



DARKEST STARS

A CLASSIC TRAVELLER FANZINE

ISSUE #1
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(FAIR-USE)
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FROM THE EDITOR

I have been playing Classic Traveller for slightly over two decades. From the moment I laid my eyes on the black "Books 0-8 in one volume" booklet with the red stripe on it, I was hooked. The rules seemed arcane at first, but soon I came to appreciate their beauty, as I will note in further details in the first article in this fanzine. I wrote a blog which, among other things, discussed Traveller in all its editions. I wrote a commercial setting for the first edition of Mongoose Traveller, called Outer Veil. I eventually published my own science-fiction rules and settings, based on the spirit kindled in me by these years of play.

Before you are the first fruits several years of thought and writing. If you read my blog, Den of the Lizard King, some of this may be familiar to you. But now, thoroughly edited, I offer you these articles in fanzine format, easy to print and read. From general musings about Classic Traveller itself, to the Dark Nebula itself, to new and clarified rules – I hope that you will find this issue useful, interesting, and entertaining.

This is a "Proto-Traveller" fanzine. True, the Dark Nebula's setting draws some inspiration from later books. However, the rules presented here fall within the scope of the first four books of Classic Traveller – the three Little Black Books and the Mercenary supplement – as well as Supplements 1 to 4 and the first four adventures. Small ships, small empires, machinations which the player characters may influence. Simple and straightforward rules. In other words, rolling dice and blowing up stuff without too much paperwork.

Darkest Stars presents a "Proto-Traveller" setting, the Dark Nebula. It is set within a variant of the Official Traveler Universe (OTU), during the early Long Night. However, it does deviate from official material in certain places, especially in its astrography, which is inspired by the old Dark Nebula board game (created by the same authors who wrote Classic Traveller). On the backdrop of the Rule of Man's collapse, remnant Terran states clash with the young Aslan – and with each other. The frontier between and around them is wide-open and sparsely settled. And, within the Dark Nebula itself, dark things steer. High adventure, terrible secrets, a wide-open future – all open for your exploration.

So, without further ado, I present you with the first issue of Darkest Stars!

- Omer Golan-Joel, Editor and Lizard-in-Chief

ON THE BEAUTY OF CLASSIC TRAVELLER

By Omer Golan-Joel

Classic Traveller. The game that started it all. One of the first science-fiction RPGs in history. Sure, it is rough around the edges, and its rules have many "holes" in them (vehicle combat comes to mind), but the game itself is a thing of beauty, from both a game design and an old-school play perspective. It is a work of art; returning to it after playing many other and newer games is refreshing. But to truly appreciate it, one must see it as its own game, maybe even take the first three Little Black Books (or the Traveller Book which is an edited and improved version of them) as their own thing, apart from later, supplemental Classic Traveller or later Traveller rulesets.

So, what is the beauty of Classic Traveller?

The beauty of Classic Traveller is a character sheet which is a few rows of text on an index card, smaller in size even than the typical old-school D&D character sheet yet describes a complete character. From these few stats, randomly generated, one can infer a very interesting and complete character, all without needing too many rules to reference.

The beauty of Classic Traveller is generating a complete character in 5 minutes (believe me, I've tried this with a timer). Sure, your character may die during character generation. But who cares? You "wasted" a few minutes of your life playing a game. No harm done - five minutes more and another character will spring forth. All of this while allowing for much diversity of characters.

The beauty of Classic Traveller is building a starship in twenty minutes; this starship has no "stat block", but rather a paragraph of readable English text, which is enough to run it. Great variety is possible, and the "building block" simplicity of the ship creation system allows for the Referee to quickly add new components (say, hydroponics, a shipboard hospital and so on) to Book 2 ships. One ship in a paragraph - this is beautiful, especially when compared to the long strings of hex digits serving as the "stat blocks" of ships in later iterations of Traveller.

The beauty of Classic Traveller is that a few digits define a world, and are enough to infer much from them, all while allowing for many nuances and for an endless variety of worlds. The stats suit adventurers and their needs - What star-port services are available? Can I take my laser rifle ashore? Which politics will I have to deal with? Can I breathe the air? Can I refuel from oceans/gas-giants/glaciers? All of this is very quick to generate and very fun to infer from.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DARK NEBULA

By Omer Golan-Joel

The Long Night Has Come.

The Ziru Sirka, mighty empire of Mankind, ruled the stars for millennia. Suffocated by bureaucracy and drowned in a quagmire of bureaucracy, this magnificent culture was rotten at its heart. Its Terran conquerors, despite their heroic efforts, could not save it from its inevitable doom. Thus, the Rule of Man - a bright light among the dark stars - fell into oblivion. Many worlds died in isolation. Others fell prey to raiders, pirates, and slavers. Chaos reigned.

This is the darkest hour of Humanity.

The year is 2900 CE - later generations will call it - 1619 Imperial. The 30th Century has just begun. The Long Night reigns for 157 years. The Rule of Man is no more. But on the frontier, far from the worst parts of the collapse, a new candle flickers in the dark. A candle at Maadin, an old colony of the Second Imperium. With its rise from the ashes of the old empire, it built a confederation of nine worlds - the new Maadin Confederation.

However, a new power arose to challenge the scattered human colonies of the Dark Nebula - a young alien species, proud Aslan. Entering the scene five centuries ago, the slowly rose from their homeworld to a union of several worlds - the Aslan Heir ate. Its Trailing expansion, however, encountered human resistance from the various pocket empires of the day, and thus most of its colonial efforts are to the Spinward. Cold peace endures between humans and Aslan, disturbed by brief periods of warfare.

Now, once more, a war is brewing. The Solomani Confederation of Maadin thirsts for resources while the Aslan thirst for land; slow recovery from the initial collapse means that heavier military forces are once again available.

But as the two polities maneuver in preparation for war, the stars of the Dark Nebula, long absent, have reappeared. Now, they are the key for victory - or possibly the doom of both prospective belligerents.

THE LAST SHIP FROM TERRA

The last ship from Terra arrived in 2780. A battered merchantman, bearing the telltale marks of laser fire and missile impacts, haphazardly held together by crude frontier repairs. Its hardy crew embarked from Terra in 2762 and slowly traded their way to the Spinward. There they hoped to reach stars less affected by the general collapse of the Rule of Man. Indeed, they found Maadin - with its still-functional economy, cut off from the collapsing 2nd Imperium.

They brought tales of untold horrors closer to the core. Interdependence between well-developed worlds caused mass famine once trade relations broke down. Entire worlds, inhospitable to maintain human life without external shipment of spare parts and supplies died even faster. In the absence of government, pirates and raiders ruled space. Slavery reared its ugly head. World turned upon world in a scramble for dwindling resources. Worlds blamed each other for piracy - in some cases with good reason - and waged wars, destroying their already meager fleets and making way to piracy even further.

The Rule of Man was gone, replaced by Chaos. The merchantman's crew spoke of a dark Night descending upon once-prosperous space. How long will this Night be? Probably very long - as the wounds suffered by Known Space economies will take many decades, or even centuries, to heal. Will anyone ever replace the fallen Imperium with a government of Law and commerce? From the crew's description of dying Imperial-Terran space, this sounded improbably in the foreseeable future.

Regular communications with New Libdis, the titular Dark Nebula Sector Capital, have been intermittent as well, through free traders and the occasional Scout craft. Courier services had collapsed decades ago. Despite the growing Aslan threat, New Libdis has no ships to spare. Neither does it have resources or funds to send to Maadin.

The Rule of Man was dead.

We were on our own.

But it took that battered Terran freighter for us to understand this.

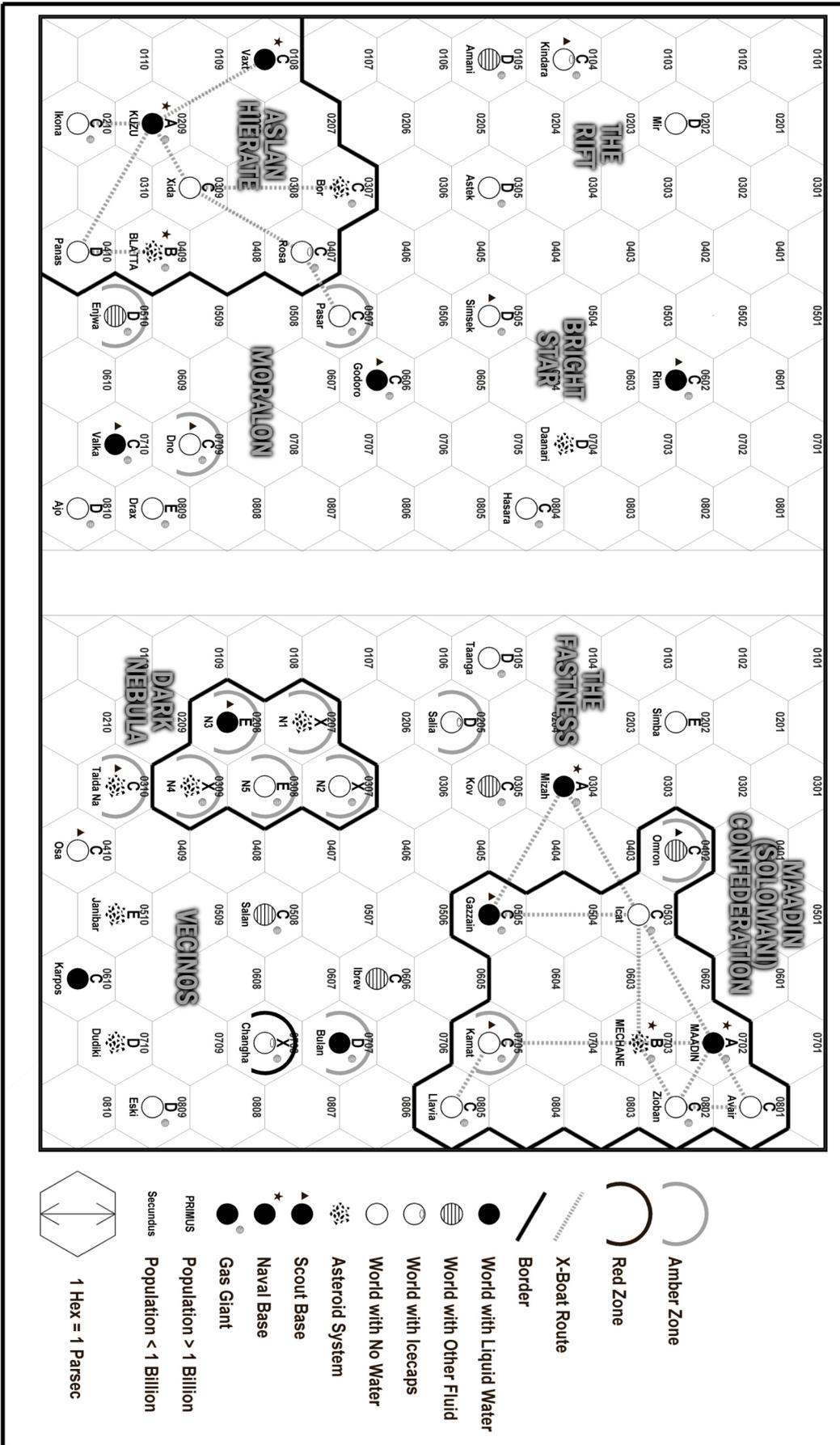
- Klara Semonova (2887). History of the Maadin Confederation, p.12. Confederation Historical Society: Maadin.

DARK NEBULA - ASTROGRAPHY

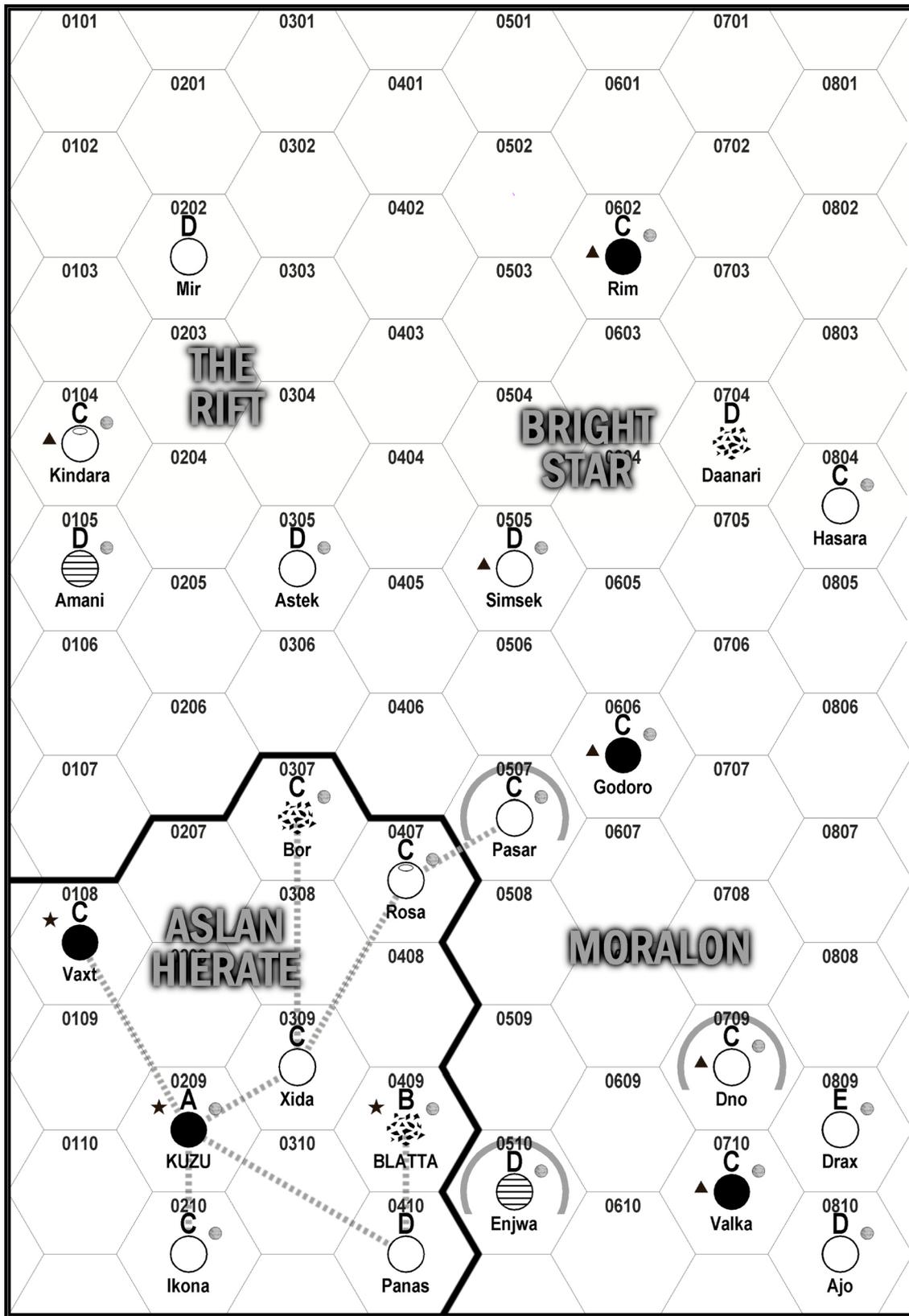
Below are the basic Astrographic data for the Dark Nebula region, composed of the neighboring Kuzu and Maadin subsectors. The world statistics come first, followed by high-resolution, easily printable star-maps.

Kuzu Subsector							
Hex	World	UWP	Bases	Gas Giants	Trade Codes	Zone	Allegiance
0104	KIndara	C201747-A	Scout	Gas Giant	Ic, Na, Va		Independent
0105	Amani	D5A5698-7		Gas Giant	Fl, Ni		Independent
0108	Vaxt	C5558L2-8	Tlaukhu	Gas Giant	Ag		Aslan
0202	Mir	D100666-A		None	Ni, Va		Independent
0209	Kuzu	A876986-B	Tlaukhu	Gas Giant	In		Aslan
0210	Ikona	C6304K7-8		Gas Giant	De, Ni, Po		Aslan
0305	Astek	D850635-7		Gas Giant	De, Ni		Independent
0307	Bor	C0007H9-B		Gas Giant	As, Na, Va		Aslan
0309	Xida	C1005K6-9		None	Ni, Va		Aslan
0407	Rosa	C5036J8-A		Gas Giant	Ni		Aslan
0409	Blatta	B0009H5-B	Tlaukhu	Gas Giant	As, In, Na, Va		Aslan
0410	Panas	D3105L7-7		None	Ni		Aslan
0505	Simsek	D810310-7	Scout	Gas Giant	Ni		Independent
0507	Pasar	C73058A-7		Gas Giant	De, Ni, Po	Amber	Independent
0510	Enjiwa	D7C27AA-9		Gas Giant	Fl	Amber	Independent
0602	Rim	C761871-8	Scout	Gas Giant	Ri		Independent
0606	Godoro	C676756-8	Scout	Gas Giant	Ag		Independent
0704	Daanari	D000310-8		None	As, Ni, Va		Independent
0709	Dno	CAC0641-A	Scout	Gas Giant	De	Amber	Independent
0710	Valka	C531437-7	Scout	Gas Giant	Ni, Po		Independent
0804	Hasara	C430486-B		Gas Giant	De, Po, Ni		Independent
0809	Drax	E320657-8		Gas Giant	De, Po, Ni		Independent
0810	Ajo	D100342-7		None	Ni, Va		Independent

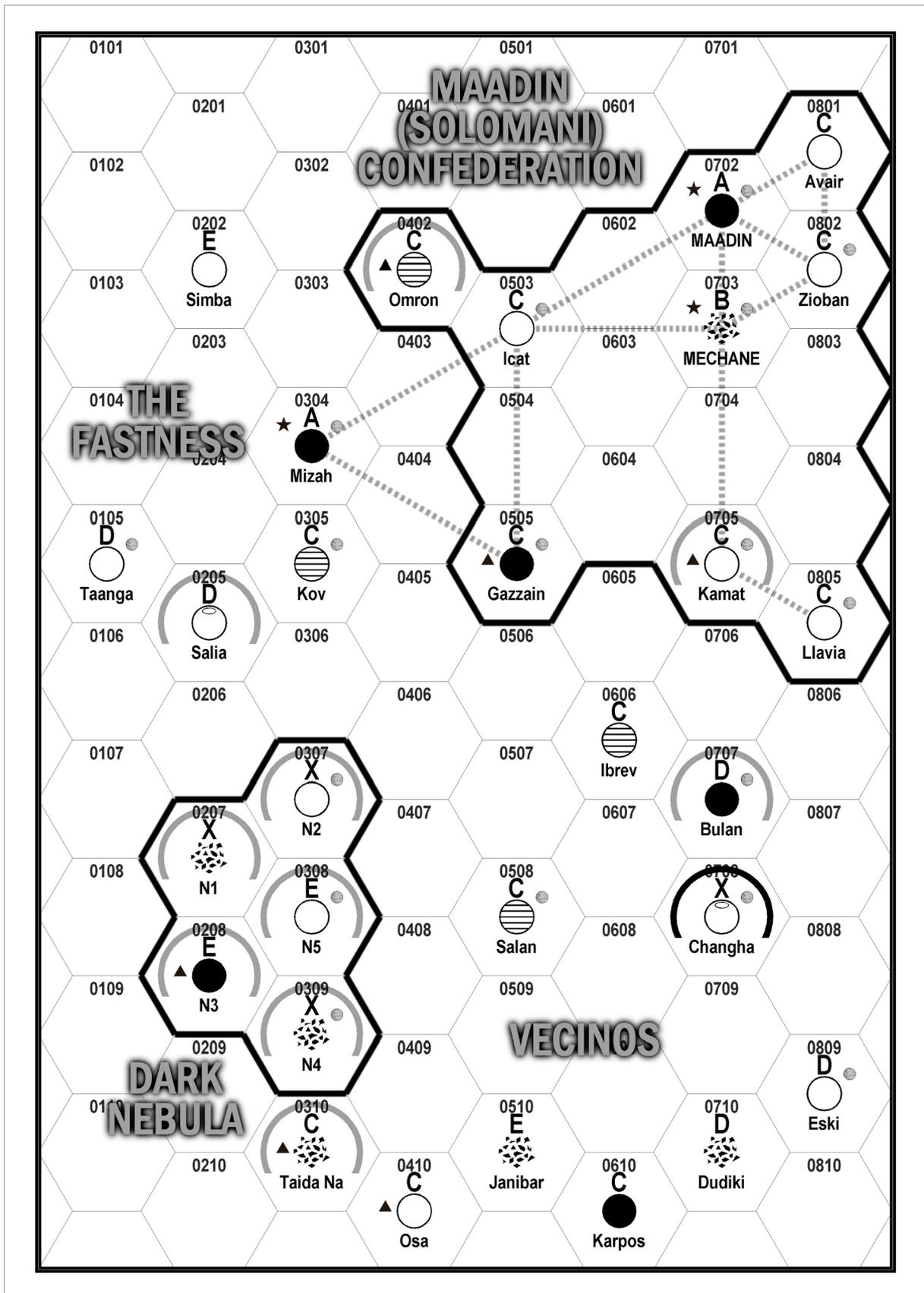
Maadin Subsector							
Hex	World	UWP	Bases	Gas Giants	Trade Codes	Zone	Allegiance
0105	Taanga	D540756-8		Gas Giant	De, Po		Independent
0202	Simba	E710686-7		Gas Giant	Na, Ni		Independent
0205	Salia	D411616-B	Scout	Gas Giant	Ic, Ni	Amber	Independent
0207	N1	X000???-?		None	?	Amber	Dark Nebula
0208	N3	E544300-A	Scout	Gas Giant	Ni	Amber	Dark Nebula
0304	Mizah	A762853-B	Navy	Gas Giant	Ri		Independent
0305	Kov	C9A5554-9		Gas Giant	Fl, Ni		Independent
0307	N2	X620???-?		Gas Giant	?	Amber	Dark Nebula
0308	N5	E5A7???-?		Gas Giant	?	Amber	Dark Nebula
0309	N4	X000???-?		Gas Giant	?	Amber	Dark Nebula
0310	Taida Na	C00035A-A	Scout	None	As, Ni, Va	Amber	Independent
0402	Omoro	CACA375-9	Scout	None	Fl, Ni	Amber	Solomani
0410	Osa	C100210-A	Scout	None	Ni, Va		Independent
0503	Icat	C620531-8		Gas Giant	De, Ni, Po		Solomani
0505	Gazzain	C764743-8	Scout	Gas Giant	Ag		Solomani
0508	Salan	C5A6754-9		Gas Giant	Fl, Na		Independent
0510	Janibar	E000353-8		None	As, Ni, Va		Independent
0606	Irbev	C7C5551-9		Gas Giant	Fl, Ni		Independent
0610	Kapros	C584676-B		None	Ag, Ni		Independent
0702	Maadin	A8759C8-B	Navy	Gas Giant	In		Solomani
0703	Mechane	B000976-B	Navy	Gas Giant	As, In, Na, Va		Solomani
0705	Kamat	CAC779A-9	Scout	Gas Giant	Fl, Na	Amber	Solomani
0707	Bulan	D869776-6		Gas Giant	Ag	Amber	Independent
0708	Changha	X402000-0		Gas Giant	Ic, Va	Red	Unknown
0710	Duduki	D000431-7	Scout	None	As, Ni		Independent
0801	Avair	C410448-8		None	Ni		Solomani
0802	Zloban	C6A04512-9	Scout	Gas Giant	De, Ni		Solomani
0805	Llavia	C510445-A		Gas Giant	Ni		Solomani
0809	Eski	D711421-7		Gas Giant	Ic, Ni		Independent



KUZU SUBSECTOR



MAADIN SUBSECTOR



A SHORT HISTORY OF THE DARK NEBULA

By Omer Golan-Joel

ANCIENT HISTORY

Approximately 300,000 years ago, the Dark Nebula was at the Rimward edge of Ancients space. Colonized by one of their many factions towards the end of their reign, the Nebula never saw intensive Ancients development. The Ancients colonized Karpos (Maadin 0610), with secondary sites at Changha (Maadin 0708), Salia (Maadin 0205), and Drax (Kuzu 0610). For an unclear reason, they steered clear of the Dark Nebula itself. This frontier faction of the Ancients did not possess human or canine subjects, nor did it intervene much with the evolution of the two local proto-sentient species, the Aslan and the Desertborn. The Final War of the Ancients soon followed, and their sites fell. A small population of Droyne did survive, however, on the main colony Karpos itself - despite widespread orbital bombardment.

Eons passed; the Aslan and Desertborn began using more advanced stone tools and engaging in primitive herding. A new starfaring species, however, appeared - around 12,000 BCE. Dubbed the Pyramid Builders by Solomani scholars, these star-travellers spread through space using slower-than-light sleeper-ships and generation-ships. They were, however, biochemically alien, adapted to live in what humaniti considers to be insidious atmospheres. On such hellish worlds, they built their edifices - pyramidal structures covering deep underground tunnels. These travelling carnivores brought their prey with them, seeding life in inhospitable environments. They even "terraformed" some of their worlds, namely Enjwa (Kuzu 0510), Omoro (Maadin 0402), and Irbev (Maadin 0606) - to suit their atmospheric preferences and ecosystem.

SOLOMANI AND ASLAN COLONIZATION

Narrowly escaping total nuclear war, the new Aslan Hierate - established in 2481 CE - began expanding into space in earnest. With their homeworld of Kuzu (Kuzu 0209) fully divided between Aslan clans, young Aslan ihatei - non-inheriting second sons - found an outlet for their territorial urges in space. Jump travel soon developed, as early as 2520 CE. The Aslan, however, lacked a centralized government. The Hierate was the closest they could get to having one - but each clan founded its own interplanetary and interstellar colonies. The main expansion was along the Aslan Main - with a long "tail" to the Rimward beyond the Kuzu Subsector. Limited by Jump-1 drives, for the time being, the Aslan were confined to their main, which they colonized in the usual haphazard ihatei ways. Then, the Solomani came.

The Ziru Sirka - the Vilani Grand Empire of Stars - never reached the distant Dark Nebula. Its successor-state, however - the Rule of Man - did. Aggressively expanding to the Spinward-Rimward in search of resources to feed this ailing empire, the Rule of Man set its first scout base on Maadin (Maadin 0702) in 2600 AD. Exploring this base's stellar environs yielded further colonization of the Maadin Cluster, especially the mineral-rich Mechane Belt (Maadin 0703).

Unlike the Aslan, however, the Solomani - as the Rule of Man's people were called here - had far advanced technology. Exploration and colony ships usually had Jump-2 drives, and sometimes Jump-3 ones. Able to cross significant interstellar gulfs, the Solomani soon expanded across the Maadin Subsector and into the Kuzu Subsector. Expansion, however, was slow given the limited number of ships and colonists coming from their Empire's core. Eventually, in 2641, Solomani scouts encountered the Desertborn - who by then already had an industrial civilization on their homeworld of Rim (Kuzu 0602) - and traders soon followed. By the late 27th century, the Desertborn already built their own spacecraft and began exploring and colonizing their own star-system, though their small and fragmented population base precluded rapid technological advancement and interstellar colonization.

In 2659, a misjumped Solomani scout dropped out of jump space in Kuzu orbit. While the ship was boarded and inspected by the Aslan, the scout captain, Minerva Amlaris, is forever lauded for her diplomatic skill - and besting an Aslan male in one-on-one blade against dewclaw combat, gaining the boarders' respect and allowing fruitful first contact. Soon after the scout crept back to Solomani space - carrying a female Aslan ambassador - Human traders learned of the potential of Aslan markets. Superior Solomani technology fetched a high price in Aslan space, enriching a few Human merchants, most notably the Stempfer family of Mizah. With the Rule of Man's government's notorious inefficiency, the Solomani did not prevent advanced technology with military applications from reaching Aslan hands. Soon enough, these aliens had Jump-2 capabilities and weaponry rated at TL11.

TWILIGHT AND THE ACCELERANDO

The Rule of Man was aptly named the "Ramshackle Empire". Unstable and inefficient, its collapse was inevitable. By the dawn of the 28th century, its gradual collapse led to a curious socio-technological phenomenon - the Accelerando. With little or no governmental oversight, and with rampant corruption, scientists with good connections could appropriate massive budgets to projects never even contemplated in less distressed times. Such projects grew like parasites on the Empire's dying body, creating a false spring of strange flowers - accelerated technological development along unorthodox lines.

One such project was Unit #72, initially from Maadin. Appropriating billions of desperately needed funds, they chose five stars within the previously unexplored Dark Nebula itself as their abode, far from the prying eyes of whatever remaining Imperial authorities. There, they tried to develop technologies which will - so they claimed - save the ailing Rule of Man from its inevitable collapse - artificial intelligence, cybernetics, genetic engineering, and, especially, new technologies for interstellar travel and, theoretically speaking, communications.

The latter technology reached a place that even the great scientists of the much later civilizations were unable to replicate, but at a price. On November 3rd, 2747 CE, The Event occurred. Experimental stationary jump-transmission coils on the world known today as N3 (Maadin 0208) fired as part of a planned experiment. However, they caused an unexpected effect. In an instant, all five star-systems of the Dark Nebula were torn from their place in the Space-Time Continuum, and hurled, through space and time. For a whole year of local time - 145 years in real-space time - these systems were in limbo - disconnected from our universe. For that time, the Nebula was a dead zone - an area of space where no solid bodies could be seen, and where anomalies in the Space-Time Continuum endangered any ship entering that space.

THE MAADIN IMPERIUM AND FIRST IHATEI WAR

Later historians will mark 2744 CE as the beginning of the Long Night proper. 30th century Maadin, however, lists its beginning on 2780 CE, when the Last Ship from Terra arrived. It was clear, at this point, that the Solomani colonies in the Dark Nebula Sector were on their own. No communications, let alone help, would come from Terra or any other Rule of Man center. Technology slowly regressed to locally sustainable production - rated at TL11 rather than the Rule of Man's TL12; and even that - on a few worlds. Many colonies deteriorated much farther.

In 2785 CE, citing "Continuity of Government" laws, Maadin's governor, Armando Abbas, declared himself Emperor. Using his remaining naval assets, he moved to consolidate his rule over the Maadin subsector. His success, however, in such imperial endeavor was limited. Lacking the resources of a proper empire, he met stiff resistance from various colonies. Particularly, the governor of Mizah (Maadin 0304), a prominent colony, declared himself King of Mizah and used his own naval assets to push back against Abbas' invasion.

As the dust settled, the Maadin Imperium ruled nine worlds and began rebuilding its economy and military using local resources, as did its smaller rival - Mizah. When Emperor Armando I passed away in 2812 CE, his son, Emperor Alfonso I, took the throne. In 2820 CE, Alfonso attempted to invade Mizah, starting a three-year interstellar war and ending in failure, further souring the relations between the two states. After he passed away in 2843 CE, Armando II inherited the throne. By that time, the Maadin Imperium was in decline. Corruption ran rampant; favoritism within the armed forces filled the top rank with incompetent nobles, weakening them and enraging the lower-ranking professional officers.

In 2862 CE, however, the Maadin Imperium received what would later be known as its death stroke. The Aslan ihatei, or "second sons", turned their attention to the Trailing and invaded independent colonies en masse. Within two months they controlled Pasar (Kuzu 0507), Godoro (Kuzu 0606), and Simsek (Kuzu 0505), with harsh fighting continuing on Enjiwa (Kuzu 0510). Within a year, they went as far as Salia (Maadin 0205), threatening Mizah and the Maadin Imperium directly. Faced with a common threat, Maadin and Mizah instantly signed an uneasy mutual defense pact and launched a counterattack.

Fighting was bloody. While the Mizahn units showed great bravery and skill, the Maadin Navy suffered several humiliating defeats at the hands of the ihatei, losing two battlecruisers and facing disastrous defeat in their ground invasion of Godoro. When both sides reached a cease-fire agreement, in 2866 CE, the Maadini military was in shambles and the Maadin Imperium lost its credibility in the eyes of its own citizens. The Aslan retained their conquests of Pasar, Godoro, Simsek, Astek, and Daanari and the Solomani forces retreated to lick their wounds and rebuild their navy.

COUP, CONFEDERATION, SECOND IHATEI WAR

Failure in war bred popular discontent and unrest on Maadin and its subordinate Imperial worlds. When mass demonstration erupted in 2870 CE, Emperor Armando II ordered troops to fire on them. This was a fatal move for the Emperor. With the situation deteriorating into street fighting and wholesale slaughter of civilians, middle-ranked Naval and Marines officers declared their support for the dissidents and mutinied, killing their noble admirals and launching a coup against the Imperial state. Within three weeks, the Emperor was dead; the Military Presidium was in power.

The Presidium - a seven-member "head of state" - then moved to re-consolidate the former Maadin Imperium into the Maadin Confederation. The limited rate of communication, even over such small distances, prevented full centralization and allowed local governments to replace the old Planetary Archdukes of Imperial times. Maadin and the Military Presidium, however, held much power compared to the other colonies.

PRESENT DAY AND THE RETURN OF THE NEBULA

Following the Second ihatei War, the Confederation engages in massive military construction. Militaristic and authoritarian, it wishes to exert its will across the two subsectors, and openly declares so. Meanwhile, a new generation of non-inheriting Aslan males are itching to grab new lands - and the Confederation and its rival/ally of Mizah stands in their way. While the Military Presidium enjoys great popularity thanks to its success in the War, taxation is high to finance military development, and the population begins to chafe under this burden. Rivalry with Mizah is also brewing, with the more radical members of the Presidium dreaming annexing it to the Confederation, though another Aslan war will force yet another alliance with such rivals.

In August 2892 CE, suddenly the N4 star of the Dark Nebula appeared on the horizons of Taida Na, re-lighting the old cloud. By the present days of 2900 CE, these stars appeared in the skies of Osa, Salia, and Kov as well. Soon enough, rumors have reached both Solomani and Aslan ears that the worlds of the Nebula, hinted upon in legend, are back. And now, their technological treasures are ripe to the plucking. Or so the Solomani and Aslan think...

The year is 2900 CE. At the dawn of the 30th century, the Hierate and Confederation rattle their sabres. This time, both powers aim to establish dominance over the two subsectors once and for all. War is inevitable. Soon enough, the secrets to be revealed in the returned Dark Nebula will threaten to tip the balance towards whoever exploits them back. The Nebula, however, will not yield its secrets so easily...





ABSTRACT CLASSIC TRAVELLER SPACE COMBAT

By Paul Elliott

There was nothing really like Traveller's original ship combat rules, with its acceleration vectors and computer-programming-on-the-fly. For me, though, the novelty was soon replaced with the burning desire to get on with the story and find out how it all ends. One screenwriter in Hollywood is a critic of the car chase, describing it as a gap in the plot, a gaping hole that leaves the audience waiting for the outcome. I'd been wanting to plug Traveller's 'plot gap' for years, but only recently come around to the task when I decided to jump into a Book 1, 2 and 3 only, universe.

The system I developed is an abstraction of the Book 2 space combat rules as they stand. An important point to make is that it leaves the starship construction rules unchanged; any book 2 design can participate in these abstract combats quite easily. I wanted to know very quickly, 'who wins?' without deciding which programs to feed into the computer, or which turrets should fire on which targets. There involves a short assessment procedure for any participating craft which assigns each a number, a Combat Rating (CR).

ASSESSMENT

First assess the spacecraft to create a single Combat Rating (CR). This assessment is designed to provide a rough guide to the power and potential combat ability of a starship, not to track every weapon and fitting. Assessment can be done following construction, with the CR written down on the construction sheet. Please resist the temptation to look at the 'break points' in the Assessment Table and go on to design ships from there, angling to gain the maximum number of bonuses. The CR is a 'rough guide' and should be done after construction. Always +3 to the final total to create the Combat Rating.

Ship Assessment Table

Ship Attribute	Modifier
1-G to 2-G Drive	+1
3-G Drive	+2
4-G Drive	+3
5-G to 6-G Drive	+4
Small Craft Weapons	+1
Single Turrets	+1
Double Turrets	+2
Triple Turrets	+3
10-19 Turrets	+2
20-29 Turrets	+4
30-39 Turrets	+6
40+ Turrets	+8
No Sandcasters	-1
Computer 4+	+2
Computer 6+	+3
Computer 7	+4

AVOIDING A FIGHT

If one ship wishes to avoid a fight, then it may attempt escape to beyond long range. Roll 10+ every turn to succeed. Add +2 if higher G -rating than the pursuer; +4 if the G rating is twice as high; -2 if the pursuer has a G rating twice as high or more, than the evader.

COMBAT

In each 10 minutes round all participants get one attack. It is the ship with the highest CR that goes first. When ships engage in combat, the attacker (on a round by round basis) must compare his CR to the CR of his target. This comparison gives a target number that must be rolled equal to or above, and if successful a hit (or hits) is scored.

Once it is determined that a hit has been made, check the result of the target roll to see how much damage was done. The hit location table in Book 2 is used to determine damage. Ships take turns in trying to inflict damage on one another. An escape attempt can be made if desired at the start of the next combat round. Remember that CR may change if a turret, computer, or maneuver drive suffers damage.

Ship Comparison Table

Ratio	Target Number (2D)
Enemy CR Quadruple or Over Yours	12+
Enemy CR Triple or Over	11+
Enemy CR Double or Over	10+
Enemy CR Over Yours	8+
Enemy CR Equal to Yours	7+
Enemy CR Under Yours	6+
Enemy CR Half or Less	5+
Enemy CR 1/3 or Less	4+
Enemy CR ¼ or Less	3+

Ship Damage Table

Roll Over Target	Damage Inflicted
Roll Target Number	1 hit
Exactly	2 hits
Roll 2 more	3 hits
Roll 3 more	4 hits
Roll 4 more	6 hits
Roll 5 more	1 critical and 2 hits
Roll 6 more	1 critical and 4 hits
Roll 7 more	1 critical and 6 hits
Roll 8 more	2 criticals and 2 hits
Roll 9 more	2 criticals and 4 hits

THE THREE-WAY FIGHT

When a ship is in combat with multiple foes then the outnumbered ship has to reduce its CR by 1 for every additional foe. The limit on how many foes can be engaged simultaneously is limited to one half of the computer number (round up).

HIT LOCATION TABLES

Use the Hit Location tables given in Book 2, with the following changes: Small Craft, Crew and Hull hits.

Small Craft: A cabin hit may injure crew. Everyone onboard rolls 1d6, if the result is 5 or 6, that person is

gravely wounded or killed. Three hits on a small craft cabin result in the craft's break up and destruction. Any critical result on a small craft indicates Explosion.

Crew: A crew hit indicates decompression, fires, hydrogen or powerplant leaks and, more likely, hypersonic fragmentation effects. Up to 1D-1 crew are injured and unable to help in the combat. The ship can only act next round if a 9+ saving throw is made on 2D. This roll can be attempted at the start of each rounds.

Hull: The hull is smashed, air lost, structure damaged and interior components disabled. Lose a corridor or two, plus one of the following:

Hull Damage Table

1D	Hull Location Affected
1	Grav-plates are disabled
2	An airlock is destroyed
3	Life support fails in 1-3 rounds
4	Inertial compensators disabled. Limited to 1G acceleration (2G if military)
5	Comms disabled
6	Long-range sensors are disabled

OTHER RULES

All other rules regarding detection, decompression, abandoning ship, damage control, repair parts and so forth can be used directly from Book 2 as required.

Sample Combat Ratings

Ship Type	Cr
Scout/Courier (double turret)	4
Free Trader (double turret)	6
Subsidized Merchant (double turret)	6
Subsidized Liner (no turrets)	3
Yacht (no turrets)	3
Mercenary Cruiser (6x triple turrets)	9
Patrol Cruiser (4x triple turrets)	8
Leviathan Merchant Cruiser (6x double turrets, 3x triple turrets, 4xsingle turrets)	9
Kinunir Battle Cruiser (8xtriple laser, 2xtriple turrets)	14
Launch (3xweapons)	5
Fighter (3xweapons)	6
Cutter (3xweapons)	6
Aslan Escort (8xtriple turrets)	10
Aslan Cruiser (10xtriple turrets)	11
Zhodani Escort (6xtriple turrets) plus 2 fighters (CR 7)	10



KILL IT WITH FIRE!

FLAME WEAPONS FOR CLASSIC TRAVELLER

By Omer Golan-Joel

A staple of trench warfare and real-life sci-fi “Bug Hunts”, flamethrowers are a monstrous weapon of war. By throwing a stream of burning liquid, they set their targets aflame. This weapon may be crude, but it is brutally lethal, nonetheless. At higher tech levels, such weapon becomes more portable, though with a smaller fuel tank. Molotov Cocktails are improvised incendiary weapons, ironically named after a notorious 20th century Terran politician. They are easy to make and deadly in use, serving as a cheaper replacement for grenades.

Flamethrowers are illegal for ordinary civilians on Law Level 2+. Molotov Cocktails are illegal for ordinary civilians at Law Level 1+.

Flamethrower (TL5): A flame-throwing weapon, the Flamethrower operates by pumping highly flammable fuel from a pair of back-mounted fuel tank, igniting it near the nozzle and projecting a stream of fuel towards the target. At the TL of its introduction, the fuel is made of refined natural hydrocarbons; later versions (TL8+) may use synthetic fuels. Two heavy fuel tanks holding enough fuel for 20 attacks. On continuous fire, the tanks will only last two combat rounds; however, a standard attack is far shorter than a continuous stream of fire and represents one “tap” of the weapon’s trigger. Replacement of empty fuel tanks require two combat rounds. The fuel tanks are connected to the Flamethrower with a flexible heavy-duty hose. Flamethrower fuel is not interchangeable with that of high-tech flamers. Length: 750mm, Weight of Flamethrower: 2,200 grams. Weight of fuel tanks: 6,000 grams. Base price: Cr1,000 (extra pair fuel tanks: Cr50).

Flamer Unit (TL8): A compact high-tech variant of the older flamethrower, with much higher fuel efficiency and a longer range, though with a significantly fuel tank. It uses synthetic fuel specifically designed for combat. Built on a “rifle” frame, a fuel “magazine” provides up to 5 attacks. Replacement of an empty fuel “magazine” requires one combat round. Length: 600mm, Weight of Flamethrower including “magazine”: 2,500 grams. Base price: Cr500 (extra fuel “magazine”: Cr25).



Molotov Cocktail (TL4): Basically, a bottle filled with flammable liquid with a lit rag stuck into its top, a Molotov Cocktail is a cheap alternative for hand grenades. Successfully making a Molotov Cocktail from available material (glass bottle, highly flammable liquid, cloth) requires rolling 4+ on 2D, +DM the character’s Mechanic or Combat Rifleman skill and 1 minute, assuming all materials are at hand. Like hand grenades (see Traveller Book 4: Mercenary), one may throw a Molotov Cocktail only at Short or Medium Range, throw to hit 8+, with no expertise or range DMs. Use armor DMs as given in the table below. Cr5.

SPECIAL RULES

Fire: On a successful hit by a flamethrower or Molotov Cocktail, throw 6+ on 2D for the target to catch fire. A burning target takes 2D damage per combat round for 1D rounds, or until put out. Putting out a fire requires rolling 5+ on 2D and takes one round per attempt.

Group hits by flamethrowers: Each “shot” by a Flamethrower may attack up to three additional individuals adjacent to the original target, provided that they are in a group (herd, pack, band, etc.) and are each Human-sized or smaller. Flamethrowers are ineffective against flying targets.

Group hits by Molotov Cocktails: Each thrown Molotov Cocktail may attack up to an additional individual adjacent to the original target, provided that they are in a group (herd, pack, band, etc.) and are each Human-sized or smaller.

Hits to flamethrower fuel tanks: Flamethrowers are fueled by large, back-mounted fuel tanks containing pressurized flammable liquid. Direct hits to these tanks will cause them to implode. Every shot fired at their user might hit them as well. Whenever a flamethrower’s user is hit in combat, roll 10+ for his tanks to explode, causing double normal damage to the user and setting them on fire. Flamer units are immune to such hits thank to their small fuel “magazines”.

Fire vs. vehicles: In the Quick and Dirty Vehicle Combat Rules (see the next article), treat all flame weapons (flamers, flame units, and Molotov Cocktails) as Support Weapons against Soft Skin and Light Armor, as well as TL6- Heavy Armor. They are ineffective against TL7+ Heavy Armor and against TL9+ Light Armor.

Flame Weapons

Item	Base Weight	Ammo Wt.	Rounds/Clip	Overall Len.	Base Price	Ammo Price	Tech Level
Flamethrower	2200gr	-	-	750cm	Cr1000	-	5
Flamethrower fuel tanks	-	6000gr	20	-	-	Cr50	5
Flamer unit	2000gr	500gr	5	600cm	Cr1500	Cr25	8
Molotov Cocktail	500gr	-	-	-	Cr5	-	6

Weapon Characteristics

Weapon	Required DEX Level	Required DEX DM	Advantageous DEX Level	Advantageous DEX DM
Flamethrower	4	-2	8	+1
Flamer Unit	4	-2	8	+1
Molotov Cocktail	-	-	-	-

Weapon Matrix

Attacker's Weapon	Defender's Armor						
	Nothing	Jack	Mesh	Cloth	Reflec	Ablat	Cbt. Armor
Flamethrower	+6	+6	+4	+3	+6	+4	-4
Flamer Unit	+5	+5	+4	+3	+5	+4	-4
Molotov Cocktail	+3	+3	+2	+1	+3	+2	-5

Range Matrix

Attacker's Weapon	Range					Wounds Inflicted
	Close	Short	Medium	Long	Very Long	
Flamethrower	no	+3	+0	no	no	5D
Flamer Unit	no	+2	-2	no	no	4D
Molotov Cocktail	no	+0	+0	no	no	2D



QUICK AND DIRTY CLASSIC TRAVELLER VEHICLE COMBAT

By Omer Golan-Joel

I wrote these rules with the typical Books 1-3 Proto-Traveller spirit in mind. That is, for the purpose of including vehicles in the various adventures and mishaps of interstellar travellers, traders, scouts, and misfits, as well as small-scale mercenaries. Its main aim is to provide some basic rules for what happens when your Scout empties their submachinegun at a hovering Air/Raft or, at most when a mercenary shoots a RAM grenade at an AFV. However, somewhat larger armored engagements are also possible.

I drew inspiration for these rules from the Classic Traveller Book 2 ship damage rules, the ATV rules in Double Adventure 2: Mission to Mithril/Across the Bright Face, and for a much lesser degree, the Striker wargame.

SKILL THROW NOTATION

For the ease of reference, "Throw Mechanic 8+" means "throw 2D and add the Mechanics skill; a result of 8+ is a success" and so on.

VEHICLE MOVEMENT

Vehicle combat is either Tactical or Chase Combat. Tactical Combat is ordinary Book 1 combat with a vehicle included, usually moving at a slow pace of up to 4 range bands per round.

CHASE COMBAT AND DOGFIGHTING

Chase combat is a chase and is played in turns. Each side throws 2D + the appropriate vehicle skill. The vehicle with the higher throw has Advantage. The Pursuer wins on ties. A vehicle with Advantage may attack normally. A vehicle without Advantage may attack at DM-4. Chase lasts until one side is disabled or 5 turns pass without either being disabled. Particularly slow vehicles such as Tracked ATVs suffer a -2 DM to such advantage rolls, while fast vehicles such as Air/Rafts enjoy DM +2. You may only hit extremely fast airborne vehicles such as Speeders and Jet Aircraft use the aircraft by specialized weapons, such as air-to-air missiles or specially designed lasers.

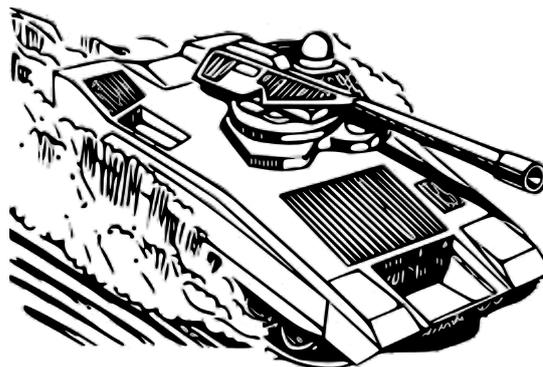
SHOOTING AT VEHICLES

Shooting a vehicle with a man-portable weapon is an ordinary combat task. Throw 8+ to hit, add the appropriate weapon skill and characteristic DMs, as well as the usual Book 1/Book 4 range DMs. Ignore armor DMs and instead use the vehicle armor in the tables below. Vehicle-mounted weapons use the Gunnery skill instead, with the appropriate range modifiers. On a hit, consult the appropriate damage table.

Hitting a fast-moving vehicle outside of chase combat suffers DM -2. You cannot hit fast, high-flying aircraft from the ground without specialized tracking weapons, but you can hit a slower aircraft, albeit at DM -2 to -4 (Referee's discretion, depending on flight altitude or speed).

ARMOR PENETRATION

To keep things within a Little Black Book scope and flavor, these rules abstract the many types of weapons and armor into three broad categories each. Use the table below to see how each category of weapons affects each category of vehicle armor and choose the appropriate damage table to roll on. Each weapon hit causes one roll on the appropriate damage table.



Armor Penetration

Weapon/Armor	Soft Skin	Light Armor	Heavy Armor
Small Arms	Surface	None	None
Support Weapons	Critical	Internal	Surface
Heavy Weapons	Destroyed	Critical	Internal

Small Arms: any regular personal weapons, whether a slug-thrower or a laser. All Book 1 weapons are Small Arms, as are the various rifles in Book 4. Light and medium machine guns also fall into this category.

Support Weapons: heavier man-portable weapons carried at the squad level or light vehicle weapons - such as Book 4 PGMPs, heavy machine guns, autocannons, Light Assault Guns (also known as Anti-Tank Rifles) with High Explosive or Discarding Sabot rounds. Most grenades, whether hand-thrown or RAM, fall into this category as well, including grenade launchers.

Heavy Weapons: full-scale anti-armor weapons. This includes Book 4 FGMPs and Book 4 Artillery weapons. The specialized anti-armor HEAP RAM grenades also fall into this category.

Soft Skin: an unarmored vehicle, whether civilian or military. In Book 3 terms, this includes the Ground Car, Hovercraft, all Winged craft, Air/Raft, Speeder, and Motorboat.

Light Armor: a lightly armored vehicle such as an armored car or light APC. In Book 3 terms, this includes the ATV and G-Carrier.

Heavy Armor: a heavily armored vehicle, such as a heavy APC (or IFV) or a tank. In book 3 terms, this includes the AFV, the Steamship, and the Submersible (due to size rather than armor for the most part).

ANIMAL ATTACKS ON VEHICLES

Usually, the confines of a moving vehicle protect its occupants from all melee attacks, animal attacks included. However, some large animals, as well as those equipped with special attacks, may damage vehicles.

Ignore all usual animal attacks for small and medium animals.

Particularly large or vicious animals cause Support Weapon damage to vehicles. As a rule of a thumb, this includes animals massed 3200kg or greater, and those with acid or similar attacks. This include various beasts the size of a Terran elephant (6000kg), or the acidic Chamax attacks of Traveller fame.

At the Referee’s discretion, the largest and mightiest animals (around 40000kg) might be able to overturn heavy armored vehicles, though note that a typical Main Battle Tank weighs approximately 50-80 metric tons – heavier than any animals one may generate with Traveller Book 3.

VEHICLE DAMAGE

For damage, roll on the appropriate tables below.

Surface Damage

2D	Damage
5-	Bounce Off
6-7	Device
8-9	Locomotion
10	Breach
11	Weapon
12	Internal Damage

Small Arms surface damage: light small arms such as handguns roll with a -2 DM on the above table, while lasers and heavy small arms such as machine guns or Autorifles roll with a +2 DM.

Bounce Off: Shot has bounced off the vehicle's skin or armor. No damage.

Device: One secondary external device, such as a light fixture or antenna, was destroyed.

Locomotion: The vehicle's locomotion, such as wheels, treads, or propeller, was damaged. Ground vehicles lose half their speed from the first Locomotion hit and stop completely with the second hit. In case of a single-engine aircraft, this might cause a crash; throw Vehicle (Winged Craft) 8+ to land safely (DM +2 if DEX 10+), otherwise this is a crash causing a roll on the Critical Damage table. In case of multi-engine aircraft, this causes a -1 DM to all Vehicle (Winged Craft) rolls per disabled engine and will be at risk of a crash if all engines are disabled. Grav vehicles have enclosed grav-lift modules and are immune to this type of damage. Watercraft will be dead in the water and subject to currents and drift until the characters repair its locomotion. Throw Mechanic 8+ to repair damaged locomotion.

Breach: If the vehicle is pressurized, its environmental seal is breached, exposing its occupants to the environment. Can be repaired with a vacuum seal patch or a Mechanic 6+ throw.

Note that a breached watercraft begins to leak, reducing its speed by one quarter and inflicting a cumulative -1 DM to all throws related to the vehicle's steering. Four such breach hits will cause the watercraft to take in water and begin to sink. This only applies to small watercraft; large ships such as Steamships and the larger Submersibles stay afloat from such minor breaches. Only a Knocked Out critical result (see below) will sink such large craft.

Weapon: One of the vehicle's weapons is disabled and may not fire. AFV (and other tank) main cannons are immune to this in most cases, but their secondary weapons are not. Throw Gunnery 8+ to repair a disabled weapon.

Internal Damage: Lucky penetrating hit! Roll on the Internal Damage table!

Internal Damage

2D	Damage
5-	Transmission or Suspension
6-7	Crew
8-9	Electronics
10	Main Weapon
11	Power Plant
12	Critical

Transmission or Suspension: The vehicle's transmission or suspension is damaged. A wheeled or tracked vehicle is immobilized. A Grav vehicle may only move up or down. For aircraft, throw Vehicle (Winged Craft) 11+ to land safely (DM +2 if DEX 10+), otherwise this is a crash, causing a roll on the Critical Damage table. Field repairs of damaged transmission or suspension are difficult and require a Mechanic 10+ throw (DM +1 for INT 10+). At a workshop, this throw is easier, at Mechanic 8+.

Crew: 1d6 crewmembers or passengers suffer 3D damage each.

Electronics: One or more of the vehicle's electronic systems is destroyed, usually the control systems or major sensors/radar. Flying an aircraft or Grav vehicle with damaged electronics suffers DM -2. Throw Electronics 8+ to repair damaged electronics.

Main Weapon: The vehicle's main weapon is damaged and disabled. This includes AFV (or other tank) main cannons. Throw Gunnery 10+ to repair a disabled weapon.

Power Plant: The vehicle's power plant takes a direct hit and the vehicle is disabled. Each occupant must throw 8+ (DM +1 for END 8+) to avoid taking 3D damage. In case of a aircraft or grav vehicles, this might cause a crash; throw Vehicle (Winged Craft) or Air/Raft 10+ to land safely (DM +2 if DEX 10+), otherwise this is a crash causing a roll on the Critical Damage table. This cannot be repaired on the field.

Critical: Massive damage! Roll on the Critical Damage table!

Critical Damage

1D	Damage
1-2	Knocked Out
3-4	Crew
5-6	Destroyed

Knocked Out: The vehicle is rendered completely and irreparably inoperable. Furthermore, each occupant must throw 8+ (DM +1 for END 8+) to avoid taking 3D damage. Aircraft crash, causing 6D damage to all occupants. Low-flying Grav vehicles crash, causing 3D damage to all occupants; if they are flying at a high altitude or at high speed, this increases to 6D damage. Watercraft, include large ones, suffer massive hull breaches, and will sink within 1d6 combat rounds.

Crew: Each crewmember suffers 6D damage.

Destroyed: Vehicle destroyed. On ground vehicles, crew must throw 10+ (DM +2 for DEX 10+) to bail out with "only" 6D damage. Otherwise, they are killed immediately.

OPTIONAL RULES

The following rules are somewhat more complex than those above; the Referee should use them at her discretion.

Technology and Penetration: Higher-tech weapons tend to better penetrate lower-tech armor, and higher-tech armor tends to offer better protection against lower-tech weapons. If you use this optional rule, if the weapon has a higher TL than the target vehicle, consider it as being one "category" higher, that is - Support Weapons behave as Heavy Weapons. This does not apply, however, to Small Arms, except for Book 1 Laser weapons and the various Book 4 weapons using specialized armor-piercing ammunition. Conversely, if the weapon has a lower TL than the target vehicle, consider it as being one "category" lower - for example, Support Weapons behave as Small Arms. Weapons "shifted" above the Heavy Weapons "category" will destroy the target on a successful hit. Weapons "shifted" below the Small Arms "category" are ineffective.

Yes, this means that Book 1 lasers can significantly damage lightly armored low-tech vehicles!

Called Shots: Many armored vehicles have weak spots. If you use this optional rule, if the Referee rules that the character knows of a specific vehicle's weaknesses, the character may roll to attack at DM -2 to hit a weak spot. Characters may only do so up to Medium range unless using guided or tracking weapons. If the attack hits, consider the damage as if done by one "category" of weapon higher, that is - Support Weapons behave as Heavy Weapons. This does not apply, however, to Small Arms, except for Book 1 Laser weapons and the various Book 4 weapons using specialized armor-piercing ammunition. Discovering an enemy vehicle's weaknesses may be an adventure of its own; alternatively, the Referee may call for a throw of Tactics 10+ (DM +1 for INT 9+) to discover the target's weaknesses by observation and deduction. Note that also in this case, weapons "shifted" above the Heavy Weapons "category" will destroy the target on a successful hit.