

# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## *The Game of Explorers and Aliens*



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# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **GAME CONTROL NOTES**

**Not to be shown to any of the players**

### **Introduction**

The game has to be played with two teams in separate rooms, or at least sufficiently far apart that they can't overhear each other.

You act as go-between and GM for the game. If there are a lot of players it might be better to run it with two Controllers.

The teams are :

- The Space Explorers - who are, in fact Spanish Conquistadors (up to 4 players) and
- The Terraanians - who are in fact south American natives (up to about 6 players)

The scene is the arrival of the Spanish man o'war (=Explorer Starship) off the coast of a native village (= the Terrainian home world). The scenario is disguised as a science fiction 'first contact' situation so that we can explore the problems of cross- cultural communication.

The player briefings are full of sci-fi nonsense and buffoonery, which is explained in the glossary below.

### **Game Set-up**

I recommend you split the game roles up as follows:

4 players	2 Explorers, Captain and Marine Commander	1 Terraanian Elder, 1 Militia commander
5 players	3 Explorers, Captain, first officer and Marine Commander	1 Terraanian Elder, 1 Militia commander
6 players	3 Explorers, Captain, First officer and Marine Commander	2 Terraanian Elders, 1 Militia commander
7 players	4 Explorers, Captain, First officer, Navigator and Marine Commander	2 Terrainian Elder, 1 Militia commander
8 Players or more	4 Explorers, Captain, First officer, Navigator and Marine Commander	3 Terraanian Elder, 1 Militia commander..any additional players are given Terraanian Elder roles.

Each of the space explorers is given a personalised briefing. Read these yourself before handing them out. They encourage some interesting interaction between the crew. All the crew players should be given the Situation Briefing.

If you want to make it even more interesting you can give the technical briefing only to the First Officer and Navigator (otherwise give each crew player a copy).

### **Player Actions**

This is quite a free-form game.

You will have to translate the players intended actions in terms of the sf background they have been given – this will require you to think quickly – but try to imagine the 'real' situation and come up with a rationale in your head at least. You will have to translate

# FIRST CONTACT!

their questions into the real 16<sup>th</sup> century equivalent. This will inevitably require some fudging.

The main aim of the game is to simulate the problems of communication, and the risk of fatal misunderstanding.

One thing to remember that players that say things like 'I'm smiling at them' could be interpreted quite differently (the show of teeth might be seen as an aggressive move).

So, the players cannot actually communicate face-to-face (there is too much to be gained by mutually understood body language between humans), which is why they are kept separate. They will have to communicate via images – so make sure there is plenty of paper and some pens. There are some ground rules you will have to impose on what they draw.

The following symbols **cannot be used** because they contain too much culturally specific data:

Tick / cross / yes / no symbols	✓ ×
Numbers	1 2 3 4 ...
Mathematical symbols	= + / × ≠ √ ∞ < ≤ ≥ > and so on... you get the idea
Smilies are right out!	☺ ☹ ☠

The players will try all sorts of ways of communicating, be watchful, but do not be so strict as to make all communication impossible.

## Ending the game

There is no fixed ending – it can go a number of ways – from massacre to successful trading. You may find it useful to put a time limit on the game of between one and two hours.

At the end, reveal that this has been about 16<sup>th</sup> Century Spanish Explorers all along, and give them copies of the glossary on the next page.



# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **The Culture Shock Game**

The game has now ended. You have in fact been gaming the first contact between Spanish Europeans and South American Tribes people. The science fiction setting has only been adopted to prevent the use of hindsight.

### Glossary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Stands for</b>	<b>Means</b>
SRLP	Short Range Lethal Penetration	<i>Native spear</i>
HTAPW	Hand Thrown Anti-Personnel Weapon	<i>Rock</i>
SKEW	Stored Kinetic Energy Weapon	<i>Bow &amp; arrow</i>
KILD Mk7	Kinetic Impact Lethality Device	<i>Sword</i>
KILD Mk42		<i>Boarding Pike</i>
CAKEP Mk3A4	Chemical Activation Kinetic Energy Projection	<i>Musket</i>
Heavy CAKEP		<i>Cannon</i>

<b>Term</b>	<b>Means</b>
Sonic Pulse	<i>Bang!</i>
Vibranium Crystals	<i>Gold</i>
Kinetic Mobility Entrapment Modality	<i>Catching the wind in sails</i>
EMR Enhanced Scanning Device	<i>Telescope</i>
Terraanians	<i>Native villagers</i>
Xynaman Empire	<i>Spanish Empire</i>
Sandronese	<i>English</i>
Shuttle Craft	<i>Rowing boat</i>
NavAid	<i>Compass</i>



# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **The Space Explorers Game**

### **Personal Briefing : The Ship's Captain**

**This is your PERSONAL briefing. You do not have to show it to other players on your team. You MUST NOT show it to the Alien players.**

*"Your mission is to boldly go, where no Zeeblegrop has gone before!"*

You are the Captain of the Xynaman Empire's Imperial Exploration Ship *Air-Ram II*.

You are the most senior officer on an exploration, contact and exploitation mission on the far side of the Western Spiral Arm of the galaxy, an area pretty well uncharted and unexplored.

Your primary aim is to find inhabited planets with high value rare elements (nothing else is worth the long and hazardous interstellar journey) and persuade the local alien inhabitants to give them up, by whatever means available.

Our species is engaged in a mighty Holy War against the heathen hordes of Sandron. Sandronese ships have been known to attack our ships in this sector, so you must be on your guard at all times.

If you bring back a large enough quantity of rare mineral (especially the naturally occurring Vibranium Crystals) then you and your crew will be immensely rich.



You have made a deal with Lord Xerpice, your quarter-uncle (and an influential Admiral in the Navy) that if this mission is a success you will never again have to make another hazardous trip like this. This would be a good thing so far as you're concerned.

Your ship has a crew of 102, composed of three naval officers, one officer of marines, seventy four naval ratings and twenty four marines

# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

The Space Explorers Game

## **Personal Briefing : The First Officer**

This is your **PERSONAL** briefing. You do not have to show it to other players on your team. You **MUST NOT** show it to the Alien players.

*"No Captain can go far wrong by putting his starship close by the enemy!"*

You are the First Officer of the Xynaman Empire's Imperial Exploration Ship *Air-Ram II*.

You are the second in command on an exploration, contact and exploitation mission on the far side of the Western Spiral Arm of the galaxy, an area pretty well uncharted and unexplored.

Your primary aim of this mission is to find inhabited planets with high value rare elements (nothing else is worth the long and hazardous interstellar journey) and persuade the local alien inhabitants to give them up, by whatever means available.

Our species is engaged in a mighty Holy War against the heathen hordes of Sandron. Sandronese ships have been known to attack our ships in this sector, so you must be on your guard at all times.

You are an ambitious and effective officer, with dreams of glory. You live for the day that you can lead a boarding party to capture an evilly-beweaponed Sandronese Warship. You have discovered, in this long and boring journey, that the Captain is not a glory-hunter like you, and you have doubts about his unquestioning loyalty to our Glorious Empire.

Your objectives are therefore to make sure that the *Air-Ram II* does not run away from any battles it might encounter, and that military readiness and caution are the utmost priority.



The ship has a crew of 102, composed of three naval officers, one officer of marines, seventy four naval ratings and twenty four marines



# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **The Space Explorers Game**

### **Personal Briefing : The Navigator**

**This is your PERSONAL briefing. You do not have to show it to other players on your team. You MUST NOT show it to the Alien players.**

*"All I ask is a starship, and a star to steer her by!"*

You are the Navigational Officer of the Xynaman Empire's Imperial Exploration Ship *Air-Ram II*.

The ship is on an exploration, contact and exploitation mission on the far side of the Western Spiral Arm of the galaxy, an area pretty well uncharted and unexplored.

The primary aim of this mission is to find inhabited planets with high value rare elements (nothing else is worth the long and hazardous interstellar journey) and persuade the local alien inhabitants to give them up, by whatever means available.

Our species is engaged in a mighty Holy War against the heathen hordes of Sandron.

Sandronese ships have been known to attack our ships in this sector, so we must be on our guard at all times.

As navigator you find the problems of long journeys like this somewhat tedious. You are nearing the end of your career and would like to retire alive and wealthy.

This mission is your last chance to get rich (if the rumours of the potential for wealth-creation are to be believed).

Your objective therefore is to avoid injury or death at all cost, and to become as personally wealthy as possible.

You are worried about the First Officer who seems to be far too aggressive and keen on war than is entirely healthy (for you).



# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

The Space Explorers Game

## **Personal Briefing : The Officer of Marines**

**This is your PERSONAL briefing. You do not have to show it to other players on your team. You MUST NOT show it to the Alien players.**

*"Xynam expects every Zeeblegrop to do it's duty"*

You are an officer in the finest military formation in the whole Xynaman Empire - The Marine Army. You are subordinate to the Ship's Captain of the Imperial Exploration Ship *Air-Ram II* and you must obey his orders.

However, in your opinion, the Captain is a cowardly and greedy person, and you suspect that he may not have the best interest of the Empire in the forefront of his thoughts.

You have therefore decided that you will bide your time and gather evidence of his disloyalty so that you can present it to your superiors in a full report on your return to Xynaman Space.

Mutiny is, of course, unthinkable.

You have under your command 24 marines, organised into four squads of 6. These are all elite soldiers and are fully trained to the absolute peak of efficiency.

The marines have two main offensive weapons:

1. The KILD Mk 7, which is for short range work and is only effective against unarmoured targets.
2. The CAKEP Mk 3A4, which is the most advanced personal weapon available to the marines, and is very much more powerful than the KILD type weapons.



CAKEP weapons have a number of side-effects when used on planets in atmospheric conditions. Due to the high power emissions the weapon gives out a small jet of flame and some smoke, and there is usually a powerful sonic pulse effect. The marines are immune to this due to their training, but these side-effects can be effective on their own against primitive aliens. Though fearsomely effective at long ranges, CAKEPs require a short period of recharging after firing before they can fire again.

Marine personal combat armour is virtually proof against all types of KILD attack, and even, sometimes, against long range CAKEP fire.



# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **The Space Explorers Game THE SITUATION BRIEFING For EXPLORER TEAM ONLY**

You are approaching a very promising-looking planet, which has a prosperous and inhabited region which is readily accessible on the present trajectory. To look for an alternative region would require a time-consuming course correction).

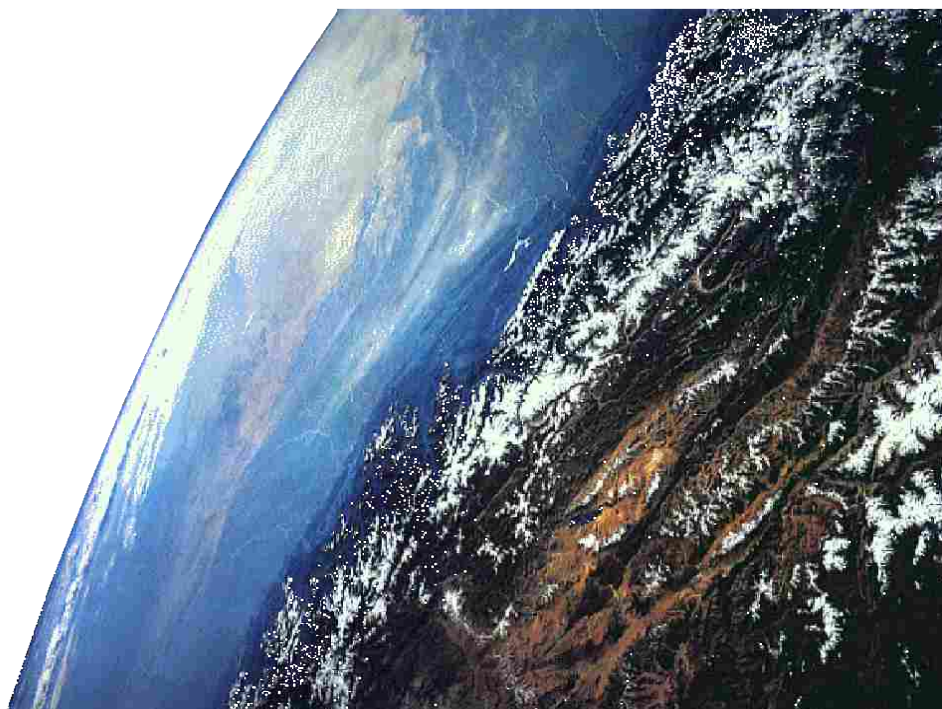
Preliminary scanning indicates that your ship has been detected by the inhabitants of this region, and they are taking steps to meet any shuttle you might send - mainly by gathering round their obvious shuttle landing field.

So far your scanners have revealed that the inhabitants are approximately humanoid (like you), with a skin colour of bright prootle. There is no sign of advanced weaponry, or planet-based defensive modules. They certainly have nothing that could harm your ship.

The only weapons that you can detect are of an early model KILD-type that was obsolete fifty years ago in the Xynaman Empire.

They have what appear to be unarmed orbital shuttles of their own, but these have not, as yet, been launched. The largest of these is not much bigger than one of your ship's shuttles, and their models are flimsy and so not look very space-worthy. One blast for a CAKEP would completely disintegrate them!

It is important that you make contact and carry out the maximum exploitation of their resources as quickly as possible.



# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **STARSHIP TECHNICAL BRIEFING**

**For EXPLORER TEAM CREW MEMBERS ONLY**

### **Propulsion System**

The Xynaman Empire has some of the most advanced ships in the known universe and your ship is no exception.

The main drive is a Triple Atomic Thunderbuster (TAT) Mk VII System manufactured by the Famous Dr Atomik's Interstellar Drive Factory Limited.

Each of the three units consists of kinetic mobility entrapment modality element, mounted in series ventrally down the ship's hull.

Adjustment and control of these powerful TAT units is carried out from special crew stations on the main deck - known as Forward Station, Main Station, and Aft Station. Sometimes there is a need for external adjustment of the TAT units, and some of the crew are specialists in this occasionally hazardous EVA work (for which they receive extra pay).

### **Control Deck**

The main control deck is located towards the rear of the ship. This is where the Captain and most of the officers spend their duty time.

It has extensive facilities for continuous and instant communications with all the main decks of the ship, and is an essential part of any modern and advanced deep space exploration ship.

The control deck is also the location of the primary NavAids and the course correction control systems.



From the control deck, officers can monitor the operation of weapon systems, supervise ship maintenance and conduct navigation.

They can also use basic instrumentation of observe space around the ship, and identify targets for fire control purposes.

As on all other Xynaman Imperial Ships, the Captain is responsible for authorising the use of the ship's EMR-Enhanced Scanning Device; a special high-tech scanning device which allows the Captain to monitor the progress of landing parties, scan distant targets and other ships. For security reasons, it is the Captain who is normally in control of this system.

# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **STARSHIP TECHNICAL BRIEFING (continued)**

### **Landing Craft**

The ship is equipped with three small shuttle craft. It is these craft that make any landfalls, or move personnel between ships. This is because interstellar exploration ships are not designed to land.

Each of these shuttle craft require 4 crew (standing safety orders apply) to operate, and can carry 12 passengers.

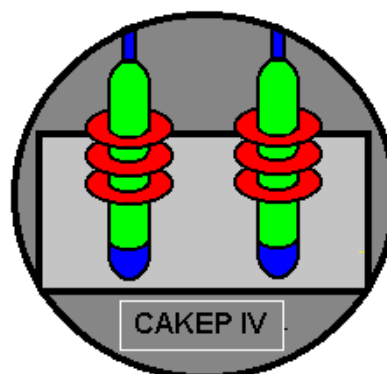
### **Ship's Weapon Systems**

The ship is equipped with 20 Heavy CAKEP Mk IV. Two are forward firing, two rearward firing, and the rest in two batteries of eight, sideways firing.

These are weapons of awesome power and represent the latest in advanced weapons technology.

They have a very long effective range and are lethal to all known mobile target configurations. They can even destroy fixed planetside defence batteries, given enough time.

The Heavy CAKEP is the standard type of ship to ship weapon.



### **Personal Weapon Systems**

All crew members are equipped with the basic short range personal weapon, the KILD Mk 7.



There is a slightly heavier version known as the KILD Mk 42, which has a slightly longer range, and is often used in starship boarding actions.

The KILD Mk7 has a kill/stun option which is not available on the Mk42.

The Marines carry a portable version of the ship's CAKEP weapons – which, with their advanced combat armour, makes them a very potent military force.

# ***FIRST CONTACT!***

## **THE TERRAANIANS**

**For TERRAANIAN TEAM ONLY**

### **Situation**

You are the peaceful inhabitants of the planet Terraan.

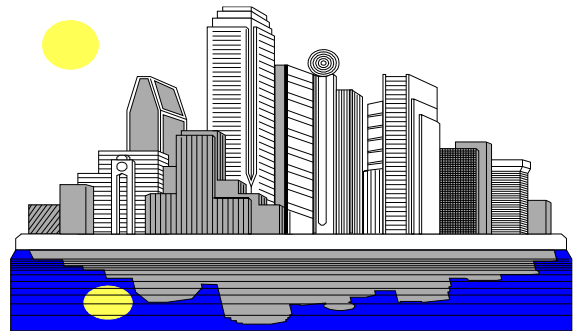
A short while ago your observatory detected an alien starship approaching. Since you do not yet have the capability

for interstellar travel this is an event worthy of note.

It has a completely unidentified propulsion system, and is truly VAST (as big as a whole town).

There are no weapons immediately obvious.

You have some small spaceships of your own, but they are like beetles to a turtle. You have been able to detect that there might be some crew aboard, but the ship is still outside effective scanning range.



### **Roles:**

#### **1. Elders**

The appointed leaders of your society. They are responsible for the safety and well being of everyone. If they fail at this, then they can be removed from office.

#### **2. Commander of the Militia**

The militia can be called out by the Elders. If this happens, the Commander of Militia will organise and lead them.

### **Militia**

Armed with the latest anti-personnel weapons, the SLRP Mk2 for close range action, the HTAPW missile for basic medium range fire, and the SKEW Mk3 which has very wide target engagement parameters.

Total call-up would be:

28 units armed with SRLP

12 units armed with SKEW Mk3

About 100 HTAPW missiles are in store, with another 100 available in a few days, if ordered.

Given time more forces could be mustered, though one must consider the potential effect of panic.