

GM briefing for Crash on Volturnus

Truane's Star is officially ruled by a republican form of government from the planet of **Pale**. **New Pale** is an agriculture colony and has the status of territory with limited representation (2 representatives). New Pale is administered by a governor that is appointed by the president. The colonists of New Pale enjoy citizenship rights as well as an exemption on income tax as an inducement to move to the colony planet.

Pale is the headquarters of the Frontier's second megacorp, **Streel**. Being headquartered here gives Streel quite a bit of weight with the government but their campaign contributions have all but bought the corporation control of the government. A division within the company, **Resource Acquisition & Development (RAD)** has committed a huge chunk of its budget toward campaign contributions. It was decided that new exploration was more costly than stealing the resources of others. The RAD has plans in place to take over the agriculture resources of New Pale as well as usurping the mineral rights of the **Zebulon** system which are currently owned by the **Pale Republic**.

The plan for New Pale is to create a crisis that requires nationalization of the farming operations followed by legislation appointing Streel to manage them. Since the population of Pale would starve without the food shipments from New Pale it's been relatively easy to engineer a crisis.

The Palonite military under the auspices of **Pale Aerospace Command (PAC)** was responsible for exploring the Zebulon system but did little since the discovery of the system. Once they finally sent a manned expedition, Streel was forced to take action lest their secret mining operation on Volturnus be discovered. Contact was lost nine months ago when the expedition entered orbit around Volturnus. Streel's interference has not only caused the long delay in sending a rescue expedition but has forced its way onto the expedition which is now a joint venture with PAC.

With the percolating crisis on New Pale caused by a new terrorist group and the colonists' resistance to the government's first move at nationalization of the farms, the government has a low priority on exploiting its rights to Zebulon. Streel has all but taken over the rescue mission and has had to scramble for personnel to man the mission. Luckily, draft of new employees has arrived in Truane's Star expecting to take low level technician and security jobs and they're about to be "volunteered" for the mission or discharged from company service. The company will of course turn over the names of those discharged to Pale's **Selective Service (SS)** which is charged with raising several drafted regiments of **Peace Keepers** for the impending civil disturbances on New Pale.

GM Background on RAD

Since **Perenni Epiphytes** took over as executive vice president of RAD she has instituted a policy shift away from her division's traditional role of exploration and discovering of new resources. The division now seeks to acquire known resources through negotiation and aggressive take over. This is best seen through the shifts in its budget where the **Prospecting Exploration & Survey Team (PEST)** use to represent the

lion share of RAD's budget it now only commands 15% while Negotiation & Administration (NA) now commands 40%.

Negotiation & Administration has been the convenient place in the budget to burry bribes, campaign contributions and covert operations expenditures. The unofficial motto within the division is, "If you aren't negotiating aggressively, you aren't negotiating!"

Currently RAD has schemes in place to acquire the farming interest on New Pale by funding a covert terrorist operation on there called the **Grangers**. The Grangers espouse to be rebel colonist but really are Merco special ops teams attempting to destabilize relations between Pale and its daughter colony by attacking infrastructure facilitating food delivery to Pale. Bought and paid for politicians back on Pale have been nudged in the direction of instituting legislation nationalizing the agri-resources of New Pale lest there be starvation on Pale. Once resistance on New Pale is crushed and the agri-business there is fully nationalized key politicians will move to hire a company "like Streel" to administer the agri-colony. The civil unrest that is being manufactured has led to moves to raise draft regiments of Peace Keepers in anticipation of armed conflict by the Pale government.

The player characters are new hires for Streel expecting to take low level technician, security, and support positions at the company head quarters. However, since RAD has only recently usurped the control of the new mission to Volturnus they are currently scrambling for personnel to fill it and the PCs will be forcibly transferred to the Prospecting Exploration & Survey Team department or they'll be fired. Those who choose firing can expect that their names will be provided to the Selective Service which is currently looking for draftees for the Peace Keepers.

The RAD has no intention that the new survey expedition will succeed and has "sold" the expedition's equipment and buildings to the pirates running the illegal mining operation in Zebulon. The pirates eagerly anticipate their arrival.

The star route to Zebulon was a closely guarded secret that Pale Aerospace Command had not shared to protect Pale's claim to colonization and mineral rights in the system. Once RAD acquired the original survey data and the star route through clandestine means it has been impatient to begin exploiting deposits of vibrillium and tomarillium there. Eventually, it was decided to acquire the deposits through a proxy and the pirate leader known only as the **Red Devil** was brought in and Perenni Epiphytes and her division at Streel have been in bed, literally as well as figuratively, with him ever since.

The Red Devil pirates were one of the few survivors of the pirate fleet that lead to the **First Common Muster** of all the militia organizations in the Frontier. They had been effectively crippled and most likely would have broken up and faded away if not for the patronage of RAD. RAD provided them with the star route to Zebulon as well as selling them survey ships from PEST and numerous drop building to establish their base.

Player Character Backgrounds:

Players will most likely begin as the Streel new hires that are forced to transfer to PEST. The moral and reputation of this department is at an all time low. Its budget,

assets, and personnel have been slashed and transfer to this department is akin to banishment. The PCs should view this forced transfer with extreme distaste, though with an acronym like PEST the players may get the idea readily enough.

At GM discretion they could also be PAC personnel from the regular militia or from the ESO depending on the character created and the player's temperament. The culture of Pale's space navy is very patriotic in nature with a strong belief in the constitution. There is near universal resentment toward Streel and politicians who appear to be sell outs to the mega corp. The Exploration & Sciences Organization (ESO), though under military control, is largely staffed with civilian contractors.

A third option for player characters could be from the crew of the Serenna Dawn. They would have to be an "able bodied spacer," meaning not from the command crew but from the service and grunt work crewmen. Use this option to replace a dead character or to introduce a new player mid game with the explanation that the new character escaped the Serenna Dawn via escape pod.

NPC contacts for the Player Characters:

NPC contacts encourage role playing as the help or information that they can provide is only obtainable through role play. They also provide the GM with a voice in the adventure but that should be limited to hints. The PCs should ask for information and the NPC would not be overly helpful without good reason. Provide the PCs and opportunity to interact with their NPC contacts and to shop for any equipment they can afford before they embark on the Serenna Dawn. The info that they may generate in this way should not give them the whole picture as to what is going on though the developments on New Pale could be used as a distraction (red herring).

Lucritia Dolores, a writer for The Star Republic, an independent and conservative periodical with largely electronic distribution. Lucritia is known for her patriotic and anti-Streel views. She is a critical analyst on politics and mega corps. Her contact with a PC could be as family (distant cousin) or through past association (knew each other in school but not necessarily close). She'll gladly answer questions or research info concerning her areas of expertise since she often feels frustrated over Streels seeming control of the government and would welcome a sympathetic ear. She could easily find a corporate division report on RAD if asked.

Ch'sR T'Seck of House Ch'sR. House Ch'sR is a vursk trade house, focusing on accounting and is reputed to be among the premier accounting firms in the Frontier. T'Seck expertise are in accounting and finds the changes in budgeting at RAD interesting as well as the fact that Ch'sR no longer audits RAD's books just reviews a prepared book that seems a little too prepared. House Ch'sR is still retained for accounting all other departments and divisions at the Streel headquarters. His association with a PC could be familial; in the case of a vursk PC or through prior business association (maybe he audited the books for the PC's family's business and is known to the PC). He would be very careful to make sure that the PC understood that any information divulged is off the record.

Bork the Bartender (race can be flexible for this character), Bork is a ne'er do well and spacer with a checkered past who has settled into bartending. His lack of respect for authority bounced him out of 2 separate militia organizations. He was in the 1st Common Muster and has little love for pirates but keeps his finger on the pulse of criminal activity in the capitol of Pale as his bar is in one of the seeder neighborhoods. He's an astute judge of the character. His association with a PC would most likely derive from the PC knowing a friend of his who told them to look him up.

Saleck Chin (any race) is an aging scientist (lvl 6 environmental skill) in the ESO. He is a civilian contractor and is biding his time till retirement next year. He will in no way jeopardize his pension but is generally unhappy with interference by Strel in the Zebulon Survey Project that first started with loss of funding for the ESO and now the usurpation of the Voltornus mission by Strel. He's well versed in environmental issues concerning Pale and New Pale and the astro sciences of Truane's Star. His association with a PC could be as past professor for a PC with a physco-social PSA or as a friend of someone known to the PC or as past professional association if the PC's background started him as part of the ESO.

Sgt. Grick (any race) is a true blue patriotic Pale citizen and career militia spacer. Words like crusty and salty come to mind for those asked to describe him. He works hard and parties hard with a fondness for strong drink. He recently dodged "the bullet" avoiding transfer to Training Command to be a drill sgt. for the new Peace Keeper force. He has family on New Pale and is disgusted with the prospect of being ordered to take action against them. His new assignment is as quartermaster sgt. and maybe able to issue some non-weapon equipment to the PCs party by virtue of some creative paperwork and or proper paperwork issued by the PCs but coached by him. His association with a PC in the military PSA would be through past professional association especially if the PCs background started him as a member of the militia or of the ESO.

Barlow Kuman, is an undercover star law agent (real name is ?). He has been investigating RAD and may decide to provide some help to the PCs on the down low as long as it doesn't risk his cover. He's obtained a support personnel position at RAD's headquarters.

Starting the Player Characters

After the PCs have been generated, starting equipment purchased and NPC contacts assigned begin the adventure with the mission briefing followed by the Zebulon system briefing. Then allow the PCs to decide what they wish to do for the 20 hours till they embark on the Serenna Dawn. Contacting their NPC contacts for help, advice or information may be done here

They may also attempt to requisition more equipment from Strel with no success or from PAC with a small chance of success depending on what is requested and who is doing the requesting. Remember, members of PAC don't like Strel and Strel employees

will get a cold shoulder. They will be able to obtain a Volturnus Survey Expedition II uniform which is also a std. skien suit. The uniform is gray with green trim and piping.

Time and game turns are not an issue, just use reasonable judgment concerning how much the PCs could do in 20 hours. If they desire to party it up in a local bar a bar fight encounter could be easily improvised though if they are arrested they may be deposited on the shuttle for the Serenna Dawn with some of their equipment lost due to it being left in their quarters and a fine being assessed against their credit account automatically.

Volturnus Survey Expedition II Mission Brief

The brief for the survey mission will be handled by a dralasite named Nocoran. His career is dead and his most defining characteristics are bitterness and vindictiveness. He will address the issue of the transfers to PEST with undisguised glee even going so far as to threaten anyone with being drafted to the Peace Keepers. The PCs will be instructed to turn in their Streel ID cards and pick up their new Volturnus Survey Expedition II identification cards as well as their uniform from the supply clerk at the end of the briefing. Note: that the PCs were instructed to turn in their old ID card but they can easily retain it as things are fairly relaxed at PEST. Having a Streel ID card may play a roll in the adventure latter.

Nocoran's briefing will involve reading the mission objectives then stating that the mission assets are listed on the report he's holding. He'll inform the PCs that they can write a requisition for additional equipment and submit it through the proper company channels (Streel employees will be fairly well aware that that could take as much as a week) or see the quartermaster sergeant form PAC. The briefing will end with, "if you have any questions text them to my com # and your shuttle departs in 20 hours." (Note he won't give his com # or will mumble it though PC could look it up in a company directory though he won't answer any of their com calls). At that point he drops the one copy of his brief on the podium and walks out.

Mission Objectives

1. Catalog flora & fauna
2. Survey, map and identify locations for colonial and economic development
3. Identify prominent mineral and other natural resources of economic importance
4. Ascertain the fate of the first expedition and effect rescue if possible
5. Establish friendly relations with any primitive sentient race should one exist
6. Secure an advanced base of operations

Mission Assets

Modified drop buildings modules which are fairly standard drop home/domiciles with living quarters, computers room, lab and operations as well as a vehicle garage equipped

with power generator, workshop, explorer, and a semi-rigid dirigible with gondola. There is also a communications relay tower that will boost communication's ranges.

Water purifiers, 12 months supply of food (mission is only 3 months but 12 months provided in case survivors of the first mission located) 5 standard med kits, 3 cases of vita salt pills and standard survival gear.

6 robots: 4 security robots & 2 mule bots

2 cases of Geo-seismic blasting explosives and detonators

1 standard arsenal of defensive & offensive weapons and equipment

Zebulon System Brief

The system brief on Zebulon will be handled by **Saleck Chin**, an aging scientist with Exploration & Sciences Organization. He is a civilian contractor for the Palon military and resents Streeel taking over a project he had long been involvement in. He's prepared a hard copy report for all team members but will not read it to them, only covering high points before fielding questions. If any PCs know him as a personal contact he may be more helpful but will not speak his mind concerning Streeel in a public forum like this. He was also close friends with one of the missing scientist, **Geeko-Sur-Mang**.

Volturnus (Zebulon star system)

MOONS:

1.) Leo: Completes one orbit every three days, reddish-orange in color

2.) Lulu: Completes one orbit every 27 hours, bluish-silver in color

CLIMATE RANGE: Hot, arid to humid

ATMOSPHERE: 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen, 1% argon

GRAVITY: 1.0013 DIAMETER: 12,895 kilometers

LENGTH OF DAYS: 24 hours, 03 minutes

AVERAGE SURFACE TEMPERATURE: 25 degrees C

COLONIZERS: Unsettled; presently claimed by the government of the Truane's Star.

KNOWN NATIVE POPULATION: Unknown

PLANET HISTORY:

Named after the Greek god of the southwest wind, Volturnus is a hot, dry world with many types of hostile terrain. The endless deserts, rugged mountains, volcanic wastes, and dangerous salt flats are constantly scoured by a strong southwesterly wind. Despite these harsh conditions, rare patches of forest and even a few lakes have managed to maintain a perilous existence.

The Zebulon star system was first investigated 20 years ago by an unmanned exploration probe launched by Truane's Star. This probe indicated that Volturnus was the only inhabitable planet in the Zebulon system. It also indicated that great mineral wealth might exist on the planet in the form of molybdenum, tungsten, gold, and other heavy metals.

Truane's Star soon made a legal claim to the ownership of Volturnus, and completed exploration of a star route to the Zebulon system one year ago.

The government of Truane's Star opened a star route to the Zebulon system recently, sending its first manned expedition to the planet nine months ago. The four member team of specialists was instructed to set up an outpost, gather data on the possible colonization and mining of Volturnus, and report back. Unfortunately, all communication with the starship ceased shortly after it passed into the system. No clues as to the whereabouts of either the crew or the ship have been found.

Because of the cost and time involved in preparing an expedition, nine months have passed since the original mission disappeared. Nonetheless, the player characters have been assigned to locate the remnants of the first expedition, if any can be found. In addition, they are also charged with exploring and mapping the planet.

The four members of this lost exploration expedition were:

Commander Luis V. Jameson; Human, 1.9 meters tall, 88 kilograms weight, 43 years old

Background: 22 years service Pale Aerospace Command; combat veteran, Truane's Star Medal of Valor; commander two previous exploration missions.

Geeko-Sur-Mang Professor of Geology, Capitol University; Yazirian, 2.1 meters tall, 50 kilograms weight, 52 years old. Background: Recognized authority in geophysics, specialist in planetary crust formation

Itklikdil, Cartographer, Vrusk Atlas Manufacturing Corporation; Vrusk female, 1.5 meters height, 85 kilograms weight, 32 years old; Background: Ph.D., experienced explorer and cartographer; loaned to exploration mission by employer in exchange for Volturnus mapping rights.

Technician **Grod,** Truan's Star Civil Service; Dralasite, 1.3 meters height, 65 kilograms weight, 85 years old, Background: Developer, hydro-magnetic stabilization system in Dralasite air cars; author, "The Metaphysical Foundations of Dralasite Morality".

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