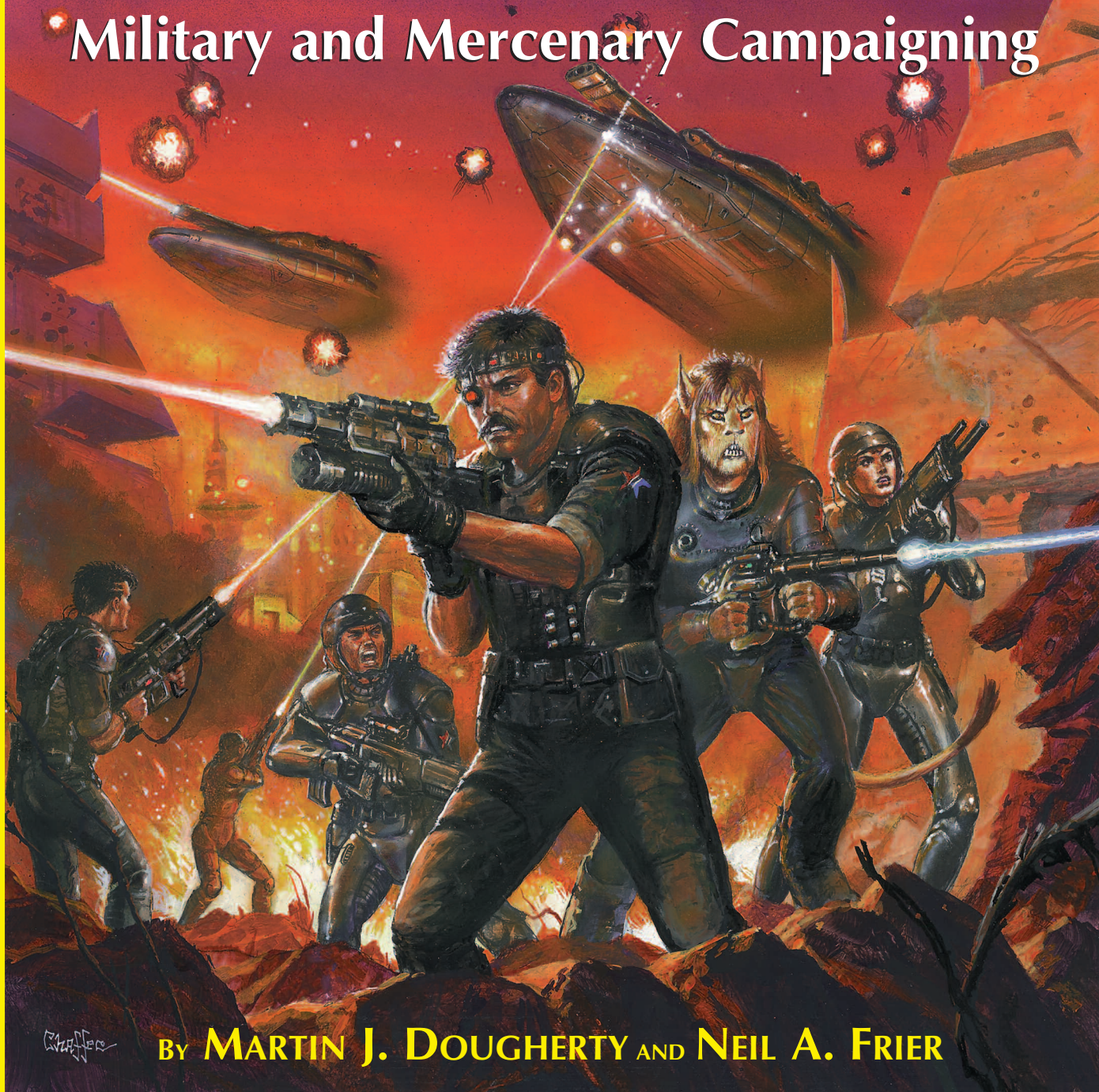


GURPS[®] *Traveller*[®]

STAR MERCS™

Military and Mercenary Campaigning



BY MARTIN J. DOUGHERTY AND NEIL A. FRIER

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Prepare for War . . .

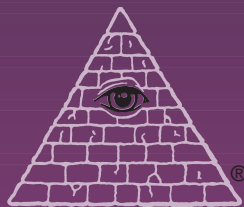
. . . with *Star Mercs*. Everything you need for a star-spanning, military-oriented campaign in the *Traveller* universe is here!

- Experience combat (and a soldier's life) in the 57th century.
- Learn how to recruit, organize, and equip a mercenary unit.
- Familiarize yourself with the Imperial rules of war.
- Get the edge with discourses on strategy and tactics.
- Arm your troops from a comprehensive list of weapons and other tools of the soldier's trade.

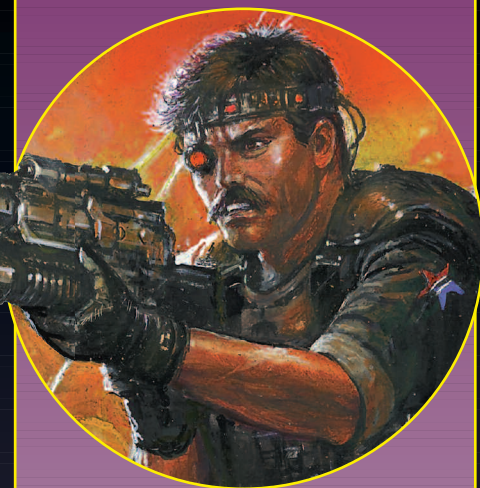
Star Mercs also includes deck plans for the 800-ton *Broadsword*-class mercenary cruiser, templates for military and mercenary soldier characters, sample missions, and a variety of units and NPC personalities your mercenary group might encounter, including the famed and feared Imperial Marines.

Face front, soldier!

This is the Big One!



STEVE JACKSON GAMES
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GURPS Basic Set, *GURPS Traveller*, and *GURPS Space* are required for full use of this book in a *GURPS* campaign. *Ultra-Tech* and *Ultra-Tech 2* are not required, but will be very useful. The background presented here will be of great value to any *Traveller* campaign, and will also serve as a source of inspiration for other SF games.

THE GURPS MERCS:

Written by

MARTIN J. DOUGHERTY
AND NEIL A. FRIER

Based on the award-winning *Traveller* science fiction universe by

MARC MILLER

Edited by

LOREN K. WISEMAN
AND GENE SEABOLT

Cover by

DOUG CHAFFEE

Illustrated by

ROB CASWELL, GLENN GRANT,
JOHN GRIGNI, JOHN LUCAS,
AND TOM PETERS

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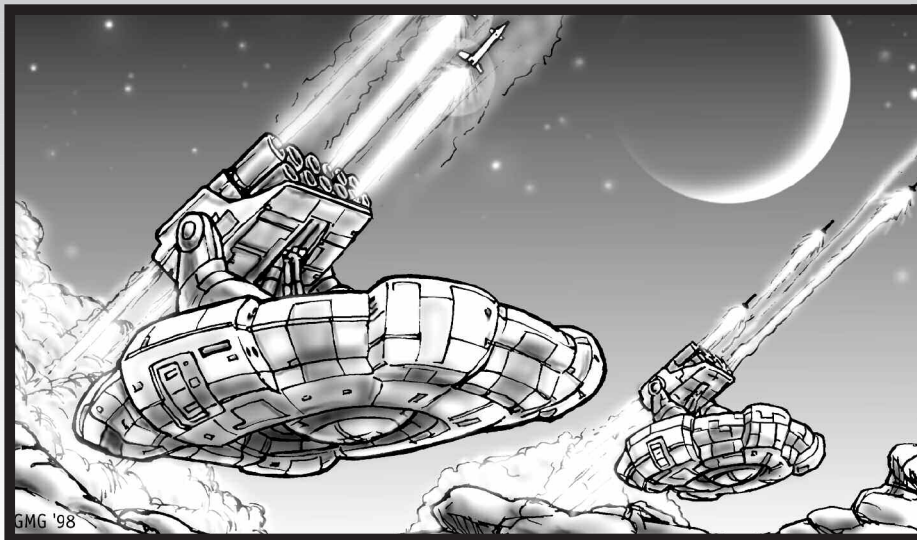
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Printed in
the USA

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AND GENE SEABOLT**

GURPS System Design ■ **STEVE JACKSON**
Managing Editor ■ **ANDREW HACKARD**
GURPS Line Editor ■ **SEAN PUNCH**
GURPS Traveller Line Editor ■ **JON F. ZEIGLER**
Design and Typography ■ **JACK ELMY**
Production ■ **ALAIN H. DAWSON, S. JOHN ROSS,**
and **GENE SEABOLT**
Print Buyer ■ **MONICA STEPHENS**
Art Director ■ **PHILIP REED**
GURPS Errata Coordinator ■ **ANDY VETROMILE**
Sales Manager ■ **ROSS JEPSON**

Playtesters: John Macpherson, Bryan Borich, David Smart,
Steven Anderson, Shawn Fisher, Peter V. Dell'Orto,
Christian Friberg, David Summers, Hans Rancke . . . and our thanks
to the dozens of great folk who helped out on the *Pyramid* playtest.

Vehicles, Additional Weapons Design, and Fact Checking:
**AERRON WINSOR, ANTHONY JACKSON, DAVID PULVER,
AND CHRISTOPHER THRASH**

Cover by **DOUG CHAFFEE**

Illustrated by **ROB CASWELL, GLENN GRANT,
JOHN GRIGNI, JOHN LUCAS, AND TOM PETERS**

Additional Illustrations by **KENT BURLES,
JOSE CORPUZ, C. BRADFORD GORBY, DAVID MONETTE,
JOEY ROBINSON, JASON WALTRIP,
JOHN WALTRIP, AND MIKE WORLEY**

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2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Contents

INTRODUCTION 4

- About GURPS 4
- About the Authors 4

1. COMBAT IN THE 57TH CENTURY 5

- The Nature of Warfare 5
 - Categories of Warfare 5
 - Resources 5
 - Send the Marines 6
 - Types of Combat 7
 - Close Combat 7

- The Nature of Mercenaries 8
 - R&R 8
 - Ground Forces 9
 - Anti-Tank 9
 - Sniper 10
 - Ambush 11
 - Fighter Jocks 11
 - Deep Space 12
 - Tactics 13
 - Aerospace Warriors 14
 - Bodyguard 14
 - Surrender 15
 - Combat Drop 16

- Imperial Intervention 17
 - Mission 18

- The Imperial Mode of Warfare 19
- The Big Players 19

- A Choice of Mercs 19
- Boarding Party 19
- Imperial Marines 20
- Special Forces — The Elite 20
- A Cold Night on Joyeuse 20
- Security 20
- The Imperial Rules of War 20
- The Imperial Marine
 - Commandos 21
 - Sylean Rangers 22

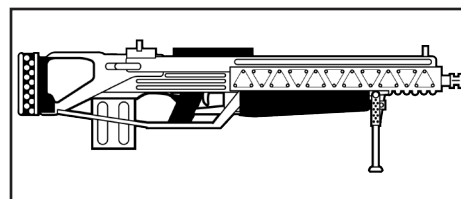


- S-3 Scouts 24

2. RUNNING A MERCENARY CAMPAIGN 25

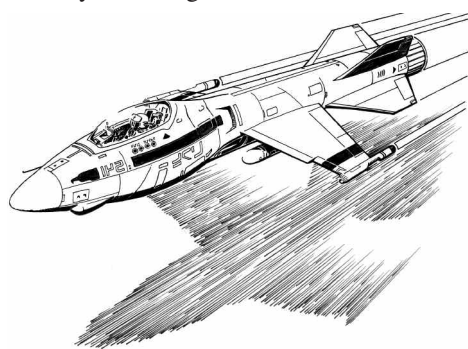
- Recruiting 25
 - Obtaining Recruits 25
 - Vilani Military Traditions 25
 - The Icetina Conflict 1:
 - Hiring-On 26
- The Mercenary Contract 28
 - The Icetina Conflict 2:
 - Going to War 28
- Training 29
 - Basic Training 29
 - The Icetina Conflict 3:
 - Jumping In 28
 - Orientation Training 30
 - The Icetina Conflict 4:
 - Hitting the Ground 30
- Mercenary Unit Organization 31
 - The Icetina Conflict 5:
 - Close Combat 31
 - Organizational Components 31
 - The Icetina Conflict 6:
 - Objective Reached 32
- Deep Space Organizations 33
- Idle Hands are the Devil's
 - Playground 34
 - Aerospace Organizations 35
 - Identification 35
 - Gadgets Versus Guts 35
 - Legal and Admin 36
- Mission Types 36
 - Ground Pounders 36

- Deep Space Ship Crews 37
- Aerospace Warriors 37
- Resolving Missions 38
 - Preparation 38
 - Choose Aggression Level 39
 - Determine ORS 40
 - ORS Modifiers 40
 - Defensive Modifiers 40
 - Other ORS Modifiers 41
 - Determine OOS 41
 - Outcome Modifiers 41
 - Outcome Charts 42
 - Operating Costs 42
 - Using the *Compendium II* Mass-Combat System 44



3. INSTRUMENTS OF POLICY 45

- Introduction 45
- Using This Chapter 45
 - Unit Sizes 45
- Import Policy 46
 - Glossary: A 46
 - Tech Levels and Tactics 47
 - Glossary: B 48
 - Glossary: C 48
- Weapons Systems by TL 48
 - Early TL5 48
 - Late TL5 49
 - Glossary: D 49
 - Early TL6 50
 - Glossary: E 50
 - Glossary: F 50
 - Glossary: G 50
 - Glossary: H 51
 - Late TL6 52
 - Glossary: I 52
 - Glossary: L 52
 - Glossary: M 53
 - TL7 54
 - Glossary: N 54
 - Glossary: P 54
 - Glossary: R 54



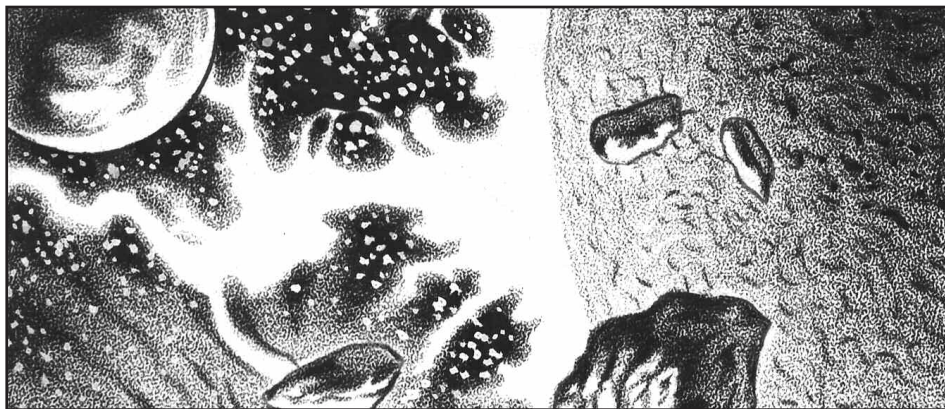
Glossary: S.....	55
TL8.....	56
Glossary: T.....	56
Glossary: W.....	56
Children Grown Large.....	57
TL9.....	58
After Action Reports.....	58
TL10.....	59
Medics.....	59
TL11.....	60
TL12.....	60



Improvised Anti-Vehicle Weapons 60

4. IRONMONGERY 61

Combat Equipment	61
Commando Battledress (TL12)....	61
Flight Pack (TL12).....	62
Drop Capsule (TL12).....	62
Decoy Capsule (TL12).....	62
Weapons	63
Small Arms.....	63
Support Weapons.....	63
Heavy Weapons.....	63
Vehicle Weapons.....	63
<i>Consolidated Weapons Tables</i>	64
2cm Californium Rounds.....	66
Consolidated Ammunition Lists..	66
Bombs and Mines.....	66
Starships and Spaceships	67
Design Adaptations.....	67
<i>Broadsword-class 800-ton mercenary cruiser deck plans</i> ...	68



<i>Puller-Class 300-ton Assault Ship</i> (TL 12).....	72
<i>Erinyes-Class 200-ton Assault Rider</i> (TL 12).....	72
<i>Young-Class Assault Rider Carrier</i> (TL 12).....	73
Vehicles.....	74
Utility Grav Sled (TL9).....	74
Imperial Meson Sled (TL12).....	74
Imperial <i>Astrin-Class Grav APC</i> (TL12).....	75
Imperial <i>Intrepid-Class Grav Tank</i> (TL12).....	75
Grav APC (TL10).....	76
Air/Space Defense (TL10).....	77
Instellarms Light Grav Tank (TL10).....	77
Instellarms Medium Grav Tank (TL10).....	78
Instellarms Heavy Grav Tank (TL10).....	79
Other Equipment	80

5. CHARACTERS 81

Infantry.....	81
Cavalry.....	81
Armor.....	82
Artillery.....	82
Heavy Weapons Specialist.....	83
Sniper.....	83
Assault Trooper.....	83
Combat Engineer, Pioneer, Sapper.....	84
Military Police, Provost.....	85
Medic.....	85

NCO.....	85
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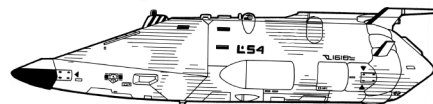
6. SAMPLE TICKETS .. 86

Ground Missions	86
Specialist/Individual Missions....	86
Small Unit Missions.....	88
Company/Battalion Missions.....	93
Deep Space Missions	96
Single Vessel Missions.....	96
Aerospace Missions	101
Small Unit.....	101



7. UNITS AND PERSONALITIES ... 102

Units	102
Squad-Sized Units.....	102
Platoon-Sized Units.....	103
Company-Sized Units.....	106
Battalion-Sized Units.....	109
Deep Space	112
Aerospace Units	114
Imperial Marines.....	116
Personalities	118
“Rifleman” Kern Valsaii.....	118
Lieutenant-Colonel “Bulldozer” Muncy.....	119
Grouv’voug.....	120
Jile Korrigii, the “Psycho Prof”.....	120
Devlin Mercé.....	122
Sebastian Arvaughn.....	122
Sergeant Alex Petter.....	123
Flight Officer Tanya Edri.....	124
Private-Recruit James Laughan.....	125
Lieutenant-Colonel Steven Bond, SB Rangers.....	126



INDEX 127

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"x12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit www.warehouse23.com.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, point your web browser to www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l.

The *GURPS Traveller: Star Mercs* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/mercs/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are GT to *GURPS Traveller*, T:BC to *GURPS Traveller: Behind the Claw*, CII to *GURPS Compendium II*, HT to *GURPS High-Tech*, S to *GURPS Space*, UT to *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and VE to *GURPS Vehicles*. The abbreviation for *this* book is T:SM. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

INTRODUCTION

Mercenary was the first major rules addition to *Classic Traveller*. It contained rules for advanced character generation, weaponry by TL, and most important, it provided us with big guns. Suddenly player-characters were all ex-Marines running around with gauss rifles at high port. Everybody wanted to be a mercenary. *Mercenary* expanded the *Traveller* universe and allowed players to break parts of it.

It was an exciting book.

Star Mercs was equally exciting for us, a chance to explore mercenary action in the *GURPS Traveller* universe, to clarify and codify and, well, to shoot at people. The aim behind the book was to let players become a single mercenary or the leader of a merc unit, playing out the missions and dealing with the issues of taking a contract to fight for “the wrong side” or dealing with the machinations of an unscrupulous employer. And of course to deal out some really Grade-A violence to all comers!

To this end we have tried to present all aspects of the merc trade, not just the ground-pounders and the shipboard teams. We wanted to address the legal and day-to-day aspects of the merc trade as well as the ripsnorting gun battles (but mainly those). We wanted to look at who becomes a mercenary, and why. We wanted to produce a resource that would enable us to play out classic scenarios in the style of *Starship Troopers*, *Hammer's Slammers* or the *Janissaries* series.

The life of a mercenary soldier isn't easy, but we've made playing one a bit simpler. So: Come on, you apes! You want to live forever?

– Martin J. Dougherty & Neil A. Frier

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Martin J. Dougherty has been involved with *Traveller* since 1983. An electronic engineer by training, he now teaches science, and blames the game's influence for his career choice. Other occupations have included computer-games design and freelance writing. He has written several fiction and non-fiction books, and many articles for gaming magazines. Martin's writing partnership with Neil began in 1994, and has not been confined to *Traveller*. Current projects include a new SF novel, more *Traveller* and other games material, and an attempt to get *Traveller* on TV. He is married with two cats. Ambitions include paying off the credit-card bill and getting-his-act-together. Interests include fencing, firearms, gaming and annoying Neil.

Neil Andrew Frier lives with his wife and son in South Shields, England, where as a graduate of Loughborough University he pursues a career as a transport engineer for the local authority. A keen cyclist, Neil splits his free time between this, being a dad and roleplaying. Neil's love of the roleplaying concept began back in 1980 when he bought the original *Traveller* black box set. Since then he has played all of *Traveller's* many versions as well as *RuneQuest*, *Pendragon* and *Vampire*.

Both Neil and Martin are members of the British Isles Traveller Support group and have been involved in *Traveller* for Imperium Games and *GURPS Traveller*.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Loren Wiseman was one of the founding partners of GDW, Inc., original publisher of *Traveller*, and spent over 20 years there as a game designer, developer, typesetter and editor. After GDW closed, Loren free-lanced, then came to SJ Games, where he is the art director and *Traveller* line editor and expert-in-residence.

THE TRAVELLER NEWS SERVICE

For many years a feature of the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society*, *TNS* chronicled the ongoing life and times of the Imperium. Loren Wiseman is once again writing *TNS* as the alternate history of the Third Imperium develops. It is updated regularly; read it online at www.sjgames.com/gurps/traveller/news.html. “Back issues” of *TNS* are also online. The SJ Games *Traveller* page has links to the *Traveller* Web Ring, and thus links to most of the major *Traveller*-oriented web sites that exist. For information on subscribing to the *Traveller* Mailing List, contact rwm@mpgn.com.

*“When the Marines arrive,
the party is over.”*

– David Nilsen

Send the Marines!

It can be taken as a sign that the player characters have messed up big time if they end up facing the Imperial Marines in combat. The Marines are the “Big Stick,” the “First Team,” the “Pros from Dover,” and their primary job is to kill people and blow things up in the name of the Imperium. They are only committed when there is a serious threat to the peace and stability of the Imperium, and they never leave a job half-done.

Because the Imperial Marines are the top of the military food chain, players tend to want to demonstrate their own superiority by engaging and defeating Imperial Marines. Some players will spend a lot of time organizing the “perfect” force and equipping it with “perfect” weapons (of their own design, of course) and they want the additional ego boost that comes from seeing their creations defeat the best of the best. In the short term, this can be satisfying for the players, but ultimately will probably be destructive to the campaign.

The best use of the Imperial Marines in mercenary-oriented campaigns is as the “or else” factor, for use when the PCs’ machinations threaten to do something the GM does not want to happen. If you have to use them, don’t go with half-measures. Marines come in full throttle, with full naval support, orbital bombardment if needed, lots of advance preparation and in numbers sufficient to handle the situation.

Fighting Imperial Marines should be a sobering experience. If the characters manage to get out alive and reasonably intact, they should count themselves among the happy few.

A Band of Brothers

If the PCs’ unit has been heavily recruited from former Imperial Marines, another factor arises: Marines (even ex-marines) don’t like to fight brother Marines. Such things have happened in the past, during the Civil War, and it was traumatic for the units involved. A mercenary unit consisting largely of Marine veterans is likely to refuse to fight another unit of veterans, *if they know ahead of time*. Marine veterans will most likely refuse to fight (and may mutiny) if called upon to attack serving Imperial Marines. The reverse is not necessarily true: Marines can and will attack mercenary units of ex-Marines if ordered to do so (but they still won’t like it much).

Another aspect of “every Marine is a brother” is the rule to never abandon wounded to the enemy. Marines take extreme risks to recover their wounded, and expend great energy to destroy any enemy who willfully mistreats them.



Brushfire War

Small groups may go to war over some local issue. Territory, resources or ethnic differences are common reasons. Sometimes it is no more than a tradition of hatred. Such conflicts are minor in scope, usually fought with outdated or low-tech weapons. Many such “little wars” are nothing more than oversized insurgencies, degenerating into sporadic sniping and small-arms exchanges, but they cause untold misery and destruction.

Mercenaries are frequently hired to train local troops or to participate in these local attempts at mutual destruction. Conflicts often drag on far longer than either side’s capacity to actually win, dying down and flaring up at intervals. Imperial or mercenary forces, intervening to end the conflict, often find themselves targets for both sides.

Corporate Dispute

The vast Imperial megacorporations are known to intervene in local affairs through the use of mercenary forces. A dispute between corporations may sometimes become a full-blown trade war. This is quite legal, and is preferred by the Imperium to a long period of cutthroat business competition that may actually be worse for the economy than a short war. Corporate wars are characterized by surgical strikes carried out by expensive, highly professional mercenary forces.

Open Warfare

Nations – whole planets even – may go to war with one another. So long as the Imperial rules of war are observed and the fighting does not spread, the Imperium accepts this situation as a useful “safety valve,” releasing tensions and resolving conflicts that might otherwise have dragged on for years. The war and subsequent rearmament might even be good for the economy.

Open warfare is an intense situation, characterized by enormous rates of ammunition and equipment expenditure. Most combat is fluid in three dimensions, with close orbit and airspace control being vital to operational success. Grav vehicles are capable of reaching orbit, but generally stay very low, using ground cover. In the 3D aerospace battlefield, there are no “battle lines” as found at lower tech levels. Instead

Mission

The battery had moved into position under cover of darkness, just a few miles from the Loyalist positions. Six self-propelled guns in light armored housings, waiting for the request to rain high-explosive death on the opposing ground troops.

In the fire direction APC, Captain Mike Berezinho sipped at a cup of strong black coffee. Out there, the foot soldiers were moving into position for their assault. Any minute now.

His headset spoke quiet words in his ear, and the captain put down his cup. He pressed a key on the comm unit.

"Razor One. Smoke on following coordinates," the captain said softly, and repeated the forward observer's request. Seconds later the gun code-named Razor One slammed a round into the sky. The captain picked up his cup, mentally counting seconds.

"Battery, prepare to move. Alternate Zulu Four," he signaled to the commanders of all six guns, the ammunition carriers, and his own driver. The intelligence report said the Loyalist counterbattery radar was inferior, but there was no point in tempting fate.

The headset spoke again, and so did the captain. "Razor One. Up three hundred."

Again Razor One slammed back on its recoil dampers. Berezinho waited.

The headset spoke softly, and he smiled.

"Razor One, on target. Battery, link to Razor One," he waited while the central fire control computer adjusted the aim of all six tubes. The ready light came on an instant later.

"Battery: Six rounds Hotel-Echo-Delta-Peter, fire for effect."

A second's delay while six crew chiefs verified the proper rounds were in the tubes, and that the trajectory had been adjusted slightly to allow for the different weight of the HEDP rounds. Then six guns fired as one.

Berezinho keyed the connection to the FO and spoke softly: "On the way."

Autoloaders whined, the guns fired again. Again. The position lit up with fire and thunder, but it was as nothing to what the Loyalists were getting. Soon the counter-battery fire would be coming, but by then the battery would be long gone. Berezinho smiled again as the sixth salvo crashed out and the command APC started to move. He'd bet good money the Loyalists were regretting their words now. Fee too high, indeed!

It is occasionally in the best interests of the Imperium as a whole to intervene in a local crisis. In these situations, it is usually the Navy that is first on the scene, deploying armed naval personnel and whatever Marines may be available to hold things together. Marine task forces are next, followed by deployment of major Imperial Army units if necessary. Planned interventions may be the province of the Army or the Marines, depending upon scale and force availability.

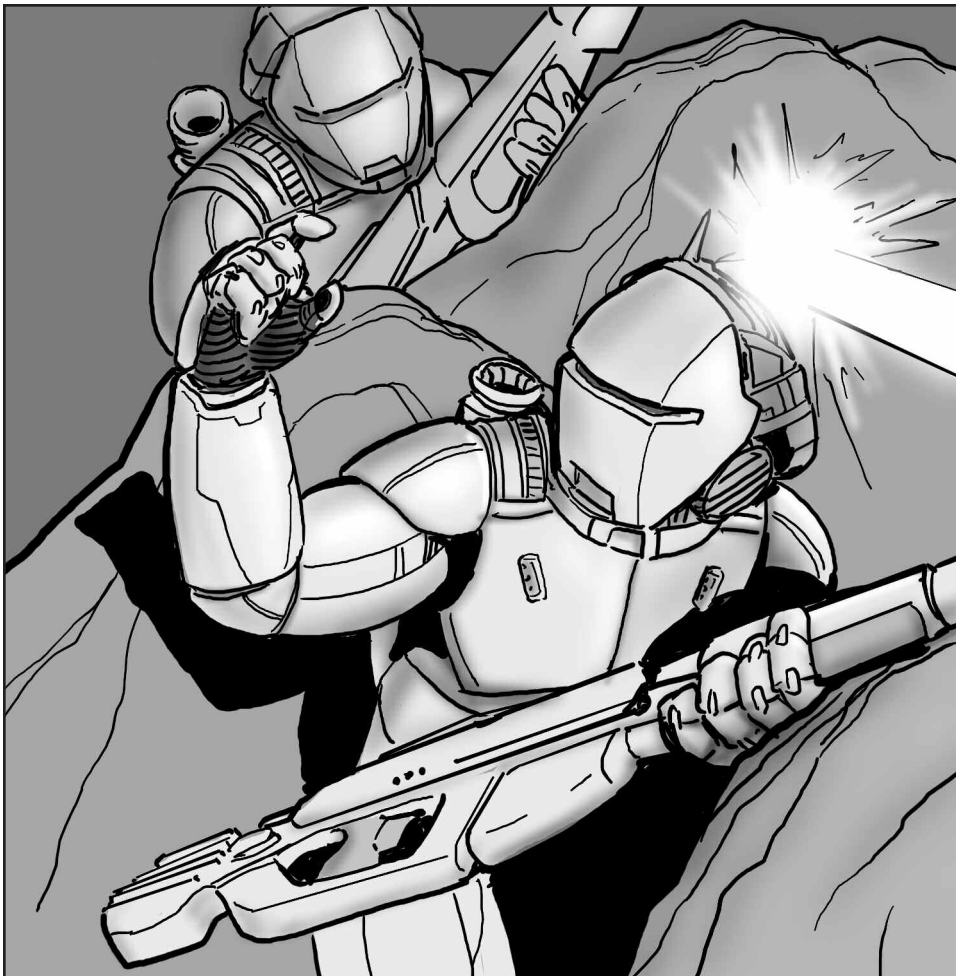
The goals of any intervention are:

- The safety of Imperial officials.
- The safety of loyal citizens and innocent bystanders.
- The security of vital installations.
- The restoration of order.
- The restoration of legitimate local government and resumption of home rule.
- Capture of guilty parties.
- Orderly withdrawal of Imperial forces.

These goals are open to local interpretation. For example, there is some debate as to what constitutes a vital installation, or exactly when local governments are ready to resume control of their affairs. But the ultimate goal is usually to restore a legitimate local government to power and then withdraw.

The decision to intervene in a world's affairs is a weighty one. There have been many cases in history when peace was given "one more chance," until bloody war broke out with the diplomats still at the table, millions dead in a conflict that could have been headed off by a timely airstrike or commando team. But once the troops go in, people die. At what point does the benefit of intervention outweigh the danger? This is the decision faced by Imperial politicians, and it is never an easy one.

Certain conditions require intervention; the use of nuclear weapons in ground combat, defiance of Imperial treaty obligations or interference with free trade.



Glossary: T

Tenaille: An earthen bank constructed in front of a bunker or wall to deflect blast.

Thunderball: Slang term applied to a thermonuclear weapon.

Touch and Go: A type of landing where an aerial transport barely grazes the ground as the troops depart the vehicle.

Trade, The: Insider term for the mercenary business.



Glossary: W

Weapons Carrier: General nonspecific term for a vehicle of any type converted to mount a weapon system it was not specifically designed for; e.g., a jeep retrofitted with a recoilless rifle; a grav sled mounting a heavy mortar.

Weapons of Mass Destruction: Weapons including (but not limited to) nuclear explosives, biotoxins and other biological agents and lethal chemical agents are defined as weapons of mass destruction. They are prohibited by the Imperial rules of war (see pp. 20-24).

electronic warfare (EW) conducted by higher-tech units. Satellite reconnaissance, communications and position-finding equipment is locally produced and in common use.

Mode of Combat

Control of the air is vital in all-out war. Air attacks on communications and supply centers, interdiction and logistics strikes are used to degrade the capability of the main enemy forces. Heavy losses can be expected to both sides' air forces.

Ground combat is characterized by incredible rates of ammunition and equipment expenditure. The early hours of any war see rapid gains by one side, with massive precision airstrikes and armored exploitation. Urban combat is common, and it is in cities that the close-quarter fighting is bloodiest. Tanks are just big tracked targets for infantry antitank weapons and laser-guided munitions are difficult to use in the confusion; here the infantryman once again dominates the house-to-house fighting. Chemical weapons are a constant threat.

From TL7 onward, the mercenary soldier is fighting in the modern environment. Local weapons are less sophisticated than his, and he still has advantages in communications and reconnaissance, but local forces are a real threat.

TL8

Local industry becomes capable of maintaining grav vehicles at TL8, though locally produced grav equipment is crude and unreliable. Caseless and liquid propellant ammunition (also known as binary propellant) begin to be used in small arms, tank guns and artillery.

Infantry

The TL8 infantryman is dressed in combat armor that provides some fragmentation protection. Vital areas are covered by a flak jacket (see p. GT117) and a light infantry helmet (see p. GT117) helmet with built-in communicator, and a respirator. Armament is the assault rifle, often with a built-in grenade launcher (e.g., M16 with M203 GL, see p. HT115 and 121 or RAM grenades, see p. GT115).

Early laser carbines are available, but are generally reserved for forward observers and elite troops who use their weapons as laser designators.

Some units are equipped for zero-g combat, where the laser comes into its own. Other weapons in common use include the snub revolver and its autopistol variant. Ablative anti-laser armor and early hardened vacc suits (see p. GT118) are issued on an experimental basis.

Infantry Support

The 20mm LAG (Light Assault Gun, see p. GT115) is in use for squad support, as well as the much heavier LSG (Light Support Gun, see p. 63) of the same caliber, for use against light armor and higher-tech troops using battle dress.

Infantry missile launchers are in widespread use at the platoon level, with various battlefield tac missiles available.

Cavalry/Armor

Tracklaying tanks have reached full development, mounting 5-6" (120-150mm) hypervelocity smoothbore cannon capable of delivering nuclear rounds or missiles in addition to standard rounds. Composite armor makes tanks difficult to penetrate with infantry antitank weapons. Infantry assault vehicles, armored like an MBT but carrying infantry and support weapons instead of a main gun, are deployed.

Light wheeled APCs and armored cavalry vehicles are also in common use. Hovercraft strike vehicles mounting missile launchers and light autocannon make an appearance on some worlds, attempting to outmaneuver the armored behemoths.

Artillery

Ortillery (orbital artillery) is available, though the technology is in its infancy. Satellites or spacecraft dispense kinetic-energy rods to home on designated targets.

Index

102nd Lift Infantry Battalion, 110.

A

Aerospace warriors, 14-15; *sample units*, 114.

AFV, *see Armored Fighting Vehicle*.

Air defense, 17; *ticket*, 101.

Air superiority ticket, 37.

Air/space defense vehicle (TL10), 77.

Aircrew, 35.

AirStrikers, 115.

Ammunition, 66.

Armor character template, 82.

Armor, 9.

Armored fighting vehicle (AFV), 11, 46.

Armored personnel carrier (APC), 46.

Artillery, 9; *character template*, 82.

Arvaughn, Sebastian, 122.

Aslan, 34, 89-90, 106; "Aslan Woe" *artillery*, 8.

AsRon (assault squadron), 34.

Assault trooper character template, 83.

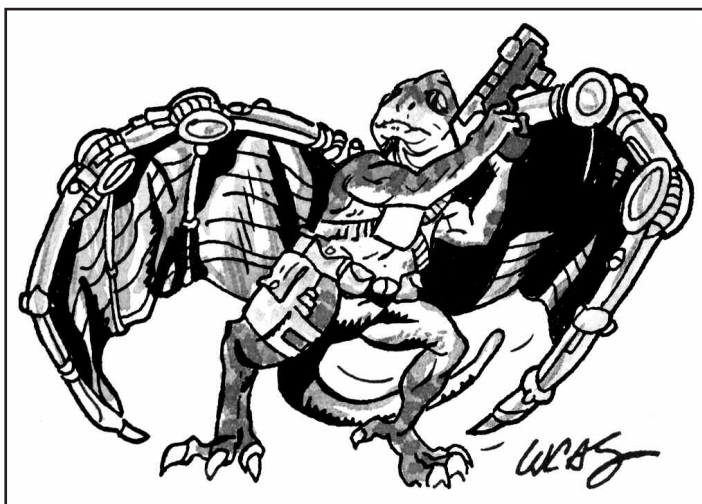
Astrin-class grav APC (TL12), 75.

B

Bad War, 48.

Basic training, 28.

Battalion-sized units, 109.



Battery, 32.

Battledress, commando, 61.

Binom, 31.

Boarding actions, 7.

Bombs, 66.

Bond, Steven, 126.

Bonding authority, 39.

Bond, repatriation, *see repatriation bond*.

Brigade, 32.

Broadsword-class 800-ton mercenary cruiser, 27, 29; *deck plans*, 68-71; *illustration*, 100.

Brushfire war, 6.

C

Cadre tickets, 37, 86, 92, 94, 99-101; *ground units*, 36; *deep-space units*, 37; *aerospace units*, 37.

Californium rounds, 66.

Carstein's Outlaws, 105.

Cavalry, 11.

Cavalry character template, 81.

Claymore, mercenary starship, 113.

COACC, 57.

Combat engineers, 12; *character template*, 84.

Combat, types of, 7.

Commando ticket, 36, 88, 89, 93-94.

Commandos, Imperial marine, 21.

Company, 32.

Company-sized units (sample), 106.

Company/battalion missions, 93-96.

Contracts, 28.

Corporate dispute, 6.

Crew, 34.

CruRon (cruiser squadron), 34.

Costs, operating, 42-43.

D

Danaarii, Kilver, 104.

Death's Head Hussars, 106.

Decoy capsule, 62.

Deep space units (sample), 112.

Department, 33.

Dream ticket, 38.

Drop capsule, 62.

Drop troops, *see meteoric assault*.

E

Edri, Tanya, 124.

Equipment, 80.

Erinyes-class 200-ton assault rider, 72.

Escort ticket (sample), 96, 97.

Escort, 37.

EscRon (escort squadron), 34.

F

Fire team, 31.

Fleet, 35.

Flight pack, 62.

Flight, 35.

Forward observer (FO), 11.

Franklin's Armored, 104.

Free troopers, 108.

G

General ticket, 37.

Good War, 50.

Grav APC (TL10), 76; *Astrin-class*, 75.

Grav sled, 50, 58; *utility*, 74.

Grav tank, *Intrepid-class*, 75; *Instellarms heavy*, 79; *Instellarms light*, 77; *Instellarms medium*, 78.

Ground crew, 16, 35.

Group, 36.

Grouv'voug, 120-121.

H

Halderney's Vacc Troopers, 112.



Heavy weapons, 63.

Heavy weapons specialist character template, 83.

I

Identification, 35.

Imperial Marines, 6, 20, 116; *commando company*, 118; *fleet marines*, 20; *grav tank platoon*, 118; *rapid-reaction marines*, 20; *security detachment*, 116; *task force*, 116-117.

Imperial meson sled (TL12), 74.

Import policy, 46.

Infantry, 9; *character template*, 81.

Instellarms heavy grav tank, 79.

Instellarms light grav tank, 77.

Instellarms medium grav tank, 78.

Insurgency, 5.

Intervention, Imperial, 17.

Intrepid-class grav tank (TL12), 75.



J

Javelin, mercenary starship, 27, 29.
 “Jim,” 25.

K

Korrigii, Jile, 120-121.

L

Laughan, James, 125.
 Laws of war, *see rules of war, Imperial*.
 Long ticket, 39.

M

Marines, Imperial, *see Imperial Marines*.
 Mass combat, *Compendium II*, 44.
 Medics, 12, 59; *character template*, 85.
 Mercé, Devlin 122.
 Mercenaries, nature of, 8.
 Meteoric assault, 7.
 Meson sled, Imperial (TL12), 74.
 Meson weapons, 61.
 Military police, 12; *character template*, 85.

Mines, 66-67.
 Mission resolution, 38-44, *aggression level*, 38; *commander's skill level*, 38-39; *operational outcome score*, 41; *operational resolution score*, 40; *outcome charts*, 42-44.

Mission types, 36-38; *see also tickets*.

Muncy, Ian “Bulldozer,” 119-120.

N

NCO character template, 85.

O

Organization, 31-36.
 Operating costs, 42-43.
 Orientation training, 29-30.
 Ortilery, 54.

P

Personalities, 118-126.
 Petter, Alex, 123.
 Pioneer character template, *see Combat Engineer Character Template*.

Plasma “hot shots,” 61.
 Platoon, 32.
 Platoon-sized units, 103.
 Prisoners of war (POWs), 23, 40, 41.
 Profors, 14.
 Provost, 12; *character template*, 85.
 Puller-class 300-ton assault ship, 72.

R

Raid ticket, 99; *deep-space*, 37; *Aerospace*, 37.
 Rangers, Sylean, 22.
 Rank, 28; *and salary*, 36-37.
 Recruiting, 25-27; *centers*, 26; *procedure*, 26.
 Regiment, 32.
 Retainer ticket, 38.
 Repatriation bond, 40, 93, 98.
 Rifles, Inc., 109.
 Rules of war, Imperial, 20-24.

S

S-3, 24.
 Salaries, 36-37; *conditions of payment*, 38.
 Sapper character template, *see Combat Engineer Character Template*.
 SB Rangers, 103-104, *see also Bond, Steven*.
 Scimitar, mercenary starship, 19.
 Scouts, *see S-3*.
 Section, 31.
 Security ticket, 87, 91, 94, 95.
 Short ticket, 39.
 Single vessel missions, 96-101.
 Small arms, 63.
 Small unit missions, 88-93, 101.
 Sniper character template, 83.
 Special forces, 20.
 Specialist/individual missions, 86-88.
 Spinward Guardian Services, 114.
 Squad, 31.
 Squad-sized units, 102-103.
 Squadron, 32; *deep space*, 34; *aerospace*, 35.
 Star Guards LIC, 114.
 Starship design adaptations, 67.

Strike ticket, 97, 95, 98; *ground units*, 37; *deep space*, 37.
 Strouden Snipers, 102.
 Subsidized merchant, 114.
 Success-only ticket, 38.
 Support weapons, 63.
 Sylean Rangers, 22.

T

Task force, *deep space*, 34, *Imperial Marine*, 116.
 TDX, 67.
 Team, 31, *deep space*, 33.
 Tech levels and tactics, 47.
 Thermal-superconducting armor, 61.
 Tickets, 36-39.
 Training, 29.
 Transplanetary Express, 106-107.
 Trantaxer Company, 108.
 Trimbell's Defenders, 102-103.
 Troop, 32.

U

Unit sizes, 45.
 Urban combat, 7.
 Utility grav sled (TL9), 74.
 Up-front ticket, 38.

V

Valsaii, Kern 118-119.
 Vargr, 19, 34, 93, 103-104, *see also Bond, Steven*.
 Vehicle weapons, 63.
 Vilani military traditions, 25.

W

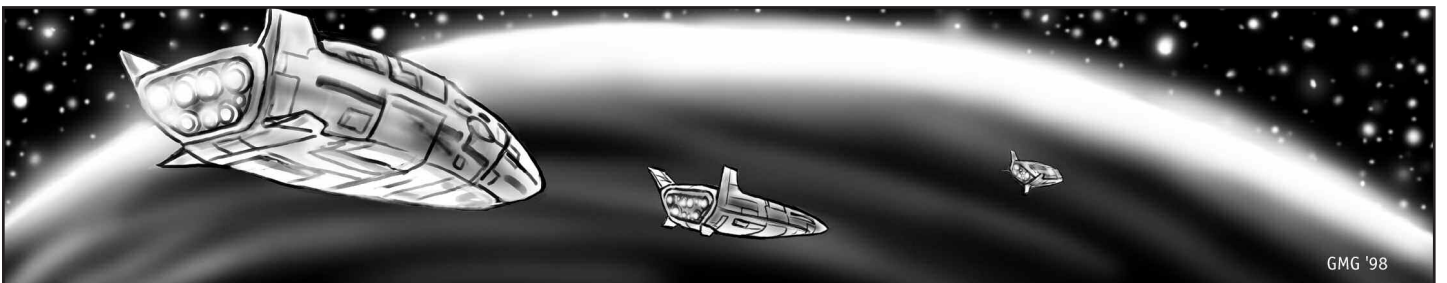
Warfare, 5; *categories of*, 5-7, *Imperial mode of*, 19; *nature of*, 5-6.
 Weapons and tech levels, 48-60; *TL5*, 48-50; *TL6*, 50-53; *TL7*, 54-56; *TL8*, 56-58; *TL9*, 58-59; *TL10*, 59; *TL11*, 60; *TL12*, 60.
 Weapons, 63-66.
 Wing, 36.

Y

Young-class 5,000-ton assault rider carrier, 73.

Z

Zero-G combat, 7.



GMG '98