

Cover by David Cherry

The No. 36  
**JOURNAL**  
*of the Travellers' Aid Society®*

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Dates in this issue of the *Journal* are given in accordance to an arbitrary Imperial calendar of 365 days. The date consists of a three-digit day number (the current day of the year) a dash, and a four-digit number (showing the current year since the founding of the Imperium).

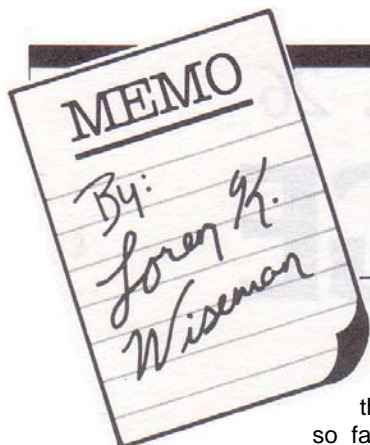
The latest date of **Traveller News Service** in this issue is 123-1118.

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*The Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* is published quarterly as a supplement to **Challenge** magazine.

**Submissions:** We welcome articles and illustrations for the **Journal**. Please inquire before submitting manuscripts, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope; we will send manuscript guideline and format sheets. Foreign inquires (except APO/FPO) please include International Reply Coupon.

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36-21, **Traveller News Service (Traveller News Service)**, Marc Miller  
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## From the Management

Now that **Challenge** has gone bimonthly, we have had to make a number of changes to the way we do things. Issues are beginning to slip by me so fast that I am sometimes confused as to which issue a given item will appear in. For example, I am writing this editorial in late October, but it will be some time before issue 36 is mailed to subscribers. Issue 35 is just being mailed, and I have already turned in the articles for 37. You can see why feedback results don't come back in time to go in the next issue. We are now working so far ahead of production that I need to ask a favor of those of you sending in convention announcements: We need them four months ahead of time to ensure a mention in the "Just Detected" (six months is even better).

*Loren K. Wiseman*

Issue 34 feedback was as follows:

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## TRAVELLER NEWS SERVICE

### NULINAD/EMPTY QUARTER

**Date: 012 1118**

¶ Until now engaged in sporadic fighting in the rimward reaches of Antares sector, large squadrons of the Antares Fleet, with the attached 104th Reserve Fleet and several squadrons of the 226th Fleet, clashed with ships of Lucan's Imperium in the Nulinad system.

¶ This major clash has for the first time pitted massed enemy ships against the proud fleets of Antares, testing the League's commitment to independence.

### NULINAD/EMPTY QUARTER

**Date: 013 1118**

¶ Caught off guard in a classic refuelling ambush, portions of Lucan's fleet were engaged and destroyed. At least seven warships were destroyed, and no Antares ships received critical damage.

¶ The remainder of Lucan's fleet has dispersed and jumped out of system. An unofficial source suggested that they must be intending to retreat out of the area in the face of superior ship strength, possibly toward Zukhisa or Dini.

¶ The fleet base on Nulinad's moon, though never engaged during this battle, is now being hardened against future assaults by the corps of engineers.

### CAPITAL/CORE

**Date: 019 1118**

¶ Large numbers of Dulinor's ships have broken through into Dagudashaad and Core sectors, apparently with the intention of disrupting interworld trade routes.

¶ The admiralty released a communique in which it discussed its plans to mobilize more reserve units and pull several mainline ships out of the front to deal with this new problem. The communique also assures that the penetrating ships have minimal ground attack capabilities.

¶ All transport craft of any kind are encouraged to travel in organized, protected convoys whenever possible.

### ZUKHISA/EMPTY QUARTER

**Date: 020 1118**

¶ Fresh from its defeat at Nulinad, Lucan's forces appeared in the Zukhisa system today. The starport was immediately bombarded and the system defense craft available were quickly forced to retire to the outer system.

### ZUKHISA/EMPTY QUARTER

**Date: 022 1118**

¶ Relief forces which jumped into the system yesterday performed admirably against Lucan's forces today.

¶ Another three major warships were destroyed, and another critically damaged. However, fighter squadrons from the Antares Fleet and system defense took several losses, as well.

¶ The damaged ship, the cruiser Leonaffle was boarded and seized. The prize crew has been instructed to return through the sector for possible repair of the ship and its return to duty in the service of Archduke Brzk.

### BELUMAR/EMPTY QUARTER

**Date: 077 1118**

¶ Regrouped after its defeat at the Battle of Nulinad earlier this year, the forces of Lucan have converged for a coordinated assault against the fleet way stations at Belumar.

¶ A liaison robot for the Admiralty suggested that Belumar's secret location must have been leaked to Lucan's agents, otherwise its out of the way location would have protected it from such a well-planned assault.

### TERRA/SOL

**Date: 081 1118**

¶ Jeffery Long, formerly a reporter for the Phoenix Sun News organization, surfaced today from SolSec, following his internment by Imperial authorities nearly six years ago.

¶ Tong claims that his work dealing with so called hyperspace sickness drew him into a ring of high tech Imperial research and, ultimately, to an Imperial jail cell, as well.

¶ "My findings will be published soon, I promise you," stated Long as he was reunited with his family in Buenos Aires.

### BELUMAR/EMPTY QUARTER

**Date: 088 1118**

¶ A relief force consisting of the 36th and 84th Fleets, with attached reserve squadrons, arrived today to engage Lucan's forces here.

¶ Lucan's fleet retreated with minor casualties, leaving behind the ground elements it had landed more than a week before.

¶ With assistance from close orbital bombardment, Belumarese defenders easily overcame the abandoned ground forces, who surrendered en masse before planet dawn.

¶ Though driven off, the loss of the way station facilities at Belumar to Lucan's fleets will be a serious setback to the League's ability to effectively defend its independence.

**DEPOT/CORRIDOR (1511 A686354 F)****Date: 092 1118**

¶ "Continued rumors that Vargr corsairs are massing a major assault against facilities in Depot are not only annoying but are doing much to undermine the very real job of maintaining effective border patrols," says Commander Lynx Breneri of the Naval Information Office today.

¶ He also added that the notion of Vargr acting in any sort of large concerted effort is "ludicrous."

**TERRA/SOL****Date: 093 1118**

¶ SolSec released today a communique stating that Jeffery Long, recently freed from imperial prison, has been murdered.

¶ "The hotel room where Mr. Long and his family were staying in Osaka on their vacation was all but destroyed by a bomb. There were no survivors."

¶ Though several staff members of the hotel are under investigation, no charges are expected to be filed against them.

¶ "We cannot rule out the possibility that Imperial intelligence agents carried out this vicious crime against true humaniti, the technology of the bomb and its professional placement are very suspicious," stated an anonymous source in the local district attorney's office.

**DEPOT/CORRIDOR (1511 A686354 F)****Date: 102 1118**

¶ A force of Vargr warships, estimated to be over 500 vessels strong, has entered the system today and begun its systematic hunt of merchant vessels.

¶ The three squadrons of the 255th Fleet left in the system were sent out against the Vargr, but were dispersed and destroyed by the encroaching Vargr.

¶ Evacuations from Depot itself had been announced, and then later cancelled as the Vargr noose tightened around the planet.

¶ "With Vargr animals in control of the approaches to Depot we have little choice but to maintain our control over the surface and await the imminent arrival of a relief force," assured Baron hault Grivven. The Naval Information Office has been in turmoil and unavailable for comment.

**GUSHAMAD/DELPHI****Date: 103 1118**

¶ The fate of a defecting noble and his family has drawn Margaret face to face with Lucan's powerful fleets, only to prove to the world the righteousness of her cause.

¶ Margaret, under advice of her high command, accepted a written plea for assistance from John, Marguis of Palanthir, a world in Old Expanses sector. A single squadron of ships was dispatched months ago to rendezvous with the escaping Marquis and his family and provide them safe escort to Anaxias.

¶ On their return voyage, a hundred ship squadron of reservists under Lucan's control caught up to the defector and battle lines were drawn.

¶ In mid-battle, however, several of the reservist ships broke ranks and began firing on their former compatriots. More ships switched sides and drove the few loyal ships away. A total of 35 ships have joined the original 12 escorts and the support of Margaret.

**KURAE/ZARUSHAGAR****Date: 116 1118**

¶ Today saw the conclusion of the largest fleet action to date between Lucan's Vengeance Fleet and Dulmor's Illeish Fleet, centered around the three worlds in the outer Kurae system.

¶ The week long seesaw conflict has left both fleets severely weakened. The Vengeance Fleet claims to have inflicted over 100 losses on Dulinor. The Illeish fleet boasts a similar number of enemy ships destroyed.

¶ In one incident of interest, patrols of both sides approaching an outer system planet fought it out to the last two ships. Both ships, heavily damaged and unable to use their ship-to-ship weapons, managed to come in contact and commence boarding actions, leaving only 15 Illeish crewmen alive on the wrecked hulks, proclaiming their own victory.

¶ Both fleets have jumped out of the system to regroup.

¶ Salvage ships from a dozen nearby worlds have arrived to begin picking through the wreckage, careful to evade the few fighters left to secure the area against looting.

**TERRA/SOL****Date: 123 1118**

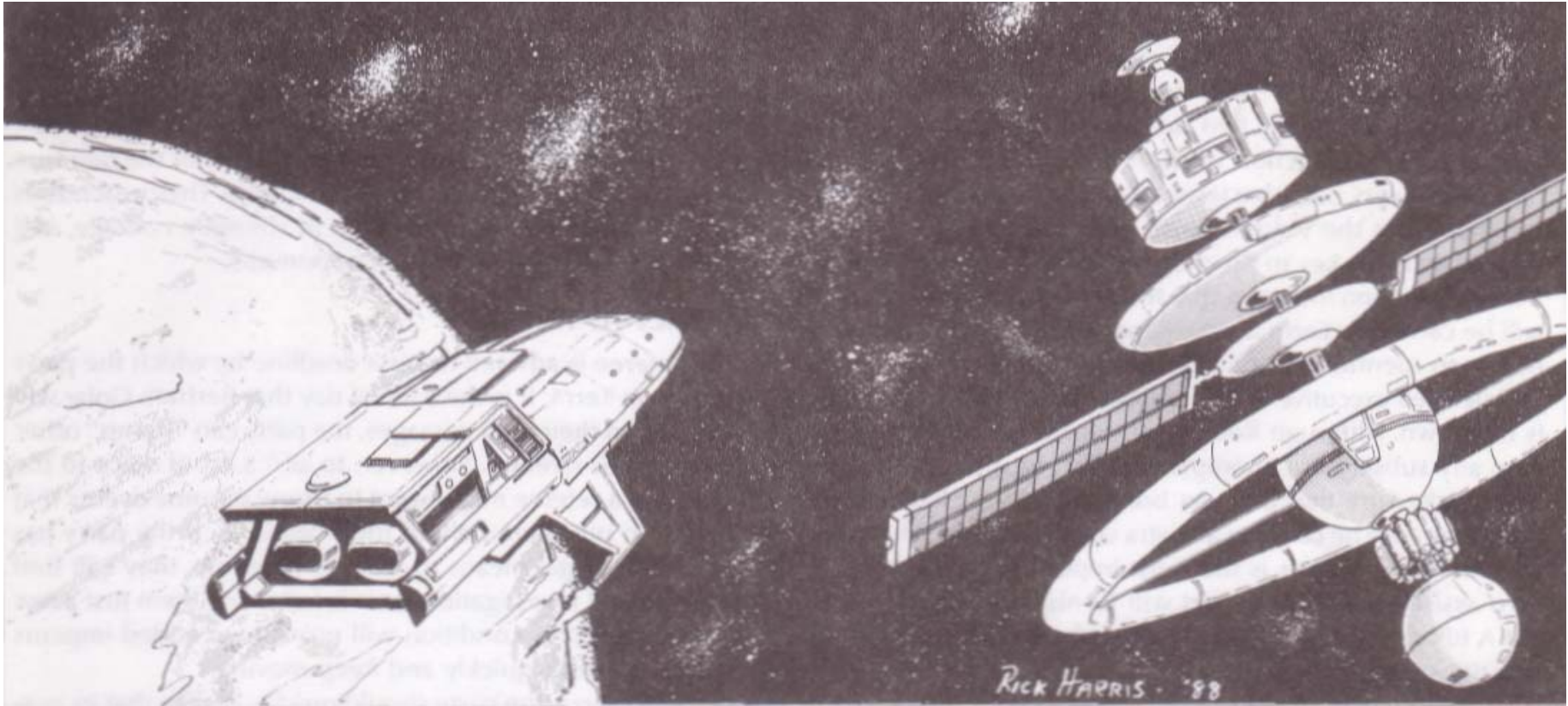
¶ From notes gathered from the wreckage of the hotel room where Jeffery Long and his family were murdered earlier this year, his publisher has produced and released a draft of his works entitled "The Hyperspace Web."

¶ In it, Long's notes suggest that he was jailed by Imperial authorities when his investigative work, into the problems and mysteries of hyperspace sickness, was becoming uncomfortable to naval researchers.

¶ It states that popularized research into the sickness was getting dangerously close to research facilities the Imperial Navy had working on breaking the jump 6 barrier.

**Traveller News Service** is an Imperium-wide service of the **Travellers'Aid Society**.





## The Green Hills of Earth

By Charles E. Gannon

*The following is an adventure calling for characters from IRIS. IRIS was originally presented in "IRIS," **Challenge** 33, and in "IRIS Character Generation," **Challenge** 34. The adventure presents a job that would come to a group of characters through IRIS. It not only gives players a look at some of the Rim intelligence community during the first three years of the Imperial Interregnum, but also provides some "hands on" insights into a number of IRIS' motivations and methods.*

It is recommended that at least one character in the party have some sort of intelligence background. A retired IRIS operative would be great, but they are (and should always remain) very rare indeed. Any character who had been posted to Intelligence School in the Navy or the Security Branch of the Scouts would do just fine. Army Intelligence (something of a contradiction in terms) would be okay, but the character should be kept a little more in the dark by his employers until such time as he has lived down the Army stigma.

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

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## BEGINNINGS

*We had just finished a job in Ishumled, Dingir Subsector, about as unremarkable a world as you'll find, which was why we were shocked when "Robert" contacted us. He knew where to find us, and he knew we were undercover in Solomani space. He knew too much for us to ignore him.*

*"You come well recommended," he said with an excessively smooth smile. "We're interested in enlisting your help for a delicate project." "Who's we?" I asked. He only smiled. I watched the ice cubes chase each other slowly about the rim of my highball glass; okay, no names, no surprise.*

*"Okay, Robert, then why don't you tell us about this project of yours?" The same smile. "Certainly. It has come to our attention that a radical fringe element within the Solomani Confederation intends to destroy all sapient life on a world of some importance. We would like you to help us prevent this."*

*I tried not to swallow too hard; saving planets was a little beyond our normal job description. "Which world?" I asked.*

*His smile grew stiff. "Earth."*

## PLAYERS' INFORMATION

The party, while on an undercover assignment in the Solomani Rim, is contacted by a man who refers to himself only as Robert. Robert and his unseen "friends" have learned that a lunatic fringe in Solomani space is interested in completely depopulating Earth. They have been referred to the player-characters by the group's last employers in the Regency Concordiat: IRIS. The job: Prevent this radical faction from succeeding.

It is clear to any character with Liaison, Interview, or Interrogation skill (or even with common sense) that Robert knows far more about this plot than he is telling. However, he will only share this much:

The method of depopulation is to be a bioagent, tailored to affect only humans. It is of a "rapid breathing sleeper" variety. Basically, it will reproduce and spread swiftly before any symptoms become manifest. It is estimated that once introduced, it would be 100 percent pervasive in three or four weeks. Symptoms would start appearing by the third week. The 100 percent fatality mark among infected individuals would be reached sometime in the seventh week. The only "positive" feature of this borderline virus bacteria is that it burns itself out very quickly; the strain mutates itself into a harmless pseudo-organism in five weeks. Therefore, even if carried off Earth by ships' crew and tourists, the bacteria would evolve into a harmless form after five weeks of reproduction. But during that time, it has nearly 100 percent lethality in all the humans it infects. Obviously, such a bioagent is far too dangerous to be left lying around. That is why this bioengineered "gerrn" is a "two part" agent. In effect, it is created by combining two advanced viruses in a protein medium. The interaction of these two strains produces the bioagent (a very basic bacteria) as an "evolutionary" result of the mutations the viruses cause in one another.

This fact is the key to the plot of the radical group. Robert's best information indicates that the two halves of the bioagent will be carried to Earth by two separate persons. One courier has been identified as Bertram Golar, a slightly overweight, middle-aged executive in an accounting firm. The other courier is

unknown. Although Robert and his friends will be able to stop any subsequent attempts with this bioagent, the group must make sure that they get both couriers; a chance exists that Golar may be carrying an extra vial of the virus. Therefore, the unknown courier is the most important of the two.

To assist the group, Robert will furnish them with:

- \*A full dossier on Bertram Golar, along with a copy of his identification card.

- \*Passports and visas to Earth, as well as security clearances (since the group has been inside Concordiat / Imperial space within the last year) and weapon permits that allow the characters to operate as though earth was law level 4 (handguns permitted).

- \*A numbered bank account with the Greater Bank of Terra containing Cr250,000. These funds can be used to cover any operating costs.

- \*High passages to Earth and one high passage off for each character.

The payment for the job is the bank account itself; they can withdraw everything upon completion and leave. All they have to do is to deliver the bioagent vial(s) to a medical testing facility in the Saar Arcologies, and their account will be cleared of any withdrawal restrictions. If they only get one vial, they only get half of the remaining monies in the bank account. And Robert will point out that even though the remainder of the operating fund is also the payment, it is best not to employ too much frugality. If the mission fails, the group will be among the first infected.

## REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The lunatic fringe behind this operation is probably unknown to the players; it is a radical cabal of Solomani Security (Solsec) officers known as the Brotherhood of Racial Purity. A secret fraternity, the Brotherhood espouses the systematic purging of any Vilani bloodlines from Confederation space with any means justifying that end. It is no surprise that they consider a now obscure Terran book/diatribes entitled "Mein Kampf" as playing a major role in the formation and evolution of their "ideals."

This secret society of genocidal radicals has long foreseen the need to "purify" Terra upon her reconquest. Humans of Vilani heritage were common there in the Third Imperium and had hopelessly "polluted" the bloodlines of Mother Earth. So, in order to reintroduce pure Solomani stock back to the home of man, they see it as their regrettable but unavoidable duty to cleanse the planet of the impure--- a bizarre form of chemotherapy carried out on a monstrous scale.

While the Brotherhood is certainly made up of fanatics and madmen, it is all the more dangerous because of that. In the first place, they are all members of Solomani Security. Solsec trains its personnel to be ruthless, efficient, and unflinchingly dedicated. Beyond that, the Brotherhood instills in them the belief that they are the saviors and protectors of the one true race, the guardians of man's manifest destiny. Their zeal makes them capable of extraordinary feats of strength, courage, and endurance; they are dangerous opponents.

## THE RACE TO TERRA

The referee is advised to set a deadline by which the party must be on Terra; it is the earliest day that Bertram Golar will arrive. Given their high passages,

the party can "bump" other passengers as needed. However, to add a bit of spice to the adventure, a referee might want to throw in some events that threaten to put them behind their deadline. If the party has to resort to illegal means to stay on schedule, they will find that a criminal investigation team is following them just a few steps behind. This condition will provide an added impetus for them to work quickly and keep moving.

Once on Terra, the party should quickly realize that its mission is comprised of several discrete tasks. These are:

- \*Intercept and shadow Golar.
- \*Locate the other courier/vial.
- \*Apprehend Golar and his vial.
- \*Apprehend the other courier and his vial.

#### POST-ASSASSINATION TERRA

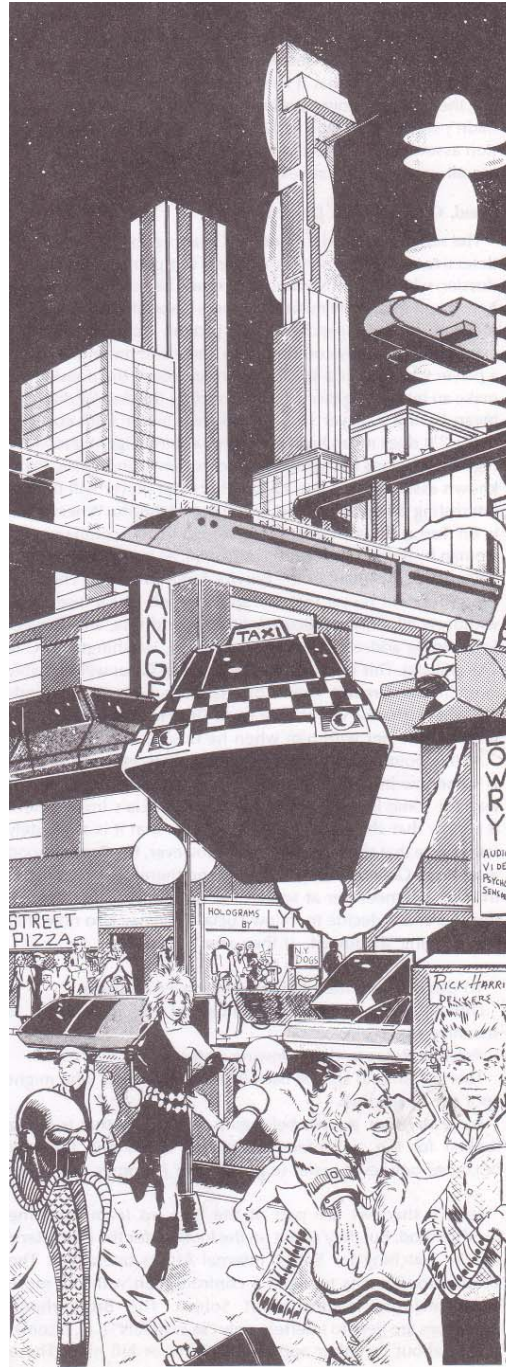
The characters may find that some of these tasks are more difficult now than before the Solomani invasion. They will immediately notice a large military presence in system, both in the form of naval units and ground troops. They will have several occasions to be grateful for the flawless identification and clearance papers that Robert has supplied them with.

On Terra itself, indigenous police forces are still handling the normal, day-to-day domestic affairs, but more serious matters are handled by the Confederation military police, whose numbers are considerable. The media is full of anti-imperial invective, some of which seems genuine, much of which rings a bit hollow. A few underground papers are circulating, and the penalty for possession of one is a week long stay in jail and a few sessions with a military intelligence officer. Extrapolating, the characters can only wonder what the penalty must be for actually printing one of these mostly harmless publications.

#### LOCATING BERTRAM GOLAR

This first task will probably be the hardest for players who are new to detective work. Once they get through it, they'll be thinking along the right lines.

Finding Golar will not be an easy task. After all,



Terra's Down Starport is a huge place, and he could come through at any time. But even more conducive to player hair-pulling is the possibility that Golar will arrive at the Highport and then shuttle down to a surface spaceport of which there are more than a dozen. Obviously, the group cannot monitor all these facilities in person; the old TV standby of the "stakeout" is just not going to work here.

What will (or may) work is what intelligence operations are all about: creative problem solving. Actually, the group can find out where Golar is coming in through two different ways: computer break-ins and good old detective work.

#### Computer Break Ins

Bertram Golar is an executive, and it is obvious from the most cursory glance at his dossier that he travels with some frequency. Therefore, it would be normal for him to have accommodations and other amenities reserved in advance; and, because he's now on a covert mission, he would not vary from that routine. Varying from an established pattern is precisely what attracts unwanted attention.

It is standard procedure for all hotel and lodging services to be plugged into a room availability data network. (This practice is already the standard among the larger chains by TL 15 it would be assumed.) Therefore, a person with Computer skill has a reasonable chance of determining where Bertram Golar will be staying.

To locate where Bertram Golar will be staying through computer break in:

Difficult, Computer, 30 min, (safe).

Referee: If the characters manage to get access to a hotel terminal (breaking and entering, anyone?), the task level becomes Easy.

A successful attempt will reveal that reservations have indeed been made in Golar's name, commencing two days from now at the Arlington Plaza Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Further research will reveal that several messages have already been sent to his room's data account.

To access the messages in Golar's data account through computer break in:

Difficult, Computer, 30 min, (fateful).

Referee: In the event of a failure, any Minor Mishap (or those of more severe proportions) will trip an alarm. For consequences, see the following:

Most of the messages are automated sales pitches for various services, but one is from a woman who simply says, "I am ready." No return number is on that call. The other unusual message is from a man who identifies himself as "Cousin Adolph," leaving a return number. Research into that number identifies it as an automated answering service. It would be possible to find out who has the



account with the answering service if the players decide that a little breaking and entering at the service's office is in order. (If they do find out whose account this is, see the following section on The Second Courier.)

Tripping the alarm on the data account will result in an immediate wire trace and investigation by military police. If the guilty parties are not apprehended within 12 hours, four to seven covert operatives (referee's discretion, depending on group size) will be dispatched by Solomani Security to track down and apprehend the computer criminals. These operatives do not belong to the Brotherhood; they don't even know that it exists. However, a high ranking Brotherhood member gave the police orders that if Golar's account was tampered with, they should inform Solsec. Accordingly, he also informed the local Solsec office that if they received word of this tampering, they were to mount a priority one investigation if the police hadn't settled the issue in 12 hours. A priority one investigation assumes all suspects to be armed and dangerous, allowing all involved operatives to use lethal force at will.

### **Good, Old Fashioned Detective Work**

The second method for finding Golar is good old fashioned detective work. The players can find out plenty from Golar's dossier: who his relatives are, how much he travels and where, how much money he makes, business associates and contacts, medical history, psychological profile, school records, everything that they could want to know and more. However, a player who makes a special effort to dissect the dossier will make an interesting discovery. (Dissecting the dossier does not mean having a player say, "I read the dossier from cover to cover." It does mean having a player ask intelligent questions regarding Golar's background, travel patterns, and, particularly, known associates on Terra.) The thorough player will find an interesting piece of data lost in the paper shuffle: When Golar is on Terra, he is frequently observed in the company of a woman by the name of Lucia Azabadian. At last check, she was a financial consultant in the Province of Morocco. A check by the group will reveal that she quit her job just a week ago, withdrew all monies, secured an off world visa, and moved. Forwarding address: the Regency Hilton, Washington, DC (a TAS affiliate). This information suggests that Golar will probably land in the Greater New York spaceport or, if he lands elsewhere, that he will at least go to DC. He is obviously planning to take her with him when he leaves.

At this point a shrewd player will begin wondering if Lucia is somehow involved in the plot and may decide she might warrant some looking into. In actuality, Lucia's involvement is simply that she's been told by Bertram that it is absolutely imperative that she leave with him. However, the Brotherhood is aware of Golar's fondness for her and therefore has guessed that he will meet her at some time or another. Therefore, if the characters decide to follow Lucia, they may also note that she is being shadowed, if they aren't seen first.

To discover the men following/discovering Lucia:

Difficult, Off = Recon, Intelligence, Def = Recon, Stealth, 10 seconds, uncertain.

Referee: Refer to the following notes.

This task should also be used by her "shadows," who might spot the characters.

For every four people belonging to the side that is being looked for (i.e., is defending against detection), the task becomes one level easier (e.g., Difficult becomes Routine).

Lucia's shadows are part of the back up team from the Brotherhood. But they're not on the lookout for the characters; they're watching for Solsec Internal Affairs operatives. The Brotherhood wants to avoid a confrontation with the more sane, majority leadership of Solsec. The Brotherhood operatives are here to interfere only "in extremis" (i.e., if someone is about to either apprehend Golar or kill him). These operatives will therefore hang back rather than engage the characters at first.

Once the players have found Golar, they will probably want to apprehend him. But that may not be wisest or, at least, not all that simple. Golar is no pushover. He has Handgun 3, Martial Arts 2, Streetwise 2, Recon 1, and is armed with a Gauss pistol and a 5mm revolver for a backup. Most important, he is extremely intelligent and inventive. Furthermore, Golar will be watched as soon as he contacts either "Cousin Adolph" or Lucia (at this point, surveillance on Lucia will be reduced to one operative). The Brotherhood will take every measure to prevent Golar or the vial from being abducted. And also if the characters have a confrontation with any of the Brotherhood operatives, they'd better not let any escape. An escaped operative's first act will be to inform the rest of the on site Brotherhood resources that there's a problem and that something had best be done about it. Once the players take overt action, the clock is running. They have to move fast so that they can complete their mission before the rest of the Brotherhood's operatives are aware of them. This means removing Golar before he's made any contact at all, or removing him and his observers in one fell swoop.

### **The Second Courier**

The group will find that the only way to locate the second courier is through connections to the known operatives. Bertram will only know that "Cousin Adolph" is the code name for his contact, who is to escort him to the rendezvous site. Of greater use to the party will be any prisoners they might have taken if they decide to confront the Brotherhood operatives who are shadowing Lucia.

If the characters manage to spot Lucia's observers without being seen themselves, it may be possible to follow these operatives and apprehend one or more of them. These three operatives are living in a small hotel in Georgetown. Their room's service code matches the account number they have with the answering service (the characters know of this answering service if they played back the messages in Golar's data account (see preceding section). At any given time, one operative is sleeping in the hotel room and two are on surveillance near Lucia. The referee should feel free to assign whatever skills and statistics he feels are appropriate (or generate them through a scaled down IRIS procedure (**Challenge** 34) or Police Tables ("There When You Need Them") (**Challenge** 30). However, these operatives will at least have Handgun 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Tactics 1, Interrogation 2, and high endurance. They will be armed with Gauss

pistols, and the leader will have a backup autosnub loaded with tranq (HEAP available, however). They will be wearing closely tailored ballistic cloth, a TL 15 variety that is less bulky than a sweatshirt. They all wear comdot communicators around the clock and check in with their command center (see The Rendezvous Site) once every 24 hours. Therefore, these operatives may give the group a good run for their money. Even if they are captured, their Interrogation skills will make them hard to crack, particularly since they know that if they miss their 24 hour call-in, the cavalry will be arriving in short order. However, if they can be made to talk, they will reveal where the rendezvous site for the two vials is an abandoned environmental research facility in the Chesapeake bay area. They will also reveal that the other vial and its courier are already at the site, which also serves as their command center.

If the characters decide to play it right down to the wire and follow Bertram to the rendezvous site before doing anything, they'll have to contend with the three operatives at that time since they'll be working as his escort.

### The Rendezvous Site

Taking over the rendezvous site will mean an unavoidable fire fight. If the three observer operatives are eliminated beforehand, only five people will be at the facility. Three will be Brotherhood operatives; two will be Brotherhood science specialists with lower combat skills. Any of the three observer operatives who escape a confrontation with the characters will head back here as soon as possible.

In addition to early warning devices on both the land and bay sides, the folks at the rendezvous site have some very heavy artillery: fully scoped gauss rifles with extra sound suppression, xray lasers, silenced submachineguns, and gas grenades. Combat Environment suits and night vision gear are standard. Note that they do not have anything that's too noisy or flashy; attracting attention is the last thing they want.

A frontal assault should prove exceedingly costly to the players, even if they have superb combat skills. The operatives at the rendezvous site are vigilant and already have their tactical options worked out. The players will fare best if they take the time and effort to scout the rendezvous site for weaknesses and blind spots, and try to exploit these. If they manage to infiltrate into the research facility (and this should not be easy), they might be able to take on the Brotherhood

operatives piecemeal, other than as a coordinated defensive team. Also, if they have the right skills, they have enough credits to buy and/or cobble together some fairly sophisticated drones and robot decoys.

If for any reason the call-in from the three operatives is overdue, the Brotherhood site commander will use his authority as a Solsec officer to activate a major investigation by both the military and civilian police. If there is still no word 12 hours later, the science specialists and the already arrived vial will move to another location and await further word, returning only when the situation is secure once again.

### ALTERNATE PATHS

Players don't always take predictable paths (do they

ever?), so here are a few of the alternatives they might try and some ideas for suitable responses.

#### Call the Police

If the players try going to the "authorities" for whatever reason, they're going to run into two problems:

First, the Brotherhood has left orders that any inquiries or events concerning Bertram Golar may be brought immediately to the attention of Solsec. If a character so much as mentions Golar's name, the police will walk out of the office; they're under orders to seal their ears and inform Solsec. It is very unlikely that the characters would be able to change this.

Second, the police are going to ask the characters to explain who they are, where they're from, and why they're poking their noses into this in the first place. That alone will get them locked up long enough for Golar to deliver his vial. Of course, if the players make this mistake, they're always free to try to break out....



### Success Through Superior Firepower

The players might come to feel that they are undergunned to handle the opposition. Depending on what they start out with, this may or may not be true. But if they try to acquire black market weapons in order to "outgun the bad guys," they are very likely to be apprehended by police undercover agents. Enough pro-Imperial sentiment is on Terra that the Solomani are taking no chances when it comes to the availability of firearms; most of the weaponry "on the market" is actually there as part of a Solsec "sting" operation. However, given their permits, the group will find that a wide variety of sporting weapons are available to them, including semiautomatic shotguns. Perhaps more important, various night vision and compact communication devices are available, as are flak jackets and ballistic cloth.

### Round the Rubble

A perennial favorite among players: If the enemy is too big or too dangerous, then they like to build something that can be dropped on said enemy and finish him off at a single blow. With the bank account they have at their command, they can certainly do this assuming they have the skills (look for Electrical, Demo, Computer, Robotics, Sensor Ops). High-tech armored car bombs or suicide drone air vehicles (used, of course) will almost certainly "do in" the research facility and the people there. However, it will also "do in" the second courier's vial. That means less payment, but more significantly, it means that no one can be sure if the bioagent threat has really been averted. No one in the group knows how long either of the viruses can survive on their own; maybe forever. If they can last forever, the Brotherhood might eventually be able to get another vial of the other virus on planet and get some of its contents to come into direct contact with the still existing first virus.

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### ROBERT AND HIS FRIENDS, OR JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE TO GO BACK HOME

For the general administration of this scenario, Robert is assumed to be a representative of a moderate faction within the Solomani Party. Although this faction managed to learn of the Brotherhood's plot, they could not do anything about it themselves. Had they tried to spread the word to Solsec's main membership or the Solomani Military, the Brotherhood having members all through Solsec would surely have heard about it and taken corrective measures. From Robert's perspective, that probably meant an appointment with a bullet. They were forced to go outside the Confederation for help. Strange enough, Robert found himself talking with IRIS and the Concordiat even though the Confederation was still skirmishing with their forces. The Regency recommended the player party because of its ability and its proximity to the situation.

But that's the "plain vanilla" option. If you really want to end this Amber Zone with a bang and a few twists, choose one of the following or roll 1D6.

1-2: All is as presented above. Robert is working for the Mercantile Faction of the Solomani Party. He will be glad to see the group succeed and return to Concordiat space.

3: Robert represents the mainstream factors in Solsec itself. They recently discovered this Brotherhood plot and learned that the Brotherhood has more members inside the higher echelons of Solsec than suspected. They won't be able to identify and eliminate those security breaches in time to keep the people involved in the plot from finding out and switching the rendezvous site. So, they had to hire outside help through Robert, who has just been brought under Solsec's influence. Therefore, IRIS was unaware it was recommending the group to Solsec itself. Four days after the characters have completed their mission, an overwhelming Solsec force will intercept and arrest them. Escape is up to the characters and the referee.

4-5: As above, but Solsec has decreed that the characters must be killed. However, in this version, IRIS also has learned who Robert was really working for. They have sent three Strike operatives to help extract the group. This Strike team will arrive a few minutes into the Solsec assassination attempt against the players. The Strike team will be as heavily armed and armored as circumstances reasonably permit, and they are good at their work (primary weapon skills of at least 3).

6: This one is only for the real "covert operations" buffs. Robert is a member of the Brotherhood of Purity. He contracted the characters so they will "clean up" any evidence left over. The Brotherhood is using an "enemy" group to kill its own people involved in the plot, eliminating any evidence that could lead back to the most highly placed Brotherhood members. Robert and six operatives will show up at the end of the firefight. He will not try to convince the characters to come along peacefully; he wants to kill them at the facility and make sure it looks like it was all part of the firefight (lasers and gauss rifles do not leave much ballistics evidence). If he succeeds, he and his team will put on fresh combat environment suits, combine the viruses, and leave to catch an off world courier; the Solomani Party will always wonder who was responsible for the bioagent disaster.

