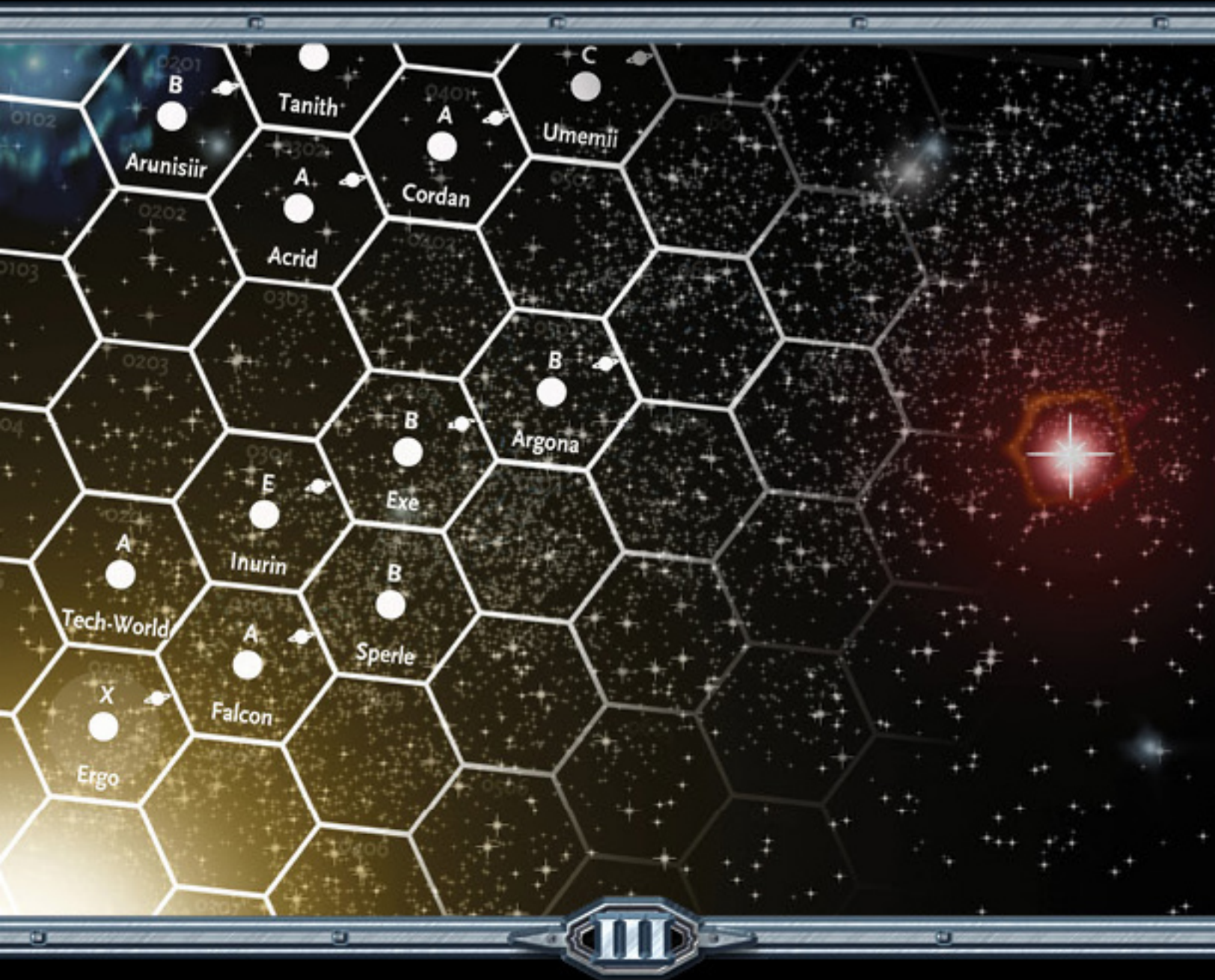


# THE THIRD IMPERIUM

## The Borderland



# TRAVELLER

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# INTRODUCTION

***The Borderland is the unofficial name given to a region of space in Trojan Reach sector. It is also – not coincidentally – the name of a subsector in that area. The two overlap, though the term 'Borderland' is sometimes used in a wider context to refer to the general area surrounding the subsector of that name.***

The Borderland is a region of great strategic significance lying between the border of the Third Imperium in Tobia subsector and the territory of the Aslan Hierate in Tlaiowaha subsector. One cluster of seven star systems (the Voidsedge Cluster) lies entirely within the Borderland subsector, whilst another (the Wildeman Cluster) of eight worlds lies on the border of the Borderland and Tobia subsectors. These two clusters of worlds make up the region normally referred to as the Borderland, whatever the star charts may say about which subsector they are in.

The Borderland is a buffer zone between the Imperium and the Aslan Hierate, with its own small local powers caught between the two big players. It is a region of rather vigorous local politics, in which a handful of relatively small starships can tip the balance of power. The sort of place where the crew of a beat-up old Free Trader can make a real difference... or meet an untimely end without anyone knowing what happened to them.

This book is an overview of the Borderland; its powers and polities, their agendas and their rivalries. Further supplements will detail the Wildeman and Voidsedge clusters and the surrounding systems, presenting a wealth of adventure opportunities in a 'small ship universe' where a group of travellers can rise to fame and fortune with a few good decisions, and lose it all just as quickly.





# ABOUT THE BORDERLAND

Imperial influence does not stop at its borders, nor does its strategic interest. Many Imperial corporations operate across the border, and the navy routinely sweeps nearby space to prevent threats taking route just outside Imperial space. Imperial fashions, customs and the like filter across the border – and local equivalents move the opposite way. However, beyond the Imperial border is a 'region of interest' where the Imperium has no official power except by local treaty, but does have a lot of influence.

Imperial-made goods can be found in the shops alongside local products, and a trade embargo might be very bad for the regional economy. Entertainment shows made by companies within the Imperium are marketed outside its territory, creating an impression of imperial culture that is both familiar yet slightly distorted. The Imperium as a political entity is a powerful but distant player with many other concerns, whereas closer powers (whilst much weaker) may be more important in the region.

Attitudes to the Imperium of course vary beyond the border. Some people would like to join, some fear increasing Imperial influence. Others are Imperial citizens who have migrated for various reasons. These people include former military personnel who retired across the border, successful businesspersons who have moved into the new market, criminals avoiding Imperial justice and many whose life circumstances took them to a new place – often unexpectedly.

## ***THE ASLAN HIERATE***

The race normally referred to as Aslan are humanoids who are thought to some to be sort of 'lion-like'. Hence their human name, which means lion in Turkish. The Aslan are technologically advanced and generally warlike, and have fought wars against the Imperium in the past. Their expansion into the main Imperial territories was halted during the Border Wars by the peace of Ftahar. This was in 380, long ago now, and whilst it ended Aslan encroachment into the main Imperial territories it sent them in other directions. Aslan explorers had already crossed the Great Rift, but since that the Peace of Ftahar several more clans have moved Coreward and are now encroaching upon Imperial territories in the region of Trojan Reach sector.

The Aslan have a strong gender bias – males are warriors and leaders; females are facilitators, scientists, merchants and the like. Their culture also has a tradition that first sons inherit everything. Lesser sons, known as ihatei, must seek their own fortune. This results in waves of ihatei spilling out of the Aslan territories in search of new lands to conquer. Although usually on a small scale and rarely very well organised, these waves of

colonist/conquerors can be a real problem for societies living along the borders of the Aslan Hierate. This is not least because conflict with ihatei can bring about a clash with the far more potent forces of the Hierate's great clans.

## ***STARSHIP DEPLOYMENTS***

Putting a starship on patrol in a distant system is not an easy business. Ships need to be refuelled after every jump, which imposes operational limitations and sometimes makes vessels vulnerable if they arrive with dry tanks into a dangerous situation. However, it is the time required for a jump that poses the biggest problem.

As an example, a government wants to put a ship into a star system two jumps away, for a 4-week patrol deployment. It will take two weeks in jump to get there, plus refuelling time, and the same to get back to base. Realistically, that means that a 4-week deployment requires the commitment of a ship for 9-10 weeks, assuming that nothing happens en route.

Some shore leave might be possible during a deployment if there is a friendly or neutral port available, but it is likely that the crew will have to remain aboard their vessel for several weeks on end. This is not a huge problem if shore leave is available once the ship gets back to port, but crews do need significant down time after a deployment. Time is also needed for maintenance, refits and training for personnel, and ships need to be available to take part in exercises with other vessels if a fleet is to remain effective as anything but a customs enforcement force.

Thus it is not unreasonable to assume that for each week spent on deployment, a vessel must spend an equal amount of time conducting training, on exercise or in port. That means that 4 weeks on patrol in a distant system absorbs the vessel for 20 weeks, i.e., to maintain a standing patrol a fleet needs five ships of the same class for just that one deployment.

For a patrol where the ship is to spend a week in each of five systems, looping through them to come back to home port at the end of the mission, six jumps are needed to make the circuit. This means that for every week the vessel spends on a given station, it is on deployment for 11 weeks total, and assuming the same proportion of down time, exercises and so forth as above, then 22 ship-weeks are needed to put one vessel in a given system for one week.

It is obvious that single-system patrols are more efficient, but even so the mechanics of jump make it problematic to maintain an adequate presence in distant systems. One ship cannot



really cover an entire star system, though if there is only one inhabited body or region of interest in a system then a single vessel can probably control the significant assets.

Thus, while it should be possible to properly defend and police a critical star system, the resources required to deploy enough ships to control several systems are beyond most of the powers in Trojan Reach sector. The solution used by most states is to concentrate on a small area – e.g. a single star system or perhaps a cluster of worlds – and to send occasional patrols farther afield as a deterrent and as a ‘flag showing’ gambit. A 1-in-22 chance that there will be a naval vessel in a given system when something happens is better than the certainty that there will never be a vessel present.

One consequence of this logistical situation is that it is often far more practical to concentrate assets within one star system where they can be more easily defended than to spread them out over the mainworlds of several star systems. Of course, a sufficiently valuable mainworld is worth securing and developing, and this in turn means that it can become the hub for the development of the rest of the system.

This factor tends to shape the deployments of naval vessels and the levels of security that can be provided. Along with the obvious efficiency advantages of in-system trade as opposed to interstellar commerce using jump-capable ships, this has driven the development of local economies. In Trojan Reach sector it is common to find several inhabited bodies in a star system that is home to an advanced society, with the less-developed systems in between the major worlds receiving far fewer visits from starships unless they lie on a trade lane.

## ***UWP CODES VS DETAILED WORLDBUILDING***

The UWP code provides enough data to quickly form an impression of a star system the players are interested in – ‘low-population airless world with a modest starport; it is little more than a stopover point, probably with a single city around the starport and not much else’ and if they just bounce through then there is no real need to detail more than this.

Greater detail becomes desirable when the characters start to spend some time in a place, or for variety. If the characters are rushing from planet to planet and their minds are on what they are doing, then a general description like ‘it is a desert world with three suns’ or ‘it is a water world’ will suffice, perhaps with some local quirk to keep things interesting. However, something is lost from a game when the setting fades into the background. It is well worth ensuring that adventures take place in an interesting locale once in a while – an arctic water world where mid-tech airships are the main form of transport; a giant super-high-tech arcology, or among the remote planetoids of a backwater star system. Setting detail does add depth, and can make an adventure more memorable. The environment can also create new challenges and opportunities for the travellers.

This volume gives an overview of the Borderland region and the societies that interact there, but it cannot be more than an overview. A star system cannot be fully summed up with a simple code or a few paragraphs of text. A world that has millions of people will have some fairly significant variations from place to place, and there may be entire societies not listed – if a nation of 100 million gets a paragraph, nine thousand scattered farmers in the outback will probably not get a mention.

The short version of this is that in this volume we are presenting an overview of the ‘big picture’. As a referee zooms in on locations and adventures, details will emerge, and it may be that the description of the world as listed in the navigational databases has some serious omissions....

## ***THE BORDERLAND AS A GAME SETTING***

The Borderland region contains several star systems, many with multiple inhabited bodies. This provides a wide variety of adventure locations and the possibility of months or even years of play without leaving the region. If the players have a ship with jump-1 capability they can go anywhere in either of the two star clusters of the Borderland they but cannot cross to the other or wander off into the wider universe. This permits the referee to use a sandbox style of play yet still do sufficient preparation to cover the areas that players might go. When it is time to move out into the wider universe, there are jump-2 links that can be followed. This requires some logistical planning but it can be done using deep-space refuelling. In the meantime, there is plenty to do and enough space to do it. In short, this setting balances player freedom with referee workload whilst keeping the restrictions imposed on player movement realistic and plausible.



# TROJAN REACH SECTOR

Trojan Reach sector lies to Spinward of Reft Sector and to Rimward of Spinward Marches sector. The latter is often considered to be the outermost fringe of the Third Imperium, which makes the Imperial holdings in Trojan Reach mere outposts on the edge of the unknown. This impression is only partially correct, but certainly Imperial territory in the sector is limited. Most of the Imperial worlds of the sector are in Gazulin and Tobia subsectors, with some holdings in Pax Rulin and Sindal subsectors. Directly Coreward of this area are Glisten and Trin's Veil Subsectors, which are firmly Imperial territory. Indeed, Trin's Veil is one of the most important political and economic centres for the Imperium in the region. Thus despite its traditional name, the Outrim Void, this area is of great strategic interest to the Imperium. Foreign encroachment would place potential hostiles close to Trin, which would not be acceptable to the Imperium.

Beyond this area of interest lie many independent systems and small interstellar powers, and more importantly a region annexed by the Aslan Hierate. The nature of Aslan society is such that expansion is inevitable, and this is likely to bring conflict with the Imperium sooner or later. In the meantime, landless Aslan ihatei view the independent worlds of the sector as ripe for conquest.

Like much of Charted Space, the Ancients left behind numerous artifacts in Trojan Reach Sector, and transplanted colonies of humans to the region. Some survived the long period from the Ancients' Final War to the present day; others disappeared from history leaving behind only relics and mysteries. When the Vilani Imperium (the First Imperium) arose, it did not do much more than send a few scouts into Trojan Reach sector, though a few colonies were set up. Some colony missions may have been launched late in the history of the Vilani Imperium, as an attempt to escape or find a new home ahead of the Terran conquest.

This was fruitless; whilst the First Imperium had largely ignored Trojan Reaches the Second, established by the Terran conquerors, enthusiastically launched colony missions into the area. When the Second Imperium collapsed, these young colonies were left to their own devices. Many fought over critical assets such as shipyards and industrial centres, wrecking them in the process as often as not. This large-scale conflict was paralleled by raiding undertaken by small bands of pirates and opportunists.

The weakness of the local colonies prompted Vargr from the Extents on the Coreward side of Spinward marches sector) to launch expeditions into the region, in some cases creating pirate kingdoms around local bases. The Zhodani also took an interest, although then as now their vessels tended to be

(often heavily armed) explorers and traders rather than raiders. The Zhodani are not known to have set up any permanent bases, but it is possible that installations were built to support operations in the region.

The collapse of interstellar civilisation in Trojan Reach sector not total. Some of the colonies finally banded together, creating the Sindalian Empire with its capital at Noricum in Sindal subsector. The empire was a success for a time, restoring order to much of the sector and clearing the spacelanes of pirates. However, it was an economically hollow and militaristic society built on the remnants of the earlier colonies. This was ultimately unsustainable unless the empire developed a stable economy to support its fleets and bases, which it never did.

Later in its history the Sindalian Empire became an oppressive protection racket, using its fleets to extort huge taxes from its 'member' worlds and looting conquered worlds for their remaining resources before imposing those same taxes on an economy that had just become incapable of paying them. Resistance grew, which increased the cost of obtaining what the empire needed whilst reducing its tax base and industrial capability.

The death throes of the Sindalian Empire were bloody. Rebel worlds were bombarded from orbit, obliterating cities, and bio-weapons were used to break the central power of the Empire by slaughtering its population. The empire was indeed defeated and worlds achieved independence, but at the price of a near-total destruction of the region's technological base and industrial capability. Some worlds retained a few starships or a yard to build them, but the destruction of the local economy meant that even these worlds tended to lose their high-end capabilities over time. Thus the Long Night between the collapse of the Second Imperium and the rise of the Third saw relatively little interstellar travel in Trojan Reach sector. Few records remain from this period, at least on most worlds.

During this era, Trojan Reach sector was visited only by a few outside powers. There was nothing to attract Vargr raiders from the Extents, and the Zhodani do not seem to have been very active in the area. The first Aslan scouts crossed the Great Rift a thousand years before the end of the Long Night, but other than some long-range scouting missions the Aslan did not move into the sector at first. The first clan to arrive established a territory along the fringe of the Great Rift and when more clans began to cross the rift after the Great Purge of Aslan society these pushed Coreward in search of new territory.



The Aslan made contact with the Zhodani in 461, and by this time the Third Imperium was colonizing Spinward Marches sector. Imperial expansion was more in a Coreward-Spinward direction than into Trojan Reaches however; this was not least because the foul reputation of the 'Outrim Void' had survived down the centuries. Indeed, to this day some Imperials refer to the nations of the Outrim Void as 'barbarian states'.

The Aslan expansion into Trojan Reach sector had important local consequences – especially for the worlds that were conquered. In addition to the mainstream Aslan settlement of the region, an extremely militant and violent faction (by Aslan standards, which is saying a lot!) broke away in 650 and now calls itself the Glorious Empire. The Glorious Empire is in near-constant conflict, usually with the other Aslan clans but sometimes a range of other opponents as well.

The Aslan arrival had one other important ramification. The Florians were transplanted to their new homeworld by the Ancients, and had lived there in near-total stagnation since the Ancients destroyed themselves. The arrival of an Aslan scout ship (which crashed) gave the Florians the jump drive. They used it to create a local league which is now dominated by their ultra-conservative society. The Florian League is largely confined to Yggdrasil subsector; its influence outside its borders is usually quite small and at times diminishes to almost nothing.

Today, Trojan Reach sector is a mix of independent worlds, a few small states, and the territory of the big players. The Imperium and the Aslan Hierate are the most powerful but each, for different reasons, has limited resources to put into gaining control of the sector. The Florian League is extremely conservative and passive (but not pacifistic) and the Glorious Empire is so aggressive that it can barely maintain its forces. The situation is complex, and the stakes are high for all players in the region.

Trojan Reach Sector is mainly populated by humans of mixed genetic stock, few of whom identify closely with the great powers or the main human 'races' like Zhodani, Solomani and so forth. Those dwelling within the borders of the Imperium or one of the other major powers will obviously consider themselves citizens of it and share its cultural values; those on independent worlds tend not to. Similarly, there are some societies descended from Second Imperium settlers which have retained many of the characteristics of their originating society on Terra, but for the most part centuries of interaction with offworlders have caused these societies to evolve into something more modern and cosmopolitan.

Most people (outside of the Imperial and Hierate borders) consider themselves to be citizens of their local state, which in most cases is a single world-government or a state on a multiplicity world, and consider the greater powers to be a distant concept which exerts influence at times. Many have a distorted impression of these large states as a result of propaganda or the effects of distance.

Many star systems contain multiple inhabited bodies, and in many of these in-system travel exists on a very large scale. In Trojan Reach sector, a state that controls an entire star system and has a few outposts elsewhere is big enough to be a player in the larger-scale political game. Multi-world states are rare. Thus many star systems contain mid-tech backwater worlds to which the higher-tech worlds may send trade ships, but which are mostly self-sufficient. Many worlds do have enclaves from the local powers or from multiworld corporations on them, which may make technological items available that would otherwise not be.

Because the states and powers of the Trojan Reach are so much smaller than the Imperium or the Zhodani Consulate, vessel sizes tend to also be much smaller. A ship that would qualify as a light cruiser in the fleets of the great powers would be an extremely powerful capital ship to a single-world government.

## ***SHIP CLASSIFICATIONS***

Among the independent worlds beyond the Imperial border, a slightly different starship classification system is used to that typically in place in the Imperium. This system is not universal, but most locals would recognise the following broad classification bands. This difference in classifications is brought about by the fact that lesser powers and independent worlds cannot afford to operate the large starships used by the Imperium and its main rivals. In an environment where much smaller ships are in common use, the significance of a moderately sized vessel increases. This can cause amusement for crews from the great powers when a little patrol destroyer is suddenly promoted to heavy cruiser by the locals when they realise it outguns their entire fleet.

In many cases no distinction is made between jump-capable and non-jump-capable vessels, as most spend extended periods in a single star system and only engage their jump drive to transit to another star system for an extended deployment. Long interstellar voyages involving multiple jumps are much less common than in the Imperium, where everything is far less localised.



Vessels of under 400 tons displacement are usually termed 'sloops', often with a mission-specific designation e.g. 'customs sloop' or 'system defence sloop'. Specialist ships usually have a designation of their own, such as 'small merchant transport' but they would normally be considered to be 'sloop class' vessels by a traffic controller assigning landing berths. Thus a Type-S Scout/Courier, a 200 ton system defence boat or a Type-A2 Far Trader would all be referred to as 'sloops' by most people in Trojan Reach sector. Sloops are the workhorse vessels in many areas, ranging from patrol craft to traders. Thus most spaceports are rated by how many sloop-class ships they can handle at once.

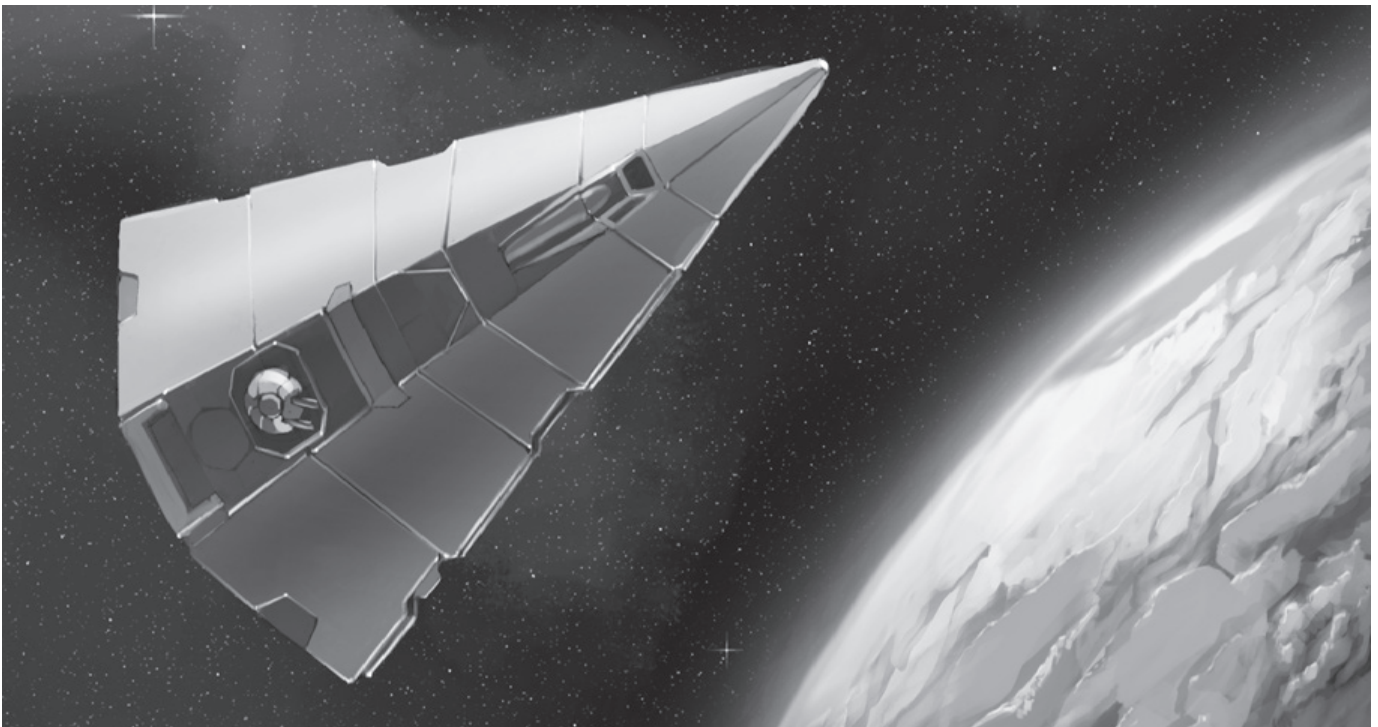
A military or paramilitary vessel in the 400-800 ton range is usually termed a corvette. Corvettes are the largest ships that many local navies can afford, and the ability to field one or more corvettes is considered an indicator of national power. Politics that cannot field a force of corvettes are essentially excluded from the political game as irrelevant; those that can do so qualify as low-end naval powers and have at least a little credibility.

Military vessels in the 800-1,200 ton range are usually designated as frigates. Some frigate designs multi-role vessels which are typically well suited to patrol and escort work, while others are designed for a specific role (e.g. missile frigates, strike frigates etc.) and are intended for a more purely 'warfighting' deployment. Some operators designate any specialist vessel in this size class as a destroyer and reserve the term frigate for multi-role ships. Thus a 1,000 ton warship with a primarily missile armament would be a destroyer, one with a mixed armament would likely be referred to as a frigate.

Vessels of 1,200 tons and over are considered to be cruiser class ships (much to the amusement of visiting destroyer crews from the great powers) which are then subdivided by role into light, heavy, armoured, missile and similar types. Few navies can afford cruiser class ships, and any government that can field one or more is a major player in regional politics. This means that a 1,200 ton Kinunir-class vessel, much-derided in the Imperium, tends to be promoted from escort to cruiser by the people of the Borderland

Any vessel over 10,000 tons is a capital ship in Trojan Reach sector. Very few navies can afford the manpower to crew one, even if they can get hold of a ship. However, a few do exist and they are often well-known in the region. A visit by a capital ship to a given world would be something of an event, even if it were just a goodwill 'showing the flag' type visit.

Civilian vessels are given a range of titles depending on their role, but are often referred to as 'transports'. Vessels in the sub-500-ton range are typically called 'small transports'; those between 500-1,000 tons as 'large transports'. Civilian vessels of over 1,000 tons have various designations. Commercial ships are typically rated as 'Small Freighter' (1,000-2,000 tons), 'Medium Freighter' (2,000-4,999 tons), 'Large Freighter' (5,000-9,999 tons) and 'Superfreighters' over 10,000 tons. Specialist ships have their own titles but are grouped into similar tonnage classes for traffic control purposes.

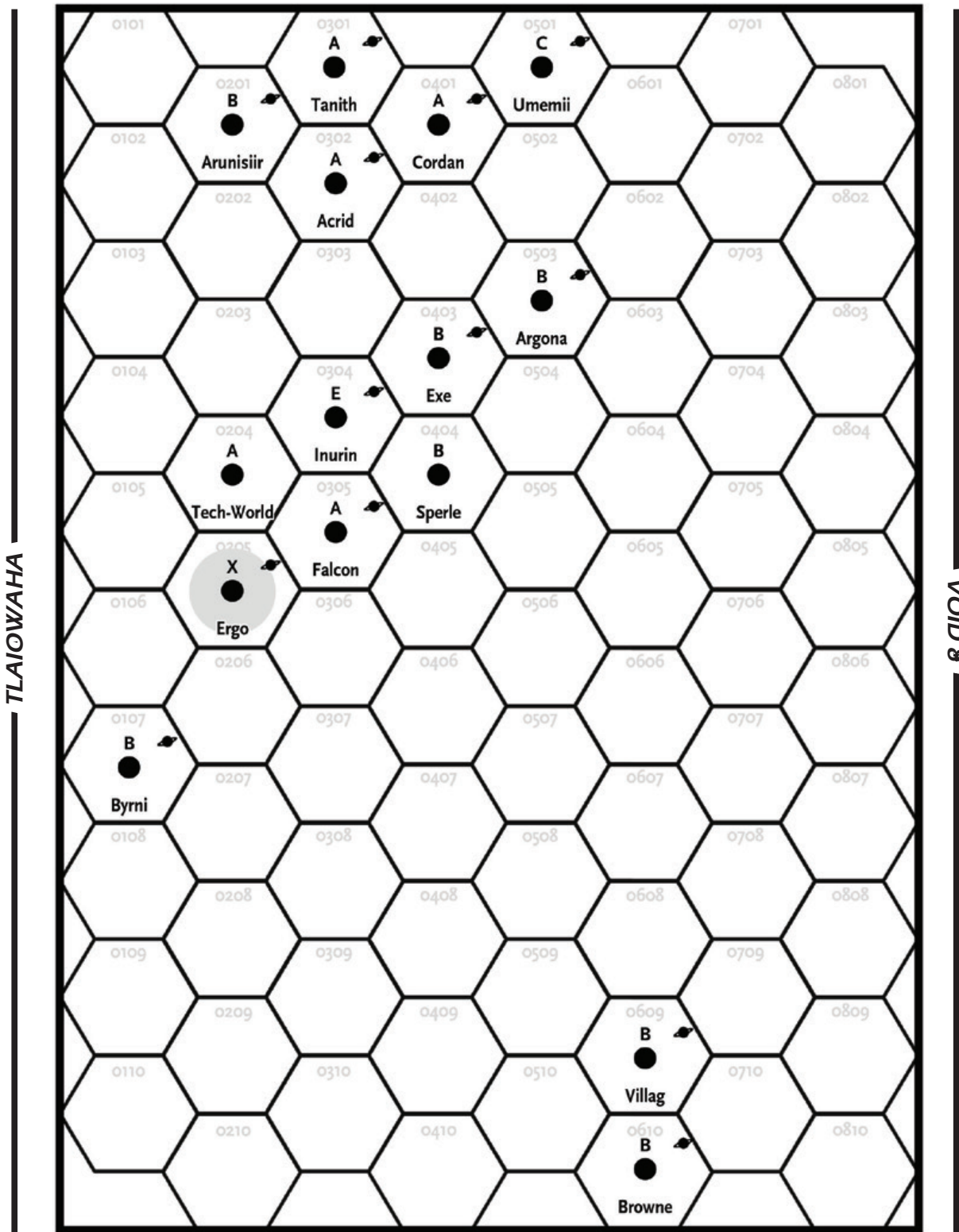






# THE BORDERLAND

TOBIA





The region known as the Borderland consists of two clusters of star systems, one of which is entirely contained within Borderland subsector. The other straddles the border of Borderland and Tobia subsectors. These two clusters of worlds are the only major concentrations of star systems in the subsector, which is bounded to Trailing and to Rimward by the Great Rift.

The Borderland is exactly that; it lies between the Aslan Hierate and Imperial space, and as such is of considerable strategic importance to both powers. However, it is also a very long way from the main centres of power for both the Hierate and the Imperium, and as a result local polities can exert enough influence to guide the fate of their nations.

The Borderland was largely bypassed for colonization by the Vilani imperium and later the Third Imperium. It was difficult to get to and not really on the way to anywhere, so was given a cursory survey and more or less forgotten about. This neglect was compounded by the unusually high rate of misjumps experienced in the region, a phenomenon currently attributed to poor-quality fuel.

Some settlement did take place, and some existing populations were discovered which suggests that perhaps the Ancients seeded these worlds with humans as they did many others. However, it was not until trade opened up between the Imperium and the Aslan Hierate, by way of the Aslan colonies being set up on 'this' side of the Great Rift, that the Borderland became important.

Even then, 'important' was a relative term. Trade ships passed through the worlds of the Borderland, and ports were established to support them, but these were only a few of the links on a long chain of worlds used as stopovers by merchant ships. The expansion of trade through the region made the establishment of colonies a lot more attractive, and this in turn led to an expansion of trade within the region. That in turn brought piracy and lawlessness; there was a lot of money to be made along the new trade route and the most efficient way to obtain it was to take it away from someone who had already made the effort to get it.

Thus, in the 500s, the Borderland was a lawless place but one where money could be made by the brave and fortunate. Imperial and Aslan naval forces attempted to pacify the region, with very mixed results at times. This was in part because they were operating from distant bases and were rarely available in numbers sufficient to ensure effective coverage. In the end, it was private business that tamed the Borderland.

The main player in this pacification was the General Development Corporation (GeDeCo), which refers to itself as a Megacorporation but is not formally recognized by the Imperium as such. This is not least because within the Imperium, Megacorporate status has political connotations; awarding

that status is a major political act as well as recognition of commercial success. Be that as it may, GeDeCo established a cost-effective piracy suppression fleet and the small bases necessary to support it, and was able to gradually make the spacelanes of the Borderland safe for traffic. In so doing, GeDeCo also established itself as a major player in the region, and came to dominate several world governments from the 800s onward.

Eventually, the Borderland grew into a modestly prosperous region with numerous world governments capable of withstanding the attempts at expansion into their territory made by Aslan ihatei seeking new lands. The Imperium also sought to discourage a gradual Aslan takeover of the region. This was best done, given the assets available, by supporting friendly local governments and applying political pressure. As a result the Imperium remains a player in the affairs of the Borderland, but a distant one.

## ***TRADE IN THE BORDERLAND***

There are essentially three levels (or tiers) of trade within the Borderland, not counting on-planet movement of goods: System, Local and Long-Range.

The System tier is, as the name suggests, in-system movement of goods and personnel often using non-jump-capable vessels. In many cases it is quicker and more efficient to 'bounce' trade from one city to another on the same planet using small craft than to carry it overland.

Some 'bounced' trade goes direct, i.e. a shuttle or similar craft lifts off from one city's spaceport and flies to that of another using a ballistic path that briefly takes it into orbit. Other trade uses the orbital Highport as a marshalling area, with shuttles plying back and forth between the Highport and various spaceports on-planet. There are merits to both systems, and many worlds use them in parallel.

The Highport is also often the marshalling point for trade goods intended for other worlds in the system. Not all systems have any settlements outside the mainworld, but those that do often maintain regular sublight (non-jump-capable) services to outposts, colonies or other settlements in the same system. Jump-capable ships can also operate on these routes, with or without the use of their jump drives, but a vessel that gives up space for its jump engine and fuel is of course less cost-effective on the sublight runs than one that can devote more space to cargo.

Jump-capable ships might also visit these other settlements from other star systems, but most use the Highport. Any cargo destined for an outsystem settlement can be carried to its final destination by sublight vessel, whilst the jump-capable ship



moves on to another star system. This set up is to some extent dictated by local law (which may prohibit trade by out-of-system ships with settlements on other worlds in the system) but is mostly a question of economics – the main Starport is where most of the money is to be made, so ships with jump engines and therefore big overheads tend to go there.

Whilst in-system trade is generally handled by sublight craft, Local trade is dominated by Jump-1 capable vessels, with some Jump-2 craft as well. Local trade in this case means within the Borderland, i.e. the two main star clusters and perhaps the nearby world of Exocet. Within either of the clusters. A jump-1 drive allows a ship to reach several ports of call and to carry cargo between them in the most efficient manner possible. Jump-2 ships have more options about where to go but can carry less cargo. They tend to operate on the 'feeder' routes into and out of the clusters, or between them, or else offer a faster service between systems more than one parsec apart.

Most of the trade that goes on in the Borderland is at the Local or System level, with goods coming into the clusters and leaving them via the Feeder routes. Trade from one cluster into the other is considered to be local, but goods moving in and out of the Borderland (i.e. the two main clusters) are considered to be Long-Range trade. Some of this moves aboard jump-2 ships, though the main Imperium/Hierate trade route also uses large jump-3 vessels.

The main Feeder routes into and out of the Borderland are via the Wildeman-Fist transit, the Arunisiir-Exocet or Arunisiir-Blue transits, and the jump-2 run from Tech-World to Hilfer. The jump-3 transit from Tech-World or Falcon to Byrni is available only to suitably equipped vessels but it is much simpler and safer than trying to reach Byrni from the Voidsedge Cluster using jump-2. Jump-2 ships wanting to proceed towards Hierate space from the Borderland Cluster have to go through Ergo, which is at present a difficult business requiring gas giant refuelling.





The main Imperium-Hierate trade route enters the Borderland via Fist. Jump-3 vessels typically transit Wildeman/Acrid/Tech-World/Byrni, with jump-2 ships sometimes choosing the 'Old Route' that bypasses the Voidsedge Cluster entirely. This route goes via Arunisiir/Blue/Clarke and onward, typically to Pourné. Drinax and Asim are currently not favoured destinations due to local conditions.

The Imperium-Florian League trade route follows the path of the Old Route from Tobia to Arunisiir, then proceeds generally to Spinward via Blue, Torpol and Oghma onto the Sindalian Main. This is a long way around, but more direct routes are only viable for jump-4 vessels.

There is much debate among economists and trade experts about whether it is more cost-effective to run jump-2 ships from Tobia to Tech-World or Falcon and then trans-ship goods via a dedicated jump-3 run into Byrni, or to send a jump-3 vessel all the way there and back. This is quicker on some parts of the run, but there are sections where a jump-3 vessel cannot take advantage of its longer legs. Shipping firms have experimented with both options but neither has yet emerged as superior.

All of this trade is a target for piracy, which is nowhere near as bad as it has been in the past but still a serious problem. Local, Imperial and Hierate naval forces all attempt to suppress piracy, with mixed results. Important routes are kept as clear as possible by guardship deployments and frequent sweeps, but attacks still occur. One solution is to use escorted convoys. Major shipping corporations are able to afford escorts of their own; smaller operators typically pay a fee to join a convoy if one is available, or can hire a mercenary escort if they have the budget.

## ***POWERS AND ORGANISATIONS***

The Borderland is not in any way unified. It is subject to various influences, internal and external, of a political and economic nature. This results in a shifting pattern of alliances and deals to counter the influence of other group, and creates opportunities to play rivals off against one another.

### ***The Aslan Hierate***

The Borderland is a major area of interest for the Hierate, or rather for some of the clans that compose it. The Imperial-Hierate trade route is important on a strategic level to many clans as are trade opportunities with smaller polities along the route. Many clans also consider the Borderland to be an obvious target for expansion. A group of worlds which already have been developed would be a great prize for the clan that conquered them, especially if it could get all the worlds in a cluster and set up a tight local powerbase. However, the attractiveness of this large-scale conquest must be weighed against the possibility of triggering a costly war with the Imperium.

On a lower level, Aslan ihatei seeking new territory view the Borderland as ripe for the grabbing. A band of ihatei could take over only the most minor of worlds, though enough acting together might swamp a more populous area. Ihatei expansion into the Borderland is thus more of a 'grab what you can' matter, with groups often seizing an area of land and building a settlement there, or taking over a small installation or town. These minor landgrabs lead to near-constant low-level conflict between the ihatei and whoever else wants that particular piece of land – which means that in some cases ihatei are fighting other ihatei as well as the current residents of an area.

This constant creeping expansion worries other powers, but is supported by the Aslan clans as it gradually increases their power. When an ihatei landgrab leads to larger-scale conflict the clan must decide whether to risk going to war or to leave the ihatei to their fate. Pride and self-interest war with long-term strategic ambition in this case, and the actions of a clan over some incident cannot always be predicted by outsiders. However, in general most clans are predisposed to support their ihatei and would like to see them claim territory along the Hierate-Imperial trade route.

Ihatei vessels encountered in the Borderland might be engaged in other activity than looking for something to grab, such as trade or mercenary work. Similarly, large numbers of clan-sponsored trade ships and mercenary vessels operate in the Borderland. Some of these are on official clan business, some are engaged in freelance trade or mercenary work, and some might be raiding or attacking the shipping of rivals. Those who do not know how to tell one clan's ships from another, or from an ihatei turned pirate, can find themselves on the wrong end of a diplomatic incident. At least, that is the human term for it. Some Aslan might prefer to refer to it as a 'Blood Feud'....

#### **NOTE:**

Alien Module 1: Aslan details several Aslan clans and companies operating in the Trojan Reach sector. If the players wish to delve into Aslan politics, this supplement will be highly useful.

Several Aslan companies backed by various clans operate in the Borderland and generally engage in business just like any Imperial firm. There are shipping corporations, mercenary forces and all manner of other Aslan-owned businesses. However, since Aslan politics are very confusing to most outsiders, the majority of people in the Borderland think of these as just 'Aslan' firms rather than being aware of which clan the company is affiliated to.



## ***Belters***

The term belter refers to individuals or groups who live in an asteroid or planetoid belt, but is not commonly applied to citizens of a well-developed belt settlement that is effectively the same as any planetary state. Instead, the common use of the term refers to small groups of itinerant prospectors and miners who work claims on various moons, asteroids and rockball planets, and who are not part of a major state or employees of a large company. Thus the crew of a corporate mining ship are not belters, but a handful of prospectors operating a couple of beat-up shuttles may be.

Although some conspiracy theorists think otherwise, the belters are not a unified group nor a dispersed nation. Many star systems have groups of belters, and may even have a large semi-permanent population with towns and industrial facilities, but even in this case society is loose and individuals or groups may move on to other systems or other parts of the same star system.

Belter ships and communities are not generally reported in the astronavigation guides as they are often transient, but it is possible to encounter them almost anywhere. Most will trade and give assistance for a fair return, but some are distinctly paranoid as a result of claim-jumping and other injustices.

## ***BorderLines Shipping***

BorderLines Shipping is a modestly sized corporation registered in the Imperium and active on several worlds of Trojan Reach sector. Its vessels are mostly fairly small liners and freightliners, operating on local runs between set destinations. Although the firm does have a few 'speculative/exploratory trade' vessels, for the most part it makes its money moving personnel and freight around in a cost-effective manner.

BorderLines Shipping makes a lot of cross-border runs into the Imperium, as the name suggests, and has naval-auxiliary contracts with the Imperial Navy. Its ships are all armed, though mostly with fairly light weapons, and the line has a preference for personnel with naval experience. Its ships are secure and comfortable, though they are not contenders in the luxury-liner marketplace.

BorderLines is an Imperial-affiliated corporation and is disliked by those who suspect the Imperium of planning expansion into the region. However, it has won a reputation for good service in the Borderland and is generally respected by those without a general dislike of all things Imperial.

## ***The Border Guard***

The Border Guard (often referred to as just the Guard) is a political organisation rather than a state. It was created by a fairly loose grouping of pro-Imperial factions, businesses and individuals and now operates in frontier regions of the Imperium and just beyond it. The organisation's oft-proclaimed remit is to foster goodwill among the people of the Imperial border and to safeguard the interests of Imperial citizens and businesses in the border regions.

The Guard receives a significant amount of support from people who have never been within the Imperium, for various reasons. Some feel that Imperial patronage is good for them, some want their world to have close ties with the Imperium or even to become a member, and some have reasons of their own. Most commonly this is a simple coincidence of interests; the Guard is a useful ally that does not ask much in return for its help so long as its agenda is furthered.

The Guard operates a uniformed paramilitary force that provides security and assistance wherever it is needed. Its personnel are often found at the scene of disasters, bringing expert help to bear in the medical, engineering and technical fields. The Guard also provides security forces to those that ask for them, and in some cases has assumed responsibility for policing certain settlements or defending backwater spaceports. These activities are considered questionable by many, but the Guard has a reputation for upholding local law fairly and improving stability in a region, which makes it difficult to object to its activities.

The Border Guard's activities regularly bring it into conflict with pirates and raiders; and more seriously, with Aslan ihatei. Indeed, the Guard has been dubbed 'The Imperial Ihatei' in some quarters as it seems intent to do much the same thing as the ihatei incursions. Whilst many in the Borderland dislike the idea of an insidious pro-Imperial movement, they are often willing to work with The Guard if it means keeping the ihatei out.

The Imperial authorities are quick to distance themselves from the Border Guard; it is an unofficial and perhaps illegal organisation. However, some Imperial officials are sympathetic to the Guard and may even be members, which occasionally allows Guard detachments to travel on naval transports or to cooperate with Imperial agencies. Thus far the Guard's track record has been generally good, with the occasional clash of interests or other incident to mar an otherwise clean copybook.



### ***The Borderland Alliance***

The Borderland Alliance is a loose confederation of governments and economic groups that was originally formed to provide greater security and stability in the cluster. Since then it has become a ramshackle debating-house in which local powers try to persuade others to align with their agenda. Wrangles over the level of resources that any given member should provide to the central pool, or who gets to control what assets, have long since become more important than actually getting anything done.

In theory, if the alliance got its act together it could bring significant resources to bear on any given problem. It could provide disaster relief, smash pirate bases and invest in decaying spaceports. However, its actions tend to take the form of a drunken lurching from one good idea to another without ever following through on anything.

The alliance does do some good, despite its horrible internal politics. It puts a couple of patrol ships into a troubled star system, sends a cargo vessel full of medical supplies to a town hit by disaster, and spends millions on building a school for disadvantaged children. But then it fails to support these endeavours and ignores a dozen equally important good causes. The patrol ships are often redeployed to fit someone else's agenda; the investment is withdrawn after a year and the school has to close.

These problems stem not least from the fact that the alliance central pool contains some highly sought-after resources which the members constantly seek control of. Deals are brokered and broken, funds are redirect or withheld, often with no better aim in mind than blocking someone else's bid to gain control of an important asset.

### ***The Darrian Confederation***

The Darrians are a human state whose territory lies in Spinward Marches sector. They are not expansionistic, and seem satisfied with the territory they control, but Darrian trade, exploration and naval vessels do venture into Trojan Reach sector. They have trading enclaves on several worlds and are engaged in asteroid mining in some systems. There are also rumours of Darrian research installations on remote worlds scattered all over the sector.

Darrian technology is very advanced, and the Confederation's trade ships are a good source of high-tech equipment in the Coreward end of the sector. Some of this equipment filters down into the Borderland, but it is expensive and hard to come by except when a Darrian trade expedition passes through one of the clusters. The Darrians tend not to trade in weapons but they are happy enough to sell starship parts, power systems and computer equipment to anyone with sufficient funds.

### ***The Droyne***

The Droyne are a non-human race with enclaves scattered all across Charted Space. Some are stone-age primitives while others possess advanced starships mounting fearsome weaponry. Vaguely humanoid with both reptilian and bird-like features, the Droyne are divided into six castes, which are physically different to one another. Workers and Warriors are large and powerful. Drones, Leaders, Technicians and Sports are smaller. Each caste has several subcastes, which define the Droyne's role within society.

Droyne possess small wings. In a standard or dense atmosphere, some Droyne can fly short distances. It is not unknown for Droyne make use of artificial wings to enhance their flight capabilities. They also seem to have a high potential for psionic abilities, though as a rule it is Leaders, Sports and Drones that actually develop their powers. It is thought that members of other castes can use psionic devices, even if they lack abilities of their own.

Droyne have difficulty in using devices made for humans, and vice versa. Many of their devices seem to involve psionics, which makes them impossible for most people to use. The Droyne talent for psi powers makes many Imperial citizens suspicious of them.

The Droyne have no central political organisation, and usually live in small enclaves (called Oyttrips) on scattered worlds. They can be encountered aboard ships conducting the same sorts of activities as humans; trade, diplomacy and so forth. Droyne enclaves may have very different technology levels to one another. For example, a group on one world may be contented TL 3 farmers, while a sector over another Droyne community hand-build starships as good as anything the Imperium can make.

There are two major Droyne worlds, Andor and Candory, located not far to Coreward, in Spinward Marches sector. These are interdicted by the Imperium, with access strictly restricted, though Droyne ships are able to come and go as they please. Some of these vessels visit worlds in the Borderland or pass though on their way to more distant destinations including – according to rumour – somewhere out in the Great Rift. The Droyne rarely explain their actions, and even if they do their logic is often incomprehensible to humans. Thus nobody knows what the Droyne agenda may be, or even if there is one.

### ***The Florian League***

The Florian League is a unified polity consisting of several star systems centred in Yggdrasil subsector which lies to Spinward. The Florian League is highly insular and at times will close its borders entirely. As might be expected, its influence in the Borderland is slight. However, Florian trade ships sometimes ply the routes of the cluster, and small escort vessels are not



uncommon if there are trade ships abroad. It is rare to see one of the Florian League's larger vessels in the Borderland, but occasional visits are made. The Florian League maintains trade missions on a couple of worlds, and will sometimes station a vessel in-system as a guardship.

The voyage from Florian space to the Borderland requires several jump-2 transits, which means that vessels assigned there must undertake a long deployment and spend much of it just transiting to their patrol station. It is simply not possible to maintain a large force in the cluster, even if the League wanted to. The typically logical Florian solution is to place ships in the cluster and rotate crews through them, bringing the vessel home every few years for a refit. Lesser maintenance is carried out under contract by local yards. This enables the Florian League to maintain a handful of small (typically corvette class in local parlance) patrol vessels on the trade routes used by its freighters.

Other than as a place to trade when it has a mind to do so, the Florian league does not have much of a stake in the future of the Borderland. It is however suspicious of both Aslan and Imperial ambitions in the region. Politically it is neutral and guided by logical self-interest, so might support whatever groups offer the best advantage. Given the Florian mindset, this means that it might be willing to work with pirates, raiders or anyone else if necessary to achieve its aims, though the League is also aware that there might be a backlash if it is seen supporting those who have offended others.

### ***General Development Corporation***

GeDeCo has its regional headquarters on Vorito, on the very edge of Aslan Hierate territory. Its head office is at Deneb, and most of its original shareholders were from that region. However, the Trojan Reach Directorate of GeDeCo has become the main source of revenue for the corporation, with relatively minor activity going on within the Imperium. This is one reason why, although GeDeCo refers to itself as a Megacorporation and arguably is wealthy and powerful enough to qualify, it is not listed among the Imperial Megacorporations recognised by the Emperor.

GeDeCo is a big player in the economy and politics of the Borderland. It came to be so by playing a 'long game' after its creation in 700. GeDeCo invested heavily in developing worlds in the region, giving technological assistance and building a starport in return for a share of the world's production and revenue. GeDeCo was also granted a say in government and client worlds agreed to abide by a set of not-very-onerous conditions which were mainly concerned with free trade and the unimpeded passage of starships.

GeDeCo has been accused of exploitative and unethical practices, but its officials argue that 'good business is good for everyone' and that there are clear benefits on both sides of all its deals. Certainly it has been instrumental in creating a stable and prosperous local economy which has benefited its clients as well as creating a healthy long-term profit for the corporation.

GeDeCo does some manufacturing under its own banner and owns numerous subsidiaries which include businesses as diverse as mining, scientific research and mercenary forces. However, it is mostly a trade and development corporation which constantly seeks out new markets. These are brought into an ever-expanding web of trade and commerce by creating shipping routes and developing the starports along them. GeDeCo has facilities on many worlds, most of which are trading centres rather than manufacturing sites.

A number of trade vessels are owned and operated by GeDeCo, notably a small fleet of jump-3 freighters that serve the Vorito/Byrni/Tech-World run, linking the corporation's regional HQ to the Borderland and ultimately to the Imperium. A large flotilla of jump-2 capable 'trade scouts' are maintained as well; these are mainly used to carry samples to prospective markets. If a market is opened up by the scouts, GeDeCo will usually invite another firm to take advantage of it and invest in their activities rather than sending its own ships. This is because GeDeCo makes most of its money out of starports and facilities that support trade, rather than directly from commerce. GeDeCo prospers by facilitating trade and generally allows others to actually carry the goods. The fact that this means that a ship lost to pirates is not a GeDeCo ship is not coincidental – so long as the route survives, the corporation does not suffer much if the odd vessel belonging to someone else is lost.

### ***The Glorious Empire***

This rather nasty breakaway state lies on the far side of Hierate-controlled space and is constantly at odds with the rest of the Aslan in the area. This is perhaps just as well for the people of the Borderland as the Glorious Empire is super-aggressive even by Aslan standards. It has interests across the sector, including in the Borderland, and would find conflict between the Imperium and the clans of the Hierate to be in its interest.

### ***The Grand Duchy of Requille***

The Grand Duchy of Requille (GDR) is one of several states on its homeworld of Umemii in the Wildeman Cluster, though it has become more of an offworld polity than a local power and enjoys a significantly higher tech level than that of most other states on Umemii. The GDR actually controls only a single small continent, but its enormously powerful economy makes it a player in interstellar politics. There are numerous other states, typically calling themselves principalities, duchies and counties, scattered all over Umemii. Few have an offworld presence and none is anything like as influential as Requille.



In addition to a powerful system defense flotilla, the GDR maintains a modest fleet of gunship carriers which is well suited to dealing with the typical smallish-vessel threat encountered in the area. These are backed up by armed merchant cruisers which also carry fighters and gunships. The result is a fleet with strong anti-piracy capabilities but which could not take on a force equipped with numerous heavy ships. The only nearby power capable of fielding such a force are the Aslan Hierate and the Third Imperium, of course, and whilst relations with the Imperials are generally good there is always tension with the Hierate due to ihatei activities. As a result the GDR is strongly pro-Imperial in outlook. It sometimes hosts Imperial vessels at its port and has conducted joint exercises from time to time.

The main capability of the Grand Duchy is its trading fleet, which mostly operates in the Wildeman cluster and the surrounding area. Regular runs are made to through the Voidsedge Cluster, and some vessels even ply the route up to Tobia and beyond into Imperial territory. This is a long haul for a jump-2 vessel, but at any given time there are usually a couple of missions en route.

GDR traders are also active on various worlds, and in some cases its companies own enclaves on otherwise independent planets, where they are often a source of higher-tech goods than can be locally made. In some cases, company troops have become involved in local military operations, especially in cases where instability has threatened the economic well-being of the host world and therefore the company's bottom line.

### ***The Third Imperium***

The Imperium's border lies in Tobia subsector, though many of the worlds in the area are poorly integrated. Some of the local world governments pay only lip service to the Imperium, though their loyalty seems to increase when ihatei are at the door. Gazulin subsector is an exception; this area is has been part of the Imperium for a long time and is much more 'Imperial' in culture than other subsectors. Pax Rulin subsector, on the other hand, is more of a military base or frontier outpost. It is gradually being 'Imperialised' by former military personnel who have served there and then settled down, but it still has the character of a military settlement rather than a fully integrated part of the Imperium. Many Imperial citizens in Pax Rulin are very pro-Imperial for pragmatic reasons – there are foreigners right on the doorstep and many of them are inclined to be aggressive.

Tobia subsector is the most cosmopolitan of the three Imperial-dominated subsectors in Trojan Reach, and is also the seat of the senior Imperial noble in the sector. It is also a major hub for trade with the Aslan Hierate, a fact which may affect a number of political decisions made at Tobia. The small Imperial enclave in Sindal subsector is controlled from Tobia, as is most Scout Service and Navy activity beyond the Imperial border.

Tobia itself is the home and headquarters of the Sector Fleet assigned to Trojan Reach. This is a fairly potent force of battleships, dreadnoughts and cruisers, most of which are kept concentrated around bases at Tobia, Empire and Ayldem. Squadrons or individual ships are sometimes detached to other bases, but current Imperial strategy is to concentrate the main fighting elements of the fleet. The obvious opponent is the Aslan Hierate, and the primary mission of the Trojan Reach fleet is to resist an invasion until additional forces can arrive from Spinward Marches or Deneb sectors.

The fighting strength of the Imperial Navy in Trojan Reach can vary considerably, particularly if tensions with the Zhodani Consulate cause vessels to be transferred Coreward. When there are sufficient major combatants available, powerful ships are sent (usually at the head of a task force) on 'flag-showing' visits to systems over the border. Heavy and light cruisers are favoured for this role, but very occasionally an entire battle squadron, with cruisers and lighter units in support, will make a tour to remind everyone in the region that the Imperium is indeed a mighty neighbour.

Routine patrols out into non-Imperial territory, and most deployments to protect the Imperial-Hierate trade link, are launched from the chain of naval bases along the border.

Realgar is home to a patrol squadron assigned to Sindal subsector. Its main task is securing the systems of Dolberg, Realgar and Chalchiutlicue against incursions by the vast number of pirate groups operating out of Theev and the surrounding systems. The Sindal Flotilla sometimes sweeps nearby systems, but usually calls up assistance from the Sector Fleet before launching a major anti-piracy operation. The Sindal deployment absorbs a significant proportion of the patrol assets available in Trojan Reach sector, weakening the Imperial presence elsewhere. However, the alternative is to allow the pirates of Theev to prosper and expand their raids, and this is not acceptable. The heavy deployment of patrol ships around Realgar is the wall that keeps 'the plague of Theev' from infecting Imperial space.

Nekrino has a small naval base which hosts a few light patrol assets but which is primarily (according to its official designation) a training facility. It is widely thought to also house a major intelligence-collation centre which monitors activities in the surrounding subsectors.

Hexx is a naval base, but is mainly used by the Imperial Marine Corps. The main Marine strength for the sector is based here, along with transport vessels and escorts. Some of these are typically detached for patrol work, just as the Marines supply detachments and larger forces all over the sector. Some of these detachments are provided to worlds in the Borderland either as training or security forces.





Ardasii is the home of a cruiser force which nominally contains two CruRons (cruiser squadrons), one of four light cruisers and one of four heavy cruisers. It is rare to have more than five cruisers available at any given time, however, as these highly useful vessels are frequently detached to other parts of the sector or even beyond. Cruisers from Ardasii form the main Imperial Navy rapid-reaction force for the border region, and are generally kept concentrated at or near their base. However, at any given time it is likely that at least one cruiser from Ardasii will be in the Borderland 'showing the flag' and dealing with threats to Imperial interests. Another will likely be deployed to Sindal subsector for similar purposes.

Imisaa is the home of the Borderland Flotilla, tasked with keeping the peace and protecting Imperial assets in the Borderland. This is a big job for a small number of ships but that is ever the way of it. Most of the navy's budget goes on warfighting

assets like battleships and the support vessels needed to keep them in action, leaving relatively little for patrol and escort work. Older and cheaper ships thus do the daily work of protecting commerce whilst the great battlewagons are held in reserve. There really is no other way – more security assets means less warfighting ships, which could have disastrous consequences, yet most of the time the big warships are little more than a deterrent to open war. Thus there is not normally a lot of major power projection in the Borderland region, but in a crisis the Imperium could bring massive force to bear.

The Borderland Flotilla officially has two task forces, plus an assortment of other vessels. One task force is centred around an old light cruiser, the other has a small carrier. These vessels represent a potent force in the Borderland, and to increase coverage the Flotilla typically has 4-8 destroyers (depending on how many have been 'borrowed' for other jobs) and an





assortment of couriers, auxiliaries and escorts available. Typically the flotilla tries to maintain a standing deployment of one destroyer at Fist and another somewhere in the Borderland, with the task forces available to conduct flag-showing and deterrent missions or to respond to a crisis. Other vessels are typically at base conducting maintenance or training, or standing ready to deal with whatever crisis requires it.

Also among the assets available to the Borderland Flotilla are a handful of the rather ill-liked Kinunir-class vessels, a large escort or small destroyer sized ship as the Imperial Navy measures such things, but often regarded as a cruiser by the people of the Borderland. Logistics considerations mean that at any one time there are likely to be no more than one or at most a handful of Imperial vessels in the Borderland, of which most will be small ships like the Gazelle class close escort.

Bastion is a small installation right on the edge of the Great Rift. Officially its role is to 'anchor the flank' of the Imperial fleet in Trojan Reach sector, but it is an open secret that the base also supports missions into the Great Rift. These are often launched in conjunction with Scout vessels from the Scout Base at New.

### ***Imperial Agencies and Corporations***

For the most part, the Imperial presence in Trojan Reach sector consists of vessels of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS), diplomatic and trade missions, and the activities of Imperial-registered corporations. The latter are not official Imperial bodies, but in some cases they have enough influence to get help from the authorities if challenged. There is a fair-sized Imperial presence in terms of Imperial-registered ships, trade delegations and facilities run by Imperial corporations, and the Imperium is becoming increasingly important in the economic affairs of the Borderland.

This is acceptable to most of the more powerful groups in the region, but the majority agree on one thing; they do not want the Third Imperium (or the Aslan Hierate) to annex their worlds. The Imperium actually shares this view; it has no plans to expand further at this time. Although assurances have been given many times over, few are prepared to completely trust the motives of the Imperium, and there is always some low-level agitation against Imperial activities in the cluster.

On the other side of that coin, the Imperium needs the Borderland as a route into the Hierate and as a buffer zone against Aslan expansion. It is also concerned for the security of its border, and for this reason cannot completely ignore events in Trojan Reach sector. However, the Imperium is satisfied with the status quo; so long as the Borderland does not become dangerously unstable, Imperial activities will be low-key and passive for the most part.

Several of the Imperial Megacorporations have some level of operation in Trojan Reach sector and the Borderland, but mostly this is on a small scale. The Imperial firm with the greatest interest is, as noted elsewhere, is General Development Corporation (GeDeCo). GeDeCo is a big player locally whereas the Imperial Megacorps are, for the most part, not.

Other Imperial firms with a major interest in the Borderland include:

Florian Trade Company, which specialises in trade along the Imperium-Florian route. FTC was originally founded around 170 to trade with the Florians but went under after the Florian league closed its borders around 200. It was refounded with investment from GeDeCo three centuries later and today maintains a modest fleet of trade ships in addition to high-jump liners which carry tourists to visit the Ancient ruins on Floria.

Pax Rulin Quartermasters, a shipping and trade corporation that grew out of expedient measures in the 400s. Beginning as a network used to obtain necessary spares and supplies for the Pax Rulin naval base, the corporation eventually grew into a trading company in its own right. PRQ is widely renowned as a second career for ex-Imperial Navy personnel. It operates well protected merchant ships along the Imperium/Florian and Imperium/Hierate routes as well as some smaller shipping lanes.

Tobia Commerce Guild, which specialises in huge (50,000 ton) megafreighters which ply the Imperium/Hierate run. TGC seems to have the patronage of the sector duke, and routinely gets away with infractions that would be serious for any other firm, whilst firing off accusations at all and sundry. Its aim seems to be to drive other firms out of the Imperial-Aslan trade by undercutting their prices, and there are suggestions that some very dirty political tricks have been used against its opponents as well.

In addition to these commercial entities the Imperial agencies are of course interested in the region. The Scout service routinely sends mapping missions into the Borderland and is engaged in exploration of the rest of the sector – there are areas of Trojan Reach sector about which little is known. The Imperial intelligence services are also active in the region, and sometimes the diplomatic corps will send a mission to assist with a problem or to negotiate a treaty with one of the local powers.



### ***The Minor States***

Within Trojan Reach sector there are various small states, most of which are too far away to greatly affect the situation in the Borderland. However, once in a while their influence is felt. Among them are:

The Belgardian Sojournate is a poor state descended from a colony mission that became stranded on Belgard in Egryn subsector, located to Spinward-Coreward. With few resources of their own the Belgardians resort to raiding others for anything they can get.

The Senlis Foederate consists of three worlds in Pax Rulin subsector, located to Coreward and slightly to Spinward of the Borderland. It is a fairly advanced but insular state which is fiercely opposed to Imperial expansion. The Foederate has been accused of supplying arms and ship spares to groups that might disrupt Imperial trade in the sector; it is possible that some of these groups may be active in the Borderland.

The Strend Cluster in Menorial subsector is quite distant from the Borderland. Strend has a high tech level and is quite a powerful state which is openly opposed to both the Florian League and the Imperium. Open conflict is unlikely, but a cold war situation has been ongoing for a very long time. Strend would probably be happy to lend deniable support to any group opposing the Imperium or the Florian League, and disrupting the Imperial-Florian trade route would please its totalitarian leaders no end.

### ***The Noraxx Confederation***

The Noraxx Confederation is an alliance of almost two dozen governments and organisations, some of which control an entire star system. Others govern a single body in a star system or one of several states on a balkanised world. Some of the organisations in the Confederation are not governments at all; they are corporations with holdings on several worlds.

As a result, politics can be somewhat complex. The Confederation has a fleet formed of vessels provided by the member organisations, and so can deploy only quite small patrol ships rather than major assets. The one exception to this is a single cruiser constructed with funds pooled by all member worlds. This vessel is a hugely potent asset in the politics of the region, but the Confederation rarely commits it outside the core systems.

Most of the Confederation's holdings and member worlds are quite distant, well outside The Borderland, and it lacks both the power and the inclination to intervene directly in local affairs. Its vessels do sometimes pass through the Wildeman Cluster on the way to Imperial space, or might make a tour of the Borderland conducting trade before returning home. The Confederation maintains no permanent installations or facilities in the cluster.

### ***Trojan Reach Shipping Corporation***

The Trojan Reach Shipping Corporation (TRSC) is a fairly large business entity which operates in the Borderland and elsewhere in the Trojan Reach sector. It differs from its main competitor, Unified Space Industries, in that it both manufactures and operates interstellar vessels. TRSC has facilities on many worlds, but most are just broker's offices where cargoes can be bought and sold. TRSC does have some shipyards scattered around the sector, and vessels can be ordered from these, or refits booked, from any TRSC office.

TRSC also operates a number of trade ships, mainly of a fairly large nature. These are mostly tied to major routes and do not undertake speculative trading voyages. The corporation has bases in some systems, which are mostly just enclaves leased from the hosting government. In some cases the corporation has set up independent spaceports where the need seems to exist. This might have trod on the toes of GeDeCo, but TRSC is so much smaller that it cannot really hope to compete. Where GeDeCo can fund the construction of a Class A or B port, and bring in staff to run it once it is complete, TRSC is limited to setting up refuelling stations in backwater systems.

TRSC is a full-service shipping corporation which operates ships and ports, buys and sells cargo and also builds and refits vessels. It seems to have no political agenda beyond wanting stability so that its assets can generate revenue in an efficient and trouble-free manner.





### ***Unified Space Industries***

Unified Space Industries (USI) builds and maintains spacecraft, but does not operate them. It is one of the primary independent contractors for shipbuilding in Trojan Reach sector, with yards on several worlds. USI builds all kinds of vessel: warships, merchants, scouts, scientific ships and commercial vessels. Most of its years are civil, i.e. they only make non-military vessels, and most can only build ships under 1,000 tons. Larger ships, and warships, are normally built at specialist facilities which also conduct repairs and refits.

USI does not operate merchant ships, but it has a few salvage and repair vessels. Its presence in the Borderland is fairly small in terms of installations, but many operators use its vessels and small wars have been fought with vessels that all came from the same USI naval shipyard.

USI is a major economic player in the region due to the number of skilled workers it employs and the amount of resources its yards require. It is deliberately and almost ostentatiously apolitical, and will sell ships to almost anyone. However, the firm has a preference for 'stable governmental users' and larger, well-established shipping lines as clients. It is also openly willing to take payments not to sell to certain clients. Again, there is no political agenda to this; USI considers that if someone makes not taking an order a viable prospect, then not taking it is just good business.

### ***The Zhodani Consulate***

The Zhodani Consulate stopped expanding long ago, and is not greatly concerned with the affairs of small powers in Trojan Reach sector. However, the Consulate is represented here and there by embassies and long-range trade vessels, with the occasional naval task force or reconnaissance ship visiting the area. Some Imperials have long feared that the Zhodani were trying to build a powerbase in the region from which to threaten Imperial interests. Some go as far as to claim that there are secret Zhodani naval bases with vast fleets just waiting to launch a sneak attack into Spinward Marches sector from the lightly defended Rimward flank. This seems rather unlikely, but the rumours persist.

It is possible that Zhodani covert intelligence-gathering vessels may be operating in the region, or they may be using ships disguised as neutrals. Likewise, the Zhodani may be quietly forming links with societies in Trojan Reach which are receptive to psionics. They are suspected of attempting to create a link with the Droyne worlds of Andor and Candory. There is no real basis for this worry beyond 'Zhodani and Droyne both use psionics. We're scared of psionics.'

The Zhodani Consulate has a very ordered society built on the use of psionics, which can make it seem quite alien to many outsiders. On some worlds, psionics are accepted and quite well understood; in other places anyone from the Consulate may be suspected of being a mind-reading spy. There is a fair amount of paranoia directed at the Consulate, which the Imperial intelligence services find useful in their efforts to contain any Zhodani expansion of influence. However, the Consulate has no real interest in expanding and so long as any problems stay outside the border its leaders are satisfied. Thus for the most part the Zhodani influence on the Borderland is distant and subtle.

### ***Pirates and Raider Bands***

As noted elsewhere, the Borderland has long been threatened by pirates and raiders. There are a great many groups operating – estimates of fifty to one hundred major groups, i.e. those with at least one starship, have been put forward. There is notorious as a pirate base, but there are a great many other places where a raider group could establish a temporary or permanent base.

Some of these groups might be working together, and some are undoubtedly supported by those with a political agenda. However, there is no organised 'pirate nation' in Trojan Reach. There is, however, a 'raider culture' which goes back many centuries. Certain customs, largely derived from Vargr pirate culture, are upheld by many raider groups, and this can facilitate truces, joint operations and even the establishment of short-lived pirate societies. It is the nature of these to be smashed by the navy or to fragment bloodily of their own accord, but that has not prevented multi-ship raids and the establishment of a number of Freeports where anything can be bought and sold without too many questions being asked.





# THE WILDEMAN CLUSTER

The Wildeman Cluster is a group of eight star systems straddling the boundary between Borderland and Tobia subsectors. It is considered to be part of the informal region known as 'The Borderland' even though it is not entirely within Borderland subsector. The Exocet star system, located to Spinward, is also sometimes considered to be part of The Borderland region.

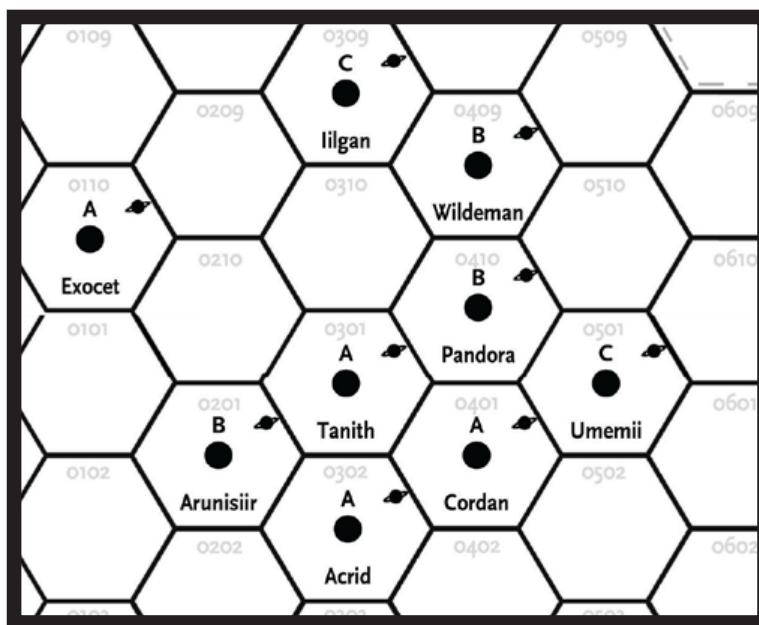
The Wildeman Cluster lies squarely on the Imperial/Hierate trade route, and was aggressively (in all senses of the word) developed during the Borderlands Rush of the 500s. A local economy has since developed, but several worlds still make a fair portion of their national revenue from servicing the trade ships plying back and forth. The main feeder routes into and out of the cluster are via Wildeman and Arunisiir to Coreward and Spinward respectively, and through Acrid or Cordan to Rimward. There is nowhere to go to Trailing, other than out into the Great Rift for some reason.

Many systems have more than one inhabited body. The UWP code listed on star charts is thus only part of the story. It indicates what the mainworld is like, but as one looks more

closely at the system, greater detail will emerge. Most systems with more than one inhabited body see a lot of in-system trade and commerce. Some are sufficiently prosperous to function as a powerful one-system economy and could maintain their technological standards even if cut off from the wider universe. Most systems are dependent on trade from beyond the system to at least some extent, however.

None of the systems in this cluster are formally aligned with any major power, though relations with the Imperium and other states varies from world to world. Some are genuinely non-aligned, some are friendly when it suits them, and some have long-standing ties with major powers but no formal treaties in place. Relations with other worlds are similarly fluid.

Location codes without brackets indicate that the world is in The Borderland subsector. Brackets indicate that it is located in Tobia subsector, though the world is generally considered to belong to the Borderland region. Note that Exocet is not 'in' the Wildeman cluster (i.e. it is not accessible by jump-1) but is 'associated with' the cluster and thus listed here.



Location	Name	UWP	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
0110	Exocet	A574126-8	Ni Lo		G
0201	Arunisiir	B776530-6	Ag Ni		G
0309	Lilgan	C467787-8	Ag Ri		G
0301	Tanith	A589342-B	Ni Lo		G
0302	Acrid	AAC1388-D	FI Lo Ni Ht		G
0409	Wildeman	B2011674-C	Ic Na Ni Va		G
0410	Pandora	B878313-B	NI Lo		G

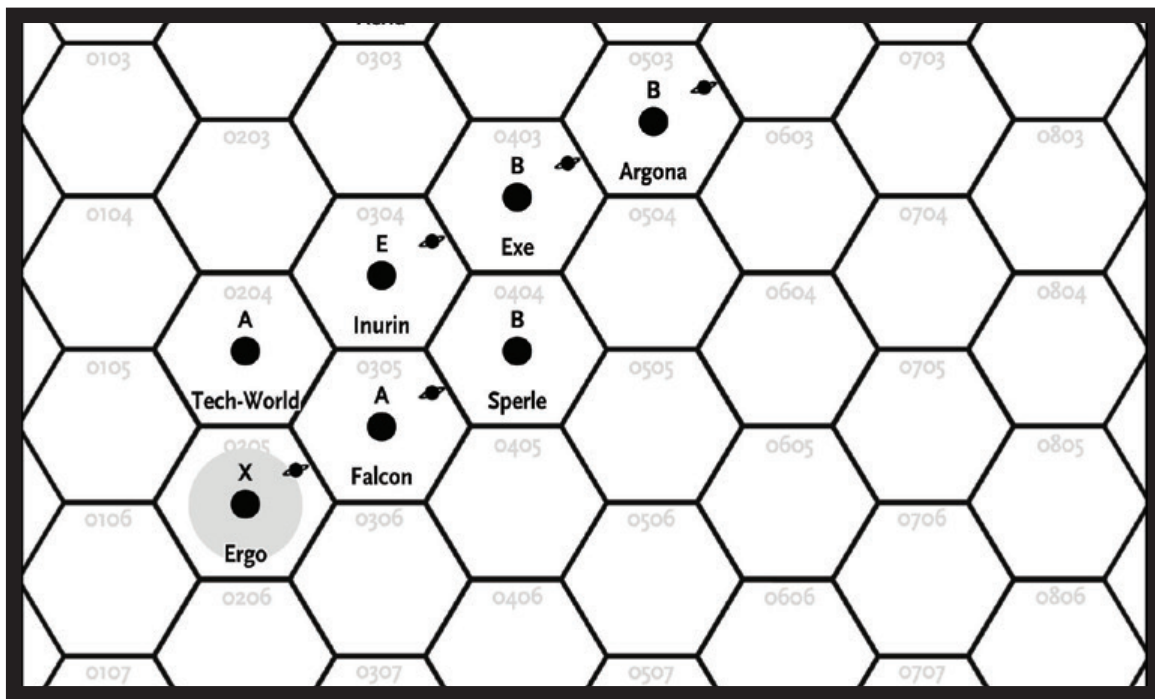
# THE VOIDSEDGE CLUSTER

The Voidsedge Cluster consists of seven star systems lying entirely within Borderland subsector. The primary Imperium/Hierate trade route runs through the cluster, though the 'Old Route' (sometimes known as the 'Alternate Route') bypasses the cluster by way of Clarke or Blue in the neighbouring Tlaiowaha subsector. The Voidsedge Cluster was not developed as quickly as the Wildeman Cluster, but expansion into the area was inevitable once Jump-3 trade ships began moving through the subsector in numbers.

None of these systems is formally aligned with any outside power, though as with the worlds of the Wildeman Cluster a variety of relationships exist and may change from time to time. Trade vessels regularly ply from one end of the cluster to the other and back again on what is variously known as the Argona Loop or the Small Borderland Circuit. The Great Borderland

Circuit is a rather longer jump-2 run around though the Voidsedge and Wildeman clusters and across into Tlaiowaha subsector, originally returning through Pourné, Paal and Byrni. The difficulty of moving through the Ergo system means that the run has shifted, with most vessels transiting back to Tech-World from Paal and missing out Byrni.

The Voidsedge Cluster gains its name from the fact that it is right next to Void 8 subsector of Reft Sector – there is nothing but empty space for many parsecs to Trailing and not much to Rimward, either. This is one reason why the cluster was bypassed for colonisation at first. It is not really on the way to anywhere. Plus, the area suffers from an unusually high proportion of misjumps, and since there is nothing but empty space in two directions this is not a good place to have a problem.



Location	Name	UWP	Trade Codes	Travel Code	Gas Giants
0204	Tech-World	A455154-F	Ni Lo Ht		
0205	Ergo	X767500-0	Ag Ni Lt	R	G
0304	Inurin	E668776-5	Ag Ri Lt		G
0305	Falcon	A158448-D	Ni Ht		G
0403	Exe	B300101-A	Ni Va Lo		G
0404	Sperle	BA8A76A-7	Ri Wa		
0503	Argona	B612586-9	Ic Ni		G



# THE EXOCET STAR SYSTEM

Exocet is only sometimes considered to lie within the Borderland, and is not part of the Wildeman Cluster as such. However, it is 'associated with' the cluster in the parlance of interstellar cartographers, so is often listed with the worlds of the cluster. Exocet is positioned to provide a jump-2 link between Fist (via Iilgan) and Blue, and sometimes hosts traffic headed into Sindal subsector. This route bypasses the Wildeman Cluster and is somewhat shorter, though vessels using it forgo the chance to trade in the cluster along the way.

## **(0101) EXOCET**

Exocet orbits an F6 V (yellow-white dwarf) main-sequence star named Kadis. It is a fairly habitable world but other than its starport has never been extensively settled. For this reason there is little trade destined for the world; everything that comes into the port is either shipped on elsewhere or used to support the starport itself.

KADIS: F6V Star

1	Starverge (X10000-0)	Ba Va
2	Kadis' Friend (Small Gas Giant)	
3	Unfriendly (X6A9000-0)	FI
4	Exocet (A574126-8)	Ni Lo
5	Gotrings (Small Gas Giant)	
6	Hardway (X210000-0)	Ba
7	Bigandwet (XAAA000-0)	Wa Ba
8	Shadows Fall (X110000-0)	Ba
9	Norings (Small Gas Giant)	
10	Goldsworthy (E211314-A)	Lo Ic

## **STARVERGE (X10000-0) BA VA**

Starverge is a small planet orbiting far too close to its primary to be anything but a scorched rock. It is tidally locked, with one face always 'bright' and the other always 'cold'. A narrow 'twilight' strip has the most amenable conditions but as far as records show Starverge has never been mined nor even extensively surveyed.

## **KADIS' FRIEND (SMALL GAS GIANT)**

Kadis' Friend is small as gas giants go, orbiting quite close to Kadis. As a result, it does not have any moons although some scientists think that a couple of rogue bodies detected in deep space might have once belonged to Kadis' Friend. Vessels hoping to save on fuel costs sometimes refuel by skimming the atmosphere of Kadis' Friend, but this is generally considered to be excessively unsafe. The atmosphere is unusually turbulent even for a gas giant, probably because of the close proximity of Kadis' Friend to her primary.

## **UNFRIENDLY (X6B9000-0) FL**

Unfriendly is what some spacers call a 'hell world', with a very dense atmosphere covering a vast world-ocean with little land. That in itself is not really enough to qualify as a hell world, but the atmosphere is hot and corrosive. There are no survey results in the database, but it seems likely that Unfriendly's seas are also corrosive.

## **EXOCET (A574126-8) NI LO**

Exocet is the mainworld of the system, but is virtually uninhabited due to an extremely nasty atmospheric taint. This takes the form of volcanic emissions in the form of gases and irritant dust. The standard interpretation of 'tainted' atmosphere is that a filter mask is required, but whilst one would be sufficient protection for a time, decontamination is a real problem. Getting the strangely insidious dust out of clothing is a difficult business, and unless it is done properly there is a long-term threat to everyone in a settlement.

Low levels of dust contamination are sufficient to cause a range of respiratory disorders, though death is highly unlikely unless exposure is huge and symptoms are left untreated. Some of the world's volcanoes produce dust that is more toxic than others, so the weather conditions have to be carefully monitored along with the day's 'air toxicity index'. This is an alarming and slightly mis-named statistic which nevertheless serves to remind everyone to take appropriate precautions.

The need for protection and decontamination every time someone goes outside makes Exocet an extremely inconvenient place to settle, and at present only a handful of people call the world home. However, the world's official population does not take into account the large workforce (and their dependents) that operate the GeDeCo-funded starport. This takes the form of a very large orbital installation and a tiny Downport which were built to facilitate the movement of trade ships through the system. There is no real reason to land on-planet so a Downport was never needed except to support the port's own (few) ground-based operations.

The Downport has extensive decontamination facilities, as might be expected. It is located on an island, using water piped from the surrounding shallow sea to provide hydrogen for fuel and oxygen to replenish both ships and the Highport. Sealed greenhouses grow crops and even support some livestock, which is farmed for food. All of this produce is shipped up to the Highport aboard a fleet of shuttles, along with the world's only export.



Exocet has very fertile soil, as might be expected from a highly volcanic world. The dominant form of life is fungus, which grows rampantly in most areas. If appropriate offworld species were introduced along with enough people to farm them, Exocet could become something of a breadbasket for the Borderland. At present, however, Exocet's only real exports are a range of fungal extracts which are useful in the pharmaceutical industry. These are farmed by semi-automated machines operated by the world's handful of residents. The world's listed tech level, 8, reflects what can be fabricated at the Downport using local facilities; the fungus-farmers really have no tech base of their own as there are simply not enough of them.

The port was built with GeDeCo money to facilitate trade in the region, and has been fairly successful in that regard. Not only are passing ships bound for the Hierate, the Imperium or the Florian League serviced, but local jump-2 traffic is also not uncommon. For all Exocet produces little of its own, there is still a fair amount of cargo changing hands at the port. Some of it comes in on feeder routes from beyond the Borderland and is transferred to local ships, some is traded by local ships seeking a buyer for whatever they are carrying.

The port is privately operated, with GeDeCo still holding a large share as a silent partner. Most visitors to the system simply pass through the Highport and never see the planet other than on 'you-are-here' navigational displays. There is little reason to go to the surface at present, though if the demand for the world's unique pharmaceuticals expands it is possible that there will be an influx of workers.

It is notable that GeDeCo, the backer of the starport, takes pains to point out that the 'rival' USI installation in the outer system is nothing more than a tiny outpost that cannot handle any volume of trade and does not even have a proper landing area. GeDeCo regularly reminds everyone that its personnel already rescued one failed outpost in the system (Shadow's Fall) and stand ready to save the survivors of any disaster that might befall the installation on Goldsworthy. Some find this assertion rather sinister, but GeDeCo maintains that it is just pointing out that it has an excellent and well-defended port in the system and that there is no need for irresponsible and ill-equipped settlement of hostile outsystem worlds... and it reserves the right to say 'told you so' to anyone whose bacon it has to pull out of the fire.

### ***GOTRINGS (SMALL GAS GIANT)***

Gotrings is a gas giant world with six major moons and a quite impressive ring system, hence its name. It is rarely visited, except by vessels wanting to skim fuel whilst passing through the system rather than going to the Highport and buying it. Gotrings is far safer to skim from than Kadis' Friend, and this is noted on the star charts. It is also well known to pirates operating in the region, and in recent years there have been so many attacks that it is thought a pirate base probably exists on one of Gotrings' moons.

### ***HARDWAY (X3 10000-0) BA***

Hardway is a small rockball world with only a trace of atmosphere. Worlds of this type are sometimes of interest to prospectors and miners, but there are no surveys on record.

### ***BIGANDWET (XAAA000-0) W***

Bigandwet is a water world with an unbreathable atmosphere of carbon dioxide and nitrogen. It is not thought to have any land above sea level, and the depth of the oceans is at present unknown. A thick sheet of ice covers the oceans, though orbital surveys have detected hot-spots (more accurately, less-cold spots) under the surface that may be warmed by geothermal vents.

A scientific expedition has been mooted, with the aim of investigating the underwater world of Bigandwet. There may be life under the ice, or something entirely unexpected. However, with nothing more than speculation to go on there have so far been no backers for the expedition.

### ***SHADOWS FALL: (X100000-0) BA***

Shadows Fall is a frozen wasteland. It was once home to about a thousand colonists, forming what might be termed a 'vanity colony'. A vanity colony is one that does not greatly benefit the settling power except by allowing it to claim that it is an interplanetary polity. The status derived from this is useful in some circles.

In the case of Shadows Fall, the colony did manage to produce a little metal ore from a small mine that was set up, and might have become a viable settlement in time. A raid by three small starships a few years ago spelled the end for that prospect; the colony was looted for most of its equipment including life-support gear. Only a handful of the population survived long enough to be rescued by ships from Exocet Highport.





Today, the settlement on Shadows Fall is a broken collection of shelters and domes with debris lying where the raiders left it. It has found fame on the datanet as a particularly stark and depressing but iconic image of desolation; small comfort to those whose dream of an outsystem colony ended in violence.

### ***NORINGS (SMALL GAS GIANT)***

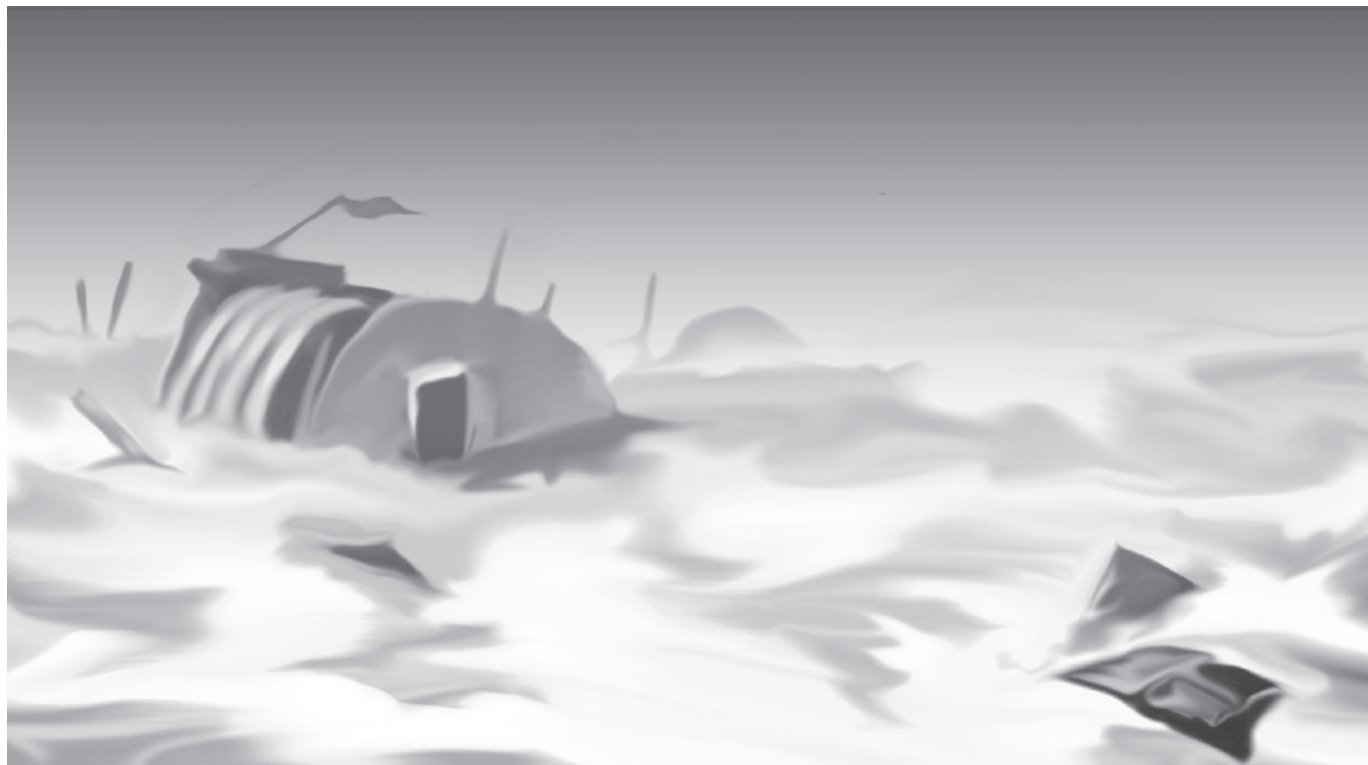
Norings is a small gas giant with a handful of moons and, as its name suggests, no ring system. It is not visited much, other than when patrol ships make a flyby to check for pirate activity. Such patrols are of necessity cursory – a gas giant moon system is a large amount of real estate and time on-station is limited. A basic sweep of this sort would have to get lucky or catch particularly complacent pirates at a time when they were not taking much care about concealing their presence.

### ***GOLDSWORTHY: (E311314-A) Lo Ic***

Goldsworthy is a small 'iceball' world at the outer edge of the system, notable mainly for the industrial-scientific outpost established there by Unified Space Industries (USI). This is a genuinely useful installation, researching advanced manufacturing techniques, but its location was driven more by vanity than a need for seclusion. In recent years the population has grown a little and there are rumours that a small shipyard is under construction. This, at least according to the rumour, will be constructing civilian and military vessels for the open market within a few years.

The installation at Goldsworthy avoided the fate of that at Shadows Fall for the simple reason that it is heavily defended for such a small outpost. USI provided a handful of obsolete but refurbished fighters from one of its discontinued lines, plus a battery of missile launchers emplaced around the outpost. This seems to have worked; the colony at Goldsworthy has only once had to fire a warning shot, and other than that has been left well alone.

Goldsworthy is interesting to astrographers because it actually has a greater population than the mainworld of the system, which some say should merit reclassification. However, since there are several thousand people living and working at the high-quality starport in orbit above Exocet this seems to be a spurious claim. Besides, updating star charts can take years, during which some starfarers would be confused about which was the actual mainworld. Opponents of the move contend that it hardly seems worth the trouble, and since there is a bustling trade port at the current mainworld and little more than a cleared area of rock at Goldsworthy, it is not in anyone's interest (except maybe USI) to change the charts. Notable among these objectors, of course, is GeDeCo.





# TRAVELLING IN THE BORDERLAND

The fifteen star systems contained within the Voidsedge and Wildeman clusters are enough to provide an almost infinite amount of adventuring potential. There may be no need to leave the clusters, or even a single star system, for whole years on end. However, the amount of adventuring potential available depends on how you treat the data in front of you. It is possible to just jump to the starport, do the adventure for that world, and move on, but this is a rather superficial approach that ignores much of what is available.

For example, most star systems in Traveller are identified by their mainworld, and normally the UWP code presented for the star system refers to this world. However, the UWP is just the merest beginning, a generalisation of the broadest sort. For example, looking at the UWP data for a given region, it may be that there are many Representative Democracies. Are they all the same? Of course not.

## PLANETS

The combination of factors contained in the UWP code – population, tech level, atmosphere and hydrographics, and of course law level – will give an idea of what society might be like on such a world. Referees creating worlds from their UWP code can then use a little imagination to fill in the blanks, creating an interesting and believable world from the raw data. But the mainworld may not be all there is to a star system, and indeed the society implied by the UWP code might not be all there is to the mainworld, or any other planet for that matter.

An inhabited planet, whether it is the mainworld of a system or not, may not be particularly habitable. Indeed, it may be an airless rockball. However, if there are people there then the world will have been settled for a reason. Perhaps there was a need for a starport at that location to link a main, or perhaps the world had some important resource. It is just as possible that sometime in the past, a minor power settled the world out of pride, just to show they could do it. Or maybe a lost colony ship crashed there. Whatever the reason, the population must be able to support themselves with food, water, light and air, and should have some reason for staying such as industry or commerce.

Naturally, rockball worlds will have little natural life outside the sealed environments, but any planet with some kind of atmosphere is likely to have at least a little indigenous life. The less Terra-like the planet is, the stranger this life will be. Worlds with little air and water tend to have less advanced life forms and/or less diversity.

Terran plants and animals have found a home on many worlds, in some cases integrating with the local flora and fauna, and in some cases supplanting it. Many versions of Terran life have adapted to their different environment and changed accordingly. Similarly, human societies have found replacements for Terran animals that are not found on their world. Thus a society using animals for transport might use Terran horses, zebras or camels (or even elephants!) but are just as likely to be mounted on ostrichlike Kian, eight-legged Ponis, or other alien beasts of burden.

Even the smallest worlds are very large, and few have uniform conditions across the globe. Even a rockball may have volcanic regions, dust seas, heavily cratered areas and so on. Deserts will have mountains and oases. More habitable worlds have very varied terrain, ranging from arctic and tundra to swamp, forest and plains. It is possible that a terrain type may be so prevalent that a world may be famed for it, e.g. a planet of vast steppes or endless forest, but normally there will be some variation. Even water worlds have varied terrain. There are deeps and shallows, trenches and the occasional island; sea mountains and seabed 'rivers' dug by fast currents. These features may affect conditions at the surface.

Temperature is not indicated by a world's UWP. Worlds with very similar UWPs can be very different if one is a little colder on average than the other. Obviously, temperature varies with location, but the high and low temperatures of a world can vary considerably. There is no reason why an apparently Earthlike world might not be in the grip of an ice age, or turned into a swampy steambath by high surface temperature. A desert world can be cold; a rockball may be icy or baked, depending upon its proximity to the star.

Some worlds orbit another body, such as a gas giant planet, rather than the star. This usually means that there will be other gas giant moons close by, and makes navigation somewhat interesting, and often results in the planet being tidally locked. This means that one face of the planet always looks towards whatever body it orbits.

It is possible for a world orbiting a star to be tidally locked. If so, then the bright face (i.e. the one always facing the star) will be very hot, while the other will be icy cold. Between the two lies the twilight zone; a ring around the planet where conditions are most suitable for life. Settlements are most likely to be created there.



It is of course possible to have settlements on moons, in planetoid belts and on the other worlds of the system. Sometimes these worlds belong to the mainworld government. Sometimes they are independent or even rival powers. Star systems are big, and there is room for a fair amount of activity away from the mainworld.

## **SETTLEMENTS AND WILDERNESSES**

As a rule, people tend to gather in fairly close proximity, and build towns and cities near to natural resources rather than spreading out evenly across the globe. Patterns of settlement vary. On very inhospitable worlds, settlements tend to be built in sheltered areas, or close to water or other necessary resources. Even on very habitable worlds, the normal pattern is for civilisation to be concentrated into several large cities or settlements (depending upon population), with smaller ones in between. There may be several such civilised areas on a planet; normally each such region will have a spaceport. Between and beyond the civilized regions will be backwoods areas and wilderness.

Tech levels are sometimes lower in the outback regions, and life can be a little more rough-and ready. It is possible that dangerous animals, rebel groups, or other hazards may lurk here on the fringes of civilisation.

Wilderness areas may, at the referee's option, contain tribes or other low-tech societies which are not counted in the world's UWP. These may not necessarily be human; chirpers, apes, dolphins and other creatures – including alien sentient species – may well live apart from humans in their own groups. Sometimes these are included in the UWP data, and sometimes not.

## **GOVERNANCE AND LAW**

Worlds, and states on worlds that have multiple societies, are mostly self-governing. Even those that are part of a large interstellar state tend to have a certain amount of autonomy, for the simple reason that the state government is at least a week away by starship. Whether a world is ruled by tribal council, electronic democracy or a dictatorial planetary governor imposed by invaders, that ruling body makes its own decisions while following a general policy laid down by the central government. Outside the large powers, worlds are even more varied, using whatever governmental system seems to be appropriate for that world.

Of course, the government type does not indicate its competence, level of corruption or who actually holds the power. It is entirely possible that a world with a democratic governmental system is in fact dominated by corporate interests that manipulate the populace through the media they control. A dictator may in fact be a figurehead for a council of advisors – or even for the whims of the mass populace.

Governments and means of governance are great tools for the referee. Local elections and publicity stunts, political compromises and manipulations from 'behind the throne' can be used as local colour to add depth to an adventure, as red herrings, or may spark adventures as the local government seeks outsiders to blame or to sort out a delicate problem.

As with government type, Law level is more than meets the eye. It indicates only the amount of laws that exist, not the way they are enforced. Normally, a world with many laws will have some kind of effective judicial system and police force. But it may be that the laws are enshrined in local culture as 'the code' and enforced only by mobs of outraged citizens or a few dedicated lawpersons.





Similarly, low law levels do not mean violent anarchy. It is entirely possible for people to get along without many formal laws, or for a society with no laws at all to be respectful, polite and well-integrated. Or a world may have only half a dozen laws, but impose the death penalty for violating them.

Laws play a big part in adventures, and in many ways. Characters may be forced to work outside the law to get the job done, which can pose a moral dilemma when the cops arrive if the characters are good guys. They will have to escape without killing anyone. Alternatively, the characters might be the law. Perhaps they are deputised to help out in a riot, go undercover to uncover a plot to murder the planetary ruler, or are hired as mercenaries to protect a community from some threat. Trying to enforce the rule of law is every bit as much of a challenge as defying it.

Characters may also fall foul of the law, leading to adventures. Characters who accidentally offend the Holy Elders or get involved in a bar brawl and are arrested may be offered a choice between legal punishment or some kind of mission. This kind of adventure hook works well for adventurers, who will usually manage to get into trouble wherever they go. The referee can use this propensity to lead them into further adventures.

It is sometimes possible to flee to another world to escape retribution for a crime, since the enforcement personnel of the world where the crime was committed may have no jurisdiction off-planet. Indeed, whatever the characters did may not even be a crime on the new world. However, this is not a foolproof means of escape. A world may also have extradition agreements, and be willing to turn over wanted criminals even though their crime is not local. Semi- and extra-legal measures may also be taken, such as placing a bounty on the head of the fleeing characters, or sending covert operatives to capture or kill them.

## ***ALIENS AND ANCIENTS***

Most of the people of the Borderland are human, with a scattering of other starfaring species. There is of course room for all the aliens a storyline requires, though this can be overdone. Aramis: the Traveller Adventure details an entire subsector in which there were three minor alien races (plus humans and some Vargr). This seems like a sensible upper limit for the number of aliens encountered in a given subsector. It is actually quite difficult to come up with believable aliens and as a rule, a few good ones are better than a heap of cardboard cut outs.

An encounter with a very alien culture can be a frustrating or rewarding experience; it is certainly the stuff of high adventure. As with human cultures, alien society should possess internal consistency, but need not be immediately obvious to the

adventurers. Thus not all aliens are there for comic relief or else are members of invading alien hordes. Aliens are every bit as varied and complex in their motivations as humans, and should be presented accordingly.

The Third Imperium universe has its share of vanished alien (and human) societies. Some of these are quite ancient, and have left behind only mysterious ruins and artefacts, while others have obviously disappeared quite recently (in historical terms). However, the greatest of all alien mysteries is presented by the Ancients (capital A), who it is thought are the beings who genetically engineered humans and Vargr, and transplanted them across Charted Space for reasons now unknown. The Ancients are now vanished, but some remnants of their civilisation survive. It is thought that they destroyed themselves in a huge civil war long ago; all that remains is minor outposts too unimportant to be targeted with the really impressive weapons.

Ancient artifacts are enormously valuable (those that work, anyway), and often dangerous. Ancients researchers and artifact hunters scour Charted Space for remnants of their lost technology. Those that possess working Ancient devices are reluctant to allow anyone to even see them.

It is unlikely that the Ancients will play much part in a typical game, but they are normally blamed for every strange anomaly, ruin or mystery discovered. Sometimes these assumptions are correct, and it is possible that travellers will occasionally encounter some remnant of these powerful beings, or be propelled into an adventure by the rumour of an Ancients site.

## ***STARPORTS AND SPACEPORTS***

Starports are the place where planetary and interstellar cultures meet, and a certain amount of compromise is entered into in most cases. One common custom is the Port Border (known as the Extrality Line in some areas) which delineates the port area and differentiates it from the world proper. Within this border, port security has jurisdiction and a certain amount of leeway is usually given to visitors not familiar with local customs. Beyond the line, visitors are treated like anyone else on the planet.

This port zone is often all that visitors see of a world. It is where the warehouses and the brokers' offices, the hotels and the visitors' centres are all located. Many travellers land, conduct their business, go out on the town, stay in a portside hotel and then space out again without ever leaving the port. Indeed, many long-service merchant starfarers are convinced that the entire universe looks like a starport concourse.



In fact, ports are quite varied. Some are extremely rough, some are nothing more than freight terminals, and some are quite unique. What they all have in common is that they exist to serve starships; the people there may not see many ships coming through, but they are not awed by them. On mid-tech worlds in particular, starports may serve more than one purpose; some are airbases for the military, or for commercial airliners. Some are seaports or major rail junctions. Higher-tech ports tend to be dedicated to their function.

A system normally has one major port (the starport), which is used by most traffic entering or departing the system. However, there may be several specialised or less important local ports (Spaceports) which feed the starport or serve particular needs. For example, a world may have a major starport supplemented by a military port and a freight port serving the main ore processing plant for the world's industry. The normal procedure is for a starship to proceed to the starport, then hop over to the spaceport with its cargo or transship it aboard another vessel.

Ports (of all kinds) are defended in some way. At the very least there will be some kind of security force to secure the area and protect the facilities. More important ports will have spacecraft based there for defence, and for utility work like repairs, salvage, cargo transfer and the occasional rescue.

Almost all starports practice some kind of traffic control to avoid collisions and other hazards. Traffic control rules are normally enforced with fines or banning from a port, but in some areas it is possible to be fired on by the port or its security vessels for particularly flagrant disregard for the traffic rules.

## ***COMMUNICATIONS AND TRADE***

One of the most important factors in the Traveller universe is the speed of information propagation. There is no faster-than-light radio or other device, meaning that the only way to transmit a message over interstellar distances is to send a starship to carry it. This is an expensive undertaking, so backwater systems must rely on passing ships to bring the news. In some regions, this means that it may be weeks between updates, and a lot can happen in those weeks. This has important implications for those trying to keep ahead of the law, or those striving to catch up with them. It is not always possible to predict when a given piece of information will reach a particular destination.

## ***PACKET BOATS, MAIL SHIPS AND COURIERS***

Many star systems have regular communications by packet boat, i.e. vessels dedicated to a run between two points or on a set route. Very busy routes may have a packet arriving or departing every few hours, whereas quieter routes more commonly see a boat every few days.

Off the packet routes, information is disseminated by means of couriers and regular starship services, and is also carried by any wandering free traders or other vessels that happen to be in the region. This means that in some areas, information travels relatively slowly. Many individuals make a good living as information agents, travelling between worlds with a data storage unit in their luggage and delivering the latest news, stock prices and criminal warrants to their destination in return for a salary or a flat fee.

Couriers are normally higher-jump ships (jump-2 or better) which specialise in delivering critical information and items on a fee-per-delivery basis. Many worlds retain a courier ship or two in order to have access to the major news at least every couple of weeks, and of course couriers can be hired by anyone wanting to get something or someone to a particular destination.

Mail ships are normally merchant vessels fitted to carry physical mail as well as facsimile copies. Mail ships are normally armed and fitted with a secure safe guarded by trained personnel. Mail licenses are usually difficult to obtain but serve as a guarantee that a ship is trustworthy. Some mail ships serve a particular route and some are simply tramp freighters that carry whatever mail is available.

## ***INTERSTELLAR TRADE AND COMMERCE***

Most worlds strive to be at least partially self-sufficient in critical goods, but this is not always possible. Even if a world can produce all the goods of all kinds that it needs, it is often the case that it is cheaper to import some of what is needed and target local production on whatever will best benefit the world economy.

For this reason, inter-world and interstellar commerce is very important. Goods and passengers are constantly moving between worlds aboard large and small merchant starships. Bulky items such as ore and grain are normally moved in enormous bulk freighters, usually operated by a world government or a large merchant line. Such vessels are often chartered or contracted to a route for long periods of time. Service aboard such a vessel tends to be routine and rather dull for the most part, but the pay is good and the risks low.



Smaller merchant vessels such as liners, freighters and freightliners may also be contracted to a given route. Such large vessels are occasionally privately owned but more often belong to a merchant line. They can only make a profit where there is a strong likelihood of full passenger manifests or cargo holds. Sometimes a world government will subsidize a route, paying ships enough that they can still make a profit even though they space out half-empty, to ensure that there is a regular service on the route.

These large ships carry most of the goods and passengers that move between the major worlds. However, there is room in the system for small ships, even independently owned free traders. These vessels may ply a fixed route, but more often wander wherever their captain feels he or she can make the best profit. They carry the small cargoes that are not worth the while of the big ships, or that do not fit into a schedule.

Making a living as a free trader is a difficult business. Some captains get around the problem by accepting subsidies. The three most common are mail contracts, set-route subsidies, and Auxiliary Service subsidies. Mail has already been discussed, and there is no real difference between a 400 ton merchant taking a governmental subsidy to ply a set route and a 20,000 ton freighter accepting one. Naval Auxiliary subsidies have more adventuring possibilities, however.

Naval subsidies are normally available only to vessels operating within the borders of an interstellar state. Auxiliary subsidy is available to merchant vessels and couriers that mount some kind of armament and are in good working order. Preference is normally given to those whose captain or crew have reserve naval rank or have served in the regular navy. The exact amount of subsidy varies considerably.

A subsidised ship of this type can be called up for naval service at any time. Only the best armed would be put to actual combat duty (and then only as a picket or escort for other merchant ships). Most are simply tasked with delivering supplies and personnel wherever they may be needed. This can occur in peacetime, of course, wherever there is a shortfall in the supply system, but it is normally done to cover the increased logistical needs of a navy at war.

The normal practice when a ship is called for naval service is to retain the current crew, who receive hazard pay, but to put a naval liaison officer aboard unless the captain of the auxiliary has naval rank. This can cause a certain amount of friction between the navy and the auxiliary crew, but usually a working compromise is created.

Note that if a ship in receipt of a naval subsidy is called for service, its captain cannot refuse to serve, and that a vessel cannot cancel its subsidy every time trouble threatens.





## ***CUSTOMS AND CONTRABAND***

Where multi-world polities exist, most of their trade is internal, and subject to lesser restrictions than in the case where trade is crossing a border. Most states take considerable care to prevent contraband goods from leaking across the border, and stringent customs examinations are common at border worlds.

For single-world states, the only way they have to prevent contraband from coming in is to catch it at the starport. Some insist that foreign vessels dock at the highport (orbital port) and transfer their cargo to local shuttles for transport to the surface (some Imperial worlds also do this) while others conduct a customs check in space using boarding parties. Those worlds with low law levels are less concerned with such matters, though anywhere with a Class D or better port will have some form of customs service to enforce whatever laws exist.

## ***SMUGGLING, PIRACY AND COMMERCIAL WARFARE***

Smuggling is likely to occur anywhere that there is trade. The temptation to under-declare cargoes, or to slip a few small packages through customs concealed in a special mini-hold, is considerable. Customs parties do board vessels and search for contraband, but the thoroughness of such searches varies considerably.

This kind of minor smuggling is a fairly trivial problem. More serious is the practice of shipping illegal goods into a world disguised as something that is legal there. Quite large cargoes can be brought in by this method, though it is generally easier for customs personnel to spot that something is amiss.

In many cases, smugglers of this sort will purchase goods on one world, where they are quite legal, along with a 'cover' cargo that they can make a small profit on at the destination, and openly fly into port with their legal cargo. If they can deceive customs into inspecting only the cover cargo, they can then deliver the illicit goods. A variant on this strategy is to use an unsuspecting merchant crew to do the smuggling, by contracting them to deliver a legal cargo but concealing something illicit in the cargo containers. This is one reason why smart crews check out their own cargoes and take care who they accept contracts from. Of course, a ship that's broke may have to take whatever cargo is going.

The most blatant form of smuggling is undertaken by bold crews who try to evade detection and slip onto a world away from the starport, never allowing customs personnel anywhere near the cargo. Such vessels can arrive with a hold filled with illicit goodies, though most have some form of deception or concealment plan in case they are caught by a customs ship.

Blockade running, where a vessel attempts to penetrate an interdiction squadron to deliver goods or personnel to a world surface, is the most dangerous form of smuggling, since it involves trying to slip past naval vessels on alert for such activity. Some navies will give runners a fair chance to surrender, but most will fire on anyone who tries to flee or shoot it out – and navies have a lot more firepower than a merchant ship!

Note that smuggling is not limited to cargo. People, small items, even data can be smuggled for a profit. Overall, however, smuggling is a low-key problem, a dark side to the necessary activity of interstellar commerce. Piracy, on the other hand, is all bad since it involves attacks on merchant craft and the theft of their cargoes.

Piracy is more common in independent systems than in a large state. This is for several reasons, but mainly because such a state can afford more resources to protect commerce and to hunt down pirates. It is necessary for pirates to have a base of some kind, and a large state will normally act to correct any world acting as a pirate haven, or to sweep a system suspected of having a base on its outsystem planets.

There are exceptions, of course. Pirate organisations may exert considerable influence and even more or less control a world's government. In some cases, corporations or even states have been founded on pirate money – and of course, to the Vargr, corsair is an honourable profession with long traditions.

There are several kinds of pirate. The first is the so-called Ethically Challenged Merchant, or ECM. Out on the frontiers, merchant ships are often armed for self-protection. Such vessels are of course able to undertake aggressive action as well as defensive. The ECM-type pirate is a merchant vessel that supplements its income by opportunistic piracy. Such craft will attack only when the odds are heavily in their favour. The typical ECM pirate starts out honest but slips into smuggling as profits from trade drop. As things get worse, a golden opportunity drops in their lap, and the crew crosses the line in a single act of piracy. Successful or not, this is the watershed; having become predators, most such crews continue their piratical career intermittently (when an opportunity presents itself) until caught or killed.

The career pirate is rather more rare, and such careers are often cut short by the navy. Career pirates may operate merchant ships, and may indeed engage in normal commerce or smuggling, but they are always on the lookout for a mark. Smart pirates (i.e. the ones who last more than a few weeks) choose their targets carefully, and often use deception to get into a position of overwhelming superiority. Contrary to the popular image, most career pirates are non-descript captains of well but not excessively armed merchant ships.



Career pirates make use of a number of factors to ensure their success. They often bribe or influence port workers and officials to feed them information. They take note of where the navy stations its patrols and where merchant ships are most vulnerable. Some strike and move on; others have places to hide, or fade back into the merchant traffic and bluff their way past the anti-piracy patrols. All smart pirates ensure that their attacks are dispersed in time and space (i.e. they do not strike repeatedly, and often, in the same small area), and are willing to abort an attack at any point and slip away if the odds do not look too good.

There are few swashbuckling buccaneers of a sort seen in entertainment shows. Most have a very short career, since they are so blatant that they lose the anonymity of more cautious pirates. Most have heavily modified vessels, or even semi-military ships, giving them a fighting chance against a patrol vessel or at least enough acceleration to run away and enter jump.

Many such buccaneers deliberately cultivate a reputation to help their activities. The usual stereotype is the 'harsh but fair' pirate captain, who will strip a ship bare if it surrenders, but leave unharmed passengers and crew who do not resist. Such captains will go to great lengths to keep their reputation intact, and normally blast ships to pieces if they fight, creating a choice between safe but financially harmful surrender and certain death. So long as the reputation remains intact, such a technique can work.

Larger pirate organisations do exist. Sometimes several ships band together to create a base or to go after more valuable prey. Such organisations often use very varied methods (some of them legal) to remain viable, engaging in commerce, smuggling, cargo theft directly from starports and extortion as well as traditional piracy.

Many pirate outfits work both sides of the line, and will demand protection money not to attack or even hire out as escorts-for-hire if this seems more profitable than attacking commerce – or if it serves some other end.

Pirates normally steal cargo rather than the carrying ship. There are numerous reasons for this. A ship that has resisted and been disabled may not be in a spaceworthy condition, and may only be fit to be stripped for spares. Bringing in such a ship requires a prize crew, or placing some troops aboard to coerce the crew into taking it to the pirates' safe port. The crew normally have nothing to lose, since they are likely to be killed to prevent them from revealing the location of the pirate base, so coercion is not always successful.

However, pirates do sometimes hijack ships or capture them to break for spares or to sell on the black market. Pirate groups will seek the best profit they can get, wherever it comes from. Some pirate groups also engage in planetary raiding, normally against outposts and worlds unable to adequately defend themselves. Such ships carry a contingent of ground troops and support vehicles. They strike hard, grab what they can, and depart swiftly. Groups specializing in planetary raids sometimes style themselves as 'Vikings' rather than pirates; many of them also serve as mercenary units.

Similar to piracy is commerce raiding, or commercial warfare. This is conducted by warships or armed private vessels (privateers), and while cargoes may be taken, the goal is to harass or destroy enemy shipping and thus inflict economic damage. Privateering is illegal in most (but not all) interstellar states whilst commerce raiding by legitimate warships is considered a part of war-fighting, and is accepted. Commerce raiders tend to be light military ships, well enough armed to destroy merchants and their small escorts, but fast enough to escape powerful navy ships.

To counter the threat of piracy and commerce raiding, many merchant ships are armed, and in dangerous areas 'Frontier Trader' type ships are popular. These are hardened merchants that sacrifice some of their cargo space for extra weapons and sensors, or for military fire control systems. Such craft also make pretty good raiders, unfortunately.

Other measures include random and regular naval patrols, inspections of suspicious vessels, sweeps of areas likely to be used as a base, and occasionally measures such as Q-ships; heavily armed vessels disguised as innocent and vulnerable trade ships. These measures are deterrents for the most part, and only rarely make actual contact with a pirate ship. By making piracy difficult or excessively hazardous in a region, these measures cause the pirates to move on. However, coverage is expensive so the level of patrols and other operations is often reduced after the number of pirate attacks diminishes. In time, the pirates come back.

Actually eradicating piracy is a matter for careful intelligence work. Agents find the pirate bases, their supporters and safe ports, their hardware suppliers and the people who buy the pirates' stolen wares. Then the enforcement arm (which could be special police, army or navy ground troops) strikes fast and hard. Arrests are made where possible, or in some cases the navy will simply stand off and blast an outsystem base to slag. Facing the death penalty, many pirates will resist vigorously, so anti-piracy strikes can approach the conditions of an all-out battle.





## ***SECURITY AND MILITARY MATTERS***

Almost all worlds and societies have some kind of security force, even if it is nothing more than a militia or lynch mob armed with improvised weapons. As a rule, higher-tech and higher-law worlds will have more organised security forces, but this depends very much upon the nature of local society.

Unless a world is cut off from interstellar trade, some offworld equipment will be available. At the very least this will be sidearms or smallarms for the security forces and the governmental bodyguards, SWAT teams and similar elite formations. Worlds will normally import equipment 1-3 Tech Levels higher than their own if it is available. Anything much more advanced will be impossible to maintain, though this does not rule out the possibility that a world may obtain quantities of very high-tech gear which will provide a big advantage until it breaks down.

The armed forces of any world can be broken down into five basic areas: Naval, System Defence, COACC, Ground Forces and Security.

### ***Naval Forces***

Naval forces are the true measure of a world's power, since control of orbital space allows a rival to choke off trade or conduct bombardment at will. However, naval forces are expensive. Powerful worlds and large interstellar states may build cruisers and even capital ships, creating a real star navy, but for most worlds this is simply too expensive. Lesser powers settle for small patrol vessels of limited capability, or second-hand military vessels that may not be in the best of repair and are frequently heavily modified. A range of ingenious conversions of civilian craft are also possible, allowing a minor power to exert some measure of space control or to tackle problems originating beyond their own system.

### ***System Defence Forces***

Most worlds that possess TL 9+ will operate some kind of vessels to secure local space and police traffic. These craft are not normally jump-capable, but are in some cases quite large and powerful. Major warships (e.g. cruisers) that are close to the end of their useful lives are sometimes gutted of their jump drives and turned into local defence monitors. Vessels built on asteroid hulls (i.e. a hollowed out asteroid fitted with drives and weapons) are also popular as cheap defence craft. Custom-designed System Defence Boats are often deployed in the defence role. These are 100-1,000 ton military craft which operate singly or in squadrons. In theory they can present a credible threat to a major combatant if sufficient numbers exist. Individually they can deal with smugglers, pirates and similar vessels.

Lighter craft such as Free Traders converted to a system patrol role, or fighters, are unable to tackle major enemy vessels

(even en masse), but can provide a useful deterrent to pirates and similar non-military threat. The primary role for such craft is to provide an armed presence to enforce laws and traffic control instructions.

### ***COACC Forces***

COACC (Close Orbit and Aerospace Control Command) forces are the last line of defence against orbital attack. Worlds with TL 5+ will usually possess some kind of COACC forces. These can include ground-based weapons ranging from anti-aircraft guns and missiles to powerful PAD (Planetary Aerospace Defence) missiles capable of attacking a ship in orbit, laser batteries and deep-site meson guns. The latter are very high tech weapons which can be buried deep in a planet's crust. They are difficult for an attacker to locate and take out, and allow an attack equivalent to a battleship or cruiser's spinal mount to be carried out on a ship in orbit.

Aircraft also form part of the COACC forces, from primitive and wholly ineffective biplanes to high-technology interceptors capable of reaching orbit and engaging attackers with laser weapons and missiles. A world's entire air force is normally considered to be part of its COACC forces, but only craft capable of engaging attackers are relevant here. Transports, ground attack planes and so forth have a big part to play in planetary security, but they cannot engage starships.

It should be noted that while many naval fighters and other vessels are capable of entering atmosphere, and many COACC craft can reach orbit, vessels designed to fight in an atmosphere are normally more effective than those that are designed for space.

COACC assets can also include orbital minefields, missile launchers set up on moons or artificial satellites, weapons mounts on the orbital highport, and even armoured orbital fortresses. There is no hard and fast rule about what level of defence is necessary; worlds will create or improvise whatever means they can to fend off an attack.

### ***Ground Forces***

A world's ground forces (which includes maritime or wet navy assets) exist to deal with serious threats (internal and external) that require large applications of force, to provide security for COACC bases, to enforce the government's will, and to respond to crises of all kinds. Some worlds have large ground forces, while others maintain only a small security force. Funding and population, and the perceived needs of the situation, determine what is necessary. It is entirely possible for a powerful world to have a large navy and yet only a tiny militia for home defence – or vice versa. Marines or naval infantry are generally considered part of System Defence or Navy forces rather than ground troops proper, since they normally receive special shipboard training.



Some worlds rely on a militia system, sometimes backed up by a body of (professional or otherwise) warriors such as bush rangers, retired soldiers and elite police teams, who provide expertise and leadership. As a rule, however, most worlds will maintain a body of troops, which can be organised in many ways, and equipped with locally-manufactured equipment. Small elite forces will be recruited from this larger body, and equipped with the best the world can manufacture, augmented by some imported gear of higher tech levels. These elite units will normally be quite specialised; for example air defence troops, assault forces or personnel assigned to defend the starport.

The basic element of any ground forces are infantry; foot soldiers armed with a personal weapon (be it pike, musket, assault rifle or laser carbine) and backed up by teams equipped with support weapons ranging from bows to machineguns, mortars and fusion guns. Infantry may or may not be equipped with personal protection such as armour.

Unless very isolated, infantry from even the most backward world will know about firearms, and will rarely try to fight in massed lines if there is any chance that automatic weapons are present. Instead, ground troops will skirmish and use cover, fighting like modern infantry even though only armed with crossbows. To do otherwise is suicide.

Infantry are also able to undertake specialist roles such as providing a starship's troop contingent (marines) or underwater combat (divers) that are not suitable for the other combat arms. This versatility ensures that the infantryman remains a feature of the battlefield at all tech levels. His equipment and weaponry becomes more sophisticated, but he remains rather vulnerable and at the same time the only unit type capable of undertaking any task in any environment.

Infantry are supported by artillery and cavalry, and by various support arms such as medical units, logistics, engineers and technical supports. Artillery begins as crude siege engines, progressing through gunpowder cannon to more advanced systems. As with infantry, even fairly primitive worlds will have an idea of the capabilities of modern firearms (which outrange cannon!) and will not try to engage in a stand-up fight. Cannon and primitive siege equipment may be used from emplacements, however. As artillery becomes more advanced and mobile, it is likely to play a greater part in planetary defence; many armed forces decide that it is simply not worth building field guns before about TL 6.

Cavalry, in the form of mounted soldiers fighting with sword and lance, has no chance against firearms, though mounted troops have a part to play even at higher tech levels. Mounts (horses and other beasts) are used for mobility in rough country, with troops dismounting to fight as infantry.

Cavalry is, however, succeeded by troops riding in vehicles and fighting from them. The heavier vehicles (Armoured Fighting Vehicles, or Tanks) are designed to smash enemy fortifications and formations, destroying other tanks as well as infantry units. They can be considered to be mobile artillery emplacements carrying a powerful weapon to where it can do the most damage, and protecting it and the crew by a combination of mobility, armour, and destruction of threats.

At mid-tech levels, armour (the term applied to tank and AFV forces) is no match for higher-tech antitank weapons, and merely provides large, slow-moving targets. However, once gravitics technology becomes available, it is possible to build heavy but extremely fast armoured vehicles, protected by advanced armour and electronic devices. Such grav tanks are capable of reaching orbit, though they are rather vulnerable and unmanoeuvrable; they tend to stay low and use the ground for cover if there is any real threat. Their weapons can even threaten a starship.

The other cavalry role, that of fast-moving scouts armed for raids and skirmishes, is always viable. The lowest-tech cavalry vehicles are little more than ground cars and trucks with a support weapon such as a machine-gun fitted, usually on a pintle mount. More advanced versions become available at higher tech levels. These vehicles can be armoured against smallarms fire, but cannot take a hit from artillery or tank (or antitank) weapons. Instead, they rely upon speed and surprise, making fast slashing attacks and disappearing before retaliation can materialise, or else overwhelming the opposition with volume of fire while using their mobility to avoid being hit.

As technology advances, these light cavalry vehicles never go away. High tech forces include light grav tanks and support sleds that fulfil the same role as the scout cars of TL 5 and the sabre-armed cavalymen of TL 2. Some things do change as technology advances, however. Infantry gain access to combat armour and eventually battle dress, which makes them more robust and at the same time capable of using more powerful weapons. Infantry also become more mobile, having personnel carriers and other means such as individual grav belts at their disposal. Forces making use of gravitic technology are normally distinguished by the use of the word 'grav' in their unit title, e.g. Grav Cavalry. The exception are infantry using grav APCs, who are known as Lift Infantry.

More significantly, supporting equipment becomes more advanced. Night vision devices, electronic countermeasures and guided missiles change the nature of the battlefield, requiring specialist units to provide support as the battle moves into the electromagnetic spectrum. Communications advances allow closer control of a battle, allowing more force to be concentrated at a single point. It is hardly surprising, then, that the top three military imports across Charted Space are small arms, communications devices, and night vision equipment.



As a rule, if a world has any armed forces at all, it will have a large infantry force backed by light cavalry units using whatever vehicles are most appropriate. Artillery and Armour will normally be considered to be a luxury below about TL 7, at which point they gain at least some capability to threaten high-tech units. This assumes, of course that the perceived threat is offworld invasion, raid etc. If a force expects to fight troops of the same tech level (say on a Balkanised world where there are several rival states) then more balanced forces are likely.

### **Security Forces**

Some measure of security is considered necessary by most worlds. Sometimes the law is enforced by individuals, such as the Security Chief at a small frontier port, or a retired soldier acting as protector to his neighbours. More often, some kind of security or police force exists.

Police, customs, rescue and bodyguard forces all come under the banner of Security. Rescue forces are not normally armed, and include paramedic, fire, Orbital Rescue, coastguard and similar services intended to mitigate disasters and save lives.

The typical security officer is armed with some kind of sidearm (handgun, baton, sword etc.) and has a uniform or other distinguishing feature. Backup in the form of better-armed personnel is often available, and many security or police SWAT units actually have better equipment than that available to the planetary army.

However, security forces are not soldiers; they exist to protect something or uphold the law. Their training is different from combat troops, and their methods differ. One adage has it that 'soldiers take casualties, cops take cover'. This means that the normal response of security forces is to try to contain the situation and call for backup rather than battling it out with the bad guys. There is nothing cowardly about this; it is a matter of focus. Military forces exist to defeat an enemy. Security and bodyguard units are focussed on keeping their charge alive, protecting the public etc. This determines the nature of their response.

Some units fall somewhere between the two definitions. For example, military troops assigned to provide security at an installation, or police SWAT teams. These units have good weapons and are trained for combat, but have a narrower role than combat infantry.

As a rule, if the security forces cannot deal with a situation, the military is called in. At that point, the gloves come off.

### **MERCENARIES**

Mercenaries are common in Charted Space. Some are individuals who sell their skills as a bodyguard, assassin or technical specialist, while others are members of formed units that range from a squad to a full battalion. The commonest mercenary units are fairly small, up to platoon size, and equipped as infantry. Such units may have vehicles available for transport.





Equipment can be uniform or come-as-you-are, depending upon the nature of the unit. Similarly, while most mercenaries have some military experience (or have been properly trained by their unit), some units are little more than armed bands. For this reason, reputation is important in the mercenary trade, or at least having someone reputable to vouch for you.

Mercenary units are normally set up to serve a particular segment of the market. Some are very specialised, such as air-defence, combat engineer or medical support units, while others are intended to handle a range of tasks within their field of expertise.

The hiring price of a unit depends upon the unit and the nature of the job. The job is outlined in a document known as a Ticket, which includes pay and conditions, likely hazards and any special considerations that might apply. Tickets vary widely. A six-month cadre assignment to train the planetary militia in basic small-unit tactics will pay less per day than a success-only strike ticket. Similarly, a company-sized unit equipped to TL 7 as light infantry is a lot cheaper to hire than one equipped as Lift Infantry.

Mercenary units are often set up as self-contained combat formations, with all combat arms (infantry, artillery and cavalry) represented in some form, and at least a skeletal logistics and support structure to ensure adequate integration with local forces. Combined-arms units of this kind are usually termed "Legions".

For example, a TL 9 company-sized Legion may have five platoons. Three are rifle platoons of about 3 personnel equipped with small arms, light support weapons such as grenade launchers and machine-guns, and light anti-armour weapons. Fourth Platoon is support weapons, including a battery of light mortars and also some teams equipped with shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. Fifth Platoon is the headquarters, which includes a couple of medical personnel, communications equipment and a couple of support sleds (very thinly armoured grav vehicles) armed with plasma guns for direct support. Such a unit could style itself Lift Infantry if it had grav APCs to carry the troops, but since it does not it is considered a mercenary legion.

Mercenaries are available to fulfil almost any requirement for military personnel. Ground troops are the commonest, but fighter and ground-attack aircraft units exist, specialist security units, maritime troops (sometimes with their own vessels) and even mercenary starship crews. By convention, mercenaries that own a ship for transportation, or who operate one as a military (naval) unit-for-hire are referred to as Starmercs.

## **INTERSTELLAR WARFARE**

All-out war between worlds is fortunately very rare. Such wars are mainly naval affairs, since whoever gains uncontested control of orbital space can bombard the defender into oblivion at leisure. Most states are unwilling to do so, however, for several reasons. Not only is massive orbital bombardment (with nuclear weapons or deadfall ordnance – rocks) devastating to the ecology of the target world, often slaughtering the entire population and rendering the planet useless into the bargain, but this kind of apocalyptic attack is repugnant to most civilised states.

Additionally, there is the fact that a state or world that engages in this kind of warfare – or that uses biological weaponry to cause mass casualties – is likely to alarm its neighbours, who may decide to band together and make sure that it never happens to them. Thus an apocalyptic state may find itself on the receiving end of a massed attack designed to do unto them before they can do unto others.

As a result, wars tend to be subject to a certain amount of restraint, negotiation and brinkmanship. These limited wars always run the risk of escalation, of course, but civilian targets are normally considered off-limits except where they are being deliberately used to shelter military assets – and sometimes even then.

Most wars take the form of skirmishes in space or ground actions to seize outposts and economic targets, with both sides trying to inflict economic damage and bring the opposition to the negotiating table on favourable terms. Massed fleet actions are rare, because losing one can lose the war, and the sheer cost of rebuilding even a victorious fleet can ruin a planetary economy.

Covert actions, raids and similar small-scale military operations are common, sometimes coupled with support for dissident elements in the enemy's society. Sudden attacks by ground forces to seize important targets are occasionally attempted. These are usually followed by a demand for negotiations, which normally results in a peace treaty, some concessions etc. Invasion to occupy and annex a world is only possible where one side has a massive military superiority.

Thus most interstellar wars are characterised by an attitude of 'grab what you can and sue for peace', and are fought for limited goals and under restrictive rules of engagement. The occasional war that spills out beyond this restriction is remembered as a horrific business, for generations to come. Normally rival states have more to gain from a favourable treaty and some economic or territorial concessions than obliteration of a neighbour, even if it means a rematch ten years down the line.



Wars of survival and extermination are not subject to any rules or restrictions. Such a Black War may have caused the destruction of the Ancients and their civilisation. Nobody wants to risk such a fate, unless they are sure they can win – or they are backed into a corner from which there is no escape. Thus most combatants are careful to ensure that their enemies never become so desperate, and wars remain a mix of economic, diplomatic and military action seeking advantage rather than apocalypse.

## ***THE PSIONICS INSTITUTES***

The term Psionics Institutes is a general catch-all for the various groups and individuals that teach the use of mind powers. Some are real institutes, organised as a university or even a corporate training school. Others are hidden, meeting like a witches' coven to practice and share knowledge. And some are individual adepts and masters who take on the odd student from time to time.

The Institutes have no agenda or common cause. Most are discreet (especially in areas where psionics are banned), and like to maintain their anonymity. A few are in communication or aware of one another, but for the most part each of the Psionics Institutes is an independent entity. Their only common trait is a desire to be left alone to pursue their interests.

This individualism means that the Institutes are not a coherent force. It does not mean that they do not influence events in the region. Some psions actively use their powers to influence politics (some are actual or de facto world rulers), while others serve as advisors, often disguising the nature of their power by acting as intelligence coordinators or political advisors.

It is not uncommon for psions to wander, seeking new secrets or a way to get some basic training. Some such wanderers may get involved in local events – for good or bad reasons – because they have the power to influence matters or because their talent reveals something that others might not see. Such a wandering apprentice or adept psion can do great good or harm (and usually, a bit of both) by his or her actions.

Occasionally a psion will decide to go on a crusade to right some wrong or change the world for the better, to champion justice or to make a fortune from a life of psionic crime. Such individuals draw attention – normally of an unfavourable sort – to the Institutes, and are frowned upon at best. Sometimes it is necessary for an institute to take measures to dispose of a crusading psion, even one who is doing good, to avoid a backlash from the local populace.

Thus the world of psionics is not merely a wondrous vista of glorious mental learning, it is also a shadowy environment of conflict, politics, rivalry and occasional violence. Players (even non-psions) can find themselves drawn into such a conflict, which may have no clear villains and no heroes at all.

## ***CRIME, ESPIONAGE, UNREST AND DISSENT***

In any society there will be those who are unhappy or underprivileged, and some of those will turn to crime or violence to improve their lot. Some societies address the problem with harsh measures, some with improved conditions, and some simply ignore the problem with the predictable result that it gets worse.

Dissent is normally of a political sort, and may represent dissatisfaction with the local government or one of its policies, or with a wider situation. Some dissenting groups are a sort of loyal opposition who vigorously but legally protest certain policies or demand certain actions. Other dissenters are violent mobs or even terrorist groups.

Dissent can create a number of adventure opportunities, and a lot of moral ambiguity. When a legitimate government needs to clamp down on peaceful dissenters whose viewpoint is dangerously stupid, but whose methods are legal, and resorts to excessive force, who is right? Who should the characters side with?

Similarly, there is a fine line between freedom fighters and terrorists. The former are fighting a war by irregular means but as soldiers, attacking military and government targets only. The latter use terror and attacks on civilians to get their point across. Terrorism is clearly a bad moral choice, but what of the situation where the cause is just and terrorism is the only way to win?

Any rebel group (and any government) will include some who believe that the ends justify the means. What happens when the characters side with a group of freedom fighters, and find out that they are using terrorism? Or when a legal government resorts to terrorist measures to deal with rebels? Does this make the rebels into good guys? Questions like these can introduce interesting moral ambiguity into a game, and cause endless trouble for the player-characters.



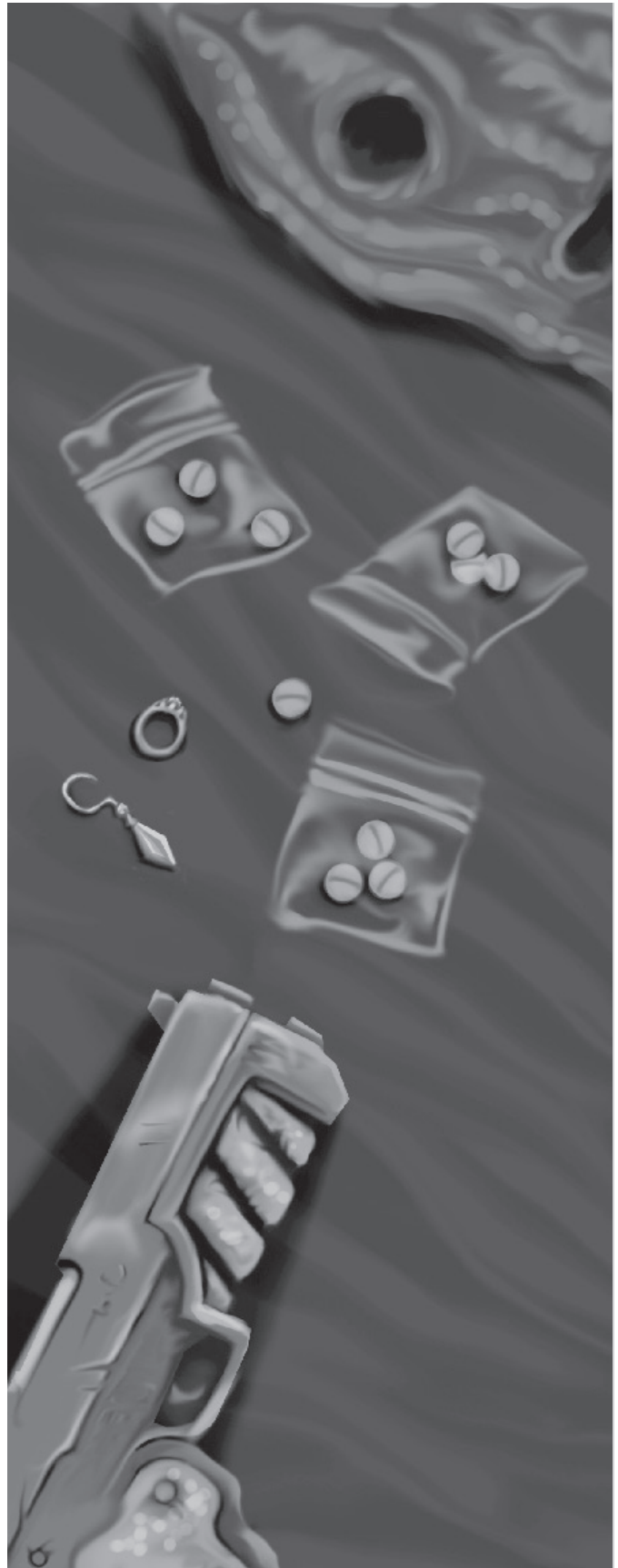
Crime occurs in many forms, from petty theft and pickpocketing to corporate corruption and organised crime. The special case of piracy has already been discussed, but other kinds of crime can be important in a game. Simple banditry provides many reasons for adventure. Characters may be attacked by bandits, or mistaken for them, or may wander unsuspecting into a town controlled by an outlaw group (transplanting a traditional Western plotline). Characters who can handle themselves may be hired to protect a community from raiders... or may decide to do some raiding of their own.

However, crime can play a part in more subtle ways. Organised crime groups can be very influential, and may have so much influence over local law enforcement or government that outsiders are needed to penetrate the organisation. Organised crime groups make great recurring foes for a character group, or may be useful contacts or employers. This works especially well when the cooperation is unwilling, in the sense that politics makes for strange bedfellows.

Covert operations groups or spy networks are also common throughout Charted Space. Spying takes many forms, from simply buying local newspapers or routinely reporting observations made by embassy staff to covert infiltration and technological information-gathering. All manner of groups engage in espionage, from governments and corporations to political parties and psionics institutes. Some collect information to sell on, others for their own use. As a rule, the more critical a piece of information, the greater the efforts a group will make to protect it.

Characters can become involved in espionage in a variety of ways. They may actually be intelligence agents, or be under surveillance by an agency. They may be duped or coerced into undertaking an operation (knowingly or otherwise) for an intelligence service, or might be used as decoy. The nature of espionage is that once a group is known to one agency, or is being watched by them, others become interested too, if only to find out what is so special about them.

Alternatively, characters may be caught in the middle of espionage-related events. For example, if they are aboard a starship when a covert agent is assassinated by a rival, the characters may investigate and be drawn into a web of deceit. Or they may be carrying an object unaware that it is of interest to one or more intelligence agencies. Or the characters may be caught in the middle of a hostage situation, assassination, bombing or act of sabotage that has nothing to do with them, but if they do not do something about it they'll become victims too.





# ***RUNNING A GAME IN THE BORDERLAND***

The preceding sections discuss some aspects of life in the region, and how they may affect player-characters. A good referee has many ways to get characters involved in adventures. It is wise to vary the kind of hook that is used to start an adventure. Another good idea is to try to build adventure hooks into incidents and encounters along the way.

## ***SETTING UP A GAME***

Many games are one-offs, a short adventure or a mini-campaign running for a few sessions. In such adventures, there is little need to worry too much about character advancement, balance of rewards and such like, since the game has a closed end. Similarly, the sort of characters that will be suited to the adventure should be fairly obvious.

These things are more of a concern if the referee plans to run a longer series of adventures, or a full campaign. Rewards and advancement are obviously important factors; characters that become too powerful, too soon, will overbalance the campaign. Conversely, characters with insufficient skills and equipment will have a dull (or fatal) time.

There are three simple questions that a referee should answer before beginning a game:

- How powerful should the characters be?
- Should they have a starship?
- Should they have a backer or service to answer to?

As a rule, characters generated with the prior history system will be good enough. Traveller creates 'people with skills' rather than superheroes, so more prior history simply means better skills. This does give an advantage, but the typical party of 26-40 year olds with a mix of backgrounds and specialties, can meet most challenges if they are smart.

For most characters, the real measure of power is political and economic. Anyone is vulnerable to a shotgun at close range. There are no invulnerable combat-monsters. Characters who are good at fighting have some advantages, but they are not overpowering ones.

On the other hand, characters with high social or military rank or a great deal of money can cause problems for a campaign game, since they can often circumvent many difficulties that a less influential party would have to think their way through. The referee may wish to limit the power of such characters by tying up their funds in investment, or use the character's position as an adventure hook by creating obligations or drawbacks such as enemies at court.

The question of whether a group should have access to a starship is a difficult one. Many groups get by well enough without a ship of their own. They may be loaned one for a time, or charter a vessel for a specific task. There are plenty of commercial vessels, and the need to find passage aboard a vessel gives the referee a tool to limit the characters' mobility, and prevents them from shooting up the local free traders for the fun of it.

Starships free a group to wander about the game universe at random, and this freedom can result in characters meandering out of an adventure. On the other hand, a ship can be the cause of many adventures, especially if it is old and a little unreliable. The need to find spares or to raise funds for a refit should, keep the characters moving.

A players' ship should be appropriate to the campaign. A scout/courier, small merchant ship or perhaps a lab ship would normally be most appropriate. Military vessels cannot pay their way through trade, requiring that characters have large amounts of money or a backer to support their ship. Larger vessels like mercenary cruisers or liners are not good PC ships since they require large crews to operate. Unless the interactions of the crew are to be focus of the game, keeping track of all these people can become a headache.



Backers are another important issue. Traveller refers to someone the characters are currently working for as a patron, but backers are slightly different. A backer is someone the characters answer to all the time. Possible backers might be a merchant line, a minor noble, an Imperial service or some other powerful individual. Backers can provide equipment and funds to the characters as needed, but again, provide a means to control what the characters have access to.

Whether the character should have a backer or be freelancers really depends upon the sort of game to be run. A backer can be used to impose adventures on the characters, but in some ways limits their freedom to develop and to roam as the players wish.

Overall, the Borderland contains enough variety to allow a wide range of possible adventures, and even a single-theme game like a trader or navy based campaign can be extremely varied as the characters confront a wide range of challenges and become embroiled in the cross-cutting politics of the region. And then, just when they are getting a handle on the situation, a bunch of foreign agents might start stirring the pot.

Two clusters of star systems (and one outlying world) is a lot of area to have adventures in. Thus the Borderland can be the hope of a Traveller game for a long, long time. How long? Well, just look at all that has happened in human history, and that was on a single planet....

