

# MEGATraveller 1™

## THE ZHODANI CONSPIRACY

### Zhodane

The Zhodani Consulate has seemed content to let events gradually dismember its only real rival.





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## THE ZHODANI CONSPIRACY

Welcome to the Spinward Marches.

We left the Starship Races feeling pretty arrogant. Jurgen's flying (he's a legend in the Scouts) earned a ton of Imperial credits. Now we're pinned down — laser fire everywhere — by someone, or something, here on Cheika, a floating hunk of rock in the Yres system.

Effane's Marine background is coming in handy. She just used her plasma rifle to draw the enemy's fire. I managed to hustle behind a rock formation. We've got to get a med kit to Dennar; his leg looks pretty bad from here. And he's the only one who can program the ship's computers. The closest to him is Verti — but what does a con man and smuggler know about medicine?

All I know is we can't waste time. An army of hit-men is hot on our trail. Their boss wants to start an interstellar war between the Imperium and the Zhodani Consulate, and we're the only ones with a chance to stop him.

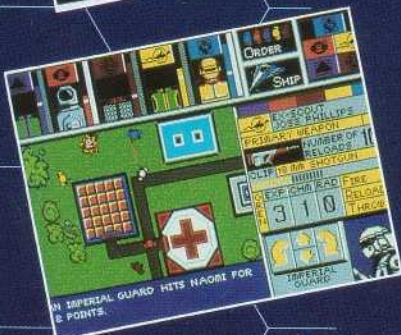
We're all ex-soldiers, specially-skilled and trained for battle. But I doubt any of us was prepared for this.

- **Versatility.** The most sophisticated character generation system ever devised: 5 military classes, more than 70 talents and abilities.
- **Courage.** Explore 28 worlds, each filled with adventure and intrigue.
- **Firepower.** Control all characters separately in real-time combat sequences on the ground and in space, with more than 30 weapons and weapons skills.
- **Resourcefulness.** Saving the universe costs money: a detailed bartering system lets players earn Imperial credits through interplanetary trading, with 30 types of cargo.
- **Imagination.** Flexible gaming system supports any playing strategy and allows multiple solutions to problems and obstacles.

Based on MegaTraveller by  
Game Designers' Workshop,  
the world's most popular  
science fiction gaming system.

## PARAGON SOFTWARE

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# MEGATRAVELLER™

THE ZHODANI CONSPIRACY





## A HISTORY OF THE TRAVELLER ROLE PLAYING SYSTEM

The Traveller Role Playing system was first published in 1977, and was the first successful science-fiction role-playing game on the market. Traveller is a game; that is, it is a system of rules which allows players to participate in a common situation for recreation and enjoyment. It is a role-playing game, which means that the players vicariously act out, or talk out, their actions in response to some situation; they assume roles as adventurers or soldiers-of-fortune and then actively seek out some goal important to them, such as money, fame, or power.

Traveller rules cover the basic facts of adventure in a logical, straightforward manner. Rules begin by describing how fighting works, including your chances of winning a fight, and losing. Traveller rules cover how starships work, and how much passage costs. Rules sections also cover how much a starship costs, how trade and speculation in commercial markets work, and how things like experience can help or hurt you. Finally, Traveller rules deal with what alien worlds are like, addressing such concepts as atmosphere (and what equipment you need to breathe), gravity, the extent of oceans on a world, local government and population, and the type of technology present. Animals, casual meetings with other people, psionics, and more are also covered.

Traveller rules are descriptions of how the universe works. Players read the rules and play the game a few times to learn what is happening. Then they start playing in earnest, seeking out things they want, and striving to get them. Traveller is often, if not always, a refereed game. The referee is responsible for everything that happens in a Traveller situation. He or she is the creator of the universe, and administers the laws of nature. A referee must be a very imaginative and creative person, at the same time following the game rules and bending them to give variety and intrigue to his situations. Literally, Traveller in the hands of a good referee can duplicate any science fiction you have ever read or ever seen.

An interesting aspect of Traveller is that on your way to achieving your specified goal, you may be swept into exciting sub-adventures that are not necessarily related to your initial goal. You may set out to recover a crashed space ship, but soon become involved in a smuggling ring where you amass a fortune. The enjoyment in Traveller is not in achieving your goal, but in constantly finding new goals to seek, and in striving to attain them. In fact, there are actually no rules for winning the game; the winning is in the playing and in staying alive.



One very important part of Traveller is the player's character. At the beginning of an adventure, each player creates a character, an alter ego, whom he will manipulate as if he were himself. Each character has six characteristics, six numbers which show his abilities - strength, dexterity, endurance, intelligence, education, and social class. These six act as benchmarks in comparing people. Values range from 1 to 15 in each characteristic. A special feature of Traveller is the treatment of skills. Characters, as initially generated, know very little. A specific procedure provides prior experience for the character, before he begins playing the game. This prior career includes terms of service in one of the military or exploratory services, and provides age, experience, money and skills. These skills indicate that the person is conversant with some field of endeavor such as navigation, piloting or medicine. For example, a character with computer programming skills can tell the referee that he is programming a computer in the game to perform some task or to recover important data, and it will, if there is a computer available to the character (not the player) in the game. The referee manages the activity, and the person playing need have no actual knowledge of how a computer actually works.

In the first years of the game, Traveller established the pattern that other role-playing games routinely use in marketing today: publish a basic set, and follow it aggressively with modules, adventures, and new rules additions in order to hold and keep the players' interest. But there were some secrets that the competition has never really caught on to.

Traveller appealed to the solitary gamer as well as the gaming group. It provided many diverse activities that the players could do alone, or in preparation for playing. They could design starships, create worlds, or generate characters in any spare minute of their time, and save them for that time when they would be able to play with a group. Since half of all role-playing activity is performed solitaire, this benefit has immense value to the gamer/customer.

That feature leads directly to the next: Traveller is eminently computerizable. Its procedures are spelled out logically and clearly so that they can be translated to a computer without loss of detail or clarity of purpose. But being computerizable does not mean that the task is easy or trivial. Only the present wave of 16-bit machines can really do justice to the game system and its intricacies.

Traveller has been thoroughly supported throughout its lifetime. Modules were commissioned from writers who have gone on to new heights: William Keith and his brother Lawrence, Lawrence Schick, Joe Fugate, and science fiction

author John M. Ford. The slick Traveller's Digest (with a four color process cover) appears bimonthly with adventures, background, and new information about the game. Traveller has its own category in the games section of GENIE. A dedicated support group (called the History of the Imperium Working Group) claims more than 130 members busily chronicling the details of Traveller's 10,000 sun interstellar empire.

But, at the base of everything, the reason Traveller continues to prosper is because it is fun. Players enjoy making Traveller part of their lives. It has something for everyone, and they love it. Traveller has a virtual world of possibilities for role-playing adventure. It is the leading science-fiction system on the market today, and one of the top role-playing systems available.



## BACKGROUND

The date in the MegaTraveller universe at the time of the game scenario is the year 1107 (approx. 5625 AD). The present government, the Third Imperium, was established in the year 0. The Imperium can best be described as a feudal confederation. Each member world agrees to pay taxes and obey several Imperial laws. The Imperium, in return, agrees to encourage travel and interstellar trade, patrol space between worlds and arbitrate diplomatic relations. Each individual world is left alone as long as it doesn't infringe on Imperial powers.

The Imperium is divided into sectors, subsectors and planetary systems. The Spinward Marches is the sector we are using in "The Zhodani Conspiracy". This area has been the location of all of the Frontier Wars, as it borders on Zhodani space.

The Zhodani Consulate and the Imperium have been at war since they first came into contact with each other over 500 years earlier. As of 1107, when the game begins, four Frontier Wars have already taken place and the Fifth Frontier War is imminent.

The Zhodani race has always been at odds with the Imperium because the psionic-using Zhodani are repelled by the deviousness of human minds. Likewise, the Imperium has always shown distrust toward psionics and a strong prejudice against the Zhodani. The Zhodani have been warring with the Imperium in order to prevent further Imperial expansion that will hamper their future growth.

Each sector in the Imperium is divided into sixteen subsectors. Each subsector contains a variable number of solar systems. Systems are named for the mainworld in that system. The characters will be able to travel to twenty-eight planets within eight different systems located in the Jewell and Regina subsectors of the Spinward Marches.

Interstellar travel (travel between the systems) in the MegaTraveller universe is based on the use of jumpspace. Jumpspace could be described as alternate space. By jumping from a point in normal space and travelling through jumpspace, you can reenter normal space at some distant point. All jump travel takes the same amount of time (approx. one week), regardless of the distance traveled. The distance of the jump is based on the number of hexes on the map. Worlds in adjoining hexes are considered a Jump-1. If you must skip one hex between systems, then it is a Jump-2. For practical purposes the limit of Imperial technology is a Jump-6, but ships capable of that jump are military or Imperial ships.



## GAME SCENARIO

Once again, as so many times before, the Zhodani and their allies plan war with the Imperium. The battleground will be the Spinward Marches. The greatest part of the Zhodani plan is support for guerilla units within the Imperial borders. By supplying arms and equipment to dissident groups on worlds within the Imperium, the Zhodani intend to divert large number of troops and ships that would otherwise be used to resist the Zhodani invasions.

Sharurshid Megacorporation, one of thirteen megacorporations in the Imperium, is so large that its upper level executives can't closely regulate the entire operation. Sharurshid's business activities emphasize trade in luxury and novelty goods, transport of goods between worlds, and service industries (such as temporary help and servants). The Sharurshid Megacorporation conducts limited trade with the Zhodani Consulate, carrying manufactured Imperial goods to the Zhodani in exchange for novelty foods, finely crafted furniture, artwork, artifacts and precious gems.

Konrad Kiefer is the Regina Subsector Executive for Sharurshid. His headquarters are on the planet of Efate. He is just the sort of man that Sharurshid looks for in its higher level executives: strong, cunning and ambitious. It takes a person with tremendous drive and ambition to handle the demands that a megacorporation division places on its executives. Kiefer, however, has reached the limits of advancement within the company. The next higher level he could aspire to is the Sector Executive; unfortunately, several better qualified (or at least, better connected) individuals are ahead of him on the promotion list. Kiefer, already in a job most people would kill for, wants more... and the company he works for won't give it to him.

In the developmental years before he became an executive, Konrad Kiefer captained trade ships that dealt with the Zhodani. He established professional relationships and even friendships with people that most Imperials consider their mortal enemies. Over the years, as Kiefer increased in power and wealth, he secretly employed many people in his own personal retinue. These people include pirates, thugs and even assassins.

Now the Zhodani have recruited Kiefer into their plans. Aware of his frustration with his chance of advancement, they have promised him precisely what he wants: wealth and power. The traitorous Kiefer is willing to betray the Imperium for his own benefit. The Zhodani have promised Kiefer executive control of a new trade company to be established in the conquered territories: Kieferthiln (Zhodani for Kiefer Trade Lines). Kiefer has eagerly (but secretly) agreed to this arrangement.

The plan calls for Sharurshid ships to carry a total of seven shipments (approx. one per month) along major trade



lanes to automated Sharurshid warehousing facilities where they will be broken down and transhipped to a variety of worlds throughout the Regina and Jewell subsectors. Contacts will receive the shipments and distribute them to the dissident groups. Properly armed, these groups will be able to pin down large numbers of Imperial troops when the war begins.

Sharurshid is so large that its central administration can do little more than set broad mercantile strategies, budgets, and directions. The subsector and sector executives report the profit and loss statements then the megacorporation counts its money and distributes dividends to shareholders. In order to keep their divisions accountable, Sharurshid has created a central auditing division called Transom. Originally, Transom was concerned with accounting audits, but it has slowly developed into a network of independent agents who are routinely (and secretly) transferred between divisions. These agents investigate embezzlement, theft and fraud of corporation employees. Transom is a highly classified division. Few outside the highest levels of management know that it does anything more than audits accounts.

Lenara Raclor is an ideal agent for Transom. She can assume diverse characters on a whim, easily confusing people that she routinely deals with. Her great motivation is youth (or, maintenance of youth). She appears to be about twenty-eight and she has looked that age for nearly forty years. She invests her lucrative income as an agent in anagathics - youth sustaining drugs. Since Sharurshid trades in anagathics, Lenara has a steady supply of these rare and expensive drugs. She has much more experience and knowledge than her appearance would suggest. Lenara has many skills that have allowed her to survive in countless crisis situations.

Lenara has been transferred to Sharurshid's Efate office in order to trace down starship cargo shipments which are not being paid for. Her investigations have revealed a pattern of shipments from within Zhodani territory to various worlds in Kiefer's subsector. Realizing that Kiefer is a traitor to the Imperium, Lenara digs deeper to access Kiefer's personal computer files and has found an encoded shipment schedule. When decoded, this file will reveal the worlds and names of the contacts for each of the shipments. Lenara has decided that she must deal with Kiefer later... the first priority is to get the two decoding keys and the file into the hands of Imperial Intelligence Agents.

The Computer Operations office of Sharurshid's Regina Subsector handles billing, market analysis, and routine communications. Dr. Arik Toryan is the Office Manager. An acknowledged expert on all sorts of business computer systems, Dr. Toryan handles his department with relative ease: he is the only staff member. The systems are fully



automated and requires little supervision. This is fortunate because Dr. Toryan doesn't get along well with people. Kiefer plays on Toryan's lack of socialization by calling on him frequently, asking for advice and support. Ultimately Kiefer asks a favor of Toryan. Kiefer asks Toryan to encode a batch file of important corporate data for submission by courier to the corporate headquarters.

Toryan devised an encoding scheme that required two code keys. He would specify one, and Kiefer would specify his own encoding key at a later time - thus assuring complete secrecy. Dr. Toryan, however, considered the encoded message an intellectual challenge. He worked for days at decoding the message without success. He is certain that the message cannot be deciphered without both decoding keys.

Toryan might be a computer nerd, but he is not stupid. He realizes that Kiefer is using him. Toryan is not surprised when Lenara approaches him about Kiefer's traitorous business plans.

They work together to assemble the pieces of the puzzle: the encoded file, Toryan's code key, and Kiefer's code key. Lenara wants to get each of these pieces into Imperial hands. She made a copy of the encoded file (and Arik has one, too). Toryan, afraid for his life, won't hand over his code key immediately. He makes arrangements to leave the planet, taking his code key with him. He plans to meet Lenara in a small bar called the Supernova on the planet of Boughene. If that meeting falls through, Arik is to go to the Transom office on Akarates in the Yres system. Kiefer's code key is probably in his office. Lenara feels that she could get it if she had an opportunity.



## THE GAME

Before getting Kiefer's code key, Lenara is discovered and is pursued by Kiefer and his armed assistants. She enters a bar in startown on the planet of Efate. Desperate for help she joins the first group she can find - a party of Imperial adventurers. Realizing that she doesn't have much time, she lays her cards on the table. She is being pursued, her life is in danger. She needs help. She hands - to the lead character - the encoded file (on a holographic cartridge), 30,000 credits, and the entry code to the Interloper (a Sharurshid ship in the starport). She explains that this very important file can only be read by using the encryption key that Arik Toryan can provide. She tells the characters that they must get to the Supernova Bar on Boughene as soon as possible to meet Arik Toryan. He will have further instructions for them.

Kiefer and his men enter the bar. He assumes the characters are Lenara's bodyguards - or possibly Imperial agents. He confronts the group and demands the return of the encoded file (promising to let them go when he gets it - of course if they hand it to him, he will kill them all).

A battle follows... Lenara disappears (she uses this diversion as an opportunity to break into Kiefer's office) and the group attempts to make it to the ship at the starport. (This will be an easy battle in order to give the player a chance to learn the combat interface.) Kiefer puts out a bulletin that the Interloper is a pirate ship. Once the character's ship leaves Efate, they will be attacked by a Sharurshid ship that received Kiefer's bulletin. The Interloper will be crippled at the very beginning of this battle: the jump-2 drive is reduced to jump-1. (This battle will allow the player to learn space combat interface.)

Being crippled, the Interloper cannot make the jump to Boughene (a jump-2). Instead, the characters will be forced to make enough money to repair the Interloper's jump drive. During this section of the game, the player will be limited to four systems: Efate, Louzy, Alell, and Uakye. Money can be raised through trading, pirating, gambling, or looting.

Once they reach Boughene, the group seeks Dr. Toryan at the Supernova Bar. Arik is no longer there; the characters will find clues that he has been abducted and where he may be. While searching for Toryan, the characters are ambushed by Viktor Quamm, Kiefer's right-hand man. The arrogant Viktor tells the characters that Arik has been taken off the planet and he, alone, knows where. The characters must subdue Quamm with a tranquilizer and use truth serum in order to learn that Arik was taken to Neaera, and to get a necessary code number to gain entrance to the facility.

The characters must fly to Neaera to rescue Arik. If they don't succeed on Neaera, they will have three more chances. Each time they fail, Arik will be taken to a different planet.



When they succeed, Dr. Toryan will tell them that he doesn't have his code key; he sent it to another planet for safe-keeping. They must go to the planet of Yres to retrieve it. After getting the code key, Arik and the characters will have to go to Akarates to meet Lenara. Once all of the pieces of the puzzle are together, Lenara uses both code keys to read the file, pinpointing the exact dates and points of delivery. Lenara returns with the characters to the planet of Efate. She takes the information to the Imperial agents, while the characters try to delay the most current shipment of arms. This battle will be next to impossible to win... the player's strategy will be only to stall until the Imperial agents arrive. When the reinforcements arrive, Kiefer and two of his assistants will run for it. The character's must then pursue Kiefer and kill him to win the game.

Throughout the game, individual assassins and bounty hunters, hired by Kiefer, will constantly be attempting to kill the characters. This will keep the game moving. If the player has a tendency to spend too much time in one place, an assassin is more likely to find them. Each of these bounty hunters will be increasingly more difficult to defeat.