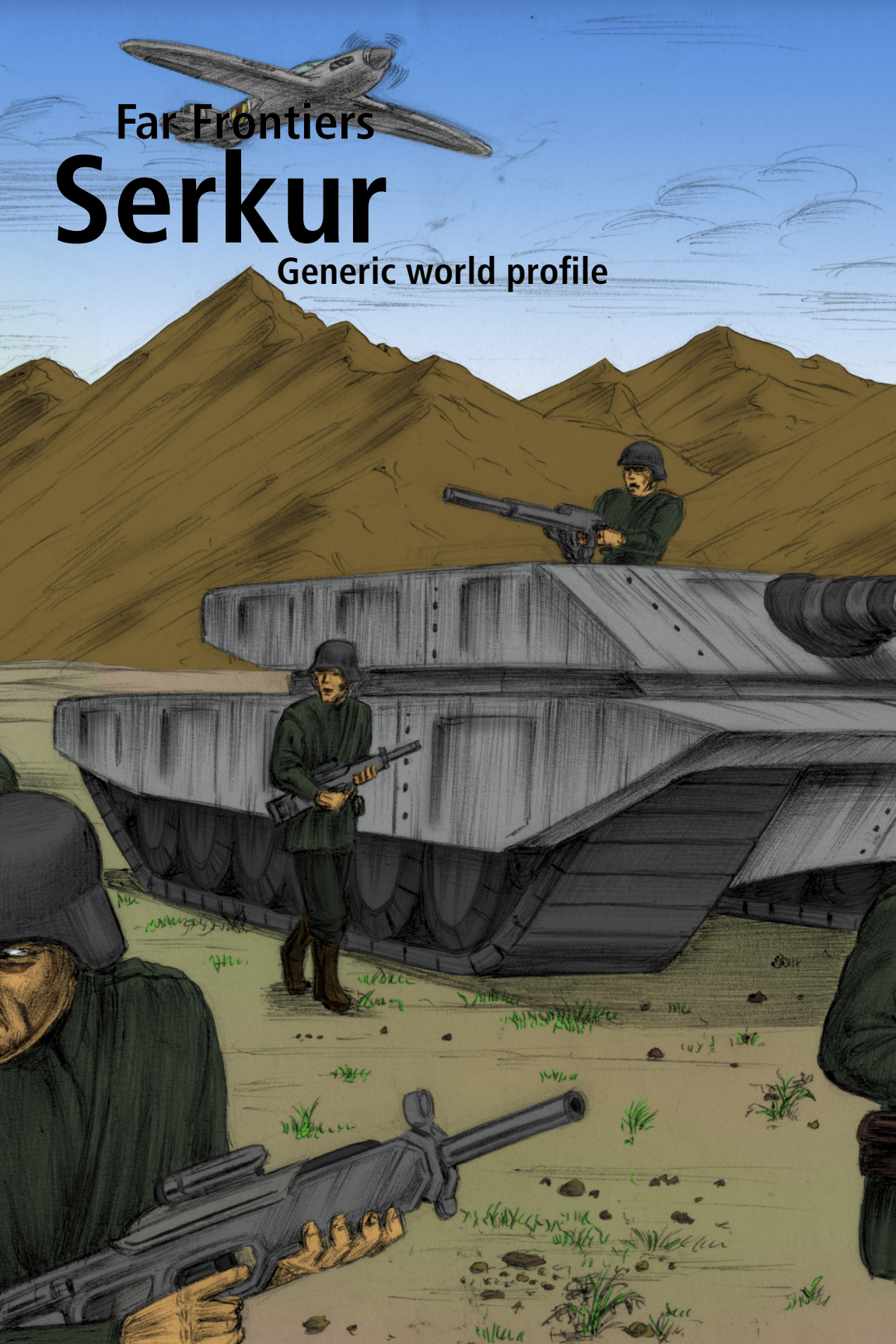


Far Frontiers Serkur

Generic world profile



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Introduction

The Far Frontiers generic world product series is a set of small supplements designed for use with any science fiction roleplaying game.

They are designed to provide a basic overview of a world designed for a GM to use as a casual stopover by players as they journey through the reaches of space. They can be fleshed out further by the GM as required depending on the needs of the campaign.

These supplements make reference to dates and generic aliens which can be modified to suit your gaming universe.

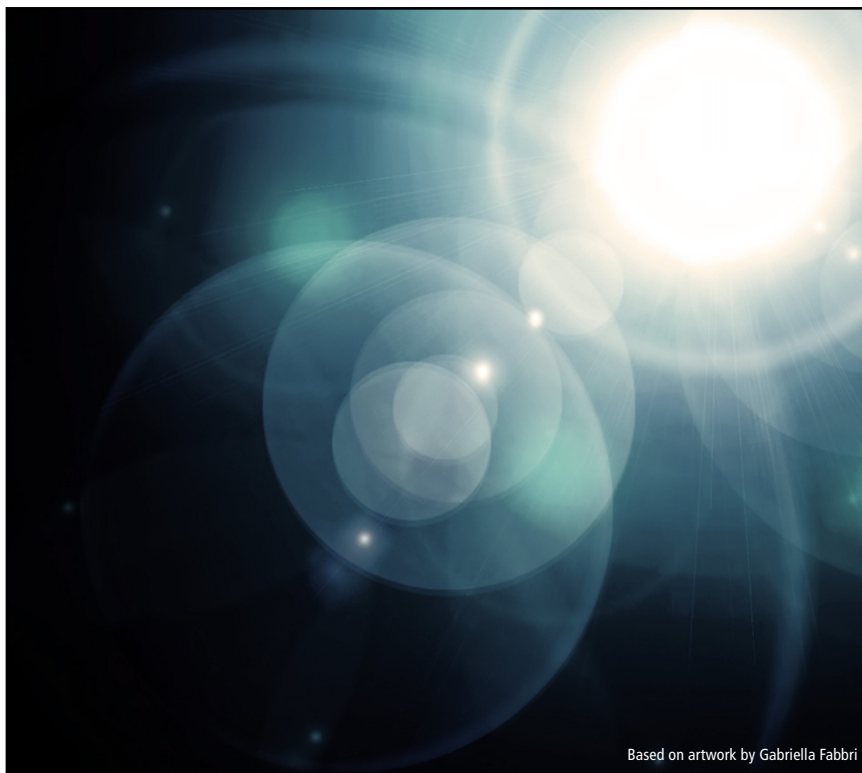
Serkur is a world that can be used in any campaign universe that contains humans and has Earth as a historic origin point.

Check out the FSpaceRPG.com website for more details about adaptations of this world for use with some specific games.

<http://www.fspacerpg.com/results.php?meta=Serkur>

For more information on the Far Frontiers products and their use with various game systems, please visit the following URL.

<http://www.fspacerpg.com/results.php?meta=far%20frontiers>



Based on artwork by Gabriella Fabbri

Serkur

Diameter	4,800 km (Mars sized)
Atmosphere	960milibars (at sea level), standard oxygen/nitrogen mix – breathable by humans without any special equipment
Water	Approximately 40% (mostly in one large ocean Great Ocean), one small land-locked sea (Chunking Sea) and a few large fresh water lakes.
Surface gravity	0.8 Earth (7.84ms ⁻²) (Dense)
Albedo	0.24
Average Global temperature	18°C (-40°C to +40°C)
Cloudiness	20%
Year	368.958 standard days, 421.7 local days
Day	21 hours
Terrain types present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivated land • Open plains and grasslands (the predominant terrain) • Desert • Ice-caps (at poles) • Water - one major ocean • City/Urban • Rainforest • Mountains
Starport	There is no star port on or around this planet – this is a non-space faring civilisation.
Population	700 million
Government	Three separate nations (all three are civil service bureaucracies)

Gayon – Serkur’s Sun

Spectral class	G3V (Yellow main sequence)
Bolometric magnitude	4.948
Luminosity	0.89 times that of the sun
Surface temperature	5700°C
Stella radius	0.958 solar diameters
Stella mass	0.98 stellar masses

Gayon is slightly cooler than the Earth’s sun but Serkur is just as warm as Earth. A lower albedo (reflectivity) makes up for less insolation (solar radiation).

System

Primary	Gayon	G3V Main sequence star
0.41 AU	Mikor	Airless terrestrial planet
0.68 AU	Yannin	Terrestrial planet – pure very dense Nitrogen atmos
1.0 AU	Serkur	4,800km diameter, standard terrestrial world
30 diam	Tarros	1,500km diameter, tide locked airless moon
1.7 AU	Straaker Belt	Asteroid belt
2.9 AU	Primus	150,000km diameter gas giant
5 diam	Lucon	1,500km diameter rocky moon, no atmosphere, inside radiation belt
7 diam	Galamish	3,000km diameter ice moon, no atmosphere, inside radiation belt
10 diam	Toa	4,500km diameter ice moon, no atmosphere, inside radiation belt
15 diam	Tremmin	9,600km diameter ice moon, standard pressure cryogenic Nitrogen atmosphere
25 diam	Cello	4,600km diameter ice moon, thin pressure atmos
5.4 AU	Solus	50,000km diameter gas giant
1 diam	-	Ring system – moderate brightness
9 diam	Sid	1,700km diameter - dirty snowball
12 diam	Po	3,200km diameter - trace Nitrogen atmosphere
15 diam	Yo	1,800km diameter - dirty snowball
11 – 80 AU	Vinian Belt	Outer belt - cometary bodies up to 800km diameter

Planets in astronomical units from Gayon, moons in diameters from main planet.

Serkur's moon Tarros, and it's relevance to Serkur's calendar

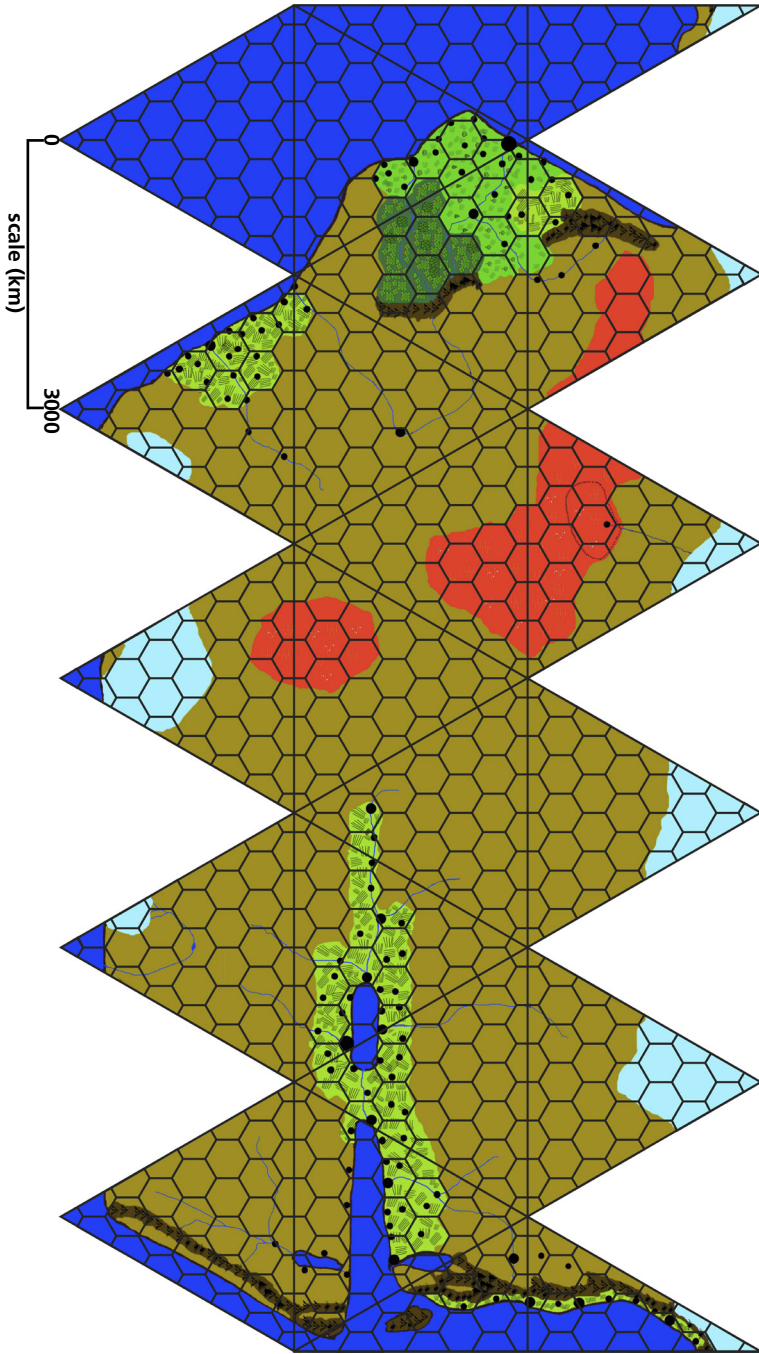
Tarros has a diameter of 1,500km and has an orbital distance of 72,000km from Serkur (see above). One lunar month is 8.60 local days or 7.53 standard Earth days. One lunar day is the same as a lunar month on Serkur due to its moon being tide lock. There are 49.02 lunar months per year. Because a lunar month on Serkur is so short, a lunar month in this case is used to define a week.

Calender

A year on Serkur is broken into ten months. The tenth month is shorter than the others. Every third year is a leap year with one extra day added to the end of the year. A normal month has 5 weeks – 9 days per week for the first four weeks and a seven day week for the fifth week. A normal month therefore looks like:

9 day week, 9 day week, 9 day week, 9 day week, 7 day week. The tenth (shorter month looks like: 9 day week, 9 day week, 9 day week, 8 day week (9 in a leap year).

World map



Key				
Ocean	Cultivated with woodlands	Open Plains/ Grasslands	Desert	Cities
Intensive cultivation	Rainforest	Icecaps	Rivers	5mil+
			Mountains	2mil+
				0.5mil+



Fertile, industrious, 'Orwellian' nightmare – Serkur, the small, populated non-starfaring planet, left isolated for centuries, is poised on the brink of major internal conflict. Similar in size to Mars, Serkur has a large dense core giving it enough gravity to preserve an atmosphere breathable by humans without any assistance. With a benign climate and pre-existing seemingly human friendly ecosystem, Serkur was a good place to settle. With time there was a rapid rise in population followed by political instability at a time when Serkur was cut off from outside contact. War eventually happened, and now a couple of tense and potentially planet threatening situations have arisen after a lengthy period of recovery.

Human History – Settlement

Serkur was never a difficult planet to get established. Despite its diminutive size by the standards of habitable planets, Serkur has a very large, dense metallic core which has given it gravity weaker than Earth's but strong enough to retain an atmosphere which is breathable by humans. The indigenous fauna and flora was also very benign. Life was as far evolved on Serkur as that on Earth perhaps 30 million years ago. Native flora included extensive grasslands, open deciduous woodlands and, in tropical regions, an area of tropical rainforest. Fauna included a range of mammalian type creatures, a few smaller reptilians and plenty of small insects. All of the native flora and fauna was generally compatible with imported terrestrial plants and livestock. Many native plants and animals were also easily adapted to domestication. This truly was a straight forward colonisation project.

Serkur was originally settled by human colonists about 2230AD, during Earth's first wave of colonisation and expansion. With a generally moderate climate and not too many extremes, Serkur was well placed to grow agricultural produce for other nearby colonies that were less well favoured ecologically. Farming settlements were established that supplied other colonies with grain. During this period of Serkur's history, large lumbering bulk freighters, many tens of thousand tons each, would wait



Based on photo by Andreas Krappweis

in orbit like a pod of fat whales, while dozens of grain shuttles would labour tirelessly ferrying the grain up to the ships. No spacefaring infrastructure was established on Serkur – only warehouses for the grain, service depots for the shuttles and facilities for producing liquid hydrogen fuel for the shuttles and visiting freighters.

As Serkur's farming communities became established, towns grew up to service the farming communities. There was no real heavy industry established at this stage of Serkur's history. Urban areas were established to act as administrative centres and as trading and service centres supplying the surrounding farmland. Farms were large, expansive grain growing enterprises using highly mechanised farming techniques and required a fair amount of energy. Sources of energy had to be established. These came predominantly from hydro-electric, solar and wind farms, with a few fusion plants imported from nearby high-tech worlds.

As Earth's empire grew during its initial period of expansion and prosperity, Serkur was relatively quiet as a bureaucratic and civil service culture became established. The Earth colonists who settled on Serkur brought their culture and language with them, with three major cultural groups being formed: Anglo Saxon (English, Australian, and North American etc.), Russian and Chinese – a pattern that tended to mimic that of Earth in the late twentieth century. These ethnic groups tended to establish their own groups forming three distinct groups. The English speaking colonists settled in the north-west part of Serkur's single large continent around a large fertile area nurtured by reliable rainfalls brought in by on-shore winds. Mainland European colonists (predominantly German, Russian and French speakers) settled in the south western part of the continent where there is a large area of fertile land similar to that in the north-west. Asiatic colonists, but also many English speaking European



colonists, settled in the eastern side of the continent around a large fertile region that encircles a small inland sea. Thus the pattern of settlement was established, forming what would ultimately lead to Serkur's three 'superpower' blocks. Culture, freedom and liberal values were all the hallmarks of Serkur's early colonial history.

Serkur had a limited industrial base consisting of simple manufacturing of mechanical components, but without an electronics industry. The benign and fertile growing conditions led to a rapid expansion in population. Serkur, with its limited industrial base, became overwhelmed and was unable to support itself. With an increasing reliance on imports the planet rapidly became a basket case of indebtedness. The standard of living rapidly fell accompanied by social problems and poverty.

Earth's empire then collapsed in an orgy of civil warfare and violence. Serkur lost contact with distant Earth and became isolated from its neighbouring trading partners. Cut off and alone, the inhabitants of Serkur were unable to maintain even their modest level of technological and industrial output. Worse still, without the protective umbrella of Earth's space fleet, Serkur was totally exposed to constant raiding by marauding bands of pirates from neighbouring worlds who set out to plunder anything of value from the helpless population. Yet the population of Serkur was very resourceful. A strong and well trained militia was established, equipped with any weaponry that they could find or make with their limited capability. The inhabitants of Serkur could no longer rely on imported technology so they improvised, adapted and eventually developed self-sufficient systems that allowed them to carry on their lives the best they could.

About the time of the collapse of the empire, the colonial governor of Serkur, based at Rhylos City, was overthrown. A new government was established by a group of republican neophytes wanting to establish a republic with strong oligarchic and bureaucratic tendencies intended to favour the ruling class. Within a year, nationalists at Canton and Karlor declared independence from the Rhylosian republic, starting a major civil war. With the collapse of the empire already well underway, there was nothing that Earth's colonial office could do to prevent the political turmoil. Serkur was left to sort out its own problems.

Serkur was gripped by a global war. There was heavy loss of life from the war along with famine as food production and the ability to distribute it plummeted. A new and deadly plague, possibly crudely made in a primitive bio-weapons laboratory, ravaged the planet, killing 70% of the remaining population. Historians have debated the true origin of the plague as nobody was able to establish where the laboratory it came from actually was. Others have suggested it was imported, purchased by one of the three conflicting governments on Serkur from arms merchants peddling their wares throughout the shattered empire for quick cash. Others have suggested that pirates may have been involved. The end result was a planet that was gutted and broken, its inhabitants exhausted by decades of war, famine and disease.

As the war progressed and Serkur was plundered by pirates, arms dealers from neighbouring worlds tried to profit from the turmoil. Pirate warlords seized tentative control of the world and exacted a toll from merchants supplying weapons to the three warring factions on Serkur. Some of the pirate kings used Serkur as a base of

operations for raiding other nearby planets. The three governments on Serkur tolerated their presence as long as they got their 'fix' of weaponry allowing them to continue fighting each other.

Post collapse

The period of collapse, war and domination by pirates lasted two centuries. During that time the inhabitants of Serkur struggled to survive. The war eventually came to an end as Earth finally began to reassert control over space and its former colonies – a restoration that was well under way in Serkur's region by 2500AD. Earth's space navy was back, and with it the banishment of pirates to the outer reaches of known space. Interstellar trade resumed and stability returned to the region. By 2520AD a ceasefire had been declared between the three warring nations on Serkur. Stability brought a rising standard of living from the export of agricultural luxuries and the import of high technology goods. Serkur's population stabilised, then increased from a low of 500 million inhabitants at the end of the war to 700 million at the time of Serkur's cold war that was well under way by c. 2600AD.

The current setting

Serkur is now dominated by three power blocks: Rhylos, Canton and Karlor. The three power blocks are descended from the three ethnically diverse cultural groups that originally settled on Serkur when it was initially colonised. During the decades since the war that raged on Serkur, there has been an uneasy peace between the three power blocks. The situation is that of a cold war, which is very similar to that experienced on Earth during the decades following the Second World War. A much more elevated level of tension on Serkur exists than during Earth's cold war period. Security within each state is extremely tight. Each nation is extremely paranoid about the intentions of the other two, and a hot war could erupt at any moment. Secret services in each of the nations are large. Spying is very common, both on each nation and on every day inhabitants, lest they be found lacking loyalty to the state and harbouring treacherous tendencies. Thus, an extreme 'Orwellian' state of tension exists on Serkur – a hair-trigger mentality in constant readiness.

Serkur is at the same technological level as Earth was during the 1970s. The technological and industrial capabilities of Serkur reached its nadir near the end of the civil war. By this stage Serkur's technological capabilities was only at the same level as that of Earth during the period between World War I and World War II. After the ceasefire, the three nations of Serkur were able to rebuild their shattered industries and restore their blighted economies, helped to some extent by the resumption of a limited level of trade with the neighbouring planets of the restored empire. Stability over the last few decades has allowed Serkur to develop its industry – as technological development is stimulated by the cold war between the nations.

Serkur now has a considerable quantity heavy industry, which may be found equally in all three nations. Manufactured items include heavy machinery for primary industries (agriculture, mining), some consumer goods (there is a culture of austerity on Serkur), tanks, aircraft, warships and other military equipment. Production of electronic hardware is still limited because Serker's industry lacks production capability.

There is unwillingness by other planets to sell technology to the Serkurians due to unease over their martial aspirations. None of the three nations on Serkur have any interest in space travel, but significant development of ICBMs has taken place. Serkur is bristling with ballistic missiles all pointing at each other.

Each nation on Serkur has a very large civil service bureaucracy. This has its origins from the prewar planetary government when Serkur was a dependent colony of Earth. The civil services revolve around the military. They are dominated by military aspirants. Each power spends an exorbitant quantity of funds on major military and scientific research and development projects.

Serkur has abundant metallic and petroleum reserves that were not exploited by the original settlers. Although the planet is less tectonically active than the Earth, geological structures are simple and much larger; hence there are many large oil and gas fields in the basins within the landmass. The planet is dense, hence, rich in metals such as uranium and iron. An abundance of mineral resources has assisted the inhabitants of Serkur to develop their economic and military capabilities.

Since the war there has been an accelerated use of petroleum. The planet has also become much more industrialised, and additional sources are constantly required to power them, leading to nuclear power being increasingly utilised. Serkur during the cold war period has become more prosperous and wealthy, but is being primed as political and military a powder keg ready to explode.

Pirate History on Serkur

Pirate activity has always been very limited on Serkur. This consisted of both renegade human pirates and a few sentient species from other nonhuman 'alien' that resented Earth's dominance of imperial space. A pirate base existed on Serkur's moon Tarros (on the side facing Serkur) up until a few years before the ceasefire on Serkur. The base was used by corsairs, whom were opportunists, exploiting the civil unrest on Serkur for their own gains.

With the restoration of the empire, warships were dispatched from Earth to eliminate the pirates. The pirate base on Tarros was subsequently destroyed leaving only scorched ruins on the dusty and battered terrain of Tarros.

The xenophobic human population on Serkur killed off the few nonhuman pirates that were present at the time of the ceasefire. They were quietly rounded up by each of the respective internal security agencies and terminated without any mention in any media. Any humans found associating with them were also rounded up and given the same special treatment. Soon after, Serkur was completely clear of pirates. Since the ceasefire no pirates have returned to Serkur, and none have attempted any further contact with Serkur.

The three major powers on Serkur

On Serkur there are 3 major superpowers:

Rhylos	Located in the northwest part of continent
Canton	Located in the southwest part of continent
Karlor	Located in the eastern part of continent and on the north-eastern seaboard.

The population of each of the nations on Serkur is as follows:

Rhylos	230,000,000
Canton	150,000,000
Karlor	320,000,000
Total	700,000,000

All three are nations on Serkur are civil service bureaucracies. The political nature of each nation on Serkur is as follows:

Rhylos

Rhylos is the technological hub of Serkur. Rhylosian industry is more technologically advanced than the other two nations. Rhylosians see themselves as eventually being the world government. The Rhylosian government has tried to copy itself after twentieth century republic type governments.

Canton

The Canonists are supremacists. Canonists believe they will eventually conquer Rhylos by outright force. The Canton government is very much a fascist government with neo-Nazi tendencies. Canton poses a major threat to Rhylos. Canton is richer in metallic resources than the other two powers.

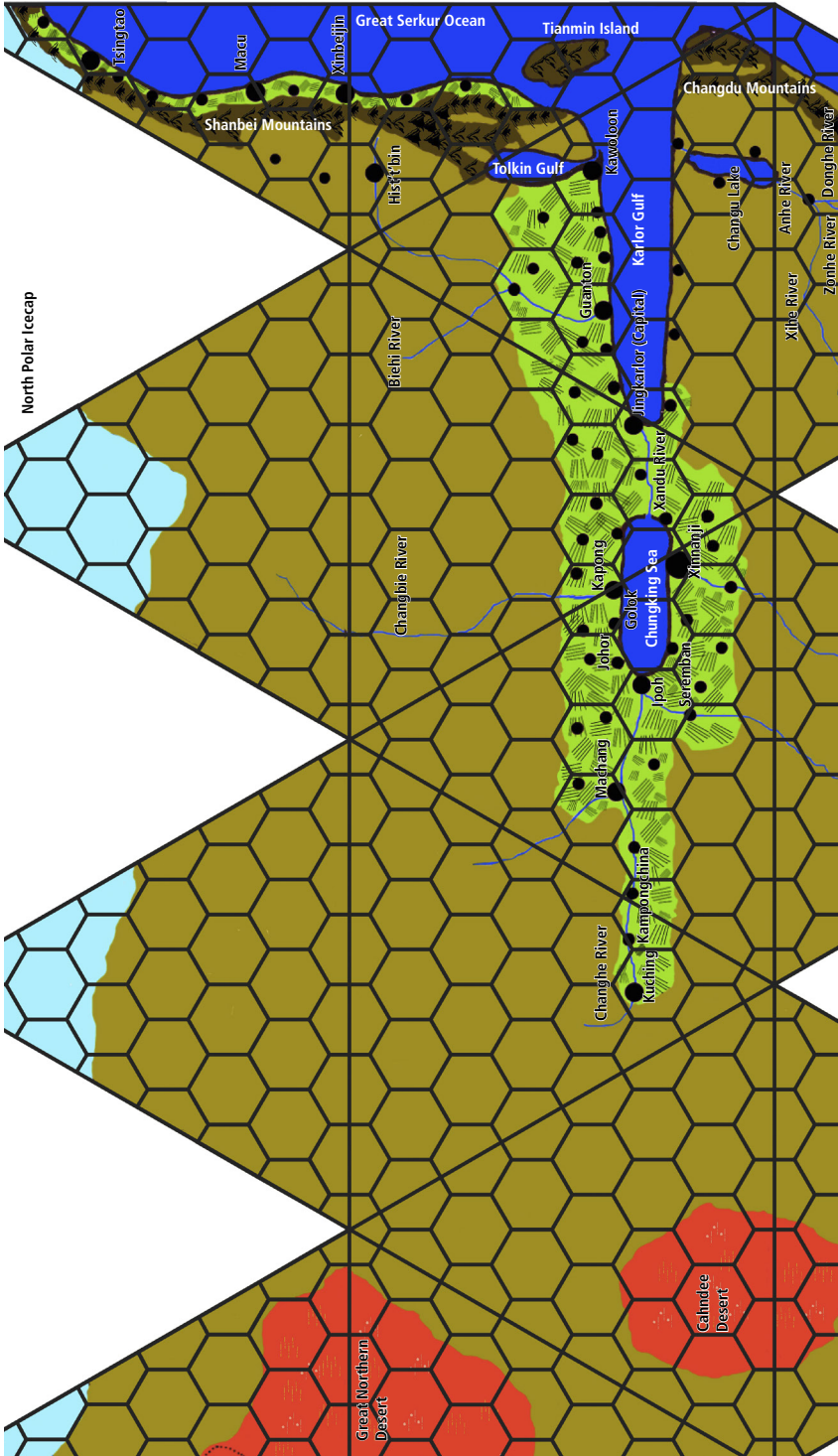
Karlor

Karlor is the sleeping giant. Karlor has a greater population than the other two powers. It has more intensive farming and a solid industrial base. The Karlor government will listen to reasonable offers from the other two nations. Karlor has been 'offside' with both Rhylos and Canton at various times. Karlor is more cash oriented than the other two power blocks.

The Political Structures of the Three Nations on Serkur

Rhylos	
President	Emperor (figurehead only) - appointed from a nobility
Senate	Elected by a lower house
Lower House	Elected by masses (landed rich have much more voting power)
The Masses	





Zoomed map of Serkur showing Karlor territory

Canton	
Dictator	(Chen)
Inner Party	
Middle Party	
Outer Party	("ley members")
Proletariat	("plebs")

Karlors	
President	Chairman
Lords	Senior Party
Minor Nobles	Major Party
Masses	(no say in politics)

Earth analogues (these are only vague comparisons):

Rhylos	A combination of ancient Rome and 20th century USA – the worst of each
Canton	Oceania (from novel 1984) - easily recognisable
Karlors	Combination of Chinese and British Monarchy (but without any democracy)

Military Strength on Serkur

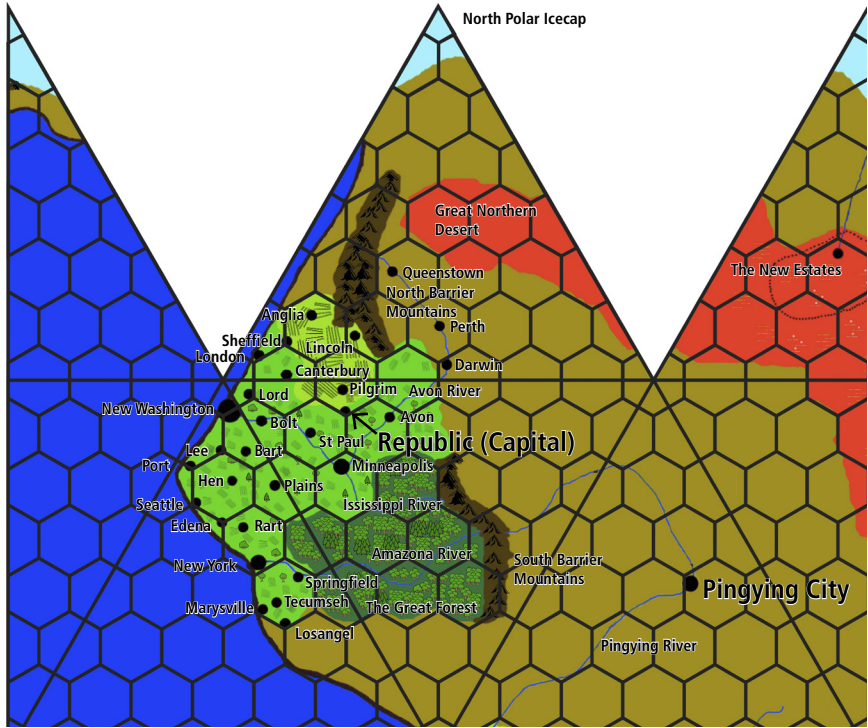
The following is the number of personnel in each branch of the military for each nation on the planet Serkur.

Nation	Army	Navy	Airforce
Rhylos	700,000	100,000	50,000
Canton	900,000	60,000	100,000
Karlors	1,200,000	30,000	30,000

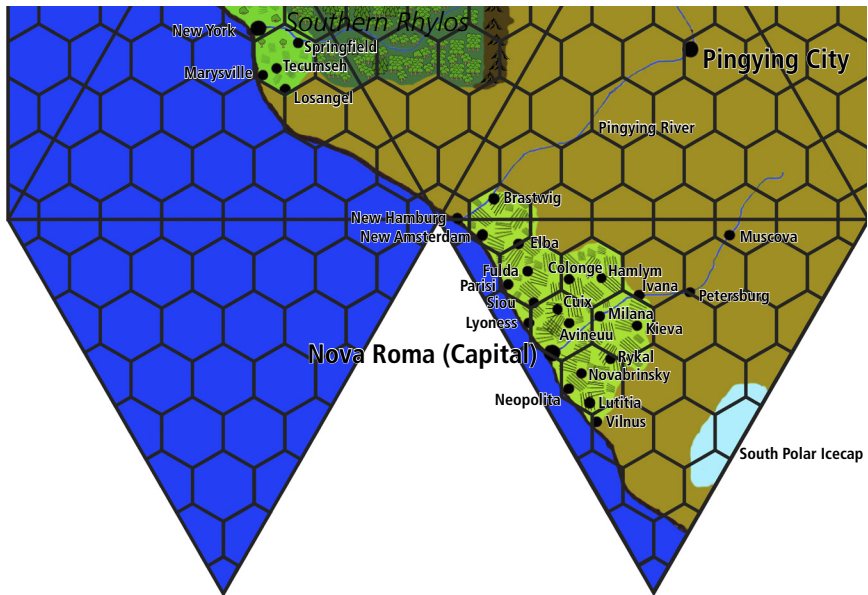
Technologically the equipment used by all three sides is similar to that used on Earth during the 1970s peak of the Cold War era.

Their navy has some similarity to that of the United States of America during the 1970s. There are, however a large number of World War 2 style ships in their navy as well as ones that would not look out of place in the 1970s. Rhylosians, like the other two nations, have been unwilling to scrap older ships. Instead, they have kept them going, and have installed upgrades such as missiles and radar technology.

Rhylos



Canton





This is a model of a typical heavy unit in the Rhylosian navy. It has 8 14 inch guns and many smaller AA guns. The catapult amidships behind the funnel is no longer used.

Rhylosian navy

Type of unit	Number	Personal/unit
Heavy units (c. 20,000 tonnes)	10	~1500
Medium units (c. 10,000 tonnes)	20	~500
Light units (c. 3000 tonnes)	40	~200
Patrol (c. 200 tonnes)	200	~50
Support staff		~50,000

The heavy units consist of six World War 2 style battleships and four aircraft carriers. The 10,000 ton vessels are cruisers – half of which are armed with modern missiles while the other half are older all ‘big gun’ vessels. Lighter vessels are frigates and destroyers with varying degrees of modernisation. The patrol craft are designed for coastal areas and on major rivers. They are quite small, of limited range and can’t tolerate rough weather conditions. There are about 50 missile armed fast attack missile armed craft that also fall into this category.

Rhylosian air force

Type of unit	Number
Fighters	400
Fighter bombers	300
Recon	60
Bombers	200
Heavy rockets	200

Fighters and fighter bombers in the Rhylosian airforce are all of 1970s era jet powered design. Bombers are advanced high flying multi-engine turboprop designs similar to the Russian ‘Bear’ bomber. Recon planes are either high flying spy-planes or light turboprop aircraft. Heavy rockets are all ground based and fired from large mobile launchers on trucks or other similar style carriers. ‘Scud’ launchers are a good example of this type of set up.

The Rhylosian Army consists of a balance mixture of armour, infantry and artillery units. In both structure and composition it is similar to many of the NATO armies of the Cold War period with a mixture of heavy tanks similar to an early version of the American M1 main battle tank, tracked APCs and light reconnaissance tanks with either a light cannon or a 75mm gun.

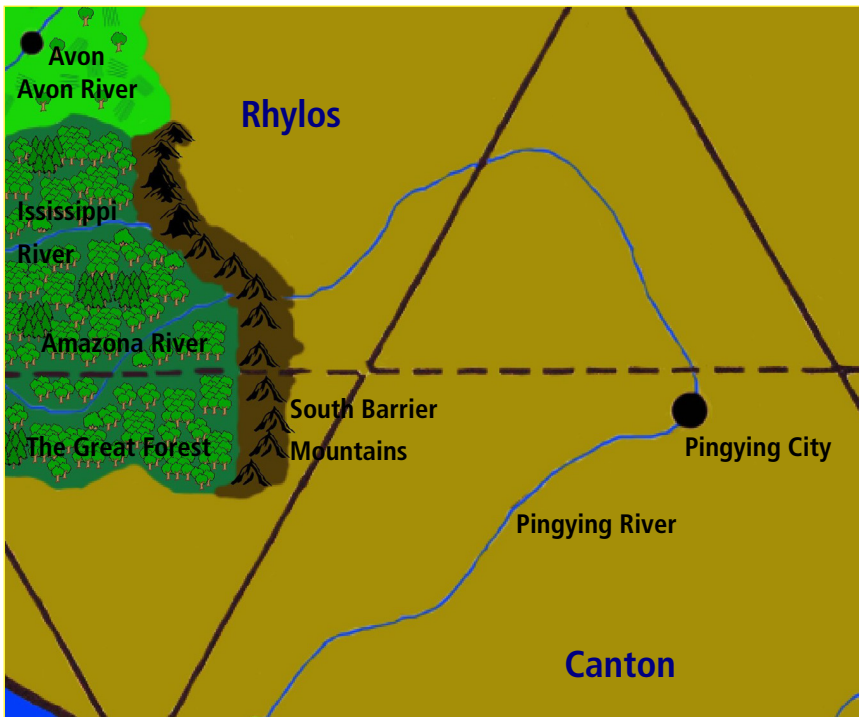
Flash Point: Pingying City

City overview

Pingying City (population 3.5 million) is the largest city along the Pingying River. The river defines part of the border between Rhylos and Canton from the city to the coast. Bisected by the broad, sluggish river, the city consists of an expanse of low two to five storied brick buildings that are drab and architecturally uninspired in appearance with a strong 'Stalinist' flavour. There is dust and grime everywhere, and one is never very far from the machinery of war, which has essentially taken over the character of this city.

Currently Pingying City is part of Canton; however most of the population is Rhylosian, thanks to the city having changed hands during the last civil war. The Rhylosian government has a long term agenda to take this city back, either by force or other means. The city and its immediate surrounding hinterland are important because the occupation of this area gives vital control over the middle reaches of the river. There is tension everywhere in the streets and the city is full of armed guards. There are checkpoints everywhere with random searches. One cannot proceed more than a few city blocks without running into one. Anyone caught without the correct papers gets arrested and detained indefinitely.

The Rhylosian government has the nagging concern that Canton might use the area as a launching point for a new offensive against Rhylos. This has led to a massive build up of arms just across the border in Rhylos, and hence a similar deployment of forces in Canton facing off against Rhylos. There is an extremely tense stand-off between the two nations along this border.



The Scenario: Caught in the crossfire

This scenario is suited for a party of four to ten characters. Most of the characters should have some sort of military background, however it is advisable that at least one character has ship piloting skills and at least one is strong in computer skills. They have been recruited by a mercenary agency on a near-by technologically advanced world to help deliver a shipment of weapons to the city of Minneapolis, which is a major city in Rhylos, east of its capital New Washington. The weapons consist of a large supply of advanced energy beam weapons and some heavy duty powered armour. A small trading vessel of 600 tons has also been provided to ship this equipment to Serkur.

As the party approach Serkur, an advanced planetary defence missile is launched at the approaching ship. Within the head of the missile there is both a high explosive warhead that will target the rear of the ship where the drives are likely to be, and an electronic warhead, which will attempt to upload a computer virus into the ships computer. The computer virus will disable the ships drives and remotely divert it to Canton airspace. Dodging the missile physically is very difficult but is achievable by a pilot with advanced piloting skills. Should the pilot fail to evade the missile, the impact will damage the drives of the ship forcing an immediate landing Pingying City. Should the players attempt to divert to another location, more planetary defence missiles of the same type will be launched at the ship. Should the pilot succeed in evading the missile, the electronic warhead will still attack the ship. This warhead is of an advanced design, far more advanced than what the Canton military engineers would be expected to make, suggesting that the Canton military must have had some outside help and was sold these missiles by an off world supplier.

Regardless of what the players try, they will not be able to completely evade the electronic warhead of the planetary defence missile. The vessel will have to land at Pingying City, where authorities from the Canton government will detain and question the crew. The players may attempt to escape, which owing to sloppy security procedures should be relatively straight forward. If they can escape within a few hours, they should be to get back to their ship before authorities discover the weapons that they are carrying. Once the Canton authorities do discover what is on board, they will quickly surround the ship with a very heavy military guard and will proceed to unload the cargo and transfer it to a military base where it can be evaluated for their own use.

Should they get back to their ship; a character with advanced computer skills will be able to evaluate the electronically hijacked ships computer. They will discover that the computer virus was actually tailor made to attack this particular ship, and a number of vulnerabilities were deliberately engineered into the ships computer software to allow this attack to happen. It will eventually transpire that the missile used to attack the ship and its electronic warhead were made and supplied by the same company that supplied the characters with this ship and the equipment that they were supposed to supply to Rhylos. Quite clearly this company has been selling military merchandise to both sides, hoping to increasingly destabilize the situation, and sell even more equipment, boosting their profits.

A though evaluation of the faster than light drive will reveal that serious damage has been caused by the computer virus. There are limited resources on Rhylos to repair



Model and photo by Philip Warnes

the damage and it will take at least several months with the current available resources. A skilled computer expert may be able to remove the malware from the ships computer, but the physical damage will all ready be done. The best they will be able to do is try to evade the Canton forces and attempt to fly to Rhylos controlled air space.

If the party does not escape in time, the characters will still eventually learn about the origin of the planetary defence missiles. They may still choose to escape to Rhylos, but it will take longer and be more difficult.

Alternatively the players may 'sell out' to the Canton side. The Canton authorities will be very suspicious of the characters at first, but will eventually employ them as experts to demonstrate and train the Canton forces on the use of the equipment.

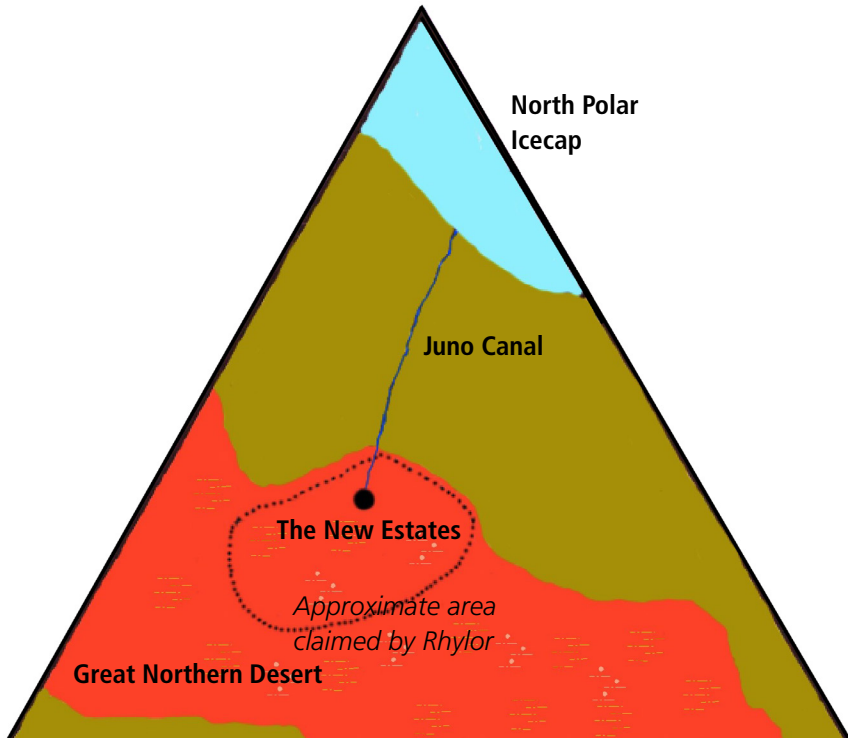
The New Estates

The Concept

Tucked away in the middle of the Great Northern Desert, the Rhylosian government has been conducting a major de-desertification project called New Estates. The main objective of the New Estates Project is to turn hostile wasteland desert into fertile new land. This is accomplished by harvesting melt water from the North Polar Icecap, sending it southwards along the newly created Juno Canal. Water is distributed to the city of New Estate (population about 1.5 million) and to irrigate the surrounding newly established croplands.

A large nuclear power plant at New Estate powers the whole scheme. The operation, from power generation, distribution of water and energy, crop management and other strategic components of the infrastructure are run by a new and very sophisticated control system of a nature that is very new and advanced by Rhylosian standards.

The Karlor government has a huge problem with the very existence of this project. They feel that the whole New Estates scheme is starting to impinge on their territory. The border between Rhylos and Karlor in this region has always been poorly defined because it is a desert region which up until recently has been of little interest to either power. The New Estates has changed all of this. Karlor perceives this as a political wedge, a pre-emptive attempt to grab ground, the moral high ground, and a potential future military base. Karlor sees the New Estates as a dagger aimed



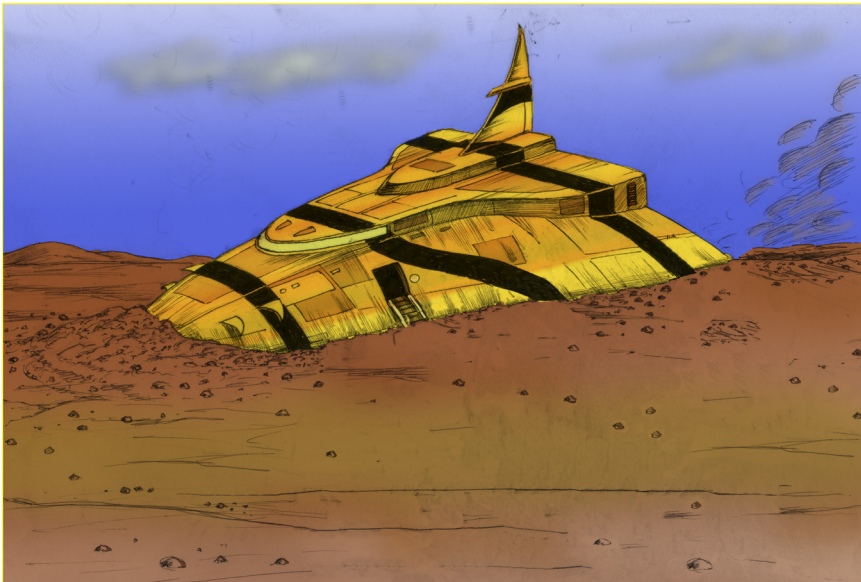
straight at their heartland. The Karlor government also expressed reservations about the environmental effects that such a project may have. They argue that the New Estates project has radically altered the whole indigenous ecosystem in the region and that it should be left alone. Rhylos has not accepted Karlor's claims, and have instead accused Karlor of using environmental lobbyists as a political wedge of its own to gain a moral advantage. Rhylos has also accused Karlor of fostering environmental lobby groups within Rhylos to cause political instability and further obstruct further development with the New Estates project.

The New Estates project was the brainchild of the Rhylosian government engineer Vladros Rammanos who spent nearly 20 years developing the systems that would operate and maintain this project. This was Rammanos' lifelong project. He was constantly at the forefront of the development of New Estates, always in the media promoting and informing the public of progress. Vladros Rammanos, unfortunately, had a nasty accident a few weeks prior to the system going online and then mysteriously disappeared. Shortly after his disappearance all hell broke loose at New Estates.

Background: An Alien Ship Arrives and Early History of the Project

Millions of years prior to Earth's Empire and the colonisation of Serkur, a small experimental alien warship of advanced design and construction mysteriously vanished in an outer frontier part of the Kiishi Protectorate. The ship, a 400 ton exploration vessel belonged to the Kiishi – a mysterious humanoid alien race with smooth metallic silver skin, approximately 1.8 meters tall and totally hairless. Humans have never heard of the Kiishi as they were from a distant part of the galaxy, many thousands of light years away, and their protectorate peaked millions of years in the past.

The Kiishi were highly technologically advanced. They interfaced directly with their computers using a form of neural jack technology and a stream of nanoscopic sized semi autonomous robots (nanobots) that could flow directly from their computers



to their neural systems for a perfectly distributed machine-Kiishi neural network.

In those distant early times, the Kiishi ship had been on a routine survey of a mineral rich planet where mining operations had recently begun. As the Kiishi ship approached the planet, it was attacked by another ship of unknown origin. There were no organic life forms on the ship which attacked the Kiishi, only advanced robots intent on gaining control of the survey vessel so that it could be harvested for components, metals and useful composite materials.

There was an intense fire-fight between the Kiishi and the boarding-bots that attempted to gain control of the ship. The Kiishi succeeded in repelling the boarding-bots but only at a heavy price to themselves. The attacking craft gave pursuit and was joined by several other craft of similar design. The Kiishi made a hasty escape, but unfortunately, navigational control systems, vital for successfully navigating in deep space were damaged. The Kiishi knew that they were destined to die in deep space but chose death rather than capture.

Thus the machine culture was denied vital intelligence on the Kiishi protectorate, preventing them from over-running and annihilating the Kiishi. In deep space the Kiishi fled and in deep space they all perished, their silvery bodies with their inert nanobots mummified in their shiny coffin.

One of the boarding-bots, however, was not entirely destroyed. It had been shut down by the effects of a Kiishi anti AI e-bomb. It was unable to restart itself so it lay coiled up and inert within the ship – powered down, asleep, with all of its systems locked down in safe mode.

The shiny, derelict ship sailed on through empty space. Eventually the faster than light drives ran out of fuel, but it kept drifting through the cold dark expanses of deep space, through millennia, alone and apparently lifeless.

By chance, the ship drifted into the Gayon System. Pulled in by Serkur's gravity, it fell and crashed into the Great Northern Desert. Nobody saw the ship streak through Serkur's atmosphere on its final plunge to the ground. Nobody saw it crash in a remote part of the Great Northern Desert. In the Great Northern Desert the shiny ship lay, half buried in sand, partially covered by drifting dunes. For nearly twenty years the ship lay, apparently dead, and for twenty years its technological payload lay dormant.

Vladros Rammanos – What happened

A few years later, and twenty years prior to this scenario, the young Rhylosian government engineer Vladros Rammanos chanced upon the wreckage of the crashed Kiishi ship while part of a surveying team working in this remote part of the desert, which was some distance from the site of the future New Estates.

The ship appeared partially buried in the sand dunes where it had crashed. Wreckage was strewn over a large part of the desert; however most of the ship appeared to be intact allowing its distinctive burnished golden bullet shape to be easily discerned. The explorers knew immediately that they were dealing with space wreck of advanced design.

Damage to the outer hull allowed Vladros and his team to enter the ship. There they found the remains of the crew and its technological treasure. Vladros accidentally

cut himself while exploring the wreck – a small nick which he did not really pay attention to. With an open wound in immediate contact with the remains of the Kiishi crew, somehow some of the nanobots entered Vladros' body. They were re-energised by his metabolism and rapidly acquainted themselves with his body. Some of the Kiishi knowledge was imparted to Vladros via the nanobot infection giving him immediate but imperfect insight to much of the Kiishi technology.

Vladros chose not to disclose his new found knowledge to his fellow team members. He kept the information selfishly to himself so that he alone would have a major career advantage in developing the New Estates. He murdered his fellow team members, hid their bodies in the desert, and then staggered alone out of the desert, claiming that his party was attacked by desert bandits.

Vladros presented his case eloquently and the Rhylosian government believed his version of events. Upon subsequent visits, Vladros returned alone to the crash site, bringing with him a small piece of earth moving machinery to cover up the wreck so that nobody else would find it.

He investigated the wreck by himself. He used his new found knowledge to create a neural jack for himself, which he surgically implanted on a part of the body which nobody would see (a very tiny 1mm diameter port on the back of the head, hidden by his hair). With his neural jack, Vladros was able to plug himself into the computer and delve more into the ways of the Kiishi.

Back at the New Estates, Vladros' career was progressing nicely. Vladros knew that for the New Estates to work really well, a new and advanced control system would be needed. With his newly gained knowledge from the Kiishi ship, Vladros set about designing the new system and the engineering to go with it. He was very careful not to make the system too advanced, lest people become suspicious of the origin of his technical knowledge. As the New Estates project grew and developed, Vladros' career flourished, helped by frequent media interviews and promotions. And all along, nobody knew anything about where he was getting any of his ideas from.

Vladros made frequent trips back to the derelict ship. He would secretly bring supplies with him so that he could 'disappear' from the public eye for up to a week at a time. On his second visit to the crash site he was able to power up the computer by supplying it with fuel – water of which the hydrogen would be used to power a small auxiliary fusion reactor. With the computer running, Vladros was able to delve more deeply into the ship's archives. He could tell that the computer was damaged, but there was enough information available to give Vladros a huge advantage over his peers.

After a few months searching the wreck, Vladros encountered the inert boarding bot. The bot was humanoid in shape, approximately 1.8 meters tall and shiny 'chrome' finish. Vladros was very careful when investigating the robot, because he knew from the ship's logs that this robot was extremely dangerous. Upon careful analysis Vladros was able to determine that the robot was essentially a drone that was part of a much larger machine culture collective with a limited degree of autonomy but also was an integral part of distributed network. Its eyes were multispectral and could see from the long wave infrared part of the spectrum through to the gamma

ray part allowing it to see thermal emissions from say humans through to high energy radiation sources.

It had hands similar to human hands with opposable thumbs, but there the similarity ends. Within the hands were an array of weapons – high energy plasma guns, electrically powered high velocity needle guns, long prehensile tentacles that could shoot out and ensnare victims or even pull them apart, and ultra sharp diamond blade cutters for carving up victims.

It had advanced camouflaging capabilities. By refracting and altering the properties of light around it, and could appear to look like any person it had met giving it the capability of gaining the trust of people by subterfuge and clever disguise. The robot was powered by a small fusion reactor of advanced design, requiring only a small quantity of water to fuel it. It was very mobile, very dexterous and very dangerous.

Vladros disappears after an accident

A few weeks prior to the New Estates project going online, Vladros was involved in a major car accident that left him a quadriplegic. Nobody was able to ascertain the truth about what really happened, who, or what caused the accident, and Vladros seemed to be unable to remember it at all.

There were many conspiracy theories regarding a botched assassination attempt by either a rival government or an extreme environmentalist group that opposed the New Estates project. Others suggested one or more rival work colleagues who felt threatened by Vladros' stellar performance on the New Estates project. The investigation is still proceeding, but police at this stage have no firm leads.

Vladros was now basically helpless, but he was able to convince a few of his close and loyal friends to secretly take him to the site of the derelict ship. Here he thought he could make use of the cybernetic technology. On that fateful day, Vladros and four of his closest workers mysteriously disappeared.

Upon reaching the wreckage, Vladros pointed out his neural jack to his friends, who were able to plug him into the computer. Vladros originally intended to upload himself into the ships computer, giving himself ultimate access to all of its systems. Then an idea came to him – why not upload himself into the boarding bot. His personality would give him control over the robot and he would have his mobility restored. Alas, this is where Vladros miscalculated!

Vladros uploaded himself into the boarding bot alright. There he was – Vladros Rammanos in his shiny new super body. Unfortunately, the hard-wired programming of the boarding bot had its own personality, and was mandated to extend the dominion of the machine culture. After millions of years, the machine culture was back – rebooted, with Vladros as its new king! Vladros' old body was quickly disposed of and his four former friends were quickly and efficiently hunted down and killed. They were no match for the new Vladros.

Vladros headed straight for the city of New Estate. He used his camouflage ability to look like the old Vladros to gain access to the infrastructure control systems of the project. With full control over the system, he was able to 'jack' into its relatively primitive electronic systems. Then the whole infrastructure and manufacturing

systems of New Estates started doing really crazy things.

The whole system appeared to become self aware. Manufacturing plants started producing strange new components – first very basic components, then components of increasing sophistication, growing exponentially, then self assembling into new killer robots. This is the nightmare scenario that now confronts the Rhylosian government, and even everyone else on Serkur.

The threat

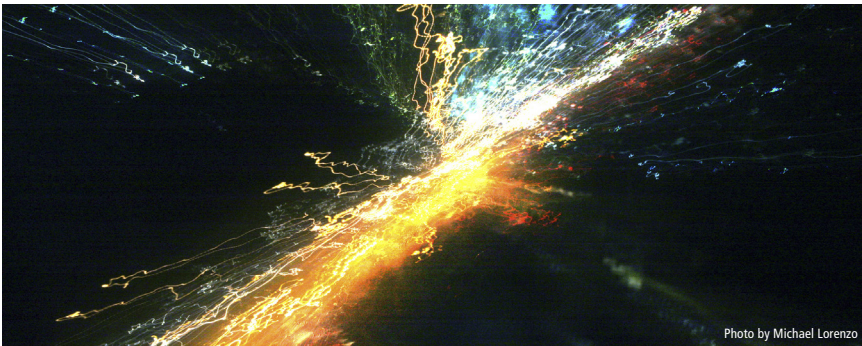
This new AI that has inserted itself into the control systems of New Estates is clearly intent on self replicating, spreading and ultimately taking over the whole planet. Once it achieves this, there is the real danger that it will try to gain access to interstellar space travel and take over all other planets within its reach. The dilemma is as follows:

The technology that has suddenly unleashed itself on Serkur is much more advanced than the current technology available to its inhabitants. Do the three states put aside their differences and try to deal with the problem and call for outside help, or will one power try to use this renegade technology to gain an advantage over the others? If one power does try to use the technology for their own use, they will have very little chance of controlling it because it is so much more advanced than they are.

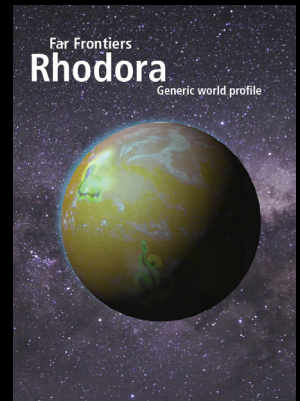
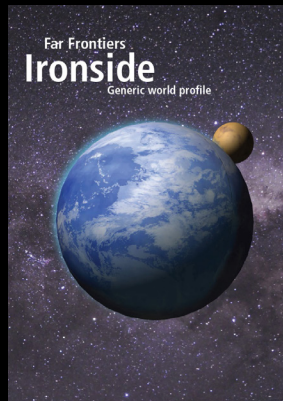
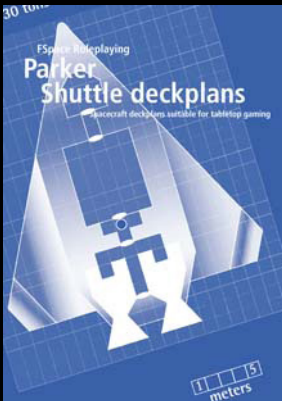
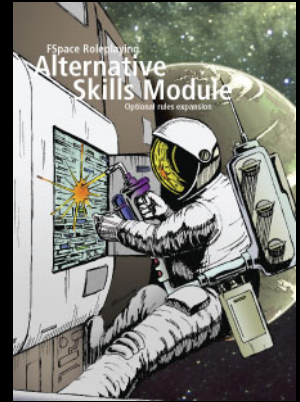
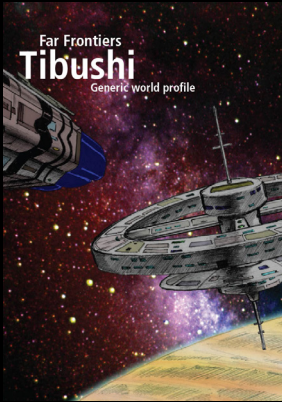
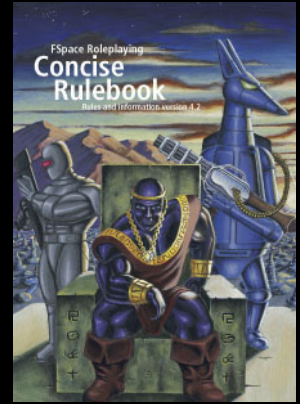
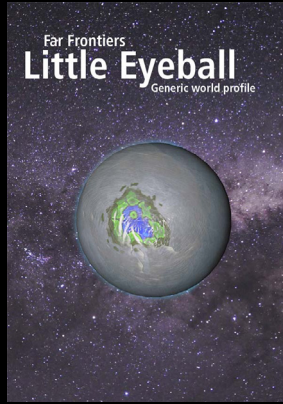
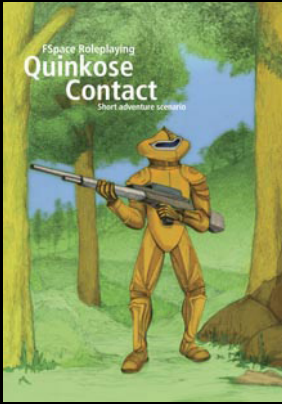
If the renegade AI takes over the planet it will pose a threat to the rest of the empire, should it find access to interstellar travel. This could be as simple as a killer robot using its camouflage technology to sneak onboard a visiting starship. If the AI is able to get off planet, can it be stopped in time or will there be a major conflict between it and the empire? Will this cause another collapse?

These are serious questions that Rhylos is currently considering, and which is a good entry point for players to be involved. They have been hired by Rhylos to intervene and stop the AI. A rival government may also try to hire them to steal the technology so that they can gain a possible advantage over Rhylos. If this is the case, should the players let them have it? Will it get completely out of hand and take over the planet?

In the meantime Serkur is off limits to everyone except the party of adventurers who have been called in to help. Serkur is now a quarantined planet. Fortunately this is the one thing that the three disagreeing states could agree on. This might just save the galaxy.



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