

U.S.S. *HAMPTON*

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2300AD

U.S.S. *HAMPTON*

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S E E K E R G A M I N G S Y S T E M S

Hampton-class Destroyer Escort

Overview

The Hampton-class destroyer escort was developed for the American Space Force (ASF) in the mid-2290s. The vessel was designed to perform convoy escort and anti-piracy patrol duties along the American Arm. Each Hampton-class ship is armed with four Hyde Dynamics EA-122 lasers, mounted in individual turrets, and carries up to six SIM-14 missiles in two forward-mounted missile packs. Following modern ASF doctrine, the vessel possesses no armor or screens, relying instead on maneuverability and a moderate degree of stealth for its defense. Unlike most other ASF warships, however, the *Hampton's* design does not incorporate spin-habitats for the ship's twenty-six crew members. Combined with minimal crew space, this restricts the ship to missions of two weeks duration.

The Hampton- class destroyer escort ... designed to perform convoy escort and anti-piracy patrol duties along the American Arm. Each Hampton-class ship is armed with four Hyde Dynamics EA-122 lasers, mounted in individual turrets, and carries up to six SIM-14 missiles in two forward-mounted missile packs.

The Hampton-class design received some benefits from the highly-regarded *Kennedy*-class cruiser. Shared components include the *Kennedy's* reliable Unified Target Engagement systems, fire-control computer, hull-masking technology and advanced composite hull materials.

One unique design feature of the Hampton is the use of the SIM-14 missile packs that are magnetically slung to the ship's hull. Once its missiles are expended, the three-shot "pillboxes" may be jettisoned, thereby reducing the overall active signature of the ship. Because of the price involved, however, this will only be done during wartime, and then only when stealth is required.

History

In July of 2294, Litton-Ingalls-Norton, Space Division, well-known for their production of several successful starship designs, won a contract with the American Space Force to construct twelve new starships for patrol/escort duties along the American Arm. The vessel was not only to be constructed by LIN, but was also to be of their own design. This would allow the builders a greater degree of flexibility in design and construction techniques, ultimately reducing the cost and construction time of the Hampton-class.

Halfway through development, due to problems with some of the ASF's Cayuga-class vessels, the American government increased its order to a full twenty ships. While this was to the considerable benefit of the builders of the *Hamptons*, McDonnell-Textron suffered serious financial losses due to contractual obligations. Allegations were brought up that LIN operatives had something to do with the problems encountered with the *Cayugas*. While there has never been any evidence of such activity, the accusations didn't help the company's image.

The U.S.S. *Hampton* (DE 150), was the first vessel of the class to begin construction, but was actually the second ship of the class to be completed. The U.S.S. *Aberdeen* was completed first, in record time and well ahead of schedule. A series of minor complications delayed the completion of the *Hampton* in the mean time. The commis-

sioning ceremonies for the *Aberdeen* were scheduled one day after those of the *Hampton*'s, in order to avoid any confusion as to the name of the new ship class. Unfortunately, the *Hampton* itself is haunted by a mistake made by the American news media when one national broadcast mistakenly referred to the *Hampton* as an *Aberdeen*-class destroyer; a mix-up caused by the early completion of the *Aberdeen*.

Despite its inauspicious start, the results of *Hampton*'s first patrol mission were impressive. One hijacked transport was captured along with its pirate crew and, more importantly, two persons wanted for their connections with a major mob ring were apprehended. After this incident, the *Hampton* continued to serve well along the American Arm.

The vessel's career as an anti-piracy ship more or less ended four years later when in June of 2301 three large Kafer task groups began their assault down the French Arm. By this time, the majority of *Hampton*-class destroyer escorts were completed and all were pressed into service against the Kafers, with new vessels being sent to the French Arm Fleet immediately after commissioning.

Initial use of the *Hamptons* was to provide support for the French, German, British, and Ukrainian fleets by taking over rear area patrol and convoy and other escort duties.

* * * * *

CONVOY DK-001: 20 SEP - 3 OCT 2301

The first use of the *Hampton*-class warship in the Kafer conflict was as escort for convoy DK-001 in September of 2301. Four *Hampton*-class destroyer escorts were each paired up with a *Virginia*-class transport of German registry. The eight ship convoy departed from Vogelheim on September 20 2301 with the transports loaded with reentry cargo canisters to be dropped at the Kafer occupied German colony world of Dunkelheim.

During the mission, two of the four escorts, the U.S.S. *Sundance* (DE 154) and the U.S.S. *Stockton* (DE 156) were destroyed in an engagement against a Kafer *Alpha*-class battleship. Also destroyed were two of the transports, S.S. *Ludwigslust* and S.S. *Creussen*, which were attacked by a squadron of Kafer fighters launched from the garrison on Dunkelheim.

While the fighters were later intercepted and destroyed by the surviving escorts, U.S.S. *Ashland* (DE 152) and U.S.S. *Bloomfield* (DE 155), the two remaining transports then proceeded to hastily deploy their drop canisters. However, no confirmation has ever been made that the canisters reached their targets and the mission was generally been classed as a failure.

On a positive note, the performance of the two destroyer escorts that battled the Kafer *Alpha* proved the staying power of the class. While both ships were lost during the engagement, the crew of the *Stockton* managed to control the spread of damage long enough to be rescued by one of the transports. Out of twenty-six crew members aboard the *Stockton*, there were only two injuries and no fatalities.

Initial use of the Hamptons was to provide support for the French, German, British, and Ukrainian fleets by taking over rear area patrol and convoy and other escort duties.

Virginia-class/Hampton Convoy Actions

DK-001: 20 SEP - 3 OCT 2301

Escorts: *Ashland, Sundance, Bloomfield, Stockton*
 Transports: *Ludwigslust, Havelberg, Uffenheim, Creussen*

BB-010: 12 MAR-25 MAR 2302

Escorts: *Bellevue, Hartford, Catskill*
 Transports: *St. Malo, Amorica, Papillon*

BV-006: 14 MAR - 29 MAR 2302

Escorts: *Redfield, Lynchberg, Colfax, Mankato*
 Transports: *Mirecourt, Pithivius, Geisenfeld, Falkenberg, Haverhill, Ledbury*

DK-020: 18 MAR - 22 MAR 2302

Escorts: *Hampton, Ellsworth, Burlington*
 Transports: *Cloppenberg, Graffenau, Viechtach*

UM-015: 17 MAR - 30 MAR 2302

Escorts: *Paxton, Glenrock, Redding*
 Transports: *Danbury, Baker's Hawk, Earthsound, Moringwind*

HS-003: 22 MAR - 3 APR 2302

Escorts: *Aberdeen, Camden, Eureka*
 Transports: *Maidenhead, Cup of Gold, Nightshade*

Ships of the Hampton Class

as of June 2303

| Hull Number | Name | Commissioned | Disposition |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| DE-150 | U.S.S. <i>Hampton</i> | 3 Aug 2297 | Active |
| DE-151 | U.S.S. <i>Aberdeen</i> | 4 Aug 2297 | D-27 Mar 2302 |
| DE-152 | U.S.S. <i>Ashland</i> | 8 Jan 2298 | Active |
| DE-153 | U.S.S. <i>Redfield</i> | 21 Oct 2298 | D-10 Jun 2303 |
| DE-154 | U.S.S. <i>Sundance</i> | 9 Mar 2299 | D-20 Sep 2301 |
| DE-155 | U.S.S. <i>Bloomfield</i> | 4 Sep 2299 | Active |
| DE-156 | U.S.S. <i>Stockton</i> | 31 Jan 2300 | D-20 Sep 2301 |
| DE-157 | U.S.S. <i>Bellevue</i> | 31 Mar 2300 | Active |
| DE-158 | U.S.S. <i>Paxton</i> | 19 Jun 2300 | Active |
| DE-159 | U.S.S. <i>Hartford</i> | 27 Sep 2300 | D-10 Jun 2303 |
| DE-160 | U.S.S. <i>Ellsworth</i> | 29 Jan 2301 | Active |
| DE-161 | U.S.S. <i>Catskill</i> | 18 Mar 2301 | D-18 Mar 2302 |
| DE-162 | U.S.S. <i>Lynchburg</i> | 21 May 2301 | Active |
| DE-163 | U.S.S. <i>Camden</i> | 6 Aug 2301 | D-27 Mar 2302 |
| DE-164 | U.S.S. <i>Colfax</i> | 31 Sep 2301 | Active |
| DE-165 | U.S.S. <i>Mankato</i> | 10 Nov 2301 | Active |
| DE-166 | U.S.S. <i>Eureka</i> | 12 Dec 2301 | D-27 Mar 2302 |
| DE-167 | U.S.S. <i>Burlington</i> | 23 Dec 2301 | Active |
| DE-168 | U.S.S. <i>Glenrock</i> | 7 Jan 2302 | D-21 Mar 2302 |
| DE-169 | U.S.S. <i>Redding</i> | 21 Feb 2302 | D-21 Mar 2302 |

... The U.S.S. *Bloomfield* destroyed the *Kafer* fighter with several well-placed bursts from the EA-122 lasers, then turned rapidly to avoid an on-coming threat. The Virginia-class freighter, S.S. *Ludwigslust*, exploded after being dealt a fatal *Kafer* blow. A brief flash, some debris; the crew and cargo were gone. A call to sister ship U.S.S. *Sundance* went unanswered. The vessel was last seen tangling with a *Kafer* battleship. A hard turn to avoid another hostile fighter. The Tactical Action Center is alive with the sounds of modern combat; the weapon controllers "kill" another "bandit" The mission continues . . .

- aboard the U.S.S. *Ashland*, Convoy DK-001. International Press. 25 Sept 2301

Hampton-class Destroyer Escort

Ship Statistics

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Length: | 72.00 meters |
| Width: | 15.75 meters |
| Height: | 17.25 meters |
| Hull Material: | Advanced Composite |
| Accommodation: | 26 crew |
| Bridge Crew: | Command, Navigation, Communication, Engineering, and 2 Computer |
| Off Bridge: | 2 Engineering, Steward, and Medical. |
| Habitat: | Zero-G |
| Powerplant: | 15 MW Sorin PPT-15AL MHD Turbine |
| Fuel: | 3000 tons |
| Drive: | 10 MW Westinghouse 1140/10 Jerome Drive |
| Quarters: | 12 Double Occupancy Crew Quarters 2 Single Occupancy Officers Quarters |
| Warp Efficiency: | 2.43 fully fuelled and armed |
| Range: | 7.7 light years |
| Mass: | 3744 tons fully fuelled and armed |
| Cargo Capacity: | None |
| Total Life Support: | 26 |
| Emergency Power: | Batteries, 1 50 hours |
| Cost: | Lv 46,055,000 (less missiles) |

Ship Description

1. Bridge (Forward): Observation Area.
2. Communications Equipment.
3. Ship's Main Computer.
4. Bridge (Main).
5. Ship's Foyer.
6. Port Airlock.
7. Starboard Airlock.
- 8 - 9. Ship's Lockers #1, #2: Storage for crew equipment.
10. TAC Computer: CPU and additional equipment.
11. Navigation Computer: CPU and additional equipment.
- 12-13. "A" Deck Port/Starboard Interdeck Airlocks: Access to "B" Deck.
- 14-20. Crew Staterooms: Double occupancy en listed quarters.
21. Upper Crew Lounge: Recreation and dining area.
22. Storeroom: Used primarily for food storage.
23. Meal Preparation Console.
24. Officer's Wardroom: Dining Area and lounge.
25. Officer's Stateroom: Normally used by the executive officer.
26. Officer's Stateroom: Normally used by the captain.
27. SIM-Pack Access Area: Access for automatic and emergency firing and release.
28. Active Sensor Equipment.
29. Emergency Maintenance Section: Parts and equipment for active/passive sensors and SIM-Pack components.
30. Passive Sensor Equipment.
- 31-32. "B" Deck Port/Starboard Interdeck Airlocks: Access to "A" Deck.
33. Tactical Action Center: Weapons direction and control.
- 34 - 38. Crew Staterooms: Double occupancy en listed quarters.
39. Lower Crew Lounge: Recreation area which may serve as an emergency medical bay.
40. Storeroom: Primarily used for storing recreational equipment.
41. Medical Supply Storage.
42. Med Bay Console: With Auto-Med Capsule.
43. Life Support Section: Main system and recyclers.
44. Ship's Locker #3: Primary storage for Engineering damage control equipment.
- 45 - 50. Parts Lockers #1 - #6: Storage for replacement components for the powerplant, stutterwarp drive and engineering consoles.
51. Engineering Control Station.
52. Engineering Intercompartment Airlock.
53. Maintenance Access: Port turret.
54. Maintenance Access: Dorsal Turret.
55. Maintenance Access: Ventral Turret.
56. Maintenance Access: Starboard Turret.
57. Engineering Bay.
58. Stutterwarp Drive: 10MW Westinghouse Drive Systems, Model 1140/10.
59. Powerplant: 15MW Sorin Systems, Model ppt-15AL MHD Turbine.
60. Engineering Bay Access Airlock.

With capabilities matching those of ships several times its size, the Hampton-class Destroyer Escort is the latest addition to the American Fleet.

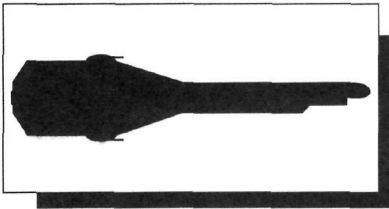
Built to exacting standards by Litton-Ingalls-Norton, the Hampton features advanced composite hull technology and proven weapon systems. This vessel has been engineered to complete the toughest missions, from convoy escort to strike patrols.

With the first ten of these destroyer escorts already operating with the American Space Force, the Hampton-class is proving to fulfill its roles like no other.

The Hampton. Designed and built to advance with the ASF into the 24th Century.

- ad from the International Space Navy Review, January 2300

Ship Status Sheet



U.S.S. Hampton Class
 Ship Name
Destroyer Escort
 Ship Type
America ASF
 Owing Nation or World

Movement
 Screens
 Radiated Signature

| | | | | |
|----------|--------------------|----|-----------------|----|
| 5 | Radial Reflected | 4 | Radial Profile | -2 |
| 0 | Lateral Reflected | 4 | Lateral Profile | -1 |
| 3 (5) | Targeting Computer | +2 | Armor | 0 |

Hull Hits

| | |
|--|----------------|
| | Minor Major |
|--|----------------|

Power Plant Hits

| | |
|--|------------|
| | Inoperable |
|--|------------|

Surface Fixture Hits

| -Weapons- | | | | -TTAs and Submunitions- | | | | | | |
|------------------|--|-----|--|-------------------------|--|-----|---------------------|--|-----|--|
| 1. X 1 +1 | | 7. | | 13. | | 1. | UTES | | 12. | |
| 2. X 1 +1 | | 8. | | 14. | | 2. | UTES | | 13. | |
| 3. X 1 +1 | | 9. | | 15. | | 3. | UTES | | 14. | |
| 4. X 1 +1 | | 10. | | 16. | | 4. | UTES | | 15. | |
| 5. | | 11. | | 17. | | 5. | Communicator | | 16. | |
| 6. | | 12. | | 18. | | 6. | Communicator | | 17. | |
| | | | | | | 7. | SIM-14 PACK | | 18. | |
| | | | | | | 8. | SIM-14 PACK | | 19. | |
| | | | | | | 9. | | | 20. | |
| | | | | | | 10. | | | 21. | |
| | | | | | | 11. | | | 22. | |

| -Active Sensors- | | -Passive Sensors- | |
|------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| Primary | | Primary | |
| Redundant | | Redundant | |

Critical Hits

| -Computer- | | -Tactical Action Center- | | | |
|---|--|--------------------------|---------------|--------------|----------|
| Primary | | Active Operator | | Fire Control | |
| | | Passive Operator | | Fire Control | |
| | | Remote | | Fire Control | |
| | | Remote | | Fire Control | |
| -Life Support- -Drive- -Hanger Deck- -Missile Bay- -Continuous- | | -Bridge- Computer | | | |
| | | Captain | Engineer Helm | | Computer |
| | | Navigator | Computer | | Engineer |
| | | Communications | Engineer | | |

Damage Control

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

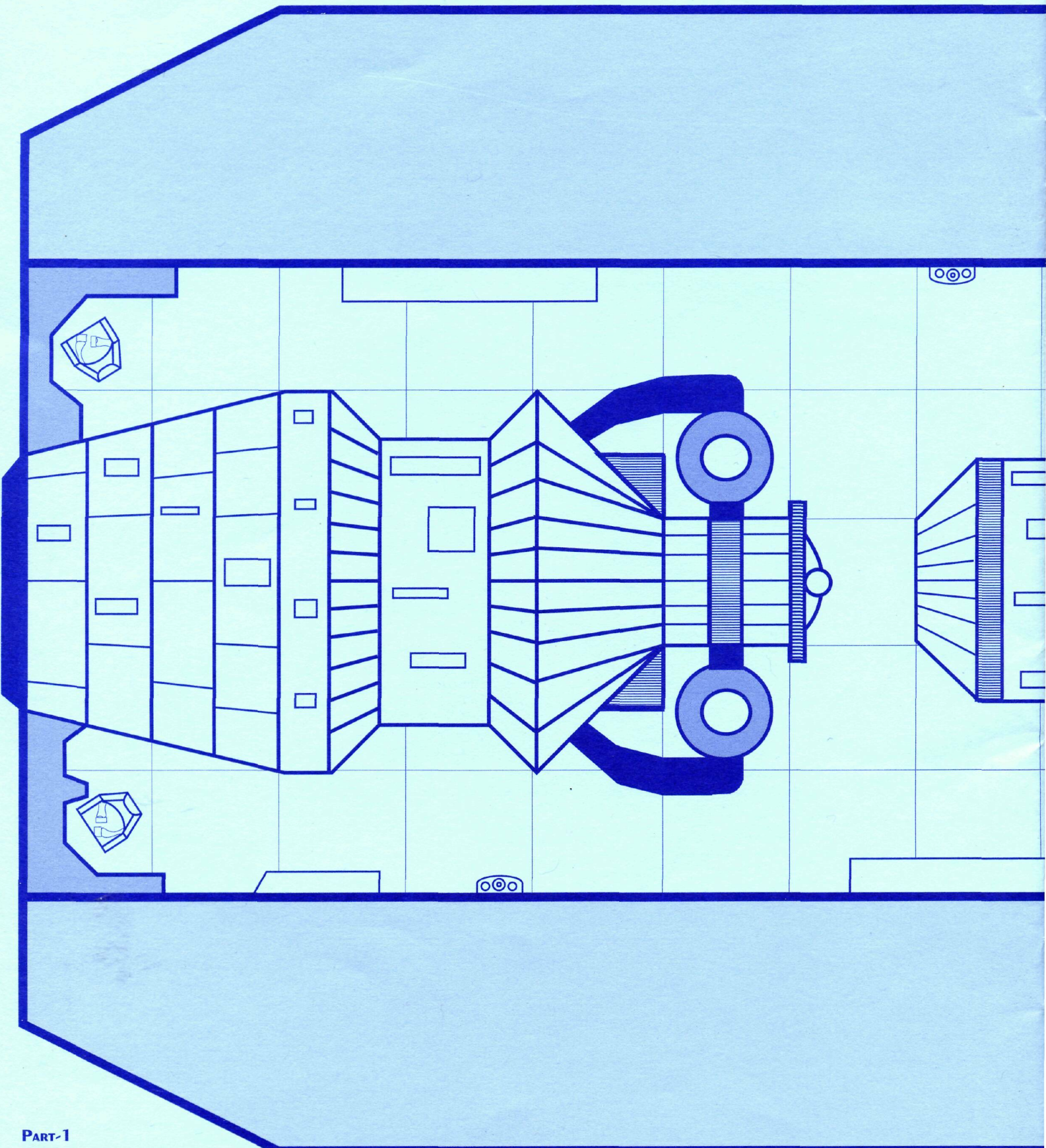
Ordnance

(record ordnance load and type)

| |
|--|
| |
|--|

Crew

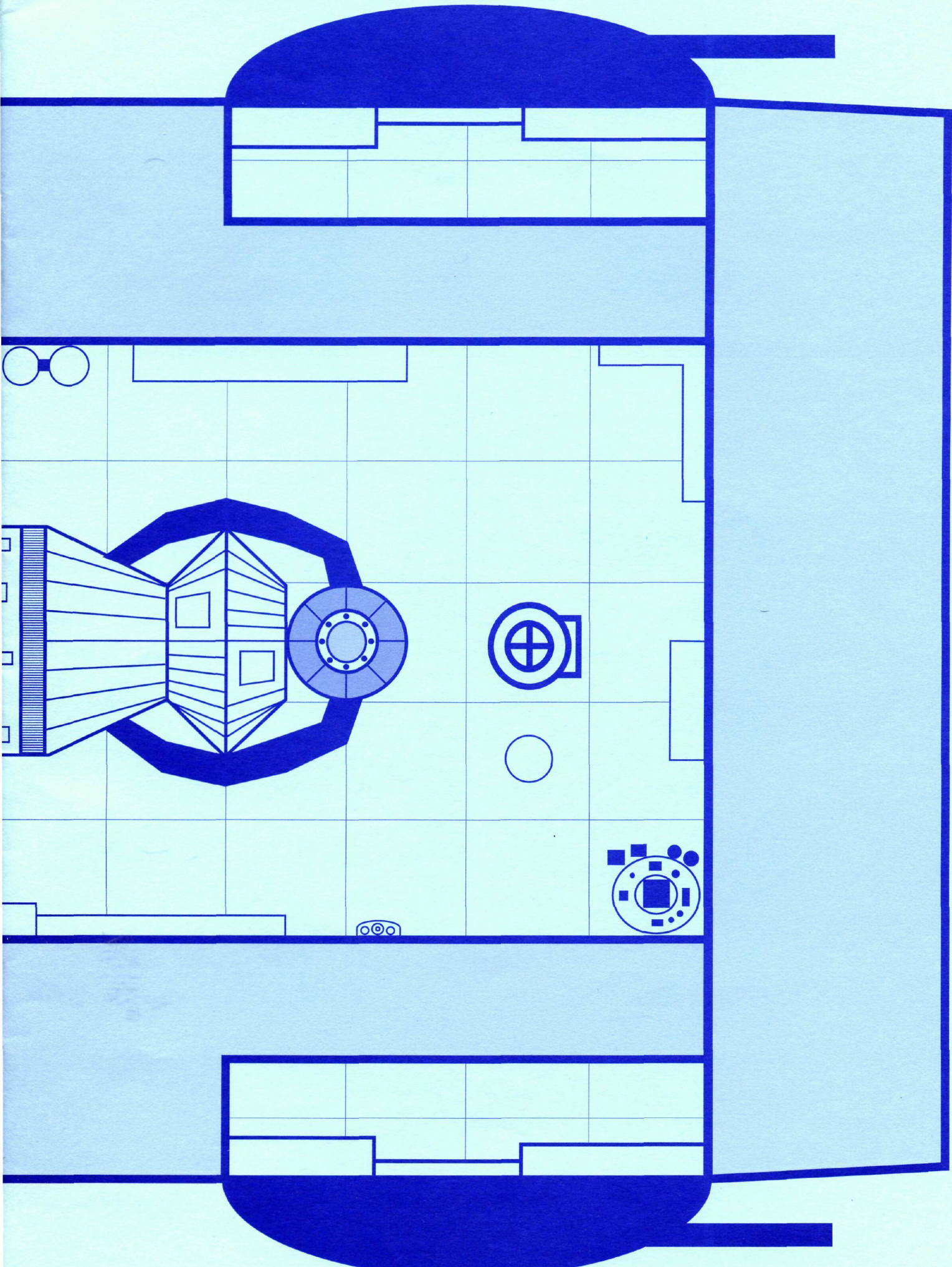
| | |
|--------------|----|
| Comfort | -2 |
| Crew Quality | 0 |

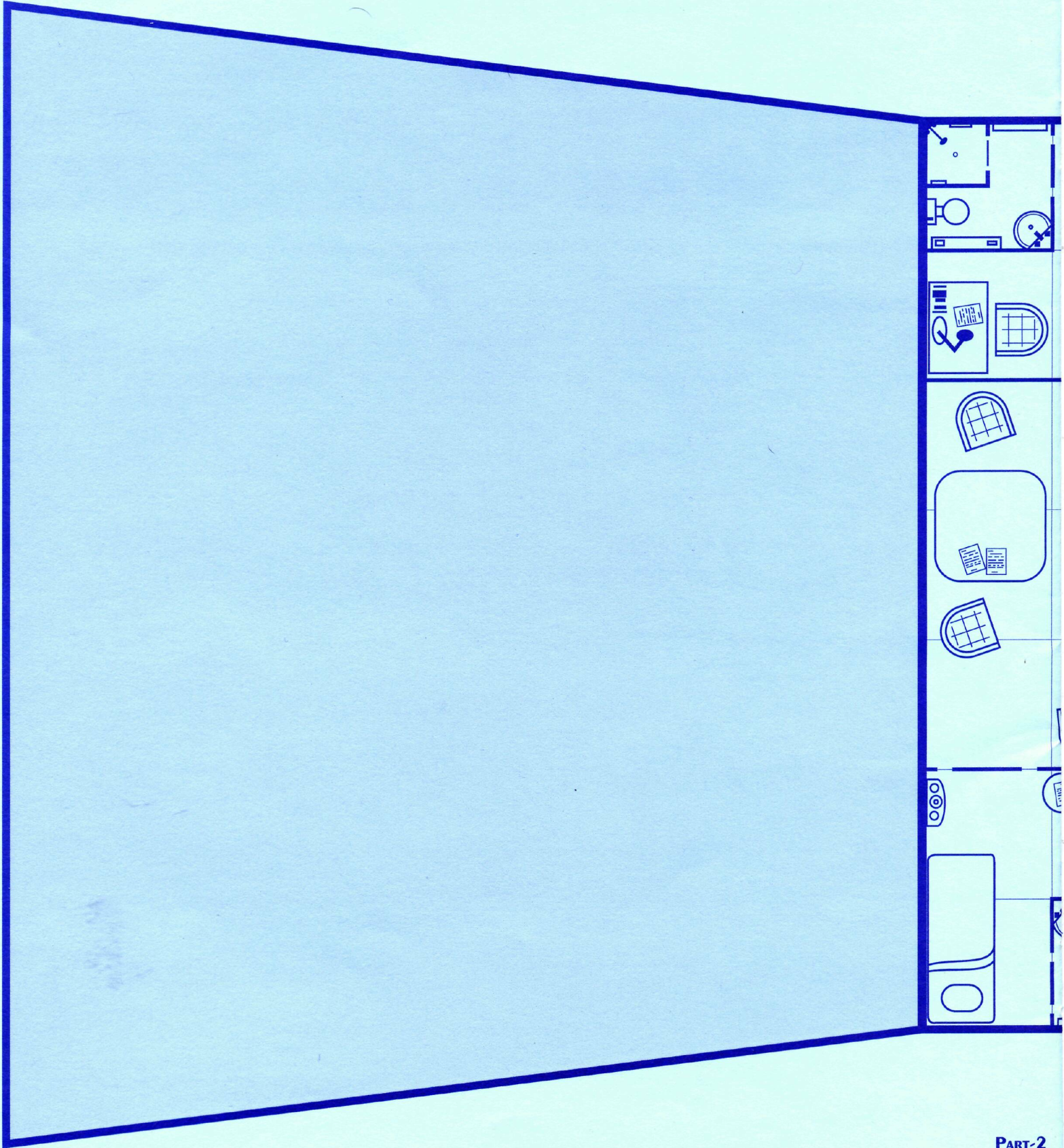


PART-1

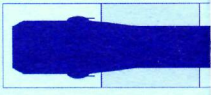


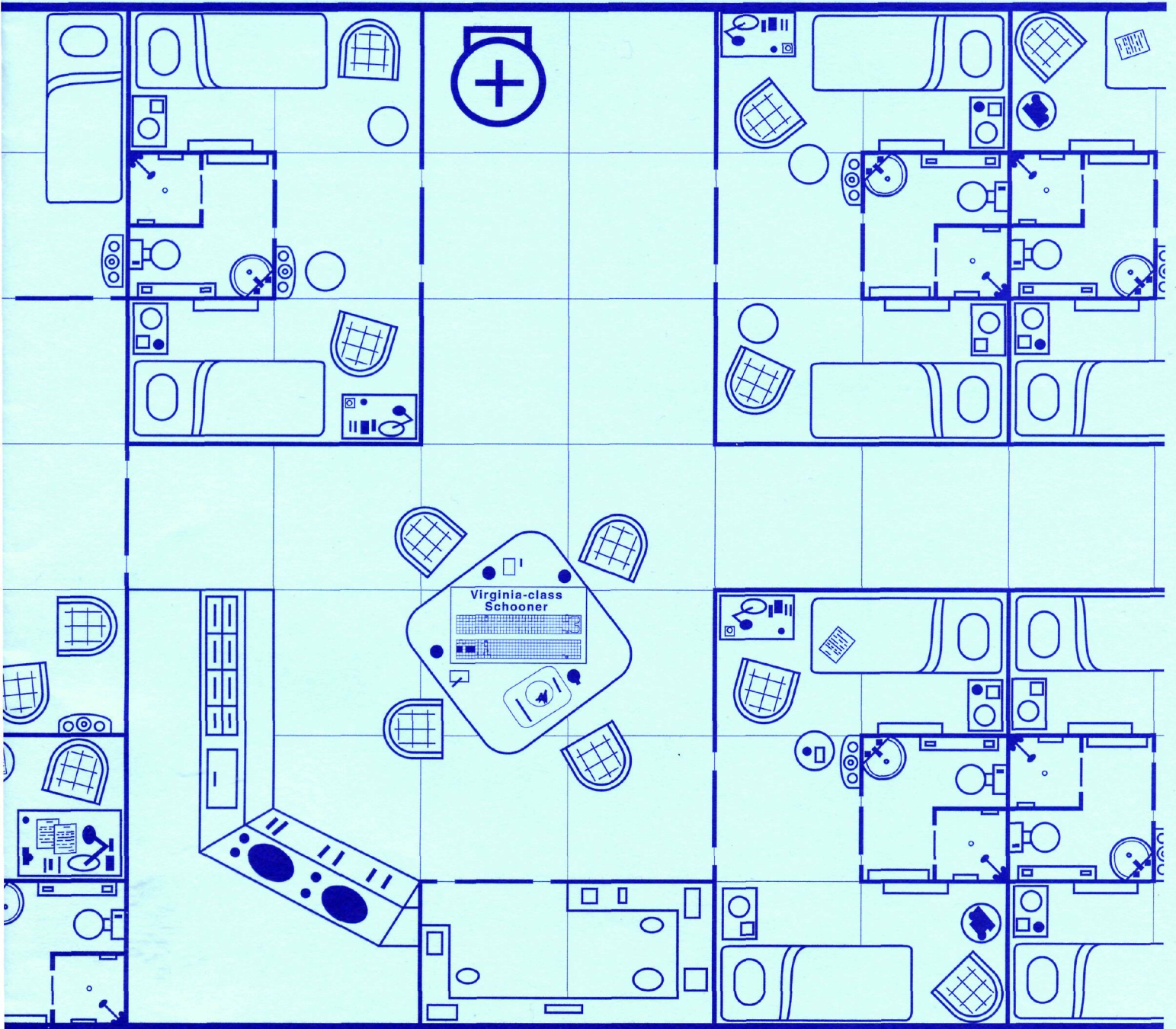
U.S.S. *HAMPTON* Top Deck (A)



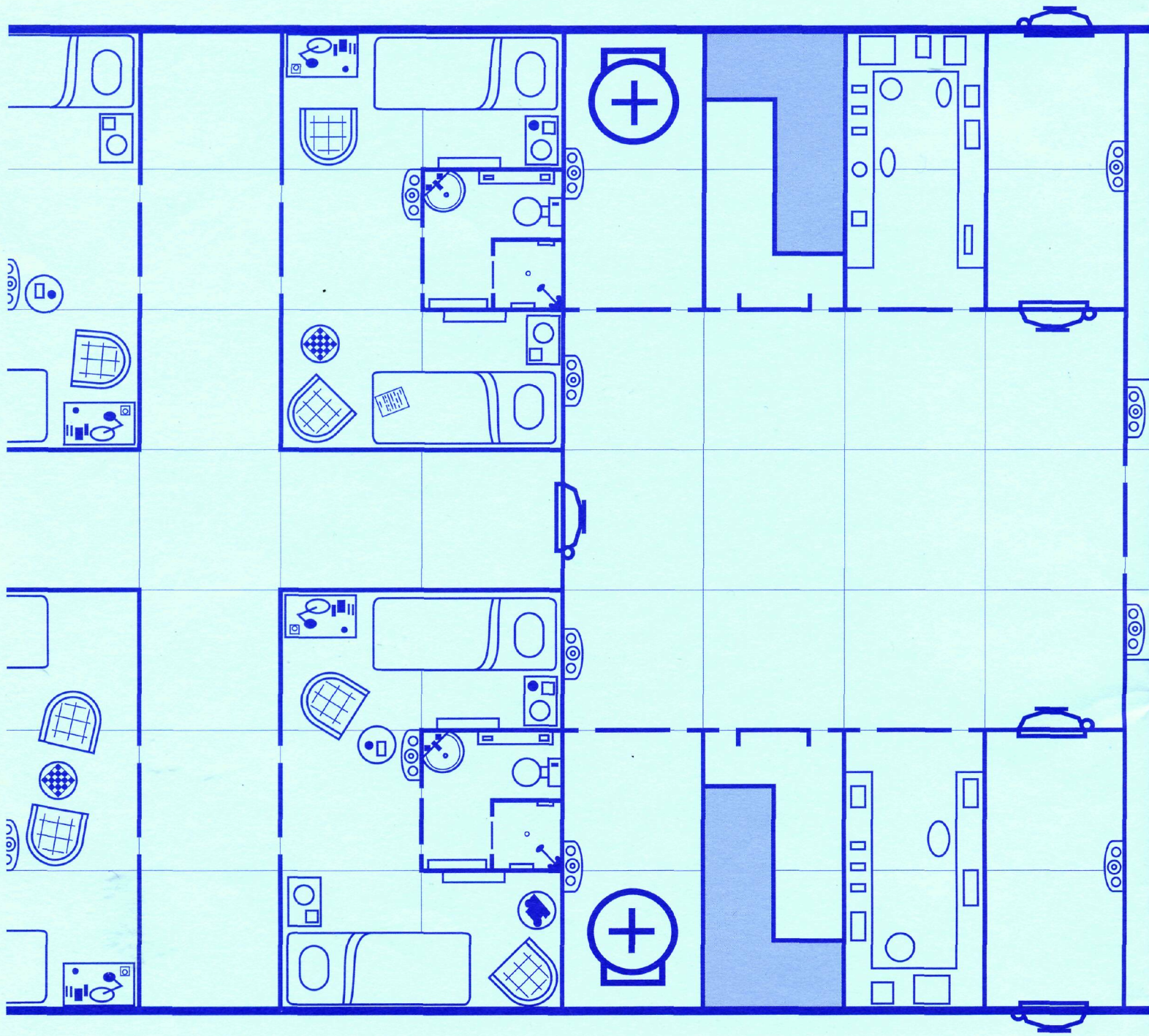


PART-2

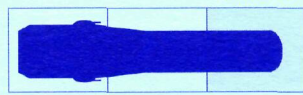




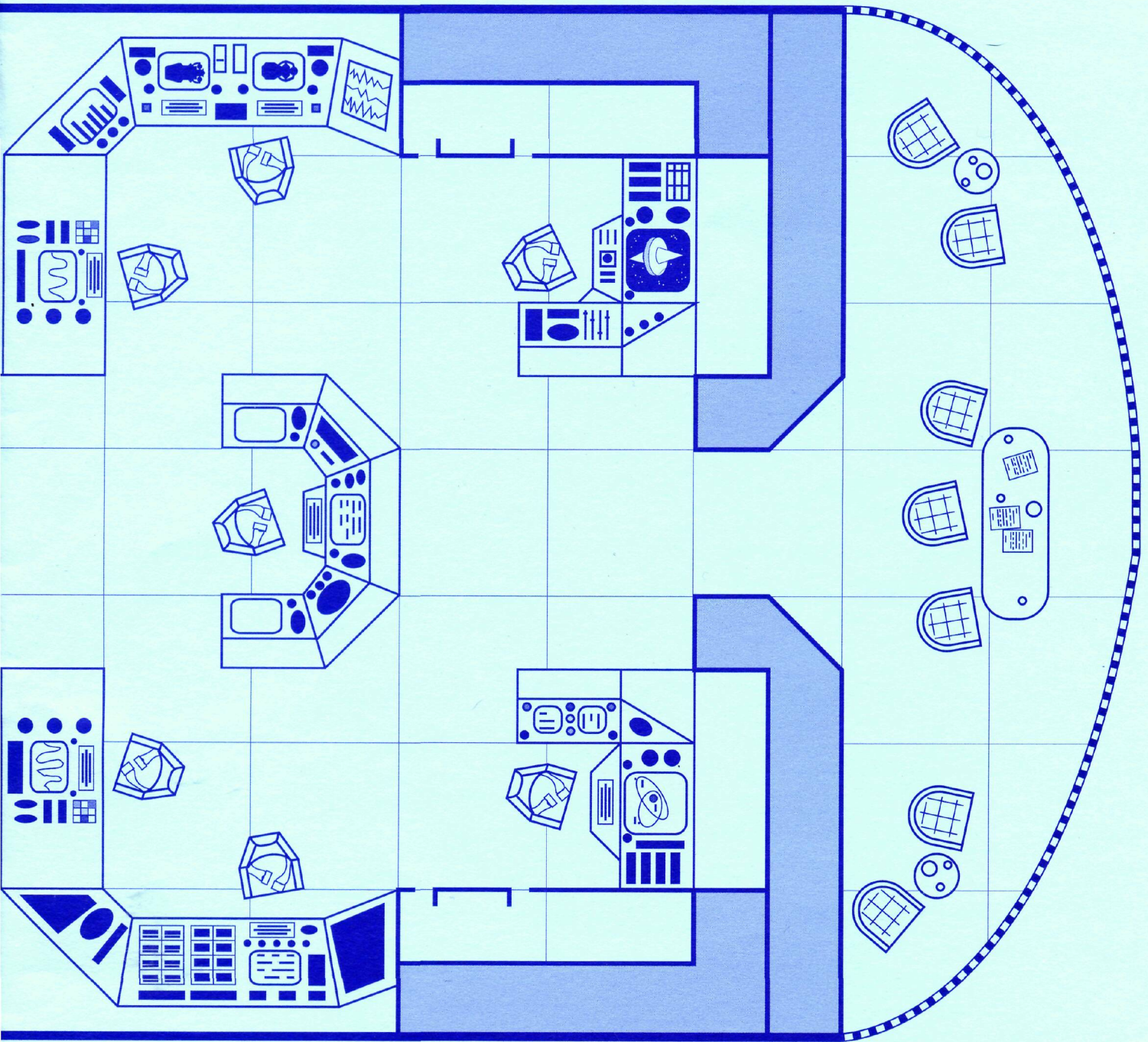
U.S.S. *HAMPTON* Top Deck (A)



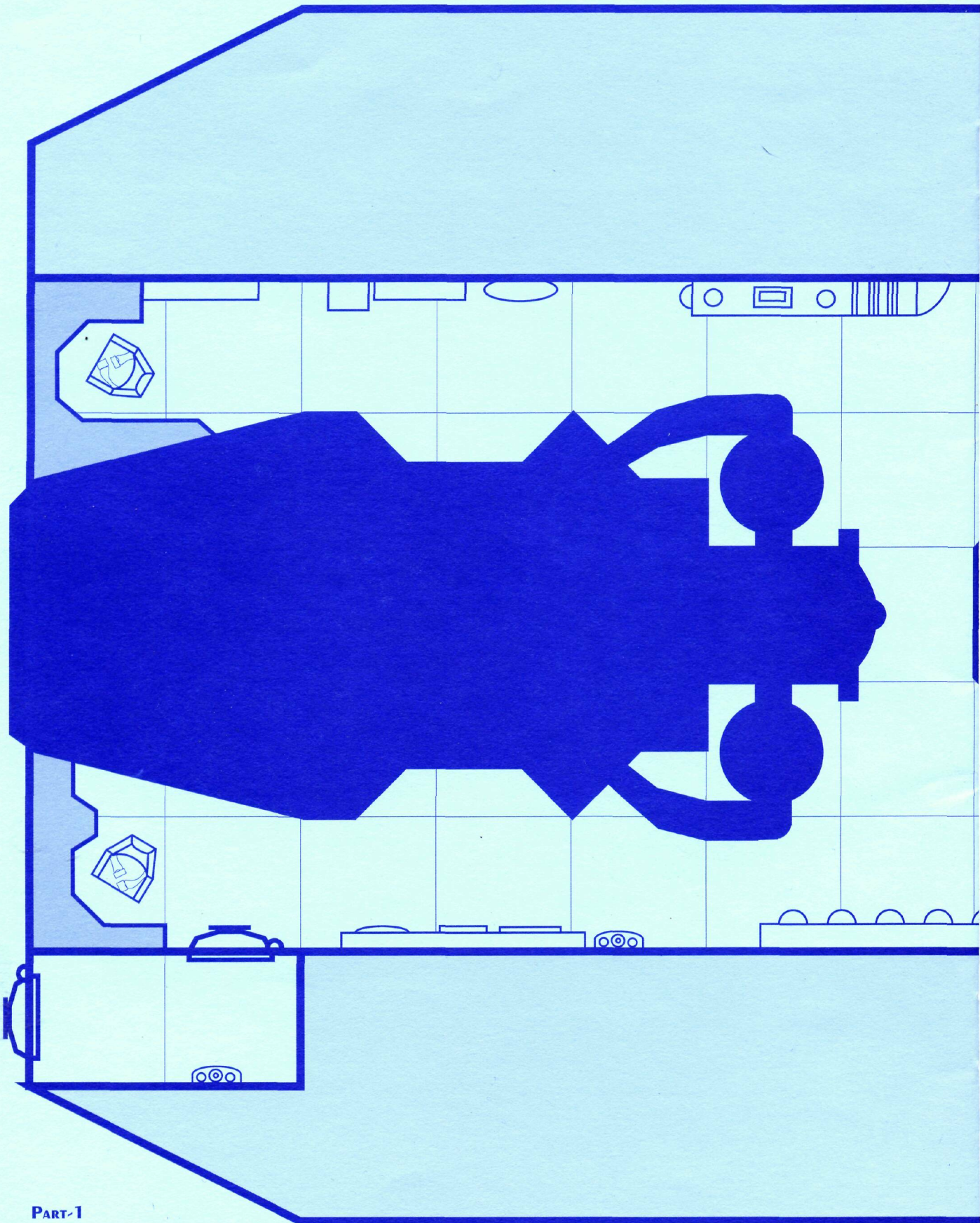
PART-3



U.S.S. HA



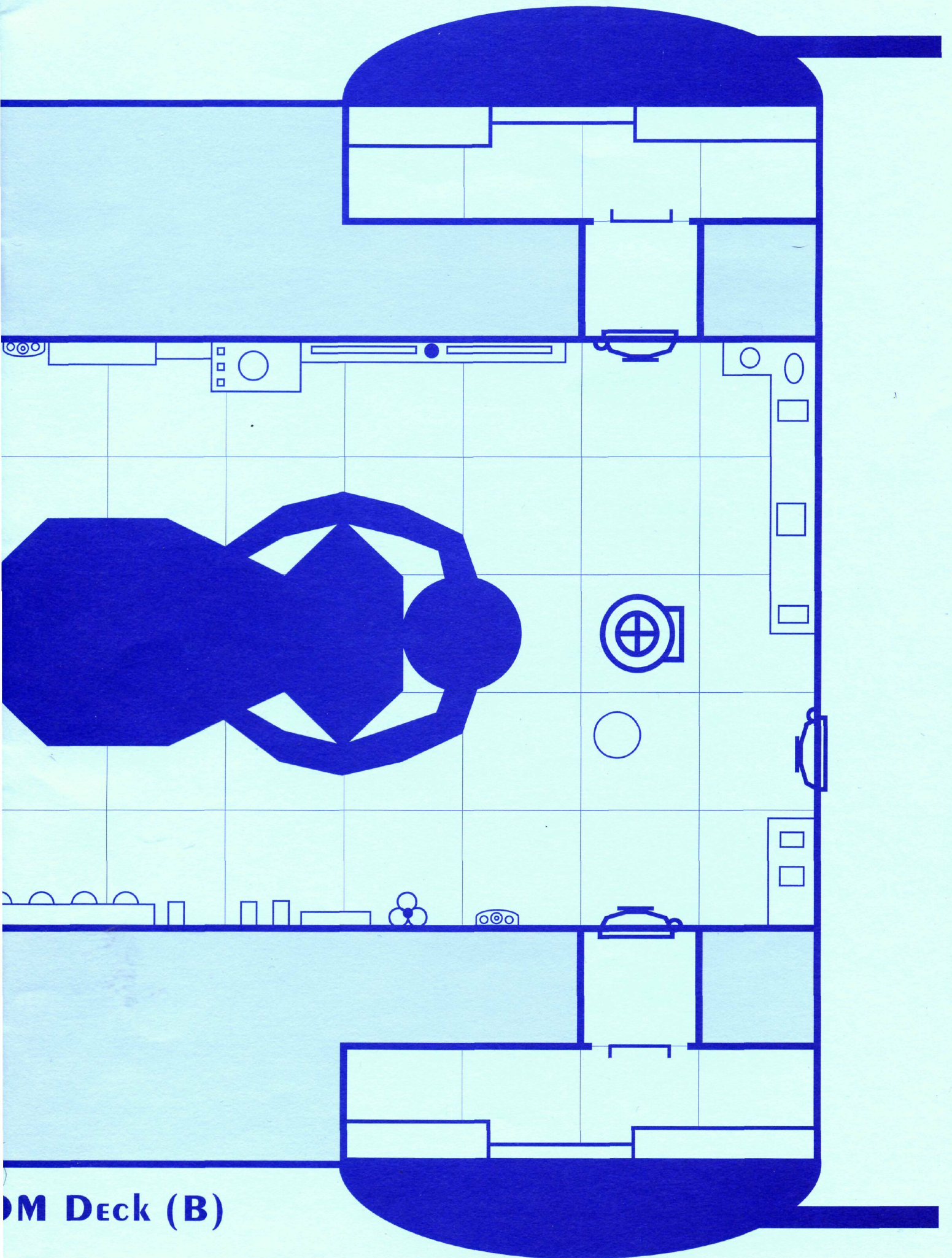
AMPTON Top Deck (A)



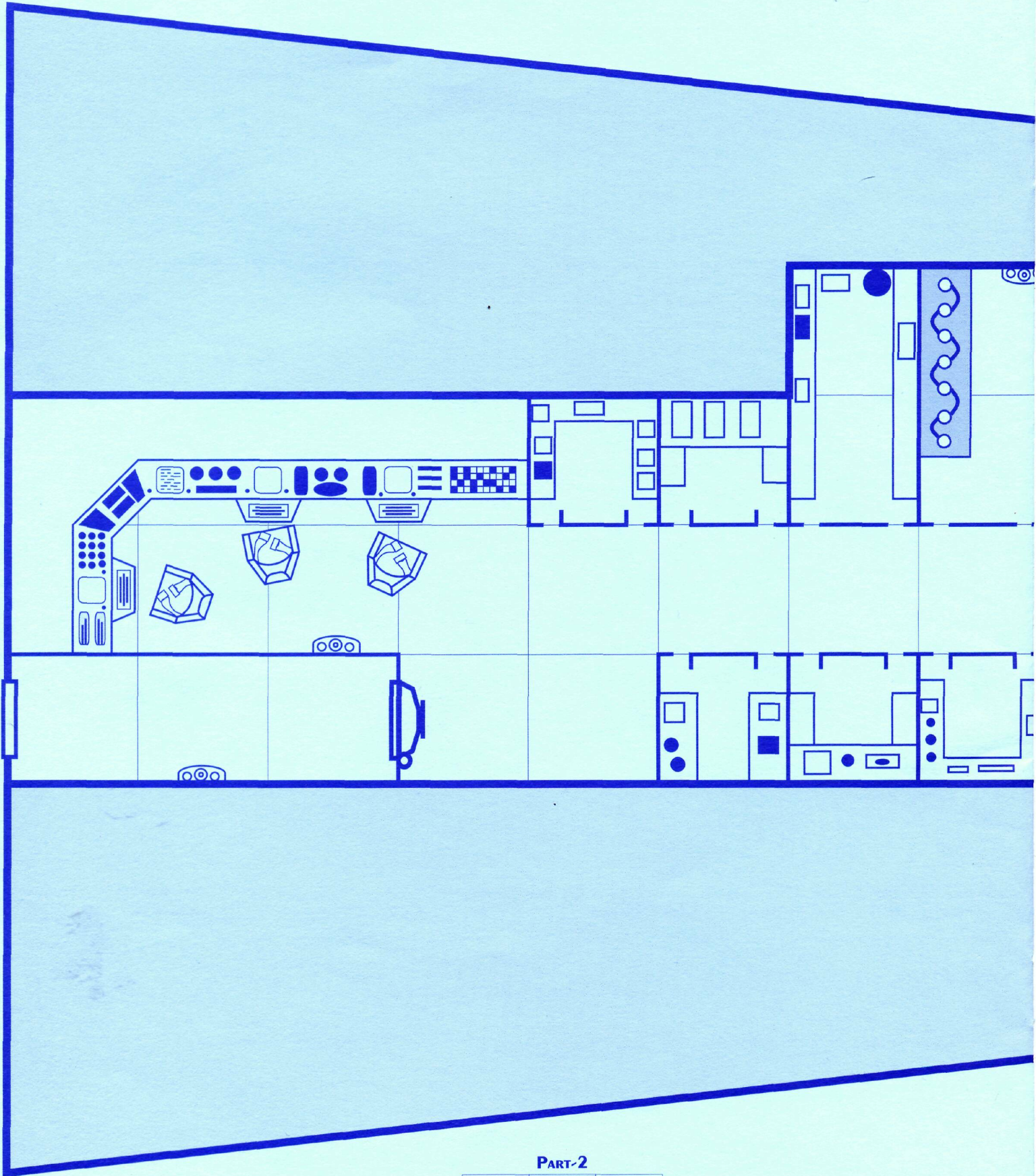
PART-1



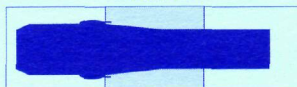
U.S.S. *Hampton* BOTTO



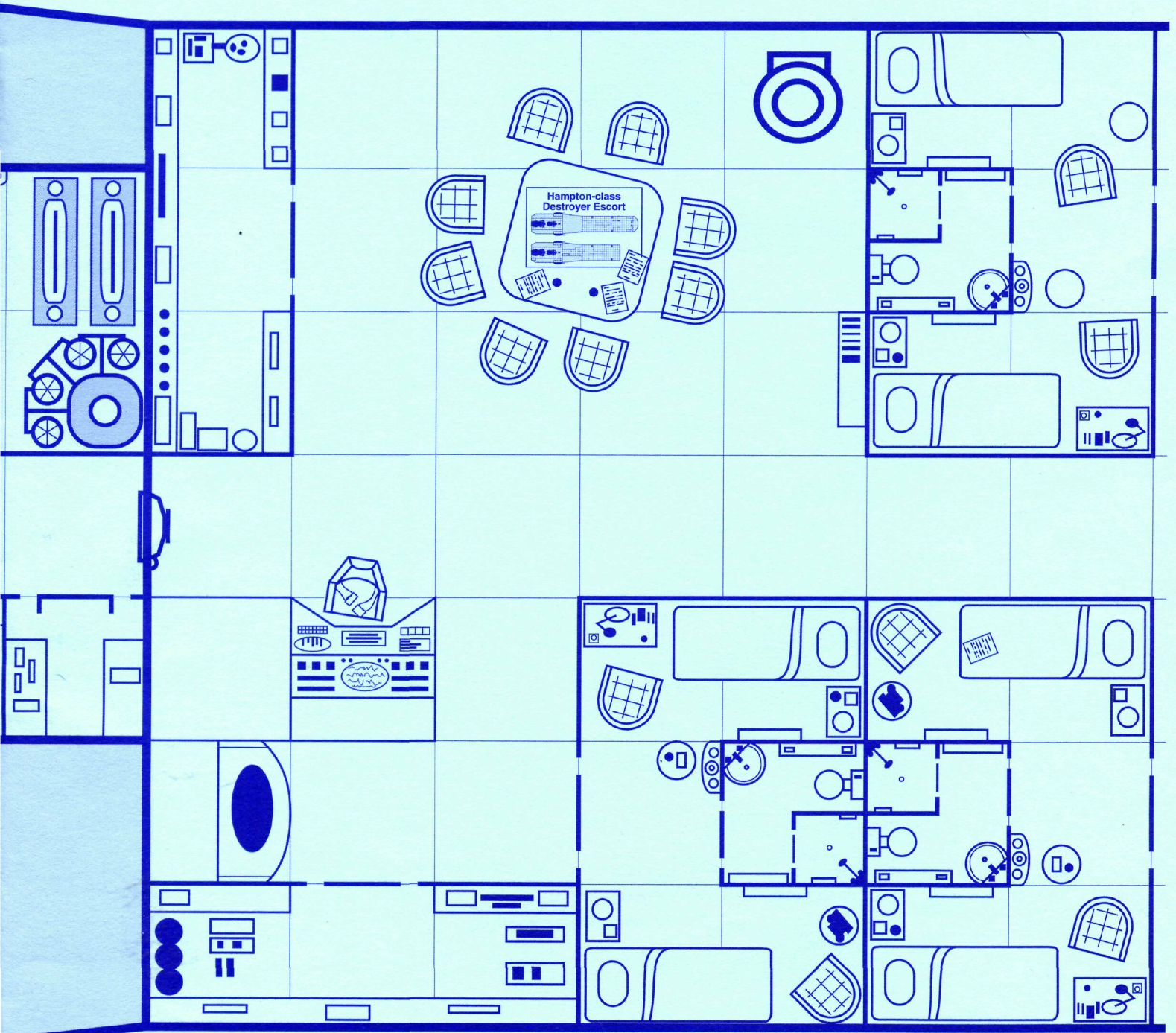
DM Deck (B)



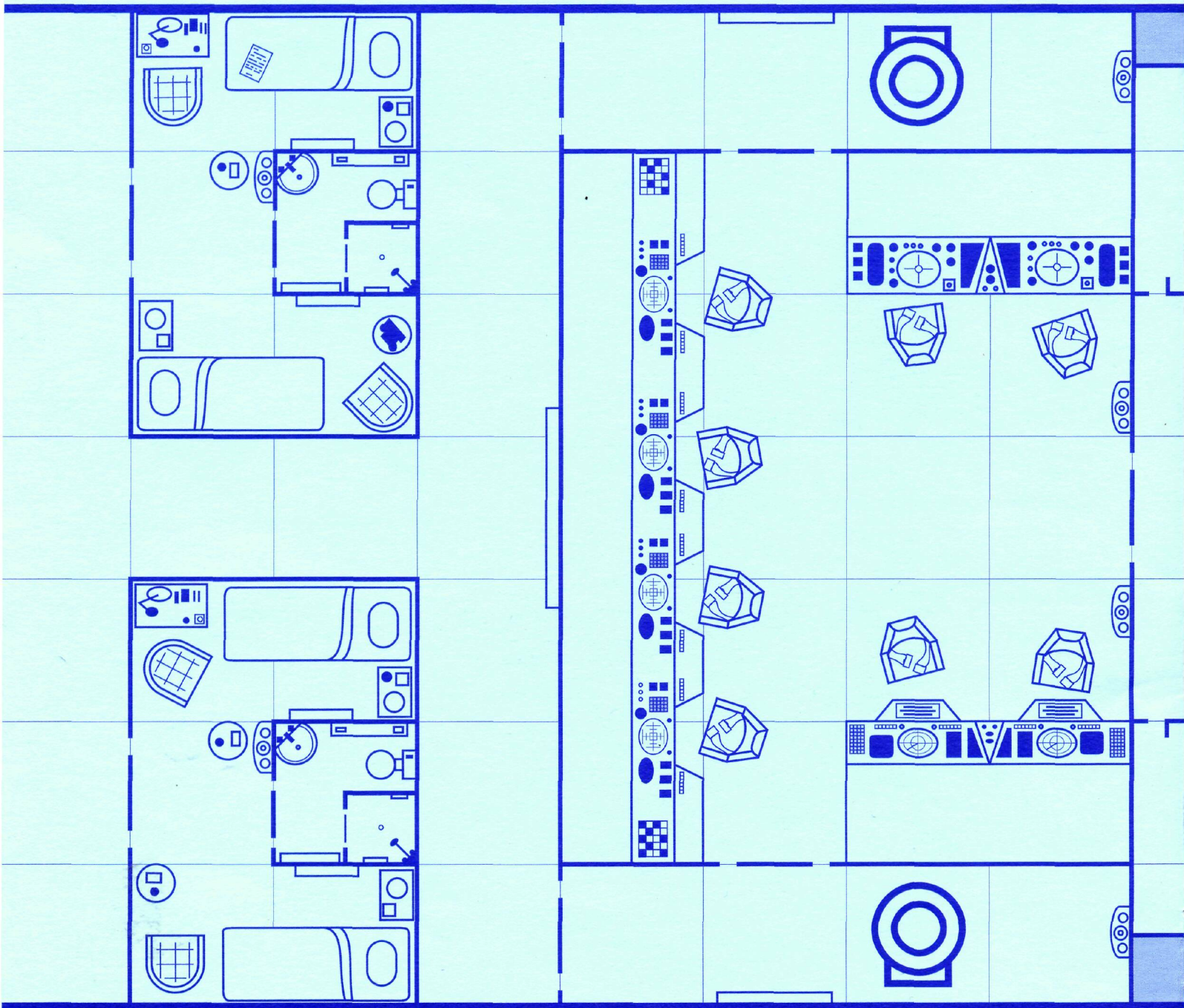
PART-2



U.S.S. HAM



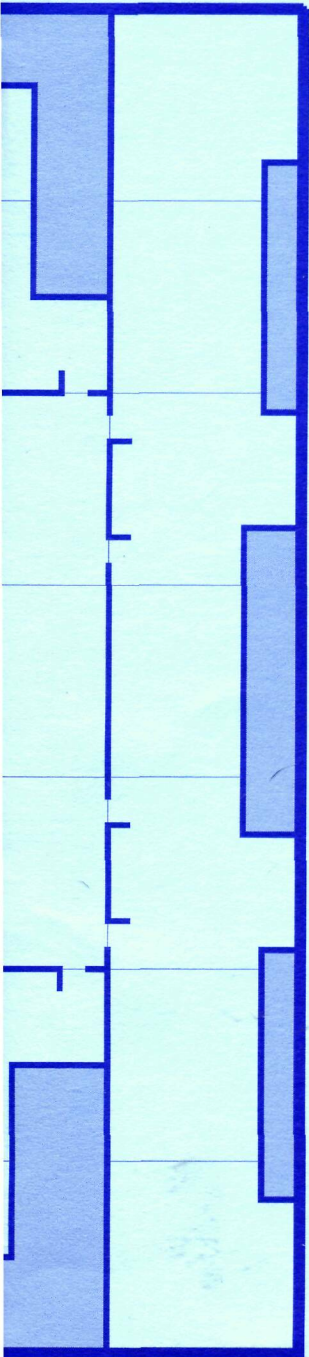
PTON BOTTOM DECK (B)



PART-3



U.S.S. *Hamp*



**2300AD
Deck Plan Symbols**

-  Interior Wall
-  Bulkhead or Hull
-  Fuel Tank
-  Sliding Door
-  Wall Hatch
-  Floor Hatch
-  Ceiling Hatch
-  Floor & Ceiling Hatch

ON BOTTOM DECK (B)

26 LESS ONE

by C.W. Hess

17 MAR 2302 1204 HOURS BCBMT (Beta Comae Berenices Mean Time)

Roughly ten months into the Kafer War, Convoy BB-010, five days out from the forward base at DM+35 2436, entered the Beta Comae Berenices system. Its mission - to deliver badly needed supplies to the battered and weary survivors of the French colony of Nous Voila. The six ships, three French registered *Virginia-class* transports and three American Hampton-class destroyer escorts, having sped along at better than a light-year per day, gradually decelerated as their warp drives began losing efficiency in the star system's gravity well. As the threat of Kafer contact grew, the three American Space Force warships maneuvered into protective formation just ahead of the transports.

U.S.S. CATSKILL DE-161

Still nearly a day out from Nous Voila, the three warships took combat watch shifts so that none of their crew members would be too tired when the Kafers showed up. As the U.S.S. *Hartford* completed her four-hour combat watch, the *Catskill* began hers. Within moments after the words "Combat watch to duty stations" sounded over the ship's loudspeakers, eight crew members filtered quickly but carefully into the ship's Tactical Action Center, each wearing standard ASF combat duty pressure suits. Like veteran acrobats, they floated to their stations one by one, each with his or her own technique for travelling about in Zero-G. The youngest recruits carefully following the "hang on to something solid at all times" technique drilled into them at boot camp, while the older, more experienced hands projected themselves right to their stations, seating themselves with a minimum of effort.

Ensign James D. Thurmond, the ship's TAC officer, was the last to enter, sealing the pressure door behind him. Drifting about somewhat awkwardly, the ensign went to each station making sure that each crewman was safely secured and that each station was fully operational. While many crew members aboard the *Catskill* felt that the ensign took himself too seriously as he mothered over his TAC crew, they all appreciated the fact that he seemed to care about the welfare of his subordinates.

Thurmond drifted to his own sensor station and reached over to the intercom panel on his control board. "Bridge, TAC. All stations manned," he called, as he positioned himself in his control couch and strapped himself into place. "Ready to begin operation checks."

"TAC, this is the skipper..." Lieutenant Commander Kelso's deep, well projected voice always managed to command the attention of anyone within earshot. "Commence operation checks and report on completion. Also double check the number three turret. I don't want any more surprises when we engage the Kafers."

"Understood, sir. TAC out."

The turret referred to was the cause for a great deal of embarrassment to both the skipper and the ensign during a recent battle drill with German combat ships. At that time, the turret had frozen into its retracted travel position and, due to a computer software

As the threat of Kafer contact grew, the three American Space Force warships maneuvered into protective formation just ahead of the transports.

anomaly dealing with weaponry safety systems, prevented the other turrets from extending into firing position. While the problem was immediately corrected and the turret fixed, it was still a sore spot for both officers.

"Passive sensor station," called out the ensign to the man seated off to his right. "Station check," he continued, pulling an electronic clipboard out from a storage compartment above his head.

"Ready for station check," came the sensorman's regulation answer, as he pulled out a similar clipboard.

"Execute panel diagnostics... Test five-one-five."

"Testing five-one-five. All systems show green."

"Stand by for calibration check..."

* * *

"Blast," swore Thurmond as he hovered behind gunnery station three. Realizing that he was talking to Gunner Second Class Lideau, he stopped himself from saying worse.

Lideau was one of only two female crew members aboard the ship of 26. While fraternization between enlisted and officer personnel was prohibited, even in the progressive 24th century, the Ensign still liked her very much. After all, it wasn't against regulations to like her. She was nice, fairly attractive, and to Thurmond's knowledge she wasn't married and had no boyfriend.

"At least this isn't affecting the other turrets this time," said Lideau looking up at the Ensign.

Realizing that he had been staring at her, Thurmond suddenly became nervous and very aware of her presence.

"Uh...right. The other turrets...should be fine."

Pulling himself together, the ensign re-checked each of the other gunnery stations, just to make sure that they really were okay. All the while he kept mentally kicking himself for sounding so stupid while running the TAC at combat stations. As he headed back to his own sensor station, the words of his Marine drill instructor suddenly rang in his head.

"If you screw up cadet," bellowed the sergeant at point blank range. "You are allowed to kick yourself once and only once!" The sergeant's hand wavered in the air with a deadly looking finger extended skyward. The image was still as clear as ever. Strangely enough, the image of the DI's face was a fond memory. Thurmond never could figure that one out.

"Contact!" yelled the passive sensor operator, breaking the ensign's daydream. "Bogey bearing zero-one-zero... closing fast!"

"Range?" called Thurmond as he scrambled back to his station.

"3 million kilometers. Looks like a fighter, probable *Golf-class*." The passive operator's voice calmed to a matter-of-fact tone as he began concentrating on the task at hand. "Passing it through the targeting computer now." After a moment of punching keys on the computer console on the right side of his station he got his results. "Confirmed *Golf-class* closing... On intercept course with the transports. Time to engagement, 10 minutes.

"Understood," answered Thurmond. Now using his headset intercom he switched in to the TAC channel. "Gunnery stand by," he said as calmly as possible. Next he switched to the command channel. "Bridge, this is the TAC officer. We have one fighter approaching from just off the starboard bow... bearing now zero-one-one..."

"Sensor contact!" called out the passive operator again, stopping the ensign in mid-sentence. "Third con-," he began again, spotting another contact. Then yet another

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"Range?" called Thurmond as he scrambled back to his station.

"3 million kilometers. Looks like a fighter, probable Golf-class." The passive operator's voice calmed to a matter-of-fact tone as he began concentrating on the task at hand. "Passing it through the targeting computer now."

bogey showed upon his sensor display. Fourth contact..." He waited a moment, hesitant to give any further specifics until he was sure he was done announcing contacts. "A total of four contacts, now bearing zero-one-two. All identified as *Golf-class*. All on an intercept course with us."

"Correction bridge," continued Thurmond. "Make that four fighters. And it looks like we're being singled out."

The General Quarters alarm that immediately followed assured Thurmond that the Skipper was on top of the situation and that the entire ship would be ready to take on the impending battle with the Kafers.

"We've got bridge monitors on them now," answered Kelso. "Hold missile fire in case bigger ships show up, unless the fighters get too close to the transports. If an *Alpha* shows up and we're out of missile armament, our mission WILL be cut short."

"Understood, sir. TAC standing by."

Though maneuvering with the stutterwarp drive was imperceptible within the ship, Thurmond could monitor the escorts' progress on his sensor display. The three American warships quickly maneuvered to position themselves between the transports and the incoming fighters. Whatever might target the transports, the escorts would position themselves in its flight path and fire on it with their laser batteries as it passed. This would be true whether the threat was a fighter or a remote detonation missile. Within minutes, the fighters closed to nearly within turret weapon range.

"Looks like we're dog-fighting," relayed the ensign to the gunners. "*Bellevue* and *Hartford* have targets Bravo and Kilo. Targets Echo and Delta are ours. Gunners coordinate and fire at will."

The four Kafer fighters screamed toward the waiting convoy and immediately scrambled their positions to confuse the defenders. A chorus of curses sounded from the row of gunnery stations at the aft end of the *Catskill's* TAC. Following the maneuver, all four fighters converged on the *Catskill's* position.

"Looks like they're picking us out people. Take your shots and make them count."

As the first weapons fired at the incoming fighters, the thrum of discharging capacitors carried through the hull. No one in the TAC noticed as the room filled with the chatter of gunners, sensor operators, communicators, and intercoms. Meanwhile, the ship's three operating laser turrets worked quietly and efficiently, striking out at their targets with more than a dozen bolts of destructive light every second. Even so, the tiny craft, jumping though 5 meters of space every nanosecond, closed untouched toward the human ships.

Now at a range of a few thousand kilometers the Kafers unleashed the destructive force of their own weapons. Like a shotgun spray, the series of well placed laser shots fell into a pattern specifically calculated to strike the target vessel with a high degree of probability. The odds fell in the Kafers' favor and a pair of beams struck the hull of the *Catskill*. The first shot stuck deep into the hull near the engineering section immediately disabling a section of the ship's internal fire suppression system and starting a fire that filled the corridor between the upper crew deck and engineering control. The fire alert warning lamps and alarms went off immediately calling the main damage control team to work.

The second shot, though not so traumatic to the physical ship, struck the hull near at the TAC. The blast sent a spray of sparks and shrapnel through the active sensor control panel and its operator. Meanwhile, smoke and the hiss of escaping atmosphere filled the room.

"TAC," called the captain over the loudspeaker. "Damage report." His voice slowly

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The two ASF crew members acknowledged the order and immediately began setting up the first of the battery powered portable work lamps that they had brought along to provide lighting for the cleanup and salvage detail. Meanwhile, three more spacesuits drifted in through the open airlock.

faded as the air pressure in the small room dropped. But the atmosphere held steady as automatic systems pumped new air into the damaged compartment.

Lideau, her turret still non-operational, unstrapped herself from her own control couch and headed toward Ensign Thurmond whose limp body was still strapped in his chair. She checked for life signs and noted the head and chest wounds. He was still alive, but without treatment he wouldn't last long.

Meanwhile, Thurmond, just beyond the edge of consciousness, heard a familiar voice that brought a warm image and made the pain in his chest and head lessen. But the warmth began to fade and the voice drew to a whisper and the world seemed to fall out from under him.

19 MAR 2302 0930 HOURS BCBMT (Beta Comae Berenices Mean Time)

Petty officer Vince Desoto drifted cautiously into the darkened room aboard the U.S.S. *Catskill*, trying to make sure he always had something solid to grab on to. The bright krypton lamp of his P-suit's helmet seemed to do little more than cast ghostly shadows in the fire gutted mess that was once the ship's bridge. Two more spotlights floated in behind him making the extent of the destruction more visible.

Looking up, Desoto let out a sudden gasp as his spotlight caught the horrifying image of a badly burned body hovering over him, as if waiting to swoop down at any moment. One of the men behind him let out a curse over the comm-link channel and proceeded to hurl backwards out of the bridge. Taking a deep breath, Desoto followed, backing out slowly.

In the anteroom behind the bridge Desoto took a moment to regain his composure as the other two men looked around and waited for orders, both more than a little scared. Desoto couldn't help but wonder what thoughts must have been going through the minds of these two, who were just boys as far as he was concerned.

"You two okay?" He asked them. Both of them nodded.

"Yeah, we're fine, sir."

Horse feathers, Desoto thought to himself.

"Very well then, setup one of the emergency lamps in here and another in the bridge." Desoto hated to make them go back into the bridge, but he knew that if these guys were to survive the war, they'd have to get used to seeing a lot worse. The two ASF crew members acknowledged the order and immediately began setting up the first of the battery powered portable work lamps that they had brought along to provide lighting for the cleanup and salvage detail. Meanwhile, three more spacesuits drifted in through the open airlock. Desoto turned to watch the detail enter the room.

"Garcia," called Desoto over the comm-link. The spaceman wrestled momentarily with a pair of white plastic bags that he was carrying as he slipped past the inner airlock door.

"Sir?" He answered, a little out of breath from his zero-G excursion.

"As soon as these two finish setting up a lamp in the bridge, start your detail in there."

"Aye, sir."

The Petty Officer thought about what he saw in the bridge moments ago. "It's not a pleasant sight," he added.

"It never is," replied Garcia; surprisingly casually, Desoto thought.

"It sounds like you've done this before."

"Too many times, sir... Too many times."

Desoto recalled hearing about how Garcia was a young recruit aboard the first American ship lost in battle against the Kafers. The man was apparently one of only twelve survivors of the one hundred crew members of the *Kennedy-class* cruiser U.S.S. *Sanchez*.

The most visible sign of the incident's effect on Garcia was his not so hidden contempt for Admiral Parker who commanded the mission that resulted in the loss of the *Sanchez*. To the Admiral, the mission was a success, as a Kafer battleship was forced to withdraw. To Garcia, the mission was his worst nightmare come true.

As the porta-lamp began to glow, it drew away some of the gloom that filled the airless room. That was something that Desoto was very grateful for.

* * *

By the time that the First Officer came aboard for inspection, porta-lamps had been set up in practically every corridor and room. The upper crew lounge turned out to be the cheeriest place aboard the hulk, showing only a few signs of damage. Desoto and Lieutenant Morlan had retrieved official documents from the captain's quarters and were making their way forward toward the main airlock.

"I suppose we've done just about all we can," said Morlan.

"Yeah. We've pulled out twenty-five of the ship's crew. The last one probably went out a hull breach during battle."

"Well, the sentinel stations we laid haven't picked up any Kafer ships yet, so we still have some time to search for him if you think it's worth the effort."

"No, sir. Wherever he is, he's dead anyway. He couldn't have lasted this long, and there's no use risking our ship any further."

"Well, Desoto, I suppose you're right."

"Of course I'm right, sir. That's why I'm here."

"Oh, I keep forgetting that."

Suddenly Desoto stopped for a moment, or at least as close as one can come to a stop while drifting along in zero-G. The Petty Officer grabbed the nearest handhold and performed a skillful U-turn and headed back toward the hatch leading down to the lower crew deck.

"What is it, Desoto?" Asked the Lieutenant as he struggled to get himself turned around.

"Just a hunch," responded Desoto as he pulled himself down through the open hatchway.

With the Lieutenant still attempting to catch up, Desoto moved quickly to the opposite side of the lower crew lounge where he began pulling at several large pieces of debris.

"Bingo!" he yelled, as he pulled away the last piece.

"He's alive?" asked the Lieutenant, now just managing to catch up. Desoto didn't answer right away as he checked the readouts on the Automed that sat upright against the wall of the small MedBay.

"Barely," answered Desoto, still concentrating on the info on the readouts. "I'm no expert on these things, but I do know that all ASF standard Automeds installed after January of 2301 are airtight and they're all equipped with a back-up power supply."

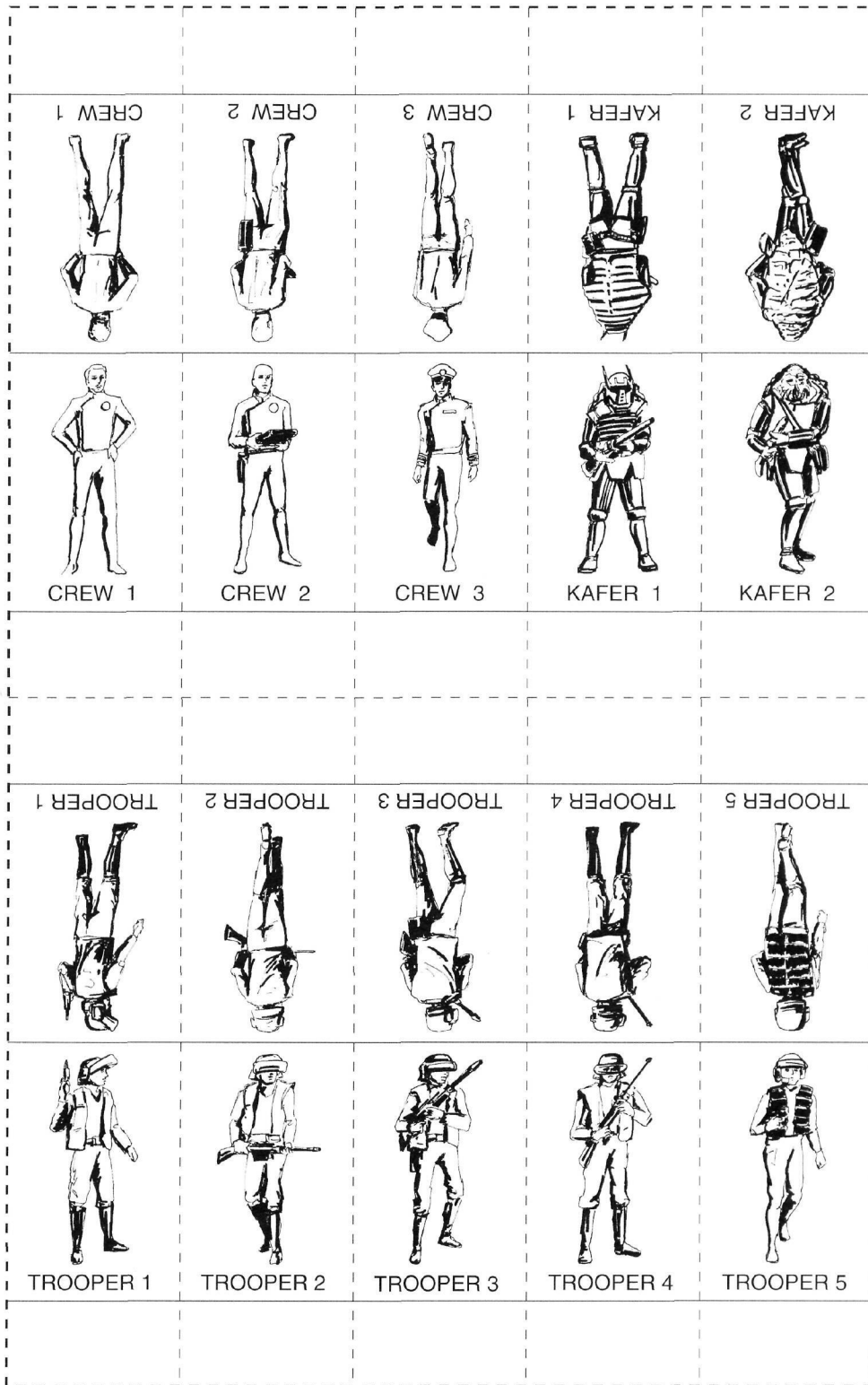
"The ship's been dead for days, but the Automed has kept this guy in hibernation the entire time." The Lieutenant chuckled in disbelief. "Those wounds he received ended up saving his life." The Lieutenant switched his comm-link over to the command channel. "Medical team to the MedBay, we'll need a few hands down here... And bring a portable life support unit. We've got a survivor."

Meanwhile, Desoto looked in at the name tag on the Automed patient's suit. "Well mister Thurmond," he said quietly. "You're one lucky sonuva-gun."

The upper crew lounge turned out to be the cheeriest place aboard the hulk, showing only a few signs of damage.

- from A Diary of War by Lieutenant J.G.
James D. Thurmond, ASF.

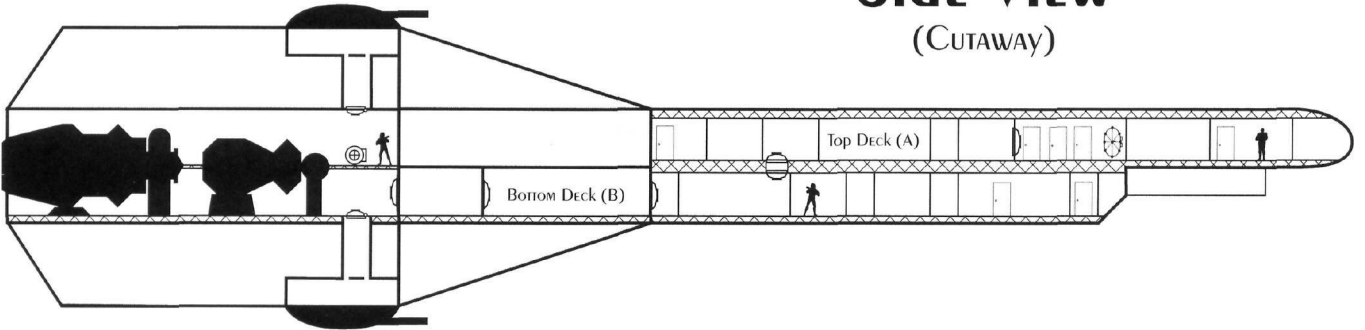
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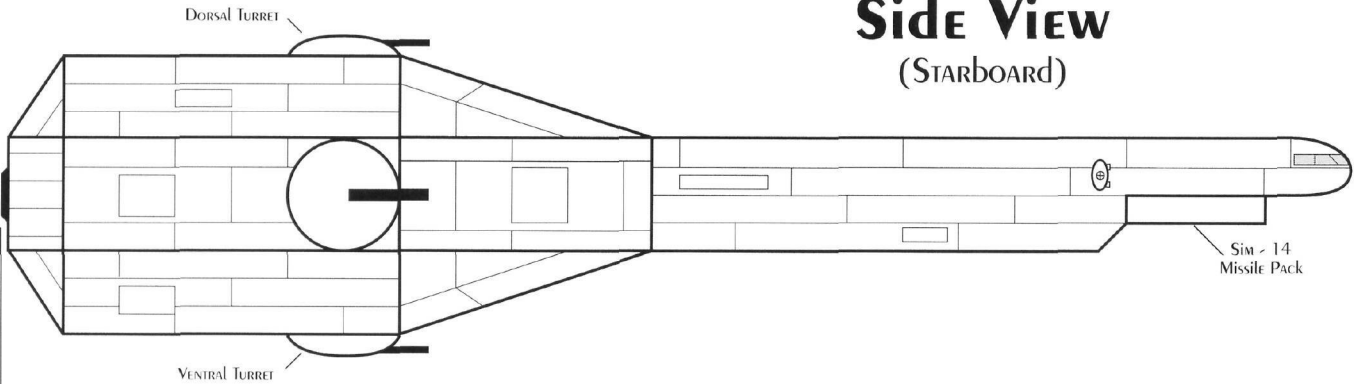
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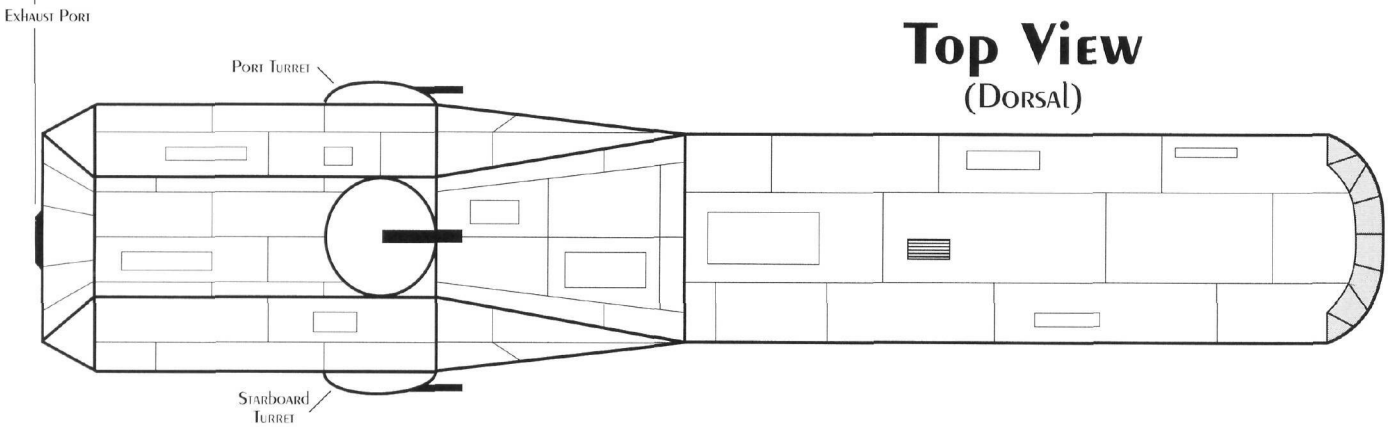
Side View
(CUTAWAY)



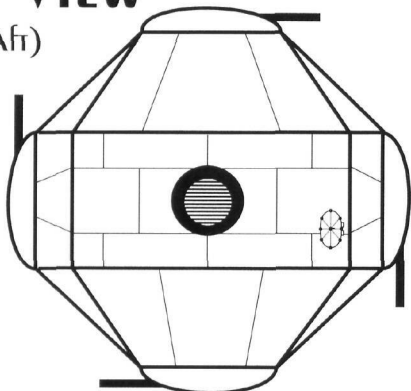
Side View
(STARBOARD)



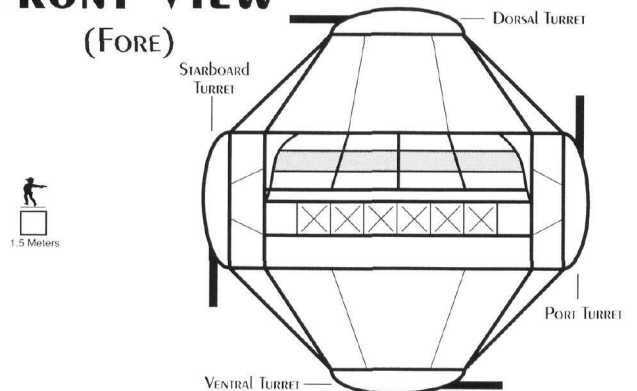
Top View
(DORSAL)



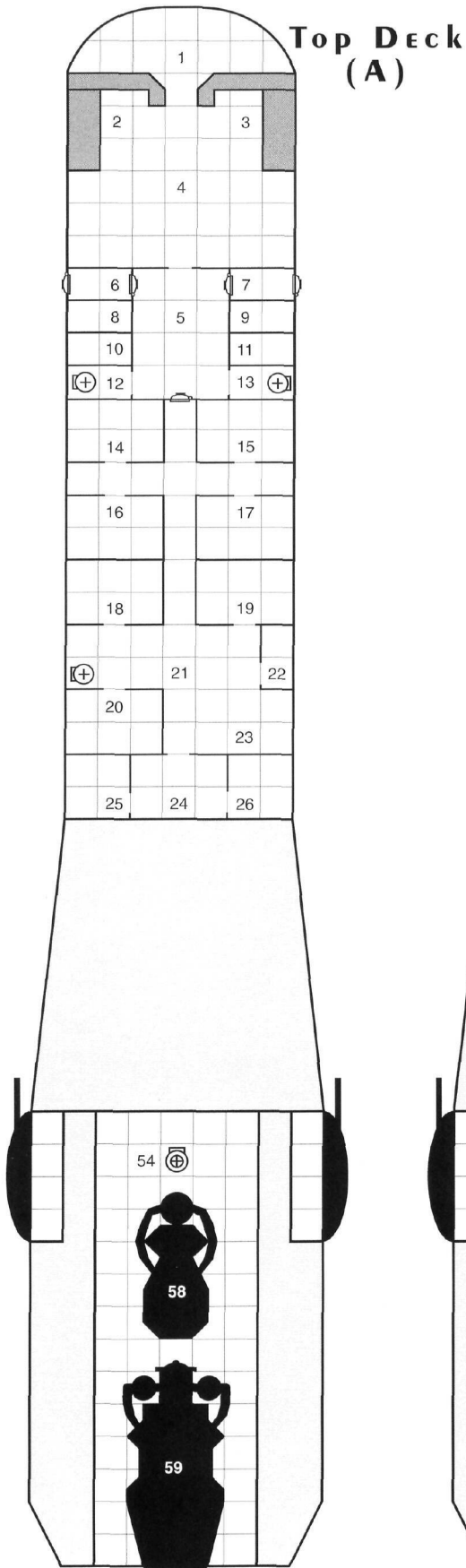
REAR VIEW
(Aft)



FRONT VIEW
(Fore)

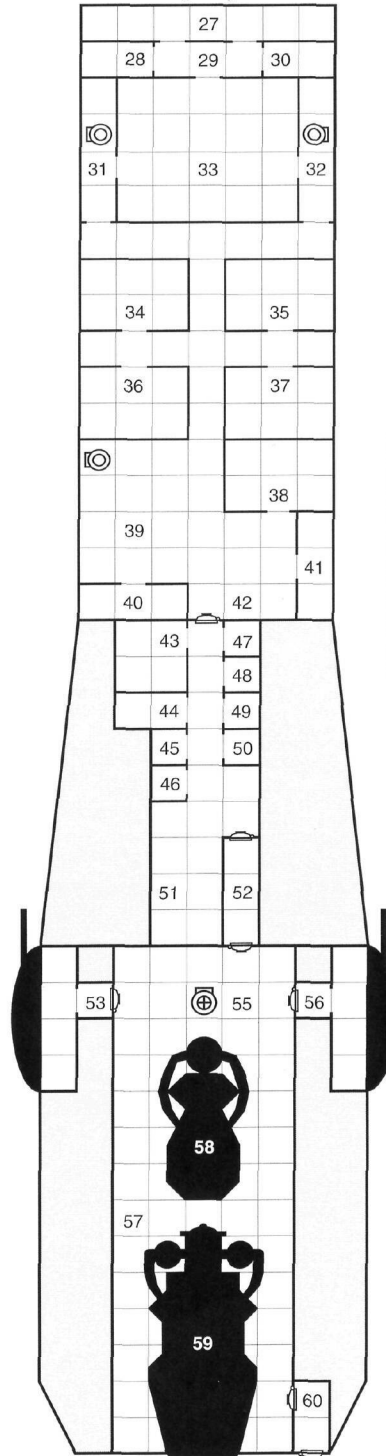


REFEREE'S MASTER DECK PLAN OVERVIEW



U.S.S. HAMPTON 3,700-TON

BOTTOM DECK (B)



2300AD
Deck Plan Symbols

- Interior Wall
- Bulkhead or Hull
- ▭ Fuel Tank
- - - Sliding Door
- ⌋ Wall Hatch
- ⊕ Floor Hatch
- ⊙ Ceiling Hatch
- ⊕⊙ Floor & Ceiling Hatch

Top Deck (A)

1. Bridge.
2. COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT.
3. Ship's MAIN COMPUTER.
4. BRIDGE (MAIN).
5. Ship's FOYER.
6. PORT AIRLOCK.
7. STARBOARD AIRLOCK.
- 8 - 9. Ship's LOCKERS #1, #2.
10. TAC COMPUTER.
11. NAVIGATION COMPUTER.
- 12 - 13. PORT/STARBOARD INTERDECK AIRLOCKS.
- 14 - 20. CREW STATEROOMS.
21. UPPER CREW LOUNGE.
22. STOREROOM.
23. MEAL PREPARATION CONSOLE.
24. OFFICER'S WARDROOM.
25. OFFICER'S STATEROOM.
26. OFFICER'S STATEROOM.

BOTTOM DECK (B)

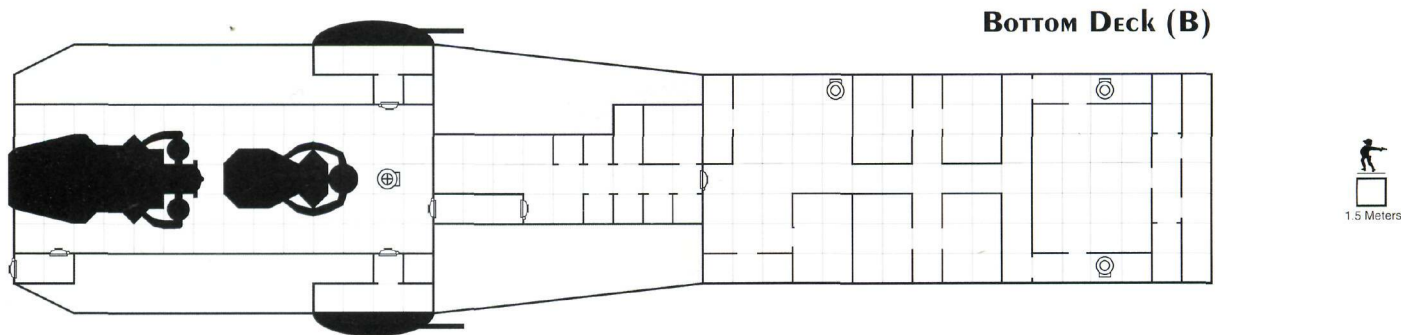
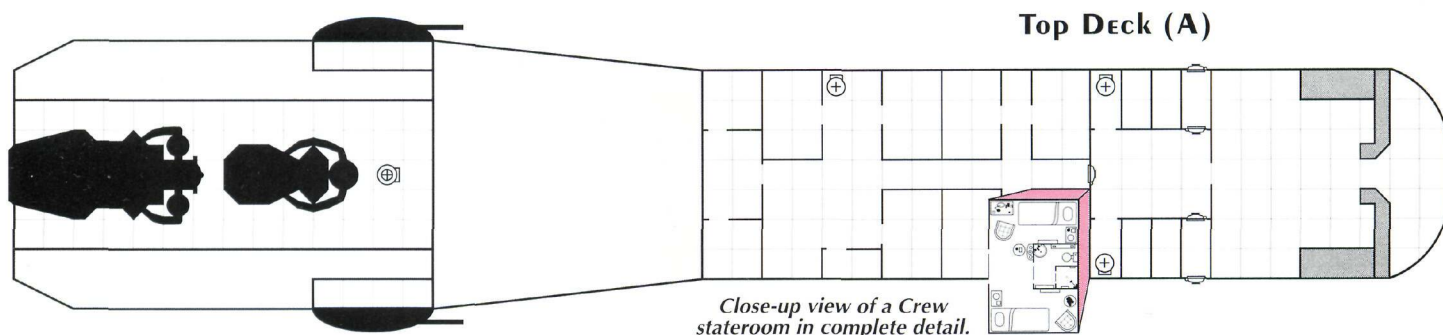
27. SIM-PACK ACCESS AREA.
28. ACTIVE SENSOR EQUIPMENT.
29. EMERGENCY MAINTENANCE SECTION.
30. PASSIVE SENSOR EQUIPMENT.
- 31 - 32. PORT/STARBOARD INTERDECK AIRLOCKS.
33. TACTICAL ACTION CENTER.
- 34 - 38. CREW STATEROOMS.
39. LOWER CREW LOUNGE.
40. STOREROOM.
41. MEDICAL SUPPLY STORAGE.
42. MED BAY CONSOLE.
43. LIFE SUPPORT SECTION.
44. SHIP'S LOCKER #3.
- 45 - 50. PARIS LOCKERS #1 - #6.
51. ENGINEERING CONTROL STATION.
52. ENGINEERING AIRLOCK.
53. MAINTENANCE ACCESS.
54. MAINTENANCE ACCESS.
55. MAINTENANCE ACCESS.
56. MAINTENANCE ACCESS.
57. ENGINEERING BAY.
58. STUTTERWARD DRIVE.
59. POWERPLANT.
60. ENGINEERING AIRLOCK.

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MASTER DECK PLAN OVERVIEW



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