

GUNSLINGERS

The Tale

In 2730, mankind was finally able to reach beyond the colonies of Mars with the creation of the supraliminal drive (SLD). The SLD worked by removing a ship from normal space into an alternate, compressed reality, dubbed the Aether.

In this alternate reality, voidspace does not exist; the shadow of all realspace matter is adjacent or in some cases, even overlaps locations of other realspace matter in a sort of squashed existence. In almost all cases, matter in the Aether is tightly compressed, with all empty space between atomic particles being non-existent. At the same time, matter in this reality is not rigid and instead a sort of shadow presence with the tangibility of mist or smoke. This shadow matter in the Aether is translucent and at first appearance, rigid, but can be navigated by Realspace objects by displacing the surrounding shadowmass. Movement is akin to swimming, but at an equivalent depth of thousands of feet below the surface.

By transferring to the alternate dimension and wading through the shadow matter, it allowed a ship to travel vast distances in a short amount of time. However, it also requires the ship to expend a large amount of energy to "plow" through shadow matter, though certainly less than the time and effort to do so in realspace. The main trick was opening a portal from the Aether to the appropriate destination point – a science that required extremely precise, though easily predictable, calculations.

A side effect of travel through the aether is the compression waves created from realspace objects passing through the compressed space. The wake created from a vessel's passage can be felt by other vessels in the aether, and at greater speeds can even carry over into realspace as shockwaves in solid matter. Though SLD technology was not suited for same-planet travel, it opened up far-flung planets to exploration and colonization.

Initial scans of this alternate dimension seemed to prove the aether to be devoid of life as it was far too dense for conventional living beings to survive within without sturdy pressurization. Initially, SLD equipped ships were cleared to use the drives to travel with impunity to far-flung worlds once they had reached the edge of a planet's atmosphere – just at the edge of the planet's aetheric mass shadow. With the proper navigation, ships could travel billions of light years in seconds, as the vast distance between one spot and another simply did not exist.

Exploratory attempts were made to set up science outposts - and in one case a colony - in the Aether, but prolonged exposure (beyond a few weeks) to the crushing pressure of the Aether saw the abandonment of any prolonged attempt to inhabit this new reality, and further reinforced that beings native to the aether could not exist.

Scientists would continue to send unmanned probes to slowly investigate the Aether, while mining and ore corporations would experiment with mining or "compressing" ores using the Aether, but the realm remained moderately travelled and mostly unexplored as the years rumbled on. Mining

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corporations had slightly more success with the concept of shadow mining – locating minerals and ores by their shadow in the Aether and drawing it into realspace in a compressed form without the need to sort through slag or other unwanted materials.

The greatest danger from initial forays into this dimension were from failed shields that caused ships to implode from the pressing matter around them or the disruptive effects of resonate wake patterns from nearby ships. Strengthened shields and strict control of distances and numbers of ships in a given area helped to first reduce, and then eventually negate tragedies associated with this new form of travel. However, the unregulated "lanes" of SLD travel was rife with close calls between independent ship owners shuttling cargo and individuals between worlds, as well as the growth of Aetheric piracy. The greatest of these tragedies - the unexplained loss of the tri-colonial ship "Raven's Feather" and its 12,000 colonists in 2741 swiftly brought strict regulation to the initial wild and wooly frontier of SLD travel and ushered in a safer and more organized period of SLD travel.

For nearly fifty years, mankind slowly began to spread throughout the galaxy. At first, colonization was slow due to a lack of finding worlds already suitable for human habitation. But as distant stars were mapped, and terraforming began to spread to new worlds, colonization efforts began to quicken. By 2780, mankind had established some 150 colonies stretching towards the center of the Milky Way, and had even established a single remote colony in the Andromeda galaxy to begin expanding into that galaxy.

The first signs of trouble began on some of the farthest flung colonies of mankind, in 2776. The colonists of Ludwig VII simply disappeared, their habitats scoured from the surface of the planet. Three other newly established colonies in a nearby star system vanished over the course of the next three years. The losses were attributed to natural disasters or some failure of colonial engineering. Four years after the first calamity however, at Raakus III, the first inclination that something more sinister was going on occurred. Raakus III was a near-earth world, with a deadly spectrum of flora and fauna. Its colonists were armed to conquer the forbidding planet when something gargantuan loomed out of the death jungles. After a hard-fought war, the colonists of Raakus III emerged victorious - but at great cost. The report was filed back to Earth, the colony rebuilt and then the incident then forgotten.

Six months later, two more gargantuan creatures emerged from Raakus III; it was more than the colony could handle, but a handful of survivors escaped. Scientists were later dispatched to the world to examine and possibly capture the creatures thought to be native to the planet, but the strange, titanic creatures could not be found. The creature's trails seemed to simply ceased in the cruel jungle and study of the planets flora and fauna revealed no clues to their natural evolution upon the planet, nor any indication of natural prey, remains or biomes to support the creature.

Another six months later, and a nearby colony in Beiteljuice was attacked. A call for help against giant, ravening creatures was sent out - but help arrived too late. Once again, only the scoured remains of the colony were found. But this time, the scientific group from Raakus III, which came to be known as the Raakus Scientific Community (RSC) came to investigate - and they found evidence to suggest that the same two creatures reported on Raakus III might be behind the Beiteljuice attacks. As before, no

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indication was found the creatures were native to the world, nor evidence of a method of travel between the two far-flung worlds.

Back at Earth, a young, cunning military officer named Lieutenant Marlo Tanatin began to correlate data between the missing colonies and the recent attacks. He properly predicted the location of the next attack and managed to gather a strike force to meet the threat before it emerged. Among the defenders were two hastily armed and armored construction frames - the precursors to Gunslingers. The gunslinger's presence proved vital to turning aside the assault that came. One of the two creatures was slain in the battle; the other retreated and appeared to simply vanish.

On a suspicion, the scientists from Raakus III sent a probe into the Aether at the location of the recent attack. Unlike previous probes, which used sonic pings to investigate the area, these probes used newly developed Aetheric phase cameras to investigate. They managed to find a trail of disturbed Aether that led them back to the creature's home - a jellyfish-like vessel piloted by a race of luminous beings who were not only repairing the damage to the escaped creature, but were building a new one to replace the recent loss. These beings were dubbed the Ethereals.

The information retrieved was a double blow - the Aether was inhabited, and they were hostile to mankind. While the scientists who discovered the beings urged communication, Marlo's response was instead a military strike to destroy the vessel. Unfortunately, destroying the Ethereal's base proved difficult - the initial fleet sent to intercept the base was annihilated by the Ethereal's pulse weaponry while the alien base only sustaining light damage itself. In retaliation for the daunting attack, the Ethereals sent the two behemoths against the nearest colony world of Norda Prime. Luckily, the scientific group from Raakus III had been observing all the while, and warnings were issued to the colony, allowing it evacuate in the face of the creature's rampage. Still reeling from the loss of a major fleet, the government refused to respond to Marlo's call to deploy a military force to the colony to intercept the creatures.

When the colonists learned that Marlo had been prevented from deploying forces to save Norda Prime, the outrage was tremendous. Marlo was granted special authorization to organize a strike force to combat the Ethereals, which came to be known as the Earth Colonial Counter Force (ECCF). As Marlo organized his forces and used the opportunity to quash his political rivals he also organized a second attack against the Ethereal base that the RSC was still monitoring. Marlo placed a mole among the recalcitrant RSC scientists to covertly obtain the Ethereal's position and launched a seismic nuclear drone missile against the Ethereals. All contact with the Ethereals was lost when the device detonated upon reaching the Ethereal's location. The RSC was exposed for keeping the location of the Ethereals secret and its organization disbanded. Several of its discredited members were tried for treason, and the heads of the organization imprisoned for their supposed sympathies to the Ethereals.

For nearly a year afterwards, no further attacks occurred. Then, on three separate worlds, trios of behemoths appeared, wrecking everything in their path. The military, however, had not been idle. From lessons learned in the last attack, prototypical Gunslingers conceived and designed by Marlo's team were deployed to the worlds to counter the attacks. The battle was hard-fought, but eventually the

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behemoths were driven back or destroyed. As before, Marbo countered the attacks with strikes into the Aether to seek out and destroy the jellyfish-like behemoth carriers. However, this time around at least half of the attacks were thwarted and the carrier-ships escaped, with dire reprisal attacks against nearby colonial worlds.

The escaped carriers quickly rebuild their losses. Within three months, more attacks by behemoths ensued - and this time, the creatures were even bigger and more terrifying than before. Several colonies were lost as the prototype gunslingers found themselves outmatched. The Behemoth war had truly started.

An arms race between the forces of the Behemoths and the Gunslingers quickly developed as the lines of battle moved across the inhabited colonies. The initial battles favored the Behemoths - their mass increased quicker than newer, heavier models of gunslingers could be developed, and the Ethereals quickly learned they could swamp the Earthmen with numbers of smaller behemoths over a growing battlefield.

Even as gunslingers were being refined to stop the growing war, remnants of the RSC and sympathetic members of the scientific community restarted secret attempts to peaceably contact the Ethereals and find some way to end the bloodshed. Eventually, contact was made and it was discovered that the war had begun over the SLD's disruption of Aetheric space. As it turned out, the wake created by a single SLD in Aetheric space could devastate the Ethereal's microworlds. The Ethereals had assumed humanity was deploying WDM's into their reality, not merely attempting to travel from world to world. Worse yet, the government had known from the beginning that the Aether was inhabited, and had simply kept the information secret and suppressed reports that would have revealed the truth long before the first attacks began.

When this information became public, the outrage against the ECCF and the government that had backed it was staggering. Despite having become a prestigious General, Marbo was forced to step down and efforts were made to stop hostilities. As accords were hammered out, Ethereal attacks slowed and eventually stopped altogether. However, the consequence of peace would mean giving up the use of SLD in areas where Aetheric populations existed. It also led to the development of the micro-burst supraliminal drive (MBSLD), designed to reduce the damage of Aetherial wakes and yet hasten travel to distant star systems. An unfortunate side effect of the MBSLD was that it slowed transplanetary travel, increasing the length of time over a SLD vessel by a factor of ten - or more in high-traffic areas.

For a time, peace reigned between the two realities. There were occasional lapses when SLD use would breach the accords and cause devastation among the Aetheric realms, but the penalties in Realspace for such breeches were harshly dealt with. Only in the most extreme cases - such as a rogue colony that refused to honor the accords - would the appearance of a Behemoth in Realspace become the consequence for not following the treaty.

With the end of the hostilities between Ethereals and Earthers, the cost to maintain Gunslingers became an issue for the military. Over time, retired military and mercenary individuals would acquire

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the aging machines. Some would sell their services against renegade or pirate forces, while a select few would come to organize gladiatorial combat between aging hulks. As the latter became more lucrative, the aging Gunslingers were replaced with newer, sleeker vessels until the sport became an intergalactic spectacle.

Unfortunately, as time passed, and with the increased time it took to hop to far-flung systems, some of the colonies began to rebel against their governments back home on Earth. As rebellion grew over the coming century, eventually the remaining military Gunslingers were pulled into the frays. Military Gunslinger vs. Renegade or Mercenary Gunslinger combat became inevitable, as did the return of full-on SLD use to quickly move units to growing trouble spots.

With the growing disregard of the peace accords, the return of the Behemoths to Realspace from disgruntled Ethereals was inevitable. Now, even as various colonies war against Earth and each other, Aetheric intrusions are on the rise as Gunslingers and Behemoths alike return to the battlefields to quell their noisy neighbors.

The Realspace Factions

Andromeda High Command

In the years following the Behemoth Wars and the switch from SLD to MBSLD drives, a cunning entrepreneur named Marcus Wellborn implemented a stunning coup over the remote Andromeda colonies. Nearly untouched by the destruction wrought in the Behemoth Wars, the newly established government rebuffed attempts to be drawn back into the fold of the Milky Ways powers and was able to entrench itself and solidify its power under a neopolitical regime. Though the newly formed High Command grudgingly allowed trade to resume with the Milky Way, it turned its back on the infighting predominate in its sister galaxy. The High Command imposed a single, if not cruelly efficient government over the growing number of colonies in the Andromeda galaxy. Unhindered by the seeming initial lack of Ethereals in the Andromeda galaxy, it has only of late begin to experience Behemoth attacks from somewhere deeper within the unexplored regions of that galaxy. However, the general lack of communication with the Milky Way has shed little light on nature of these attacks and seems only to have further pushed the High Command to violently retaliate against targets in the Milky Way as being responsible for the appearance of Behemoths in its own galaxy.

Allied Earth Initiative

Formed from the ashes of Marbo's strike force, the AEI is composed of an eclectic mix of former soldiers who have abandoned their nationality to uphold an oath to defend the rights of all humanity against the deprivations of rebels, terrorists, pirates and even Ethereals. The AEI is funded by donations

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and tithes from the worlds they protect - which are primarily either under the control of the Berlin Republic, Eurostate or the Western Hemisphere Coalition. They have established military bases on all worlds still loyal to the established governments of the Western Hemisphere Coalition (WHC) and Eurostate. Though the AEI is best known and feared for its Gunslinger aces, it likewise utilizes powered infantry forces and cutting-edge modern military vehicles to patrol and defend worlds.

Berlin Republic

Once based in Earth's Germany, this megacorporation specializes in high-technology circuits for computers and gunslingers. Based on the factory-world Berlin, it nominally claims allegiance to Eurostate and supplies the Allied Earth Initiative (AEI) with gunslingers and other weaponry in return for defense of its homeworld and corporate assets on various colonies under its jurisdiction - held in the name of Eurostate.

The Conglomerate

Composed of deposed radical bureaucrats who trace their ancestry to dismembered Russian & Chinese nations - as well as exiled petty despots from various colonies - this ex-Earth military dictatorship rose to prominence during the Behemoth Wars. Under the guise of liberation and espousing old world communist values, it seeks to gobble up defenseless colonies and strip them of wealth to support their own petty greed or to fund the throne world of Kremlin.

The various worlds of the conglomerate are ruled by tyrannical individuals, who are only loosely held together by fear of being overthrown – either by their own subjects, rival Conglomerate dictators, the other galactic powers or the disapproval of the central conglomerate homeworld on Kremlin.

The Conglomerate projects a face of democratic socialism in its spread across known space. Its primarily infantry-based military utilizes second-rate Gunslingers, outdated military vehicles and bribed marauders to subjugate its victims. It extols heavy tithes from the worlds it has embraced, and despite its lack of cutting-edge tech, possesses a brutal military force that makes even the Allied Earth Initiative hesitant to attempt to liberate worlds swallowed by the Conglomerate's forces.

Eurostate

Originally and outgrowth of the old world NATO, Eurostate came into existence in 2185 to counter the growing aggression of the Western Hemisphere Coalition. Headed by the old world nation of France and comprised of most of western Europe, this Earthbound government holds the remainder of Earth lands not under the Western Hemisphere Coalition.

The former Russian republic and most of Eastern Europe aligned themselves with Eurostate shortly after the creation of the SLD in 2375, with China and its satellite states eventually joining in 2401

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after its communist government was overthrown. It has steadily built several colonies, each with strong roots to old world nations, bound by a mutual defense pact.

Over the years, it has had a tumultuous partnership with the Western Hemisphere Coalition, up to and including war against its continental neighbors as well as being involved in several inter-colony clashes. It is a staunch enemy of the Conglomerate, and has openly engaged in liberation wars of Conglomerate held worlds on various colony worlds since the Conglomerate's appearance. In fact, Eurostate refuses to acknowledge the Conglomerate as a legitimate power, but has been prevented from successfully striking at the throne world of Kremlin to dismantle the entity. In this matter, Eurostate has committed its effort to economic sanctions against Conglomerate strongholds, in preference to costly and generally bloody military actions.

Eurostate manufactures its own Gunslingers, and freely sells light/cheap Gunslingers to colony worlds to protect themselves from Behemoths and other factions. It has created several contracts with the Allied Earth Initiative to protect allied colony worlds, but provides its own military force to protect its Earth-based holdings. While Eurostate's military forces are not as experienced or cutting-edge as the Allied Earth Initiative, its modern mix of Gunslingers, mechanized infantry and modern military vehicles are capable of meeting any emerging threat.

Free Colony Rebels

While not a true government or world organization, this rag-tag collection of individuals seeks to be free of influence from oppressive governments - especially Conglomerate and the Western Hemisphere Coalition. Suspected of working from a Realspace fleet that is constantly on the move to hide their leadership, they have rebel cells scattered throughout several worlds across the Milky Way galaxy. When the rebels emerge to fight, they generally rely on guerilla soldiers and commercial vehicles modified for combat. When pressed, they can utilize stolen or second-hand Gunslingers, but do so rarely as they have no manufacturing capability to produce their own war machines. There are rumors - possibly maliciously spread by other organizations - that the FCR has Ethereal allies willing to help the rebels in any scheme that will disrupt SLD travel in their area.

Lunar Assembly

Originally, the Lunar Assembly was a multi-national lunar scientific outpost found in 2085 as Armstrong Base. Shortly thereafter, in 2095 it became the jumping off-point for a planned colonization of Mars. Things continued to improve for Armstrong Base once the Mars colony was actually established in 2100, and for the next hundred years Armstrong Base saw amazing growth as it became both a gateways to Mars and the epitome of advanced scientific research centers. When funding for the base dried up during the World Depression era of 2213-2264, Armstrong Base struggled on alone, surviving on philanthropic grants, tourism and sheer determination. However, by 2300 the lunar city-states were on the mend and even areas that had been shut down and abandoned were reactivated and put back into use for the once again expanding population.

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Shortly after the overthrow of the last old world government of China in 2401, Armstrong Base was granted its own autonomy. It is the only government run by a college board - Galileo Astrophysics College, located beyond the outskirts of historic Armstrong Base. Its citizens are transient, consisting primarily of students and staff of the various learning centers spread across the moon's surface. Oddly enough, almost none of the workforce who toil at the advanced electronics manufacturing plants on the moon qualify for citizenship, as they only live in temporary quarters on the moon for 3-4 months at a time before returning to the less stressful living conditions on their home world for 2-3 weeks of "decompression".

The Lunar Assembly does not possess a military force, and in fact their charter bans the permanent presence of a military force at the various linked lunar city-stations. However, a stand-by force from the Allied Earth Initiative (AEI) remains ready to quickly shuttle to the moon in case of any major outbreak of violence on the lunar surface. The Lunar Assembly does, however, keep a security force on the moon to police against local crime or other unlawful activity within the city-stations themselves.

Martian Hegemony

Ever since its colonization in 2100, the people of Mars had always chafed against rule under Earth hands. It was not until 2254, in the midst of the World Depression that Mars would have the chance to split away from Earth rule and establish its own independent government. Relations with Earth were strained between the two worlds until 2725, when Armstrong Base on Earth's moon brokered a technology partnership to bring the worlds together. That partnership resulted in the creation of the SLD system. Suddenly, with the entire galaxy opened up to mankind, the mistrust and posturing over resources between Earth and Mars waned as both worlds began to direct their efforts toward expanding outward and relieving their worlds of the growing problem of resource depletion and overpopulation.

Unlike the Western Hemisphere Coalition (WHC) and Eurostate, who primarily used the SLD to shunt the overburdening population to new worlds, the MaHe used the SLD to bring scarce resources to Mars and turning it into both an economic and ecological paradise.

Today, the MaHe consists of an assorted 30-odd colonies and the crownworld. Its ruling nobility keeps a firm, if friendly grip on its colony world and is on good terms with both the WCH and Eurostate. Mars has formally refused to ally itself with Allied Earth Initiative (AEI) for military support, preferring to run and maintain its own military force, including Gunslingers designed by MaHe itself. However, it does allow its member worlds to request and use AEI defense forces when such colony worlds are not rich or strong enough to develop their own planetary forces.

Raakus Scientific Community

Originally formed as an investigative group from the Lunar Assembly tasked with discovering the true nature of Behemoths, this organization has become a haven for free-thinking scientists and the

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politically oppressed. The RSC operates from a number of hidden space stations scattered throughout the Milky Way galaxy, with a rumored branch somewhere within the Andromeda galaxy.

The RSC members are composed of those who sought political asylum from any of the other political entities of the galaxy, as well as a cream crop of scientific prodigies who are given free reign to conduct scientific study and experimentation away from the overbearing scrutiny of government oversight and corporate greed. The RSC can only afford to maintain a small, but efficient military force that is primarily used to defend their space stations and citizens. However, due to the unique presence of their scientific-minded community, the few Gunslingers among their military forces tend to be cutting-edge and/or unique configurations.

Western Hemisphere Coalition

Originally formed after the economic collapse of the former United States in 2057, the Western Hemisphere Coalition grew out of the remnants of several strong American-based megacorporations that attempted to replace the growing inept and corruption government body. In a short amount of time, the initial tripartite of three megacorporations drew both the declining nations of Canada and Mexico into the fold, officially creating the Western Hemisphere Coalition out of the disparate bodies. The resurgent body began to experience rapid economic and political growth. By the end of 2135, the WHI had expanded to cover all of North and South America and had stretched its economic exploitation deep into Africa. It had also had a major hand in the creation of Armstrong Base on the moon, and heavily pushed for the colonization of Mars.

The economic destabilizing Border Wars of 2170-2185 as the WHI aggressively expanded into the Atlantic and the remainder of Africa was later blamed as the root cause of the subsequent World Depression, and led to the formation of Eurostate to oppose the unhindered conquest of the WHI. Surprisingly, after the end of the World Depression most of southeast Asia and all of Australia willingly joined the WHI in efforts to stabilize their own economies.

Following the discovery of the SLD, the WHI rushed at the chance to expand its borders in acquiring a multitude of colony worlds under their banner. In fact, by the time that Eurostate had established its first working colony beyond the bounds of the solar system, the WHI had 13 fledgling colonies set up in neighboring star systems.

Unlike Eurostate, the various cultures that the WHI is composed of has blended into one mixed and muddled culture rather than dwell on old world ethnic and cultural divides. This has allowed the WHI to expand further and faster than the other bodies while maintain a loyal core that easily relates to the homeworld - as well as easily directed and manipulated.

Under the guise of a beneficent democracy, this "government" provides stable wages and mundane manufactured goods to Earthers and a host of colonists alike. They hold patents for the original construction frames used by most colonies and hold worlds in their thrall via the company stores maintained on colony worlds. Though they do not sell gunslingers directly to colony worlds - relying

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mainly on the Allied Earth Initiative for projected military force - they do provide minimal conventional military forces to those colony worlds under their domination. However, these militia forces are generally present to protect company materials and interests from pirates, rebels and renegades - not so much to protect the populace directly.

Zipangu Prima

Based in Japanese/Korean Earth, this megacorporation broke away from the Western Hemisphere Coalition after the end of the World Depression to establish itself as an economic power bound to no single government. It specializes in producing and distributing entertainment across two galaxies.

Besides the scores of holosims, and televids its broadcasts across the galaxy, ZiPrima sponsors most of the Gunslinger gladiatorial circuit in the Milky Way and runs its own Gunslinger gladiatorial team in the Andromeda Galaxy. There are persistent rumors that it uses Gunslinger gladiator arenas to test its own new weapon designs, which it sells exclusively to gladiators - or, if the rumors are to be believed - unaligned mercenaries and pirates.

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The Rules

TURN ORDER

Each player splits their Gunslingers in an equal number of action groups. If a player has more Gunslingers than the other player, the extra Gunslingers are equally split between the action groups. When activating action groups, the group with the most remaining unactivated Gunslingers must be chosen first.

For example, if player 1 has 4 Gunslingers and player 2 has 5 Gunslingers, there would be four action groups. Player 1 would have one Gunslinger in each action group, while player 2 would have two Gunslingers in one action group and one Gunslinger in the remaining three action groups. When activating groups, player 2 would have to activate the groups with two Gunslingers apiece before he could activate the groups with one Gunslinger apiece.

Each turn each player rolls 2d6 for initiative.

MAINTENANCE Phase

In descending initiative order, each player performs any maintenance tasks on their Gunslinger.

Reboot: If you choose to forgo the MOVEMENT and ATTACK Phases, you can clear all Jams or Overheats your Gunslinger has suffered, as well as attempt to restore all equipment that has Burned Out. If you perform maintenance, you do not need to roll to clear Jams, Overheats or Burn Outs - they are fixed automatically. Burned Out equipment is restored on a 4+ on 1D6; roll separately for each item.

Weapon Offline: You can choose to take a weapon off-line to clear any Jams or Overheats. You cannot use the weapon in the ATTACK Phases. Roll each Jammed or Overheat die on the weapon. On a 5+, the die is unlocked and becomes available when the weapon is brought back on-line automatically the next turn. If your Gunslinger is in water, Overheats are cleared on a 4+. You can choose to take multiple weapons off-line in a single turn. Taking a weapon off-line does not affect movement.

Hone: You can choose to clear Break dice from Melee weapons, but doing so makes the melee weapon unavailable for the MELEE ATTACK Phase. Roll for each Break die on the weapon. On a 5+, the die is unlocked and is available for the melee weapon next turn. Honing a melee weapon does not affect movement.

Jury-Rig: You may attempt to bring Burned Out systems back on line. For each system, roll 1D6. On a 5-6, the system is functional again and available next turn. Jury-rigging systems does not take away from movement or attack actions.

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Exhausted: Exhausted missile system dice cannot be regained; they remain unavailable until the game is over.

MOVEMENT Phase

The players move in ascending initiative order (lowest roll to highest).

You can move up to your Move Value. Each turn of up to 60 degrees costs 1" of movement. For every 4" of movement (not counting turns), you gain +1 dice to Hull rolls - remember, you cannot roll more than 7 dice at one time, but each die beyond 7 translates to a reroll of one hull die.

If the Gunslinger jumps, it gains an additional +1 dice to Hull rolls. While jumping, a gunslinger ignores all terrain it moves through. At the end of the jump, the Gunslinger lands and is affected by any special rules for the terrain it lands in.

Moving through terrain – woods, up/down hills, water or through buildings – costs +1" of movement. Moving backwards costs +1" of movement.

Sidestepping, which allows you to move 1" directly to the right or left, costs +1" of movement. For example, moving backwards or sidestepping through an obstacle costs 3" per 1" actually moved.

It takes 1" of movement for a Gunslinger to drop to the ground or stand up.

RANGED ATTACK Phase

The player performs their Gunslinger's attacks in ascending initiative order (highest roll to lowest). Remember that damage effects are not applied until all ranged combat is resolved.

Resolve your Gunslinger's attack types as you desire, in the order you desire. Valid attack types are Ballistic, Laser and Missile.

Firing Arcs and Facing

A Gunslinger has front, side and rear facing. The front facing is a 60 degree arc in front on the Gunslinger. Side facing arcs cover a 270 degree arc from the front of the Gunslinger. A Gunslinger's rear arc covers a 60 degree arc from the Gunslinger's rear. A Gunslinger that is attacked in a side arc grants +1 die to the attacker's roll. A Gunslinger that is attacked in the rear arc grants +1 die to the attacker's roll AND rolls -1 hull dice.

Firing arcs are similar to facing arcs, with some overlap. The front firing arc covers a 180 degree arc in the front of the Gunslinger. The left side firing arc covers the front firing arc and out to 180 degrees to the left. The right side firing arc covers the front firing arc and out to 180 degrees to the right. The rear firing arc covers the 60 degree arc to the rear.

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Line of Sight

Your Gunslinger must have Line of Sight to the target and be in the attack type's range. If your Line of Sight intercepts a Gunslinger, 1 inch of woods or half-Gunslinger height terrain (hills, buildings, etc), the target gets +1 Hull dice per obstacle in the way.

When making attack rolls, you can never roll more than 7 dice. Any excess attack dice become rerolls for the attack dice. Certain weapon abilities (such as paired) allow you to reroll all or some of your dice. You can never reroll a given dice more than once.

When making hull rolls, you can never roll more than 7 dice. If you have more than 7 hull, any excess dice rolled while defending allow you to reroll one hull dice for each hull die past 7. You cannot roll a hull dice more than once, regardless of the number of hull dice you have.

If you are using paired weapons located in the arms, you lose the +1D to damage and reroll if one or the other paired weapon is not in the firing arc (i.e., not in the forward arc).

Choosing Targets

You may choose to attack a single target with each weapon system you possess. The target must be in a legal firing arc for the given weapon.

If you have a paired weapon (except a missile weapon), you may choose to attack a single target, with the ability to reroll misses OR you may choose to attack two different targets within your weapon's firing arcs. If you choose the latter, you lose the ability to reroll misses, you take a -1 penalty to the die rolls, and you use the single weapon attack value.

Missile attack dice may be split between any number of targets within your weapon's fire arcs.

Resolving Ballistic Attacks

Roll a number of D6's equal to the Ballistic skill of the Gunslinger, minus one die for each critical hit the Gunslinger has suffered (minimum 1 die rolled). You may roll a maximum of 7 dice; excess dice become rerolls, though you can never reroll a dice more than once. Reduce the dice rolled for the attack by 1 for each Jam the Gunslinger has suffered. The target rolls a number of D6's equal to their remaining Hull points (max 7 dice; excess dice become hull rerolls) plus any bonus from special abilities, movement or cover.

Pair off each defender's dice to the attacker's dice. If there are more defending dice than attacking, the defender may choose which of his dice to use. If there are more attacking dice than defending dice, the extra attacking dice are compared directly to the defender's armor for a hit.

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For paired dice, if the defender's dice equal or beat the attacker's die, there is no effect. If the attacker's die beats the defender's die, compare it to the Gunslinger's armor. If the attacker's die also beats the defender's Armor value, the defender loses 1 Hull point. Otherwise, there is no effect.

Note, each attacker's die that rolls the Ballistic weapon's Jam value or less (usually a "1") causes that die to "Jam" and cannot be used in subsequent attacks until the jam is cleared.

Resolving Laser Attacks

Roll a number of D6's equal to the Laser skill of the Gunslinger (max 7 dice; excess dice become rerolls). Reduce the dice rolled by 1 for each Overheat or critical hit the Gunslinger has suffered. The target rolls a number of D6's equal to their remaining Hull points (max 7 dice; excess dice become hull rerolls) plus any bonus from special abilities, movement or cover.

Pair off each defender's dice to the attacker's dice. If there are more defending dice than attacking, the defender may choose which of his dice to use. If there are more attacking dice than defending dice, the extra attacking dice are compared directly to the defender's armor for a hit.

For paired dice, if the defender's dice equal or beat the attacker's die, there is no effect. If the attacker's die beats the defender's die, compare it to the Gunslinger's armor. If the attacker's die also beats the defender's Armor value, the defender loses 1 Hull point. Otherwise, there is no effect.

Note, each attacker's die that rolls the Ballistic weapon's Overheat value or less (usually a "1") causes that die to "Overheat" and cannot be used in subsequent attacks until the overheat is dissipated.

Resolving Missile Attacks

Roll a number of D6's equal to the Missile value of the Gunslinger's weapon. Reduce the dice rolled by 1 for each Missile that has been exhausted. Each die that comes up equal to or greater than the Missile's Lock value (usually a 6) deals a Hull point of damage to the defender. The defender DOES NOT make a Hull roll to avoid the attack, but the Locked die must also meet or beat the defender's armor value. Note that missiles ignore bonuses to Hull from movement or cover as well - they seek out the target by maneuvering around obstacles and adjusting for the enemy's motion.

Note, if a Missile Attack rolls a 1, it is exhausted. Exhausted missiles cannot be restored except by special ability or by being restocked between fights in a campaign game.

Range Combat Resolution

After resolving all ranged attacks for both sides, damage is then applied to Gunslingers - this means that the Gunslinger still rolls its full complement of Hull Dice against all incoming attacks (except Missile attacks) for the phase. A Gunslinger reduced to 0 or less Hull points at the end of the Ranged combat phase is destroyed.

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MELEE Phase

The player perform their Gunslinger's attacks in ascending initiative order (highest roll to lowest). Remember no damage effects are applied until all melee combat is resolved.

Gunslingers that are within 1" of each other may perform hand to hand combat. The attacker rolls a number of D6's equal to its Melee skill, minus one die for critical hit it has suffered. A Gunslinger can always roll at least one die for melee. The target rolls a number of D6's equal to their remaining Hull points. Bonus dice from movement or cover do not apply.

Pair off each defender's dice to the attacker's dice. If there are more defending dice than attacking, the defender may choose which of his dice to use. If there are more attacking dice than defending dice, compare the extra attacking dice directly to the defender's armor for a hit.

For paired dice, if the defender's dice equal or beat the attacker's die, there is no effect. If the attacker's die beats the defender's die, compare it to the Gunslinger's armor. If the attacker's die also beats the defender's Armor value, the defender loses 1 Hull point. Otherwise, there is no effect.

Melee Combat Resolution

At the end of this phase, apply all damage accrued to the Gunslinger. If the Gunslinger is reduced to 0 or less Hull at the end of the Melee combat phase, it is destroyed.

Gunslinger Destroyed

If your Gunslinger is destroyed, you can attempt to save the pilot by ejecting him. Roll a die. On a 5+, the pilot successfully ejects before the Gunslinger is destroyed.

If you have an Advanced Ejection System, the pilot successfully ejects on a 3+.

If you have a Scuttle System, your pilot only successfully ejects on a 6 - but you get the chance to take out any nearby Gunslingers (hopefully, none of your own!).

GUNSLINGER DESIGN

Gunslingers have a mass ranging from 1 to 12. Depending on the mass, the Gunslinger can accommodate so much equipment and weapons and has a base speed and Hull points. The table below displays this information.

Frame

This is a measure of the bulk or mass of the Gunslinger. Gunslingers have a frame ranging from 1, the smallest, to 12, the largest.

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Capacity

This is the total number of spaces of weapons and equipment mass the Gunslinger can hold.

Power

This is a measure of how powerful the power core of the Gunslinger. This limits how much energy equipment and weapons can draw from the Gunslinger. Gunslingers generally start with engines that give the machine less power than capacity, though there is equipment to increase the Gunslinger's energy level - at a cost to its capacity, of course.

Weapons

Gunslingers can only be armed with three weapon systems: Their primary weapon system, secondary weapon system and tertiary weapon system. The weapon system may be ballistic, laser, missile or melee in style, and you may choose more than one of a given type. Each frame has a mass/energy limit for the primary, secondary and tertiary weapon system. The total mass of the Gunslinger's weapons and equipment cannot exceed the Gunslinger's Capacity. Likewise, the total charge of the Gunslinger's weapons and equipment cannot exceed the Gunslinger's Power.

A Gunslinger **MUST** have a primary weapon system. It may (or may not) choose to have a secondary weapon system. It may choose to have a tertiary weapon system, but it **MUST** have secondary system before it can choose a third. A Gunslinger **CANNOT** have more than three weapons systems!

Each weapon must be placed in one of three locations: Hull, Arms or Rear. One weapon system can be placed per location, with the exception of Arms, which can have one weapon system each – or one paired weapon that takes up both arm spaces. Hull weapons have a forward firing arc. Rear weapons have a rear firing arc. Arm weapons have a side firing arc - on the side they are located. However, paired weapons placed in the arm are assumed to be placed one per arm; they only gain their pair bonus when their firing arcs overlap (about a 60 degree arc from the Gunslinger's front).

Hand-to-Hand weapons can be purchased for a Gunslinger. Hand-to-Hand weapons are always placed in the arm location - usually the right arm. You **CAN** choose to have Primary, Secondary and Tertiary melee weapons; in this case it is assumed the gunslinger has been outfitted with additional arms to hold the weapon(s).

When purchasing weapons, you may choose to make it a paired weapon – essentially two copies of the weapon, one on each side. A paired weapon has twice the mass and charge. It makes one attack at +1D damage and can reroll all dice with its attacks. A paired weapon's mass cannot exceed the mass restriction for its type class (primary, secondary or tertiary). One-handed melee weapons can be made paired weapons, great weapons cannot. Paired weapons take a single location. In arms, they can split to one weapon per Arm to give a wider arc of fire or can be located in a single Arm.

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Likewise, when purchasing ranged weapons, you may choose to make a weapon a double weapon – essentially “double-barreled”. A double weapon has 50% more mass (round up) and 50% more charge (round up) but deals 50% more damage (round up). Thus, for example, a double Heavy Gauss Rifle has a mass of 8, takes 2 energy and does 6 dice of damage (with a Range of 60 and Jamming on a 1). A double weapon only takes up one location.

If you have the Capacity and Power, you can arm the Gunslinger with double paired weapons. Perform the doubling first, then apply the effects of pairing. Thus, for example, a double paired Medium Gauss Rifle would have a mass of 12, take 4 energy, deal 7 dice of damage and you can reroll any of its attack dice.

Finally, you can purchase a Weapon Cluster. Weapon Clusters consist of two to three weapons, each of a different type. Clusters can only be placed in the secondary or tertiary weapons slot, but count as one weapon. The base weapon in the group cannot exceed the primary/secondary mass limitation. The second and third weapon must weigh at least 1 ton less than the base weapon. Cluster weapons cost 150% normal and take up the same space as the individual weapons. Clustered weapons use the normal energy charge for its kind.

When using the cluster, you can fire any number of weapons from the cluster in a given Ranged combat phase as a single attack. If the weapons have different special abilities or rules, use different color dice for the weapon, or roll the attack separately. The defender rolls one armor roll against the entire cluster attack.

Equipment

Gunslingers can be equipped with special gear. Each piece of special equipment belongs to one of 6 groups. You can only take one of each type of system on a Gunslinger. Unless otherwise specified, you can only purchase one iteration of a given system.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Veteran: After gaining 3 kills, a gunslinger becomes a Veteran. The Gunslinger can reroll one die per turn per point of veteran, whether attacking or defending. The new result cannot be rerolled. With 4 kills, a Veteran can reroll two dice per turn. He may reroll two dice for a single action, or may reroll one die for two different actions in the turn. The veteran ability is lost when a gunslinger becomes an Ace.

Ace: After 5 kills, a gunslinger becomes an ace. the Gunslinger can reroll one dice for one action in a given phase, whether attacking or defending. Also, if an attack die causes a hit and is a natural “6”, it causes a critical hit to the target. A critical hit defeats any die it is paired with, regardless of the other die's result. For every 5 additional kills, a gunslinger can reroll one addition dice per phase.

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Turn Summary

Determine Initiative

- 1) Each player splits their gunslingers into equal numbered groups
- 2) Roll 2d6 for initiative.

Maintenance Phase

Movement Phase

- 1) From lowest to highest initiative, each player selects one group of gunslingers and moves up to their base speed. Gunslingers with the Run ability can move their run speed. Gunslingers with the jump ability can move their jump speed, ignoring any terrain in the way.

Ranged Attack Phase

- 1) From highest to lowest initiative, each player selects one group of gunslingers and resolves their ranged attacks. Damage is applied AFTER all gunslingers have finished their ranged combat
 - a) Choose target and announce which weapons will be used
 - b) Attacker rolls each weapon's attack dice (up to 7 dice). If the weapon is paired and being fired at one target, you may reroll each dice once
 - c) Defender rolls Hull dice + cover dice (up to 7 dice). If the defender has more than 7 hull + cover bonus, any additional dice allow the base dice to be rerolled once (up to 7).
 - d) Compare each attack dice to each defense dice, from highest to lowest. If the attack dice equals or beats the defender's Armor value AND the defense dice, the gunslinger take a point of damage.
 - e) Check any 1's rolled by the attacker for Jams or Overheats

Melee Phase