



THE MERCENARY'S ATLAS

The Inner Sphere is an immense place, as any modern mercenary, House trooper, free trader, or common interstellar tourist can tell you. With so many planets worth fighting over, nearly every world in the Inner Sphere and Periphery has the potential for being a mercenary's "hiring hall", with local political, military, and even corporate leaders all eager to employ a hired gun from time to time. However, by and large, the majority of these worlds cannot offer the range of opportunities that a dedicated mercenary hiring center can. That is why, in all of known space, only a handful of worlds have become hubs of the mercenary trade.

Galatea, for all its lost glory, is still one of the most lucrative places for mercenaries to recruit, train, and gather skilled warriors while simultaneously offering a wealth of contract opportunities, both above-board and below. Recently accredited by the Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission, this world has become second only to Outreach as the center of the legitimate mercenary trade, supplanting rival Solaris VII as a prime spot to hire today's professional soldier.

But, as was discussed in our previous volume, there are other hubs of mercenary trade beyond Galatea and Outreach. Described here are Galatea and two other popularly recognized centers where the average soldier of fortune can go to find quality training, equipment, and—above all—paying work.

GALATEA: A CLOSE SECOND

With three jumps between itself and Terra, Galatea, the Mercenary's Star, is not quite as conveniently located as Outreach, but it is included on many major trade routes both within the Lyran Alliance's Skye regions and between the Alliance and Draconis Combine space. Once the single most important hub of mercenary business, the rise of Outreach, the turmoil of the Clan invasion, and the splintering of ComStar diminished Galatea's importance over the last two decades. Despite this, it remains one of the Inner Sphere's busiest ports of call for professional soldiers and employer agents, with hundreds of DropShips launching and landing daily at the massive Galaport spaceport, each a beacon of opportunity for the professional warriors whose careers are made—and sometimes broken—on this arid world.

FACT SHEET: GALATEA

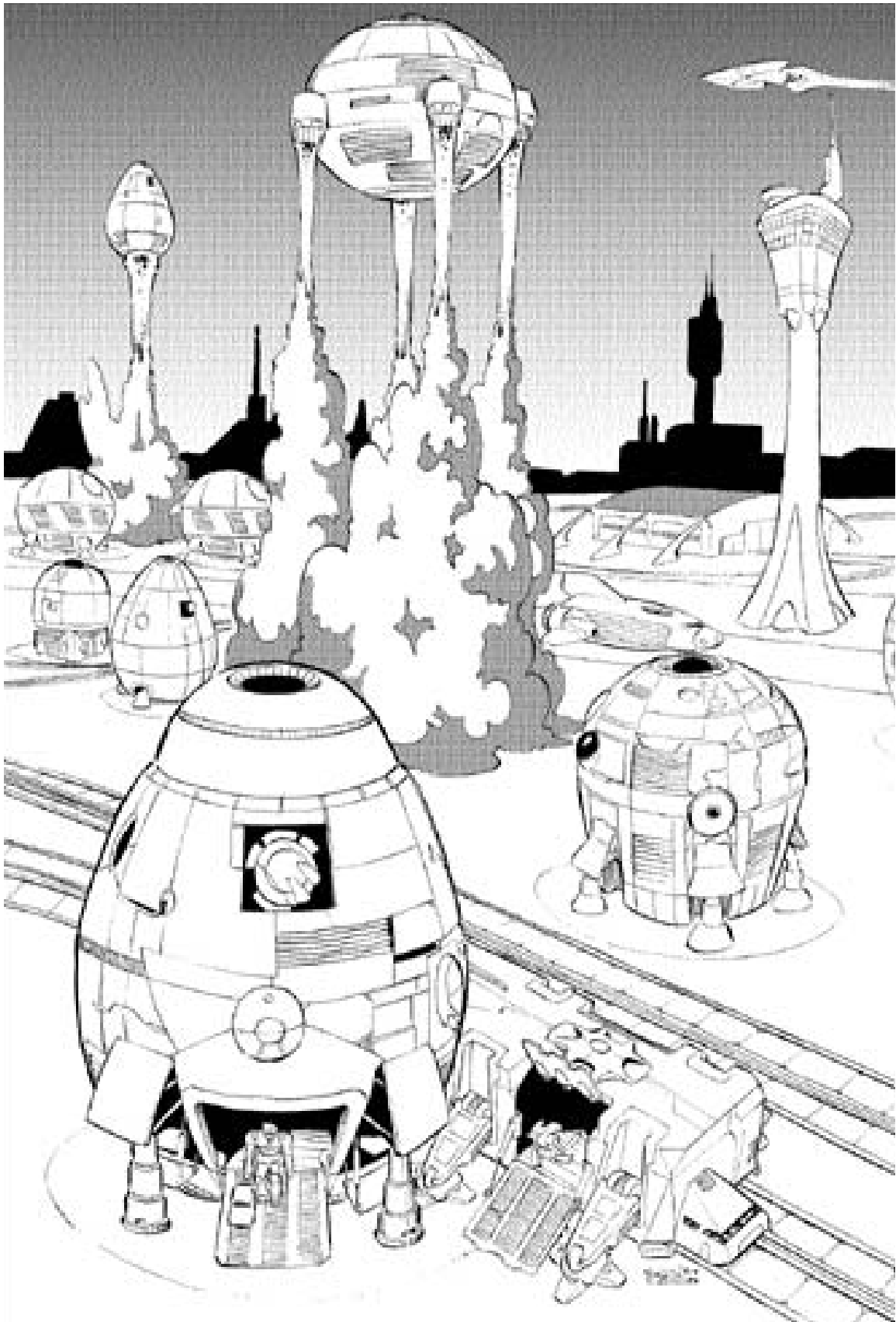
Noble Ruler: Duke David Nowakowski
Star Type (Recharge Time): F8II (179 hours)
Position in System: 6th
Time to Jump Point: 12.01 days
Number of Satellites: 1 (Galatea Minor)
Surface Gravity: 1.00
Atm. Pressure: Standard (Breathable)
Equatorial Temperature: 55° C (Desert)
Surface Water: 35 percent
Recharging Station: Zenith
HPG Class Type: A
Highest Native Life: Mammals
Population: 556,976,000
Socio-Industrial Levels: C-C-C-C-C

THE MERCENARY'S STAR

Though it orbits far from a yellow-white giant, Galatea is a hot world, rendered largely barren along its equatorial and tropical zones thanks mostly to its thin protective ozone layer. In the temperate and polar regions, where the solar radiation is less severe, the soil is largely sterilized, lacking in nitrogen from centuries of ultraviolet exposure. As a result, very little vegetation grows on Galatea, save what can be found along the coastlines of rivers extending from the planet's oceans—the Amersia Sea in the north polar region, the Kileri and Paradise Oceans in the south—which are completely land-locked within the single, planet-wide landmass known as Lubbocks. Given the largely barren environment that is Galatea, the first settlers to this world in 2250 were surprised to find it actually supported a basic ecosystem, at the top of which was a furry, burrowing, rodent-like predator called the Galatean Mole. Indeed, preliminary analyses made by the first surveyors of this world suggested that the root of the planet's ecology lay in a complex system of underground rivers.

All this did not discourage the first settlers to this world in 2250. These colonists, hailing from various anti-technology sects that included elements of Terra's Amish, Native American, and Central African cultures, sought to make a home of hot and barren Galatea and had begun to succeed against the odds before the Terran Hegemony annexed the world in 2333. In the Star League era, Galatea became a major military training ground, shared jointly by the Hegemony and the neighboring Lyran Commonwealth. Galatea experienced an economic boom during this period, followed by a long period of stagnation in the wake of the League's collapse. The lack of economic growth eventually led to its development as a Mecca for out-of-work and dispossessed mercenaries and its establishment as the home of the largest Hiring Hall in the Mercenary's Guild.

Becoming known as the "Mercenary's Star," Galatea experienced a revival, with employers and mercenaries drawn to compete for contracts both over the negotiating table and in vast improvised training fields. The rise of Outreach, under the administration of the Wolf's Dragoons, drained this world of some of its vitality, but in the wake of the breakdown of the Federated Commonwealth and the establishment of the MRBC's satellite Hiring Halls, professional soldiers once more returned to the Mercenary's Star.





Galatean City

Galatean City is the center of mercenary trade on Galatea, a sprawling metropolis that dates back to the economic and industrial boom of the Star League era. To the northwest of this marvelous city lies the massive sea of ferrocrete known as Galaport, one the largest and most sophisticated spaceports in the region. All traffic to and from this world flows here, controlled by a sizeable local aerospace defense force that doubles as the planetary customs police. Like all local law enforcement and planetary defense, these units are often augmented by additional "irregular" troops, mercenaries on a short-term security contract to the Nowakowski government.

Despite the formidable air defense system and the scars of the recent BattleMech-scale rioting that ravaged this world during the FedCom Civil War, Galatean City, like Outreach's Harlech, maintains an open-door policy. Bars, hotels, and other recreational facilities scattered throughout the city cater to the professional soldier, and some have even been known to act as impromptu hiring halls for warriors and employers looking to stay off the record books.

The numerous booms and busts of the Galatean economy are apparent in the overall design of the capital city itself, which lacks the formal planning evident in cities like Solaris City and Harlech. As a result, business districts, industrial parks, and residential zones may be found in scattered patches and clusters of buildings. At present, Galatean City is experiencing another boom in both population and commerce since the end of the Civil War and the planet-wide rioting. The opening of the new Galatean City Hiring Hall has drawn record numbers of mercenaries in recent months, a trend that promises to offset the years of decline brought on by the rise of Outreach.

The Hiring Hall

At the heart of Galatean City stands not only the administrative centers of the planet but also the recently-opened Galatea Hiring Hall, three towers of modern architectural wonder, linked by a series of skywalks—all dedicated solely to the recruiting, training, hiring, and contracting of mercenary commands. Not quite as imposing as the Outreach Hall and still undergoing final construction and minor renovations, the Galatean Hall is nonetheless an impressive complex. Its central tower stands fifteen stories, flanked by two eleven-story towers, which all feature angled architecture that, from the proper angle, makes the Hall appear as a massive pyramid dominating the downtown area. While not the tallest in the city by any stretch, these buildings still draw the eye and dominate the skyline.

Like the Outreach Hall, the Galatean Hiring Hall contains all the resources needed to locate, meet, and test mercenaries, as well as facilities for contract negotiations and offices and conference rooms for mercenary and employer agents alike, all available for daily use or even year-round lease. At the base of the towers, a complex of buildings houses the MRBC's own security forces, including a company of mercenary BattleMechs, two armor companies, and support for a contingent of battle-armored

troops. Dedicated to the defense of the Hall, its guests, and its facilities, these personnel maintain a low profile during routine operations, and visitors are not permitted in the security complex.

The central tower of the Galatean Hall serves as the main administrative center of all MRBC operations on Galatea, analogous to the central dome of the Outreach Hall. MRBC personnel are on hand and available to offer visiting mercenary commands and employer representatives with everything from travel clearances, storage of military equipment, temporary lodging needs, and a host of other services. In addition, living quarters (located in the upper levels) may be rented here, and visitors may even shop the Hiring Hall's gift shops or dine at one of five restaurants and cafeterias within the tower.

Like the central dome on Outreach, the central tower of the Galatean Hall is also home to the MRBC's central offices, as well as the trading floor where mercenaries and employers alike meet in a free-for-all forum. Mercenary auctions are held in outlying chambers for commands eager to recruit new blood. Simulator pods, conference rooms, additional quarters, and other offices for the benefit of guests are also available in the north and south towers.

THE MERCENARY REVIEW AND BONDING COMMISSION

Fifty years after its original formation on Outreach, the Mercenary Review and Bonding Commission has finally come into its own as a truly independent agency dedicated to fair treatment and high ethical standards. No longer limited to Outreach and hoping to shed its image as an extension of the Wolf's Dragoons mercenary command, the MRBC has not only replaced ComStar's Mercenary Review Board, but has fostered the redevelopment of Hiring Halls throughout the Inner Sphere, starting with the first offices established outside of Outreach in 3062.

Now clearly independent of Dragoons' oversight, the MRBC continues to act as a neutral body, respected by all parties and dedicated to promoting a uniform standard of conduct among mercenary commands and their employers. In agreement with the Mercenary Review and Bonding Accords, signed in 3054 by representatives from all five Great Houses, ComStar, and the Wolf's Dragoons, the MRBC also retains the right to adjudicate disputes between mercenaries and employers who conduct business through the MRBC or MRBC proxies on other worlds. This authority lends a degree of legal security for professional soldiers and employers alike.

Like the parent organization on Outreach, the Commission on Galatea is composed of representatives from all political entities throughout the Inner Sphere, and many from nearby Periphery realms. Also like the Outreach branch, the Galatean Commission has seats for ComStar, minor political powers, and several noteworthy elite mercenary commands to provide a fair and balanced political mix.

Using the same ComStar-bonded accounts as the Outreach office, the Galatea MRBC acts as an escrow company for contract payments. Employers may deposit the full payment in trust with either commission office, regardless of the mercenary com-