allowed direct access to this data net. An unparalleled world of information was only a thought away. Moreover, the capabilities of Synthesis permitted the creation of realistic virtual realms whose realism, all accessible through the dream jewels. It became common for Osirans to access these worlds while they slept, sharing consciousness with nest mates.

Synthesis also had the processing capacity to encompass digital storage of Osiran minds. Translating a mind into Synthesis was a destructive process: the encoding nanomachines literally ate the subject's mind as it copied it into data. Once encoded, however, a subject was literally immortal — a virtual spirit freed from the bonds of flesh. The old and infirm chose Synthesis rather than face death. And, increasingly, many of the young did as well.

Uploading technology spread across Osiris as more and more Osirans chose to live forever as digital life forms. Freeing of the restraints of flesh (like sleep and hormones) and able to think at faster-than-human speeds, they often produced startling insights into philosophy, science, engineering, and art. Others spent their time in play, creating or dwelling in elaborate virtual worlds more fascinating than reality. The cyberminds began to spread into commerce, edging out uncompetitive individuals. As the cybermind population expanded, it provoked a backlash among ordinary Osirans who had chosen not to upload themselves. Some political entities banned uploading, or declared that uploaded individuals were not really people. Others embraced them and reaped the benefits of cybermind invention.

3,200 years later, the Osirans had been polarized into two blocks: the Synthesis, who accepted cyberminds as citizens, and the Identitacists, who stated that only organic intelligences were actually people. Identitacist authorities banned the uploading process, while mystics taught the hatchlings that Synthesis were soulless ghosts. A religious-philosophical opposition to Synthesis emerged, known as the Identity Crusade. They feared the ultimate goal of Synthesis was to eliminate individual identity, to merge everyone into a single consciousness. As Synthesis spread from the space habitats to the surface of Osiris, the opposition turned violent. Most habitat colonies were part of Synthesis, as were an increasing number of planet dwellers, but populations were intermingled. This was a war of ideology, fought in territory occupied by both sides. Nuclear bombs and planet-killing asteroids were initially avoided. Instead, more subtle weapons were used: computer viruses, sabotage raids, infiltration robots, and spies. There were clashes between robot space ships, but few deaths.

The super computer networks of Synthesis had a huge advantage in a war of information, however. They began development of the Scorpion robots, which were able to forcibly upload individuals through their neural harpoons. Seeing defeat on the horizon, the Identity Crusade raised the stakes, gambling on a new arsenal of nanomachine-based weapon. Agents of a radical faction within the Identity Crusade leadership smuggled a nanomachine weapon — Disassembler Fog — into many Synthesis habitats. It was an intelligent, stealthy "mind-virus" designed for brainwashing. It would enter the brain and sever the neural connections between each dream jewel user.

Unfortunately, the Synthesis minds had foreseen the threat of nano-viral warfare, and “inoculated” most of the habitat inhabitants with defensive “blue goo” nanomachines. This had unforeseen consequences. Inside each victim’s brain, the mind virus made more and more copies of itself, attempting to overwhelm the defenses. The anti-viral nano had similar programming as well. The struggle between friendly and hostile nanobots resulted in tremendous heat, and, as a result, millions of Osirans suffered fatal strokes or brain haemorrhages. As the nanos spread like wildfire, thousands of victims in the Anubis Cluster chose to upload their consciousness into Synthesis rather than die.

On Osiris, Identity Crusade moderates were shocked at what the radicals had done. They launched a coup, striking at Identity Crusade government and military installations. One of these stations contained the radical Crusader nanomachine weapons lab. This led to disaster. The laboratory had developed other nanotechnological weapons, something even the radicals considered too horrible to use. One such prototype was the Alkahest. It was a self-replicating nano-dissembler intended only for space use, to consume fortified asteroid installations. In the course of the assault, lab containment systems were breached. The Alkahest was released on the Osiran homeworld.

The “grey goo” nanomachine plague spread geometrically, eating cities, people, forests, animals, everything. From space, the minds forming Synthesis could only watch in horror. They were forced to use their machines to quarantine the planet to prevent the spread of the nano-plague. Even so, it reached and destroyed several orbital stations. A complete planetary biosphere and 7.6 billion Osirans were exterminated. The only Osirans that might have survived were those in underground planetary defense bases, but most of these were destroyed when the Alkahest nanomachines ate their way into ventilation systems and access shafts. The rest were buried alive when their upper levels were transformed into dust.

A few Identity Crusade space stations and much of its battle fleet were in space or lifted off quickly enough to avoid contamination. Realizing the war was lost, some surrendered to Synthesis, shocked at what their compatriots had done. Others, among them the radical high command, chose to flee to the Identity Crusade community at Re. A vengeful Synthesis sent robotic Stingray warships in pursuit. The bulk of the Identity Crusade fleet were defeated, but two ships of Identity Crusader exiles had escaped. They reached the Earth solar system circa 200 BC. Upon discovering the Earth, the exiles planned to conquer the primitive humans and colonize the planet. Before this could happen, a pursuing Synthesis robot warship discovered them. A battle was fought, which eliminated one craft. The other craft fled to Mars where it was destroyed in a final struggle. The Synthesis Stingray ship was crippled and crash-landed on Mars, near the extinct volcano Olympus Mons. There it lay for many centuries, until discovered by humans in 2016 AD.

Back in Alpha Centauri, Synthesis was left with a ruined homeworld. The war and the Alkahest had destroyed all space habitats in orbit around Osiris. Elsewhere, the majority of Osirans had been killed by the Anubis Plague and absorbed into Synthesis. The only remaining Osiran ecosystems were contained in one large space habitat. There were less than 3,000 “live” survivors. They constructed star tombs on the surface of Osiris, and used the ghost fog to create an even larger, planet-wide version of Synthesis. The remaining Osirans retreated more and more into a digital existence, merging their minds with the dead. Eventually, they chose to transcend their frail bodies. Turning inward, their minds had no interest in expansion; the single “merged” consciousness could create infinitely complex virtual universes of its own.

Thus far, Synthesis has not noticed the humans. It still lies dreaming, occasionally touched by Fog Witches undergoing “mind experiences.” If people continue to tamper with the star tombs on Osiris, however, it may awaken. Whether Synthesis is one mind or many, and whether it can control the ghost fog directly or be forced to work through Fog Witches, is yet unknown.

Centauri Knights

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