No.33

US $3.25

CHALLENGE

GDW's Magazine of Adventure Gaming

For Twilight: 2000—
USSR: 2000, Part II:
The Hit List
by Frank Frey and Loren K. Wiseman

For Traveller—
Project Farstar
by Marcus Rowland

For 2300—
Lone Wolf
by David Nilson

Incorporating the Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society

The JOURNAL of the Travellers' Aid Society®

No. 33

MEMO

By:
[signature]

From the Management

My first experience with role-playing games was, as I'm sure it was with many of you, with a certain popular fantasy game. A friend of mine described to me how the game might develop--- "You can go down into a deep cavern, fight with a dragon and take his treasure. Then on the way out half the treasure might magically turn into some other monster you have to defeat!" As a young man eager to experience the thrill of victory in a fantasy universe, I immediately agreed to give it a try. So he came over with some other friends and with his boxes filled with what I have come to find are the necessities of role-playing games; rules books, dice, and miniatures.

From my first days with role-playing games, miniatures have been an integral part of every game. They are the little pieces of three dimensional reality which really make the situations come alive. It is one thing to have the referee tell you that you are in a room with three trolls and a treasure chest. It is another to be able to see the situation, with a heroic fighter figure facing three horrible looking trolls guarding a glittering treasure chest of jewels and gold.

Of course, I may be tainted by my gaming past. Before I had even heard of such a creature as a role-playing game, I was an avid miniatures gamer. I had painted and played with hundreds and hundreds of Napoleonic, Civil War, and Ancients miniatures, fighting battles and campaigns on an elaborate gaming table we had erected in my parents' basement. I was very familiar with the concept of miniatures, how to get them, how to paint them, etc.

Also, as anyone who paints miniatures armies knows, a hundred figures can be a mere drop in the bucket, lost in the ranks of dozens of units on a very large battlefield. But for a fantasy army, a hundred figures is a gihugic (ji-huj-ik) quantity, enough to give you a tremendous variety of adventurers and nasty monsters for them to run into.

So, given this background, I figured role-playing games and miniatures were a natural partnership. Besides, instead of having to paint forty identical guys for a Napoleonics unit, every fantasy miniature demanded some more attention, individual detail, and creativity not warranted elsewhere. Getting fantasy miniatures was fun, plain and simple.

My early days of gaming were also the days when a set of rules weren't expected to cover every aspect of play. House rules were commonplace-indeed, our games couldn't be played without them. Some of that tradition has carried on into present day designs under the guise of giving greater latitude to the referee (yeah, right). Specifically, there were no miniatures rules to speak of (who ever had **Chainmail**, anyway), so we made up our own.

It's a fairly simple task to motorize the combat rules of a role-playing game for miniatures use. Mostly you need some method of regularizing movement and initiative, both easily conjured up by a clever group of players. It wasn't until role-playing's second generation games that serious efforts were undertaken to get these kinds of rules into the original game.

So what is the point of this editorial? Well, should there be complete miniatures rules in a role-playing game or not? Obviously, I'm pulling for the affirmative. Provided the rules are fast-moving and easy to learn, I would want to use them. Let's look at the advantages and disadvantages of using miniatures in a role-playing game, starting with the negative.

First, there is a certain amount of expense incurred. Fantasy or science-fiction miniatures are not especially cheap, but again, you don't need all that many. Of course, you will have to buy paints and brushes. If you're breaking into miniatures, you will spend a few dollars. After that, picking up new figures is a nickel-and-dime operation you can take at your own pace.

Second, you will have to learn to paint your figures. It takes time to learn to do a fantastic job with your miniatures, but you'll be able to do an adequate job almost from the onset. Patience for painting may also become a problem. You will need to set aside some time just for painting. I know in my case, this is nice and relaxing, but not everyone agrees.

Third is the question of terrain. From my standpoint, terrain can be as big an undertaking as you want. I've seen fine miniatures battles played with virtually no terrain, using dice to represent various features. I've also seen the other extreme-a complete tavern/inn/bawdyhouse set up, detailed down to the beds, tables, and paintings on the walls, for use with musketeer brawling games. You can be as clever as you want. To some extent, your background in miniatures will help determine your level of interest in working to create elaborate terrain.

Now, there are several advantages to having miniatures in your role-playing games. First among them, in my mind, is looks. Nicely painted figures depicting the characters in action really make a smashing scene. They can help hold my interest in what might otherwise become an exercise strictly in imagination. Imagination is nice, indeed necessary, don't get me wrong, but it is very nice to have something substantial to look at or touch.

Of course, a second advantage to using miniatures is their concrete existence. How many times have you argued with the referee: "I thought I was over there," "No, I distinctly remember you saying you were over here." With miniatures, these questions are much less common. I have problems visualizing a complicated encounter using only my head or a hastily created map on paper. Figures give me something to see, to deal with, something on which to base my decisions that I can count on as being accurate.

Convinced? I hope so. Miniatures are an entire branch of our hobby which shouldn't be ignored. There are dozens of miniatures manufacturers out there, all of them making fantastic figures for all types of periods. Their quality has never been better (anyone remember the quality of figures just 10 years ago? What progress!). Whether they are necessary to complete enjoyment of a role-playing game is a question you'll have to ask yourself. As for the guy on this soap box, I wouldn't run a game without them!

-Timothy B. Brown

Issue 32 feedback was as follows:

Traveller News Service	3.42
A World on its Own	3.75
Swift Water: An Amber Zone	3.58
Tlea: A Casual Encounter	3.83
Cayuga-Class Close Escort	3.92
The Xiang: Chapter 19	3.75
Papers & Passports	3.83
Equipment for Armor Crews	3.93
Native Canadian Ranger Regiment	3.68
Small Patrol Craft	3.41
AS Origins Tourney Results	3.00
Alone Against the Empire	3.82
From the Management	3.41
Just Detected	3.21
E & C	4.U8
Reviews	3.77
Challenge Classifieds	4.03
Issue 32 Cover Art	4.10
Issue 32 as a Whole	3.75
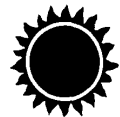
TRAVELLER NEWS SERVICE

AMDANI/DAIBEI (2014 A727A88 E)   **Date: 341 1117**

¶ Imperial forces retreating ahead of the advancing Solomani Fleet made a stand this week in Laudumash and Amdani, and fought the Solomani to a standstill.

¶ A naval spokesperson expressed a feeling of confidence that the invaders would be forced from Daibei sector by the end of the year.

HINDAHL/OLD EXPANSES (1422 A754A86 8)   **Date: 224 1117**

¶ Sector naval headquarters today announced the transfer of the Old Expanses Fleet to Zarushagar for operations against the usurper, Dulinor. The brief announcement from headquarters indicated that all of the first line fleets would be transferred within 60 days.

¶ "The defense of the sector lies in the capable hands of our reserve squadrons," Sector Admiral Hinchcliffe said at the press conference which revealed the arrival of the Transfer Order from Emperor Lucan.

HINDAHL/OLD EXPANSES (1422 A754A86 B)   **Date: 350 1117**

¶ In the face of continued Solomani fleet actions, a rise in Solomani political activity in the sector, and a lack of defenses for the region, a coalition of Dukes within the Old Expanses today announced the voluntary incorporation of the sector into the Solomani Confederation.

¶ A spokesperson indicated that the Confederation had made certain guarantees to the region, and that no immediate changes in local government were contemplated.

¶ The Transfer Order reached Corridor on 221 1117. Corridor Fleet, vastly overstrength for the territory it patrolled, was staffed by personnel from throughout the Imperium.

¶ Its mission, one it had pursued for centuries, was to protect the passage through Corridor of Imperial commerce and communications.

¶ Although abandoning the mission was difficult, the strength of an Imperial order and the crisis facing the Empire made the Fleet's crew anxious to comply.

DEPOT/CORRIDOR (1511 A686354 F)   **Date: 221 1117**

¶ The Naval High Command of Corridor Fleet today announced the arrival of Emperor Lucan's Transfer Order.

¶ To help save the Imperiurn from the rebel Dulinor, the announcement said, Corridor Fleet is to transfer to Zarushagar within a month.

¶ Local authorities expressed confidence that sufficient assets would remain in Corridor sector to defend the region against Vargr raids.

¶ The assembled Corridor Fleet departed on its voyage to Zarushagar sector today, leaving defense of the sector to a scattering of reserve squadrons.

¶ Extensive plans for continued border patrols and pre-emptive operations "virtually guarantee" the security of the sector, according to a highly placed naval official.

DEPOT/CORRIDOR (1511 A686354 F)   **Date: 318 1117**

¶ Reports of a strong Vargr raid on Khukish last week were dismissed by naval authorities at Depot today as exaggerated.

¶ "We constantly receive reports of Vargr raids, and they always turn out to be isolated incidents of little importance. The Vargr would never dare a major operation into this sector," according to Commander Lynx Breneri ofthe Naval Information Office.

¶ Khukish Naval High Command today announced the withdrawal of the Khukish 984th Naval Reserve Squadron from border patrol duty.

¶ "After last week, it is clear that the 984th is more urgently needed in defense of the home system," according to Admiral Dwayne Fornish of the System Tactic Developments Command on Khukish. Several neighboring systems are considering similar moves. When the local coordination officer for the Imperial Navy protested the withdrawal, he was placed under house arrest. It is reported that the officer fled the Khukish system later in the day.

Project Farstar

For thousands of years, it's been apparent that the range and capabilities of jump drives are the key factor influencing Imperial culture. The short range jump drives used in the majority of Imperial merchant ships suit the government very well; they ensure that most ports will be visited occasionally since it's often difficult to bypass worlds that would otherwise represent poor markets. At the same time, slow communications make it difficult to mount a successful rebellion. Occasional civilian craft have J3 or J4 capabilities; in general these tend to be owned by wealthy individuals or organizations with a vested interest in maintaining the status quo, such as nobles and the largest mega-corporations. Military craft need greater range and generally take a brute force approach to the problem; some sacrifice up to 90 percent of their design weight to drives and fuel.

Given the size of the Imperium, there's a clear need for faster communications; however, the government is anxious to ensure that they remain firmly under control. For example, the Xboat system is notable for the fact that all messages carried must be computer scanned for data storage and transmission, and it's probably safe to assume that Imperial intelligence agencies frequently analyze Xboat messages, especially those from suspect individuals or organizations.

Although the imperial government sees no real need to improve civilian communications, there's a long standing need for more efficient military designs and government couriers. At the same time, it's apparent that it would be almost impossible to build such ships without making the technology available to civilian scientists and contractors. There's also a problem in deciding how to allocate resources for the research

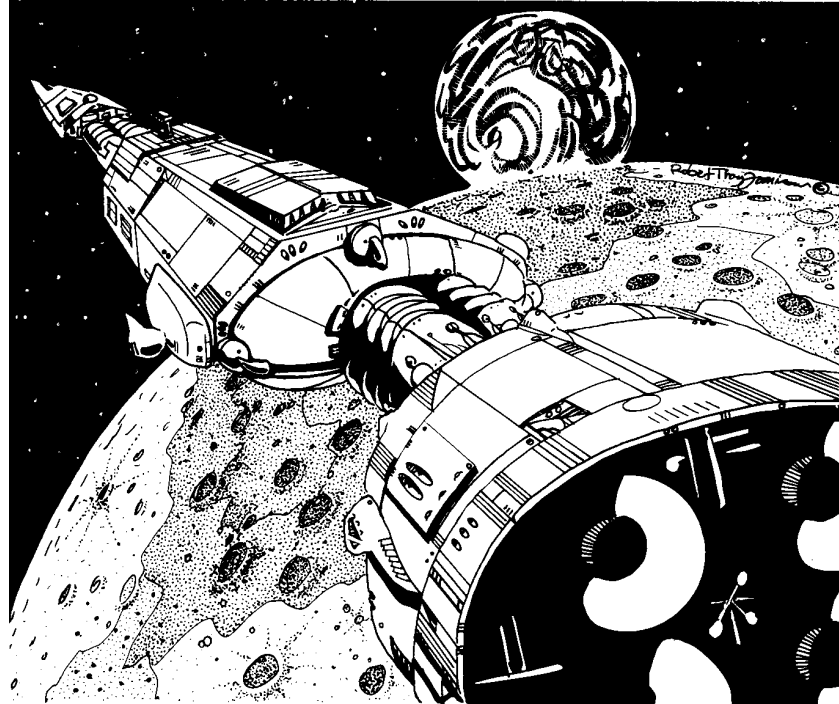since several approaches look promising but have yet to yield good results.

Farstar is the official project coordinating the research work. It's jointly funded by the Imperial government and services and by several megacorporations. Increased range for a given size of drive is given first priority, but other goals are decreased power consumption for a given mass, cheapness, and shorter jump durations. Other drive systems are also under investigation, but there has been little success in this area.

Some military design improvements have been achieved, but as yet there has been no development which would significantly improve civilian travel; it has occasionally been suggested that most of the interests behind the project would prefer to discourage

widespread civilian use of this area of technology. If the government began to launch new classes of military ships, the megacorporations would almost certainly be prime contractors and could use similar drives in their own ships. Smaller companies wouldn't have access to the new drives and would gradually be frozen out by the megacorporations. The government has a cozy working relationship with the megacorporations and feels that they can be trusted with faster ships, but it would prefer to limit smaller lines and free traders to existing technology. In practice, this means keeping the megacorporations 10 or 20 years ahead of their smaller rivals.

Since there's intense public interest in this research, and since it's possible that workers outside the project might develop useful ideas, there's a prize fund for the invention or discovery of any new or improved method for interstellar travel. Rewards offered include grants, honors, and guaranteed royalties; however, participants must agree to hand over patent rights and all other forms of control.
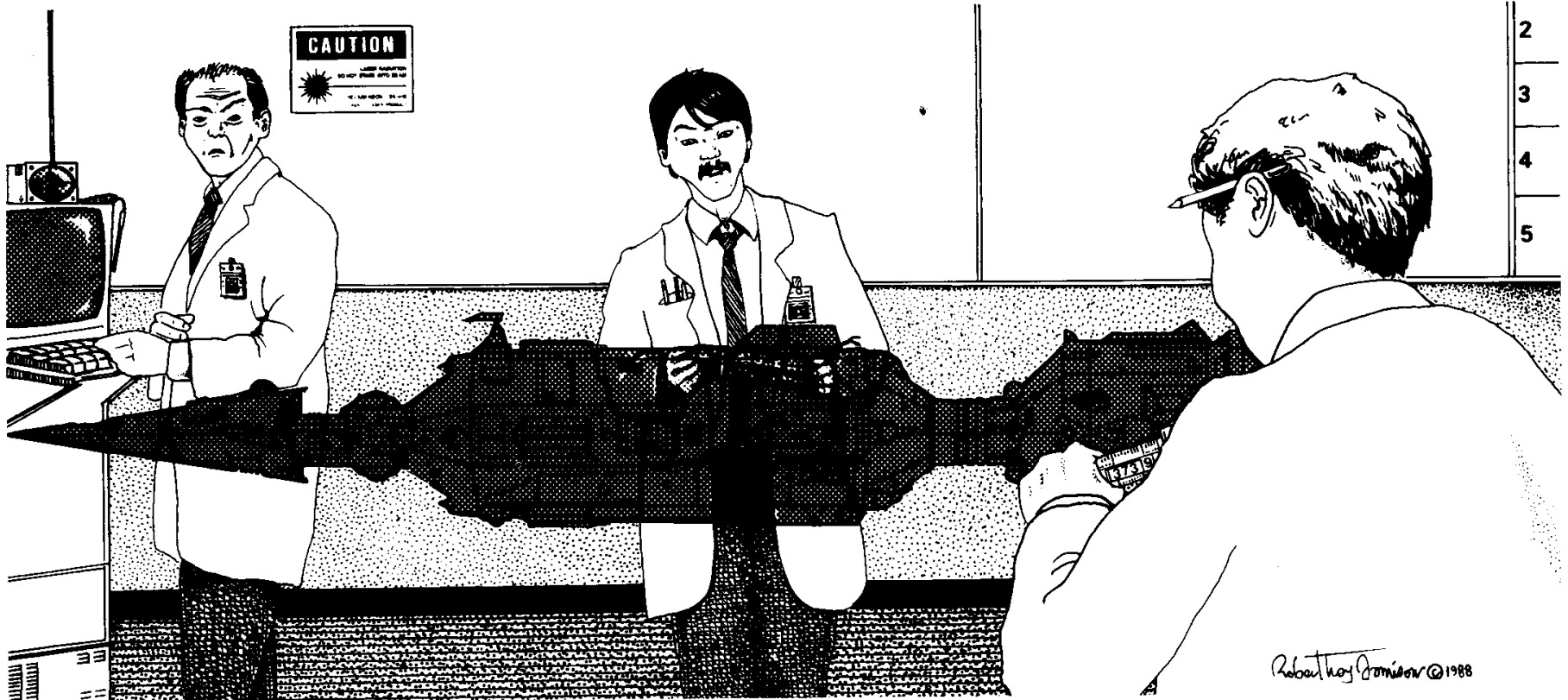
Despite this limitation, there are several thousand applications for grants and hundreds of attempts to demonstrate "new" or "improved" drive systems every year. Most come to nothing, but there are occasional demonstrations of marginal improvements.

Most of the project centers are in sparsely populated systems within easy jump range of industrial and technologically advanced worlds. These systems are usually interdicted and are generally Amber or Red zones, since the TAS regards such installations as potentially extremely dangerous. In 878, a research station (and an area of several hundred thousand square kilometers around it) was destroyed in circumstances which suggested that the scientists involved had managed to open a temporary jump link or possibly a relativistic wormhole into the core of the

local sun. In 1057 another installation apparently created a black hole, which subsequently "ate" the station and approximately 30 percent of an Earth-sized planet. Both accidents have suggested new theories about the nature of space and time, but how they will be tested remain unclear.

While much of the work remains secret, four main approaches are apparently receiving the greatest attention:

1. Improvement of existing designs: This area has shown some results which blend into the overall technological advancement of the Imperium. In general, this aspect of the project makes slow progress rather than producing any spectacular breakthroughs.

2. Misjumps: It has long been known that component failures, fuel impurities, and gravitational effects can cause a ship to misjump, in some cases throwing a J1 ship as far as 36 parsecs. Several experimental ships of various designs have been fitted with deliberately faulty jump drives which will malfunction almost every time they are used, backup drives for the return journey, and enough fuel for a second jump if the ship materializes in an unpopulated area. Several ships have been lost on such missions; others have returned with data suggesting that the misjump effect is totally random and not amenable to any form of control.

3. Multi-drive systems: This is possibly the most promising area researched, but it is unsuccessful to date. Theory suggests that operating several jump drives simultaneously without merging their fields might generate a stress effect with the ultimate jump a product of the jump capability of each drive. Thus three J2 drives might multiply together to produce a J8 product, or three J3 drives for a J27 product. In practice, the effect seems to be that such drives either merge fields to give their average product, or oppose fields to give a greatly reduced effect. Occasionally they'll rip the ship apart.

4. Alternative drives: This area of research receives some attention, although most scientists doubt that anything useful will be produced. Various systems of matter transmission have been investigated, but all seem to be unusable at interstellar distances. In 984 this research produced a method of converting matter to tachyon state, but it was later realized that matter disintegrated into subatomic particles under the stresses involved. At present there seems to be no use for this system even in communications, since the information content of any tachyon transmission is always garbled: signals appear to be randomly distributed in time, so that even crude code

transmissions (such as the ancient Terran Morse code) become unworkable.

The Scout service is continually alert for sightings and reports of ships which don't use normal jump drives, and Scout ships and bases have occasionally detected unusual phenomena which might be the result of such vessels' passage. However, it is equally likely that these observations were caused by purely natural phenomena or instrumental malfunctions.

Referee's Information

In order to preserve game balance, GDW suggests that referees should not allow the development of more powerful or faster jump drives. Although GDW has been known to break this rule, it may be best to assume that the normal **MegaTraveller** starship designs are the only types in common use. However, the search for enhanced drives can involve characters in unusual and potentially hazardous situations. The easiest way to avoid imbalance is to assume that all attempts will fail, but a more interesting option is to

allow the development of alternative drive systems which will have new and unforeseen problems. Not the least of these problems is the attitude of the Imperial government, which will do its best to ensure that civilians don't get their hands on faster ships.

The short scenarios below involve ideas for alternative drive systems, which shouldn't unbalance the game disastrously. All scenarios are in the style of **Traveller** supplement 6, **76 Patrons**, and they are designed for three to six player-characters.

_____

(I) Patron: Imperial Government Required Skills: Space Crew Required Equipment: None

Players' Information

After years of research, Imperial scientists have developed a jump drive which can be set up to give either a "controlled" misjump of up to 36 parsecs in a random direction or a random jump of 1-36 parsecs in a controlled direction, which doesn't allow full control of direction and distance. Scientists have asked the services to supply volunteers to crew the ship on its maiden flight, and hope to gather enough data to allow simultaneous control of direction and distance.

Referee's Information

This adventure should be run as part of the extended character generation system in **Traveller** Books 4 to 7. Player-characters in the services (including merchants, representatives of the megacorporations funding the project) should be assigned to the mission after 2D6 years of service while still in their chosen service branch, and the skills acquired during the mission should be related to their activities on the mission. See "Military Academy" in

Challenge (the **Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society**) issue 26 for a background to adventures within the character generation process.

The ship is a modified Far Trader carrying its normal J2 unit, a J1 unit which will initiate the controlled misjump, and a model 4 computer. The cargo capability is devoted to additional fuel capacity (for a J2 jump if the ship emerges in interstellar space), instrumentation, and supplies for a prolonged flight. The designers have not realized that the deliberate misjumps impose tremendous subatomic strains on all working parts, making the normal (and supposedly perfect) J2 unit prone to random misjumps. This effect will give a cumulative + 1 DM on the misjump roll for the J2 unit, increasing with each deliberate misjump. No normal method of correcting the fault (such as flushing the fuel supply) will reverse this effect; the only remedy is a new drive. On a roll of 12+, the special J1 unit will malfunction and give a truly random misjump with both distance and direction selected completely randomly. Fortunately the area selected for the tests has a large number of solar systems; the GM should choose a suitable area, remembering that one or two misjumps could take a ship out of the sector.

Roll 1D6

1-3: Scientists will discover the distortion effect after two to four experimental jumps and order a return to base using the J2 unit. Allow skills to influence the chance of misjump during the return flight, but say what the modified chance will be.

4: Two NPC scientists are Solomani or Zhodani infiltrators (substitute spies or terrorists most relevant to your campaign) who will try to hijack the ship after the first jump.

5-6: The theory behind the project is faulty, and the J1 unit will cause totally random misjumps from its first use.

If any of these possible outcomes or the random nature of the drive under testing leaves the ship in interstellar space with insufficient fuel to reach any system, see Appendix A below. If you would like to use this situation as a way of sending characters on a prolonged trek through unexplored space, see **Traveller** Adventure 4, **Leviathan**.

(II) Patron: Noble Required Skills: Ships crew Required Equipment: None

Players' Information

Sir Mazun Kir is an eccentric Vilani aristocrat and dilletante scientist encountered at the TAS hotel in port. He claims to have invented a new form of jump drive and is recruiting a crew to fly his ship (a modified subsidized merchant) eight parsecs to the nearest Imperial research station, which happens to specialize in such projects. He is not prepared to discuss the new drive and will operate it himself.

Referee's Information

The ship's engineering compartment has been gutted, and an oversized power plant has replaced the normal drives and jump system; heavily armored superconductor cables lead through armored bulkheads to the main hold, and the other holds contain extra fuel tankage. The computer is of an odd design seemingly assembled from parts of several nominally incompatible machines; most of its processing power is hardwired for jump control, with no other capabilities. Needless to say, the holds are firmly sealed, and access requires a combination, explosives, or cutting gear and several hours work. Khir should be played as a true eccentric rhapsodizing about the beauty of space one moment, then cold and a little paranoid a few seconds later. Players who attempt to look him up in the local equivalent of "Who's Who" will learn that he owns companies holding patents on several jump drive components. Patent files show that these are all minor refinements on existing technology rather than true technological advances.

If team members gain access to the hold, they will find that it contains three military surplus J2 units surrounded by a network of odd circuitry and components. Unless characters can spend several hours examining the unit, it will make little sense. If this time is available, they will realize that it is an attempt to link these three drives so as to multiply their effects. The three J2 units would thus theoretically become a J8 drive.

Roll 1D6

1: "Khir" is perpetrating an elaborate confidence trick. He's spent years building up his cover as a noble but is actually a criminal mastermind. There have been months of publicity surrounding the project, and the research base knows when the ship is supposed to arrive. As the ship heads out to the jump point, it will be intercepted by a privateer. Khir won't try to fight (and the ship isn't armed anyway); the team will be taken aboard the privateer and held prisoner. A week later, an identical ship will arrive at the research station with badly damaged engines, and Khir's twin brother will start to negotiate contracts. Their network of companies will raise 100 million credits from share sales and Imperial contracts before the fraud is discovered. Naturally the teams are then a weakness in the plan; as soon as Khir is sure his fraud has begun to work he'll have them killed, unless they can escape first.

2: Khir thinks that he has made a breakthrough but is wrong. The arrangement he has devised will result in a merging of fields, giving a normal J2 jump. The ship will emerge in interstellar space, a parsec from the nearest habitable system. Fortunately there's enough fuel for one jump, provided the players can persuade Khir to cooperate in gutting his system and running one of the three drives as a normal J2 unit. Khir will gradually decide one of the teams is responsible for the failure and denounce them as saboteurs when they reach port.

3: The same as 2, but the jump fields are opposed so as to give a small jump equivalent to J0.5; also, there will be no fuel left, apart from the maneuvering reserve. This leaves the ship stranded in interstellar space, but it will be just inside maneuver range of port. The team can survive if they can convert one or more compartments into emergency low berths and take watches over the two or three years needed to return to the port. If they don't use low berths, they'll run out of food and oxygen months before reaching port.

If no one thinks of this, or the teams are unable to complete the work, see Appendix A below.

4: At the moment that Khir switches on his drive system, the three engines will simultaneously explode outwards, boring neat holes through the supporting apparatus and the walls of the hold. On a roll of 11 + the hold hatches will give way under the sudden explosive decompression, leaving the entire ship in a vacuum. The ship won't travel anywhere and won't be fit for normal jump travel until the hull is repaired. The ship is heavily mortgaged to pay for the experimental drives, and the cost of repairing it will leave Khir bankrupt and unable to pay the team.

5: Khir has made a real breakthrough, and his system of drives will operate perfectly. They will also melt into radioactive slag a few seconds after the ship returns to normal space. Khir will be offered a contract to develop a more usable version of the drive for the Navy. If the teams have no criminal records, they may be offered work on one or the other of the experimental vessels at the station. Otherwise they will be hustled onto the first available flight out of the system. If the teams have done anything to arouse Khir's suspicions, such as searching the hold, he will suggest that base security hold them until they can be interrogated by Imperial Intelligence agents. Subsequent events are left to the referee's discretion.

6: The same as 5, but the drives will not melt.

(III) Patron: Spy Required Skills: Computer, Combat skills Required Equipment: Ship

Referee's Information

The spy is working for a local shipping line which doesn't want to be kept out of the latest areas of technology. The nearest research station is two parsecs away, an asteroid in an uninhabited system. The referee will need to design an installation built as a hollowed asteroid with surface structures and docking spaces for six ships. Four ships are at the station when the team arrives, with markings indicating experimental designs. The referee should maneuver the team into attempting a raid on the offices and computers of the station, or attempting to steal a ship by specifying enough guards and weapons' installations to make a total takeover or multiple theft impossible.

If the players decide to raid the laboratories, they will gain access to plans and models of 1 3 of the vessels described below. If they decide to steal a ship, describe the external appearance of all four vessels and let the players make a choice:

1: A modified trader similar to that described in encounter (I) above. Use the rolls for malfunctions described above if the teams decide to try the experimental drive.

2: A laboratory ship with the multiple jump drive system described in (II) above. Use the same malfunction possibilities if the teams attempt to operate the experimental drives.

3: An unusual design, a 100 ton spherical hull with no maneuver drives. It contains an experimental J2 drive, which should allow direct jump initiation from a planetary surface without the normal risk of a misjump or destruction. In fact the experimental circuits are incomplete, and any attempt to use the drive will destroy the ship and its occupants. Characters with Engineering 2 or better should be able to complete the installation in 6+2D6 hours. Once complete it will allow direct jumps from a planetary surface without risk of destruction but with a guaranteed misjump.

4: A Type S Scout/Courier, with a number of external pods, booms, and antennae. This ship looks like it might be carrying some new type of drive; in fact, it's assigned to frontier patrol duties, carrying

sensors and recorders. On its last flight, it detected a burst of Cherenkov radiation which seemed to imply the passage of a tachyonic starship. It has been sent to the station for analysis of the recorded data and sensor checks.

Roll 1D6

1-2: The Scout's instruments are faulty.

3-5: The ship actually detected a burst of tachyonic particles transmitted by the research station.

6: The Scout detected an alien spacecraft using a genuine tachyonic drive. It is now over 50 parsecs away, heading for a cluster 500 parsecs beyond the Imperial borders.

The spy will be prepared to pay the full price for the ships described in 1 3 above or 1.0 MCr for the Scout and the data it contains. On a roll of 8+, the money will be forged (at forgery level 3); on a roll of 9+ the spy is a Solomani agent, whose cover is work for the shipping line.

Appendix A: Rescue from certain death in the vacuum of space (*Deus ex Machina* Department).

Several of the devices and situations may leave travellers marooned in interstellar space. The following give a chance of rescue or escape.

a) Each player rolls a percentile dice three times without being told why. The referee records all rolls.

b) If any player rolls 42 on any throw or rolls three numbers adding to 42, the ship will suddenly be rescued by a passing starship (at a fairly high improbability factor).

c) If the numbers rolled by all the players add up to a number exactly divisible by 42, the same will happen.

d) If none of the players make any of these rolls, roll on the following table for an event occurring 1D6 weeks after the misjump:

1: Pirates find the ship.

2: A comet nucleus is detected at extreme maneuver range (with enough frozen gas to refuel the ship).

3: A fleet of hostile warships finds the ship. They are about to launch a surprise attack and will do their best to ensure that no one gives any warning.

4: The ship encounters a space-going lifeform (for example, an intelligent dust cloud of the type described by Sir Fred Hoyle in **The Black Cloud**. If the team can establish friendly contact (this should be very difficult), it will help them by accelerating the team's ship to 99 percent of the speed of light, giving them a short (subjective) flight home but actually taking years or decades of objective time.

The teams arrive home to discover that they've long been given up for dead and must spend several months unravelling the mess and resuming their lives.

5: The ship encounters some form of space warp, wormhole, or black hole, giving a chance for a very risky random jump outside normal space time. If the teams make enough engineering and scientific skill rolls, they'll reach a system where they can refuel and make repairs.

6: (Only use this ending if your players have good senses of humor and are at least partially responsible for their present predicament):

There's a knock on the outer door of the airlock. When someone opens it the teams will discover that the ship is in a hanger, apparently on an Earthlike world. The man (?) standing outside welcomes the

team to the afterlife and explains that their lingering deaths have been edited out of their memories to avoid unnecessary distress. Now it's time for the team to be reincarnated again. Would they like to begin by rolling a few dice to determine the shape of their future careers ... ?

Appendix B: Further Information

Greatly enhanced jump drive systems are described in **Secret of the Ancients** and in **The Traveller Adventure**. Descriptions of several useful interstellar drives can be found: The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Douglas Adams, The Avatar, Poul Anderson, Let The Spaceman Beware, Poul Anderson, The Deep Reaches of Space, A. Bertram Chandler, The Dark Dimensions, A. Bertram Chandler, Catch the Star Winds, A. Bertram Chandler, The Forever War, Joe Haldeman, Bill the Galactic Hero, Harry Harrison, Palace of Eternity, Bob Shaw, Ship of Strangers, Bob Shaw, and Who Goes Here, Bob Shaw.

-Marcus Rowland

Iris

The Imperial Regency of Intelligence and Security: They Also Serve Who Are Not Seen.

Note: This is a **MegaTraveller** variant.

In the year 622, the Imperium was war weary and drained. For 16 long years, civil war had raged back and forth as the Emperors of the Flag each sat for a brief moment upon the Iridium Throne, only to be toppled by the next ruthless usurper. But Arbellatra, last of the Emperors of the Flag, had a different vision.

Upon coming to power, she declared herself the regent, not the Emperor, thereby allowing the first trickle of legitimacy to return to Imperial politics. When she was made Emperor, she largely attributed her success to the image of patriotic responsibility generated by her role as regent.
.

What is less well-known is her first official act as first Emperor of the Line of Alkhalikoi. Still standing in her coronation gown, she decreed that the Imperium must be guarded against a recurrence of the political adventurism that had brought about the Civil War. Remembering how she herself had restored order to a war torn Imperium, she established an independent and powerful regent capable of ensuring the smooth succession of the throne's rightful heirs: the Imperial Regency of Intelligence and Security, or "IRIS."

Her choice for IRIS' high regent came as no surprise to any of the Imperium's political elite or to Rhys ap Connor, her friend and consort of 15 years and her intelligence chief throughout the long and trying Zhodaniand Civil wars.

Arbellatra and ap Connor had learned the key lesson of the Barrack's Emperors period: The throne could not be trusted to the tender mercies of ambitious naval commanders. What was needed was an independent, invisible force with the power to eliminate individuals who would contest the lawful Emperor or his/her successors. In addition, ap Connor was farsighted enough to urge Arbellatra to expand IRIS' mandates to include responsibilities that needed the Regency's organizational independence and secrecy, namely, covert operations dealing with foreign powers. The endemic bickering and rivalry between various services Navy, Scouts, Army made it essential that there be at least one powerful covert organization at the Emperor's disposal that had no political axes to grind. Pursuant to keeping IRIS free of outside intrigues, ap Connor restricted the social level of prospective IRIS appointees to a maximum of 10 and a minimum of five a solid middle class composite. This angered many ambitious nobles who had hoped to exert some control over the Regency by insinuating some of their own family members into its ranks. Ap Connor's demographic analysis had shown that middle class individuals tended to evoke far greater loyalty to the Imperium as a sovereign state than they did to any individuals that supposedly embodied that power. This individualistic predisposition also seemed markedly stronger in individuals of Solomani heritage than in the more code-bound Vilani. This resulted in an unusually high percentage of ethnically Solomani names in IRIS' duty rosters.

Predictably, ap Connor was the center of controversy, ranging from rumors about his being a secret Solomani supremacist to his plotting to overthrow the throne he was supposedly protecting. Even the motto he gave IRIS, Custodiamus Veritas "We Guard the Truth" (from the ancient Solomani Latin dialect), was the target of a play on words. The Regency's detractors revised it into a slightly different Latinism; Quis Custodes ipsos Custodiet? or: "Who Shall Guard the Guards Themselves?" Despite the exemplary service IRIS has unflaggingly afforded the Emperor and the Imperium, that nagging question still remains in the minds of many; given its unusual powers and insular nature, who could tell if IRIS is abusing its powers or not?

This issue became a matter of hot debate in 879, when an investigation into the Psionic Suppressions revealed that the two Psionic Institutes that had not had their charters revoked (Terra and Regina) were both being used (among other things) as training and testing centers for certain IRIS covert operatives. A general furor over this discovery compelled the Emperor and the high regent to disclose that IRIS did employ psionics on a very limited basis, pursuant to carrying out its second mandate. IRIS employs psionics in other ways also, but it was felt that a limited disclosure would satisfy public curiosity. It did.

OPERATIONS

IRIS has never published any numbers regarding the number of individuals on its duty rosters, but most estimates place the total between 300,000 and 400,000 a small force, given the size of the Imperium.

As an organization, IRIS is hard but fair. IRIS will go to the limit when trying to protect or recover an operative; there is a powerful sense of internal loyalty and esprit du corps. Conversely, defectors or double agents (whether they are actual IRIS personnel or "on site recruits") are, without exception, terminated at first expediency (they may be permitted to live long enough to compromise their associates via contact).

The Branches

There are three branches in IRIS: Covert, Strike, and Operations. It is estimated that 65 percent of IRIS' manpower is in Operations, 25 percent in Strike, and 10 percent in Covert.

The Covert Branch: This branch handles all clandestine activities and is generally considered to be the "elite" of IRIS. Appointment prerequisites are high, training is demanding, and missions are hazardous. Fifty percent of Covert assignments involve substantial travel (or residence) outside the Imperium's borders. The nature of their assignments varies from living a calm, undercover life in a foreign society while quietly gathering information, to sabotage and assassination. Covert operatives must be willing to give IRIS a substantial commitment; when they accept their appointments, they are signing up for 20 years. Not surprisingly, morale is extremely high in this branch, and their self-given motto, "They Also Serve Who Are Not Seen," reflects their status in Imperial eyes: invisible soldiers who fight an invisible war.

The Strike Branch: This branch functions as the "commandos" of IRIS. Their missions are primarily military in nature, involving either the security of highly sensitive installations/individuals or surgical strikes against sensitive targets. They rarely operate in units larger than platoon size, and usually conduct missions in squad or fire team size elements. Many military experts hold Strike operatives to be the finest troops in the Imperium on a man-for-man basis.

The Operations Branch: This branch is the foundation of IRIS. Operations personnel conduct the more "mundane" aspects of intelligence work. They are charged with data gathering, surveillance, tactical analysis, policy formation, and liaison work. They are frequently assigned as intelligence officers for Imperial embassies. They also provide IRIS with the majority of its medical personnel.

Special Conditioning

In addition to IRIS' normal operating policies, there are two areas of "special conditioning" that a select number of Covert operatives undergo. One area is anagathics maintenance; the other is psionic testing and training. Needless to

say, neither are "advertised;" they comprise the most confidential of IRIS' operating procedures.

Approximately five percent of the Regency's Covert operatives are on some schedule of anagathics maintenance. In the majority of cases, this involves a "slowing down" of the aging process. In a very few cases, it is arrested altogether.

The most important and the most obvious reason for this is the fact that younger skin is more receptive to repeated bouts with extensive plastic surgery. Even though TL 15 can work wonders even with elderly facial tissues, younger tissue is more pliant, more resilient, and more frequently alterable.

Less obvious but equally important is what the Regency refers to as "baby facing" their agents. In brief, analysis of intelligence operations showed that younger individuals were less likely to be identified as suspects in connection with crimes of espionage or sabotage, and that the more sophisticated the crime, the lower degree of suspicion placed on younger persons. Accordingly, IRIS takes steps to keep a number of its Covert agents "young," a tactic that additionally forces opposing intelligence services to consider a greater number of suspects, thereby complicating and slowing any investigations.

The second area of special conditioning --- psionic testing and training --- is among the best kept secrets of the Imperium. The value of psionics to any intelligence operation is obvious, but telepathy allows for foolproof loyalty checks. In a business where double agents and moles are the greatest dangers, the importance of this aspect of psionics becomes critical. IRIS tests all Covert operatives for psionic potential and telepathic talent immediately upon appointment, albeit under the influence of drugs that interfere with the memory. Regardless of the outcome, the operative's foggy memories of this testing are hypnotically and psionically suppressed.

Upon completing their 20 years of field service, those Covert operatives who elect to advance into IRIS' Directorate (the general ranks, if you will) have their memories restored and telepathic training is completed at that time. These directors then serve, among other things, as "loyalty checkers." While it is common knowledge that such checks are surreptitiously made of all persons who are to be granted a personal audience with the Emperor, it is not known that similar checks are carried out regarding IRIS' own agents. The directors and even the regents themselves are subject to periodic checks which provide insurance against high echelon subversion.

ORGANIZATION

IRIS' nerve center is in the Core sector. IRIS provides the Emperor with personal security in the form of unobtrusive psionic screening of all persons who have been granted an imperial audience, as well as a number of Covert operatives in various positions within the palace. The high regent and the 10 senior regents remain in Core sector at all times, directing IRIS' strategic level operations at the Regency's headquarters. However, only one regent is stationed on Capital itself, and the high regent rarely visits that planet. In this way, any natural or "man-made" catastrophe that might take the Emperor's life, will not also kill the high regent and his successors.

It is at Core headquarters that most of IRIS' long-range strategic planning and information analysis is done. It is also the central marshalling area for Strike operatives, which simultaneously gives the throne a powerful, independent combat force in close proximity.

The next organizational tier is comprised of the Domain level command centers. These centers compile and organize reports from the various sectors under their jurisdiction and then forward them to Core. They also oversee general assignment of personnel and dissemination of broad tactical goals to their various sectors. Non-senior regents and senior directors are in charge of these centers.

The last structured level of organization within IRIS is the operations center, which is assigned one to a sector. These operations centers are run by senior directors. They are the "grassroots" loci of IRIS. Given the nature of travel times, the senior directors of operations centers are permitted an extraordinary degree of independent action. They initiate all types of projects, assign Covert operatives, set intelligence agendas, designate essential targets. In all, they oversee 90 percent of IRIS' field operations.

They also assign and establish what are known as "project offices." These are the in field command and control centers used to support ongoing projects. Such offices may be essentially permanent or may exist for less than a month, depending on the nature, complexity, and duration of the project(s) that they are supporting. Run by directors and heavily staffed with Strike operatives, these offices are Covert operative's "link" to IRIS. In support of clandestine operations, they provide personnel to facilitate information drops, supply and reinforce undercover agents in the field, and function as safe houses.

Upholding the Five Mandates

The five mandates of the Regency constitute its reason for being. As such, it becomes important to have a general understanding of the mandates and how IRIS upholds them.

Mandate 1) Ensure and enforce the smooth and lawful succession of rightful heirs to the Imperial Throne. In the event of an interregnum, IRIS is to act as regent pro-tem until a legal heir is located and/or reaches the age of his/her majority.

Pursuant to the fulfillment of this mandate, IRIS maintains extensive records on all possible successors to the throne. It also keeps extremely well-informed regarding every aspect of the Imperium's political, economic, and military condition in the event that the Regency would have to provide sovereign leadership during an interregnum.

But perhaps the most interesting and controversial activity initiated under this mandate is the Regency's "overseeing" of naval fleet commanders. In short, IRIS maintains two to three undercover operatives on the shipboard staff of every fleet commander in the Imperium. Their mission is twofold: to prevent the commander from using the fleet in a bid for the throne, and to prevent general mutinies, whatever the motive. The reasons behind this activity are clear; whoever controls the fleets controls the Imperium. The Barracks Emperors proved that beyond argument. Equally clear is the Navy's general resentment; they have always considered it a blow to their pride that they have to be watch-

dogged by an independent agency. However, given the number of mutinies that IRIS operatives have prevented over the past six centuries, many fleet commanders actually take comfort in the knowledge that they have a couple of guardian angels somewhere on board.

Mandate 2) Prevent "unreliable" individuals from gaining direct access/proximity to the person of the Emperor.

IRIS fulfills this mandate by providing surreptitious psionic screening of all persons who have been granted an audience with the Emperor. They also maintain sporadic surveillance and detailed files on all Imperial intimates and palace staff.

Mandate 3) Check and compare all information relayed to the Emperor against IRIS' own independent sources.

IRIS achieves this by funneling information from the sector level operations offices into headquarters in Core, and then comparing it to the reports made to the Emperor by the various services (Navy, Scout, Army, Foreign Service, etc.). IRIS notes any contradictions and offers any data it might have on any subjects that are vague or confused by conflicting reports. This increases the reliability of information received by the Emperor and strips away any misrepresentations that might stem from the vested interests of a given service (the Navy is renowned for "weighted" reporting).

Mandate 4) Identify all significant anti-imperial covert activities initiated by foreign powers. Formulate and expedite responses thereto.

This mandate accounts for at least 80 percent of IRIS' Covert and Strike activities. These activities are conducted primarily at the sector and subsector level and involve some of the dirtiest, nerve-wracking work in all of known space. One of the most interesting features of IRIS' activities in upholding this mandate is the relationships that have evolved between the Regency and numerous outlaw Psionics Institutes. A perennial hotbed for Zhodani infiltration attempts, the Institutes provide IRIS with an excellent opportunity for monitoring Zhodani activities within the Imperium.

Therefore, IRIS permits the Institutes to exist but makes certain members aware that the Regency is in fact aware of, and permits, the Institute's continued existence. However, in return, IRIS expects the Institute's cooperation. The results of that cooperation have been spectacular. Although this is a controversial tactic, IRIS maintains that if you know where the Institutes are, you can monitor them and make sure that nothing gets out of hand. Only when you start closing them down do you drive the problem deeper underground, where you can no longer keep tabs on it.

Mandate 5) Conduct and maintain covert activities in foreign territories, pursuant to ensuring the security of the Imperium.

IRIS has had to carry out increasing numbers of these operations over the past two centuries in response to requests which come not only from the Emperor, but from the military services. The reason lies in the increasing destructiveness of general warfare. The more advanced technology becomes, the more expensive and debilitating war becomes. Decisive results become obtainable by the implementation of forces that also annihilate most, if not all, useful resources. Consequently, the cost effectiveness of overt military confrontation decreases. As a result of the decrease in the cost-effectiveness,

war increasingly moves into the realm of clandestine operations: surgical strikes, sabotage, and assassinations. The attainment of limited but key objectives becomes paramount in the ongoing struggle between interstellar powers. Accordingly, IRIS' activities in these areas have risen, particularly since the Rim War.

A note on Mandates 4 and 5: IRIS is not the only agency that engages in such operations, but it nominally oversees and coordinates all such activity, The Scout Security Branch is very cooperative in this regard, Navy Intelligence less so. However, they generally don't mind this arrangement; neither the Scouts nor the Navy has the resources or inclination to make clandestine operations their first priority. Therefore, IRIS gets the most difficult jobs and bears the final responsibility.
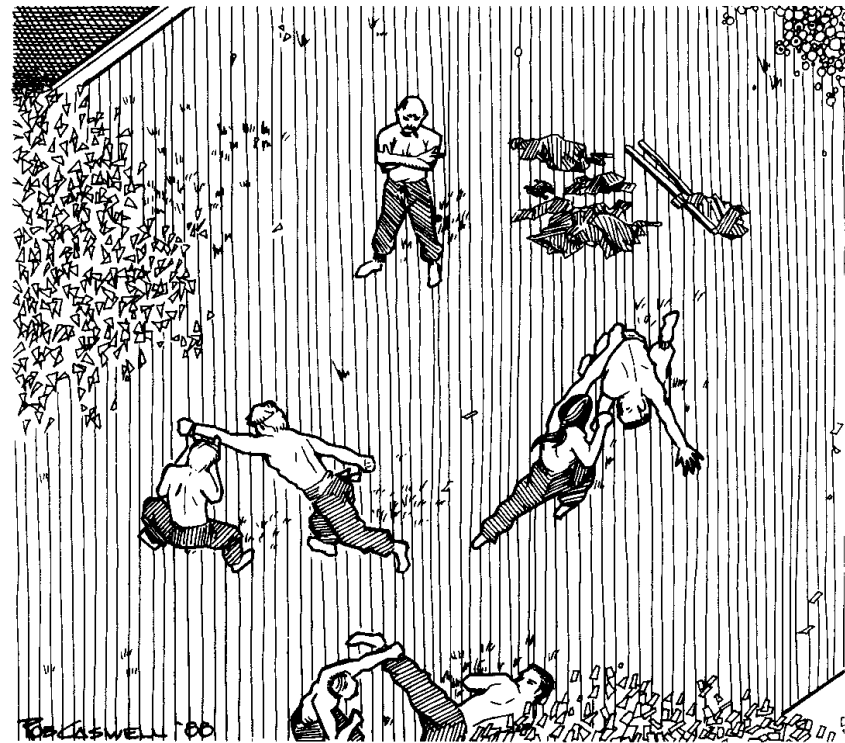
Retirees

Most operatives do not opt (or qualify) to continue into the ranks of the Directorate. This does not mean that their relationship with the Regency comes to an end. All operatives particularly former Covert operatives are monitored to some extent to the day they die. The more ambitious and sweeping their post Regency ventures, the more they are watched. IRIS requests that former operatives who engage in "volatile personal projects" (i.e., get involved in any

high stakes, high risk ventures) keep the Regency informed as to the general nature and direction of their activities. If this good faith cooperation is given, IRIS is fairly lenient regarding its former employees. In cases where the activity is clearly pro-imperial (particularly where the activity meshes with Regency goals), aid is occasionally supplied, primarily through the removal of red tape.

However, the majority of retiring operatives seek more traditional employment, usually as intelligence chiefs for planetary governments or megacorporations. It is worthwhile to note that almost 20 percent of IRIS retirees find employment with Hortalez et Cie, perhaps the largest Imperial megacorporation. IRIS and Hortalez have strong ties dating back to IRIS' inception. Megacorporations in general and Hortalez in particular (given its enormous investments in other firms), strongly desire the governmental stability that IRIS was formed to ensure. Not surprisingly, eight of IRIS' 10 private sector economic advisors are Hortalez executives.

RECENT HISTORY AND CURRENT SITUATION
The following details recent history and current situations.

Postwar Changes
In the wake of the Fifth Frontier War, IRIS' fortunes changed for the worse. Elated by the news of victory and brimming with confidence, many people began claiming that this latest victory in the Marches conclusively proved that "psionic powers have been proven inferior to the abilities of normal men." A number of nobles including an especially vehement contingent from the Ilelish sector were particularly vocal in this regard. This general self-congratulatory attitude grew, and by 30-1115, it had metamorphosed into requests that the Emperor do away with IRIS' pre-audience psi-screening. IRIS found itself in a position where it could not offer a rebuttal. Psi-sensitive Directors had played a key roll in ensuring the victories attributed to "normal men," but it was impossible to point out how psionic powers had ensured victory without compromising the secrecy of those powers. After much discussion, IRIS volunteered to remove itself from palace security if Strephon so desired. This offer made life easier for the Emperor, who had no desire to "dismiss" IRIS after six centuries of faithful service. But given the political pressures, he accepted the offer and nullified IRIS' second mandate.

The sudden increased attendance of certain nobles at court after the removal of psi screening began to concern IRIS by late 1115. The Regency found itself in accord with its traditional adversaries, the nobility, when it made recommendations to the Throne against the appointment of Dulinor of Dlan to an Archducal seat. As the weeks passed, the writing on the wall grew clearer, and any lingering doubts finally vanished on 124 1116. On that day, the high regent received word from the undercover overseers in Admiral Hutara's (Dulinor's brother) fleet staff that a number of coded communications directed to Hutara himself had been detected. However, the code was not one used by the Navy; in fact, it was completely unknown. Additionally, a large number of shore leaves had suddenly been granted and others postponed, with the net result of keeping all pro-Dulinor personnel fleetside. After a 12 hour conference with three senior regents and various high-ranking analysts, High Regent

Garran Trainor Hughes ordered that the Emperor be sent a direct warning and that IRIS' pre-interregnum contingency plans be put into effect. Jump 6 couriers were dispatched immediately, bearing instructions for IRIS forces to begin concentrating in the Marches, Core, and Rim.

The Assassination
But the warning to Strephon arrived too late. At the time of the assassination, the Regency was still planning to take charge in the event of an interregnum. However, the senior regent stationed on Capitol was killed at his home minutes before the assassination took place. Therefore, by the time news reached the next available senior regent, news of Lucan's questionable ascension and the concurrent unrest in the Moot were only days behind. After considerable discussion, it was decided that the high regent would remain in the Core sector with a skeleton staff and two companies of Strike operatives. It was his duty to attempt to determine the legality of the current succession situation. The remainder of IRIS' resources evacuated the Core and launched into their worst case contingency plan: establishing and preserving a power base from which to rebuild the Imperium in the wake of a civil war.

Activation of IRIS' Contingency Plans
The vast majority of IRIS' resources moved rapidly to the Solomani Rim sector. There, in cooperation with Hortalez et Cie (and other megacorporations largely owned by Hortalez, notably, Instellarms, Ling Standard Products, and Sternmetal Horizons), the Regency consolidated a strong position centered on the Concord, Esperance, and Vega subsectors. Next, the Regency exercised its interregnum powers of Mandate 1 to assume command over the Rim fleets. Although at first this was resisted, the aggressive Solomani reaction to the news of the assassination made the commanders think again. Within a week, the Rim admirals were gladly acknowledging IRIS' claim. In an independent statement, they concurred that since Lucan had not received the Moot's consent, power legally reverted to the Regency. Of course, this high sounding reasoning had little to do with the fleet commanders' decision for siding with IRIS. Quite simply, the area secured by IRIS offered them a secure support base for their fleets, a superb defensive position, and a legal excuse to refuse any orders that would compel them to join the multisided naval meat-grinder developing in the Core sector,

Spinward operations were placed on an independent footing under the guidance of the most senior regent there. He immediately put his resources at the disposal of the new Archduke of Deneb (Duke of Regina) in order to assist the Marches in resisting advances by foreign powers.

As the situation at Core deteriorated and it became evident that Lucan's actions had stalemated whatever chance there was for a legal resolution to rightful succession, the high regent relocated to the Rim, leaving the third most senior regent to assess succession claims and feed information to the interregnum headquarters in the Rim.

The Rim area selected by IRIS was quickly forced into becoming, for all practical purposes, an independent state, when the first Solomani incursions tested the Imperial borders. Calling itself the Regency Concordiat (with a

provisional capital at Eleusis: Concord 0509), IRIS' fledgling policy hit hard at the first tentative Solomani probes, stopping them cold. Then, while the Solomani Confederation was still regrouping for what it feared would be a long and costly assault, the Concordiat offered a truce, including a negotiated withdrawal of all Imperial forces from several sectors: a move that ceded Terra itself (and thus cooled the Solomani war fever). Wary but glad to be able to bypass the consolidated naval power of the Concordiat (supported by 14 naval bases, and the Depot system, Vega 0301), the Solomani agreed to the truce, occupied the ceded areas, and then swept past, eager to make deeper inroads against more vulnerable targets. (Current Concordiat boundaries are indicated on the map on page 31 of **Challenge** 30, *The Rebellion Begins*.) This outcome was a major reassurance and relief to the Vegans, who, being long lived, had very clear personal memories of how non-humans fare under the humanocentric Solomani Confederation. Equally significant, IRIS' diplomatic maneuverings had minimized military losses, thereby preserving the Concordiat's forces for future defense.

Future Goals

IRIS' primary goal is to rebuild the Imperium, although perhaps along the lines being espoused by the Federalists with the Emperor as wielder of various vetoes rather than as an absolute autocrat. In reforming the Imperium, the Regency would also like to bring about an agreement that might include peaceful reintegration with the Solomani Confederation.

The Regency is still attempting to identify any legitimate successors to the Throne, with the intent of offering them protection during course of interregnum. However, were a potential "successor" to order IRIS to bring forces to Core, the Regency is prepared to refuse on the grounds that approval by the Moot is necessary before any successor can be legally recognized as Emperor. Until then, the Regency retains responsibility for control over Imperial resources it has been able to preserve. Under no circumstances will it jeopardize the well being of the Concordiat, which may yet turn out to be the last bastion of civilization and high technology in the Rim.

Despite a general war footing, the Regency Concordiat is attempting to build strong trade relations with the Confederation. It is the Concordiat's strategy to become an essential trade partner to the Solomani, thereby discouraging any future attacks which would inevitably jeopardize that relationship.

Possibilities for Play

The possibilities for play as an IRIS character of any branch are obviously limitless. A few interesting scenarios might include:

Security and liaison work on Ludmilla (Esperance, 0406), where the human supremacist party that is currently in power is highly upset over the Concordiat's strict insistence on equal rights for all sophonts. Characters might have to protect an important Vegan political leader or infiltrate and dismantle the supremacist faction.

Despite a general warfooting, the Regency Concordiat is attempting to build strong trade relations with the Confederation.

Work as a courier to and from the IRIS elements still in the Core sector. Various complications could arise, including having to travel undercover to avoid Dulinor's people (who take a very dim view of the Regency), avoiding Solomani forces, or having to help against the sudden outbreak of commerce raiding that threatens all interstellar transport.

Quelling Solomani uprisings on a number of planets throughout the Concordiat, particularly Heraldes (Dingir 0202), where there is strong evidence that the rebels are being supplied directly by the Solomani. Putting down the rebels could include cadre work with local militia, infiltration of the rebel underground, or surgical strikes against their leadership.

Counterstrikes versus Vargr raiders that are pushing over into the Deneb sector. This situation could also include intelligence gathering in Vargr space as part of an effort to attempt to predict exactly where the next major strikes will be located.

Providing security on a Concordiat trade mission to the Near Bootes Cluster (Capella sector) that is a part of the attempt to build economic ties with some of the more influential planets in the Solomani Confederation. Possibilities for this include attempts at sabotage, ambushes, even a double agent on board who is working for an ultramilitant Solomani faction that wants to keep relations with the Concordiat from becoming amicable.

The character is on Embassy assignment in Solomani territory when news of the assassination arrives by secret Imperial courier. He hears the assassination announcement only 24 hours ahead of when it reaches the general news. His present job is to evacuate the embassy and also to keep ahead of Solomani pursuers until such time as the Imperial border can be crossed.

Charles E. Gannon

Editor's Note: Watch the next issue of **Challenge** for **IRIS Character Generation**.