

SOLDIER OF THE LEGION

MARSHALL S. THOMAS



Book One of the Beta 3 Series

Soldier of the Legion



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Marshall Thomas



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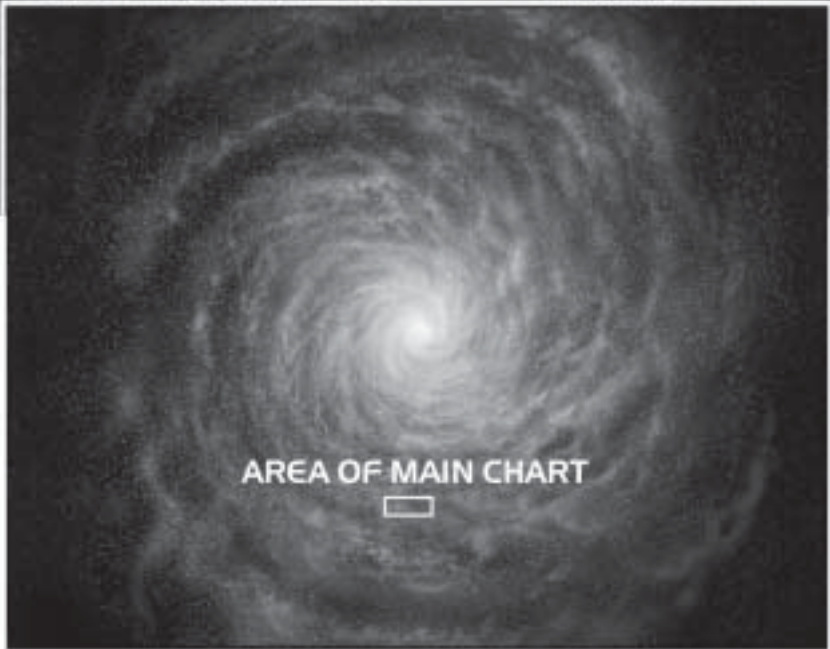
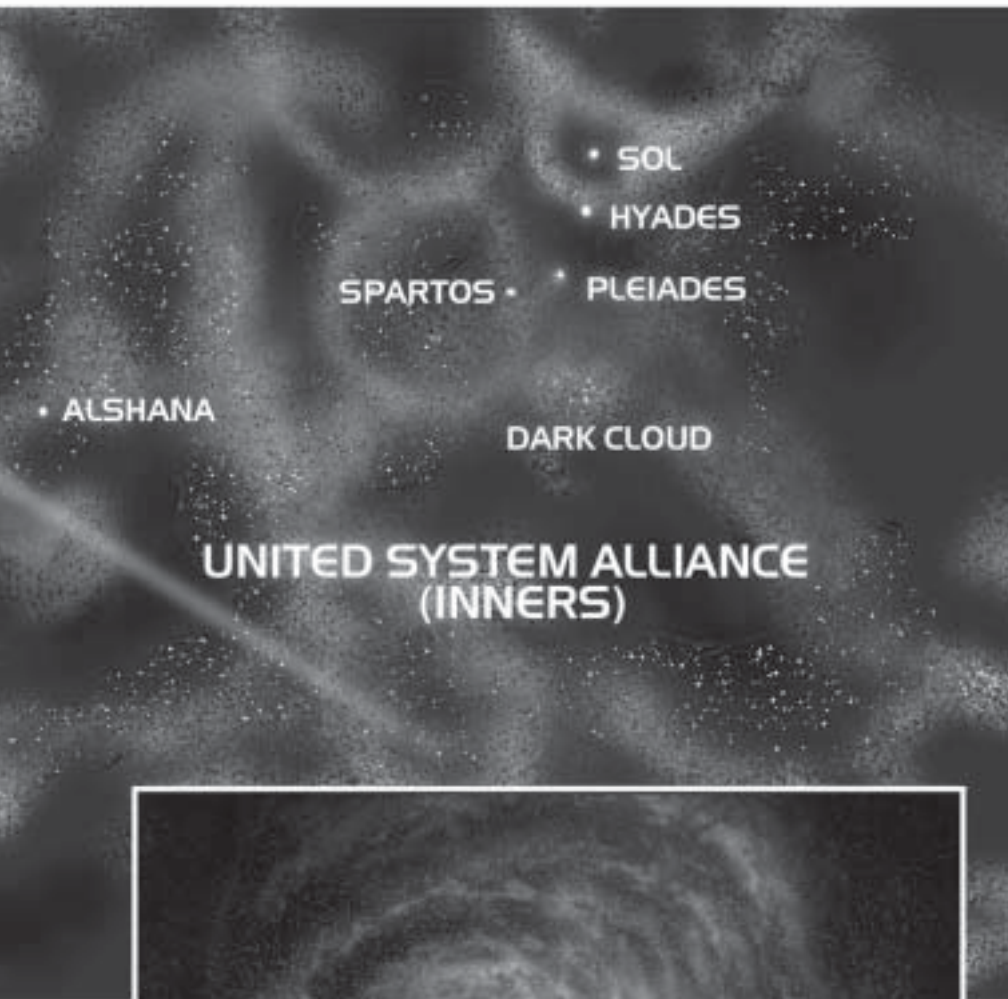
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Regards to all,
Marshall



CONFREE AND THE SYSTEM

Situation, Year 312 CGS



Chapter 1

Fortune's All-Sub Crimson Souls

“Stand by. Red Hawk is on the way.” Snow Leopard’s icy whisper hissed in my ears, though he was nowhere in sight.

A muted red glow bathed the interior of my helmet and the darksight built into my faceplate lit up the black forest better than daylight. It was the dead pit of the night on this obscure world. Merlin and I crouched in our A-suit battle armor in a tangle of undergrowth, surrounded by tall, spooky trees. The silent forest was calm and serene. All appeared to be well.

But it wasn’t.

For what seemed like the thousandth time, I checked my E. The E Mark 1 Multi-Ordnance Battlefield Superiority Rifle was a compact, general-purpose electronic weapon that never malfunctioned and never missed. I raised it and slid the stock against my armored shoulder. Biostats blinked in the upper left corner of my faceplate. My heartbeat had just sped up. I swear I could taste the adrenalin on my tongue. *Deadman!* I would probably start shaking soon.

I was completely protected inside my A-suit, with its powered, lightweight, superdense, self-sealing cenite armor. According to our instructors, it was the most effective personnel armor yet devised. In fact, I had yet to take a single breath of air from this planet’s atmosphere—I was still on suit-air. Suddenly, though, I felt naked.

This was insane! I was insane! Joining the legion had seemed like a good idea at the time, and now, here I was, about to get killed on our first real action. My past was gone forever and now I was Beta Three. They called me Thinker because I had a tendency to over-think things. I was convinced I should have been re-named Psycho for even being here, but Beta Five had me beat, hands-down.

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The numbers were our official designations: Snow Leopard was Beta One, our leader; I was Beta Three, and Merlin was Beta Four.

The night was spectacular. I glanced up at stars beyond the treetops. *Velvet hush*, I thought. *It won't last long*.

“You know, Thinker,” Merlin remarked thoughtfully, “When they told us the Final Problem was a live fire exercise I kind of thought it would consist of us shooting up lots of targets with live ammo while they shot over our heads. I never suspected the targets would be trying to kill...*us*, that it was a *combat* mission.” He sounded a little worried. Merlin was a tech’s tech, our own lab rat, an absolute genius. He had headed his own research effort before deciding to join the Legion as a common soldier and sure didn’t belong in an A-suit, but there he was, right beside me, peering into the dark.

“Getting scared?” I asked. My heart pounded. It promised to be one hell of a final exam. Planet *Hell* had been bad enough, but that had all been training. We hadn’t known about the Final Problem until the last moment. The problem would be different for every squad, of course—a whole lot of opportunities existed out there, a whole galaxy of problems.

“I’ve been scared since I walked through the Legion gate!” Merlin confessed.

A titanic blast lit up the night, casting an eerie electric green flash over the night sky. Blazing phospho gold tracers ripped over the forest, crackling and screeching. A series of deafening secondaries savaged the earth. Multiple micro-nuke tacstar clouds writhed into the heavens, glittering crimson and gold. Red Hawk, Beta Ten, had just arrived in the aircar and made a good hit on the *Ain’t No Lady*. Scratch one slaver starship! The fools had softlanded it downside, but I guess it wouldn’t have lasted long in orbit, either.

Legion training took over. “That’s it!” I shouted.

Merlin and I bolted forward toward Slavebloc 1, smashing our way through the forest like a couple of human tanks. Xmax, explosive high velocity rounds set on maximum-yield, suddenly opened up ahead of us. That would be Cool Hand, Beta Two and War Hound, Beta Six, hosing down Barracks 2 with their E’s. I saw them on my faceplate tacmap, riddling the building from

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outside, taking their time. Ironman, Beta Seven, and Dragon, Beta Eight, approached Slavebloc 2 from the North, opposite us. They held their fire. The tacmap also showed Beta Nine, Priestess, springing to her position where she could cover Barracks 1 when the slavers came tumbling out the doors.

A tacstar flashed and boomed to our left, that terrifying silken rip that always raised the hairs on the back of my neck, followed by an elemental blast from the gates of Hell. Snow Leopard and Beta Five, Psycho, attacked the Headquarters building in the center of the sprawling complex.

Slavebloc 1 stared out of the dark, brilliantly illuminated in green by my darksight. The luxurious prefab with four interlocking two-story residential blocs contained a central rec area. Painstaking recon showed that it held both female slaves and their male captors.

“Thinker and Merlin entering Slavebloc 1,” I announced, blasting the door to fragments with a burst of auto xmax. Merlin fired a starflash grenade into the doorway and it spewed about a million glittering white phospho tracers back out the door towards us. We jogged straight into it and I felt the debris ping harmlessly against my armor. The starflash would blind everyone unarmored inside.

“Slave!” Sweety announced, as a scantily-clad female stumbled out of the glittering white smoke, blinded and lost. I had been just about to blast her. Sweety was my suit tacmod. She had proven most useful on Planet *Hell*, saving my butt more than once.

Merlin crouched beside me, E up and scanning. We knew exactly how to clean this place—one slaver at a time. It was just like our training sims. Except that these were real people in front of us.

“Target!” I fired standard-yield x, and Merlin lased it just as glowing green x tracks flashed over our heads. A gory specter appeared out of the smoke, wide-open chest spraying black blood, forehead squirting a thin stream of blood from a single hole. He collapsed to the deck, dropping his DefCorps StarGuard rifle. He wore only shorts. Prominent cheekbones, sparse whiskers, slit eyes and long dark hair. An Assidic. The SG was functionally equivalent to our E, though it was more compact. It was an ugly reminder of System tolerance for the slave trade.

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“Target!” Sweety announced again. I’m not sure if I fired or Sweety fired but the round took off the second enemy’s head. He had been stocky and powerful—evidently an Outworlder. He, too, wore only shorts.

Merlin forced a laugh. “We caught them with their pants down.”

“Targets in red!” Sweety colored them on my faceplate. The thick carpet beneath our armored boots probably cost more per square mike than a year’s earnings back in my civilian life. We barely noticed the luxurious surroundings, the carpet, rich tapestries, couches, canopied beds and abundant bowls of exotic fruits, all looted from countless worlds, along with the abundance of nubile slaves.

I shouted at the slaves and my suit amplified my voice to godlike proportions, “Get down!”

We advanced into a confusing tangle of female slaves and hostiles armed with SGs—they couldn’t see a thing, but the slavers fired x blindly, on full auto. Merlin and I shot short bursts of x, laser, x, laser, each round downing a target.

I remembered my weapons instructor: *The A-suit tacmod assures one-round hits for all ordnance*. Until now it had all been training. A grueling abstraction. Now real people were dying.

Sweety’s color scheme enabled us to pick the bad guys right out of the crowd, though even inside the protection of our armor, the racket deafened us. Blood splattered up the walls and girls shrieked. We kept firing, trudging through bodies and exotic debris down one corridor after another, shrapnel pinging on our A-suits, firing more starflash for luck and leaving a trail of corpses in our wake.

“Targets!” Xmax burst all around us, the walls erupting with hits, lasers flashing. Two, three, no, four hostiles, coming right at us! I fired blindly and Sweety did it all, controlling angles and trajectories. The hostiles went down.

We advanced, stepping over body parts amid surprisingly intact corpses—some with their skin shredded away and some with blood still squirting from arteries. We marched through pools of blood, leaving behind trembling young girls huddled against the walls, gasping and splattered with blood. Too scared to shake, I moved in icy shock, an automaton, doing whatever Sweety ordered.

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I noticed Merlin hadn't made any more bad jokes, or spoken at all, for that matter. I didn't feel much like conversation, either.

A hostile lay twitching on the deck. I shot him through the head with a laser burst and felt only cold horror. A Cyrillian, with black satin skin, tribal scars and sharpened white teeth. The slavers had given their group a name, *Fortune's All-Sub Crimson Souls*. They were a diverse bunch. Assidics, Outworlders, Cyrillians, even a few outlaw Mocains and Ormans—the *Crimson Souls* welcomed all. Being a merciless homicidal maniac was the only qualification. They had found a nice hideout here on *Alshana 4*, but their good times were ending fast.

The Legion didn't negotiate with slavers, and we didn't arrest them. We killed them. According to our initial estimate there were more than two hundred fifty of the bastards in the complex. With only ten of *us*, including Red Hawk in the aircar, we had strong motivation to terminate the engagement as rapidly as possible.

"Damn it," someone said on the net. "DefCorps armor!"

Merlin and I were vaguely aware of an intense firefight raging outside.

"Snow Leopard, Psycho, Dragon. They've got some kind of reaction team. Looks like a whole squad in armor. Get 'em, Priestess." The voice belonged to Dragon, our most experienced soldier. I could hardly believe how calm he sounded. A squad in armor! Bad news, very bad news.

"Dragon, Snow Leopard. Responding. Thinker, Merlin, break off your target and engage their armored squad."

"Snow Leopard, Thinker, tenners!" I replied. The rest of our assigned Slavebloc would have to wait. Merlin and I shot our way out of a door on the east side and ran along the wall toward Barracks 1.

"We're entering Priestess's line of fire!" Merlin and Sweetie exclaimed in unison. We skidded to a halt amid dead and dying slavers littering the plaza in front of the barracks. Two more slavers with SGs charged out and ran right into Priestess's precision xmax, one round apiece. Unarmored, they were torn to pieces instantly, going down spraying blood. *Damned good shooting by our medic, Priestess. A very talented little girl.*

We converged on the enemy squad through the dense white smoke drifting through the plaza. The armored slavers could see

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through it as well. Five—no, six DefCorps A-suits bounded towards Slavebloc 2. They opened fire on Ironman and Dragon with x as I raised my E and fired auto xmax. Snow Leopard and Psycho moved up on my left as Ironman and Dragon returned fire from the north side of Slavebloc 2.

“Targets!” I watched one of the armored slavers go down in a blinding flash of hits as I walked the xmax down his chest. Another went down as well—an obscene tracery of xmax and laser crisscrossed their path.

“Relax, gals, we can handle this bunch!” I recognized Psycho’s obnoxious whine. Then his Manlink spoke, auto tacstar, ripping open the world. Most of the armored slavers vanished, replaced by dazzling brilliant white hot cores, screeching gibbering actinic gold tracers, precision nuclear flowers writhing upward, with blinding lightning strikes flashing down all around them. Tacstar Goddess, Flower of the Legion, annihilating our enemies. The Manlink was effective tactical, shoulder-fired artillery. Merlin and I fired at the stragglers nonstop, xmax and laser. Priestess, Ironman and Dragon laid down a deadly crossfire of xmax while Snow Leopard switched to laser as the last of those A-suited bastards went down.

The firing stopped, and I got my first look at what a tacstar can do to armored troops. Cenite was supposed to be just about indestructible, however, a direct tacstar hit was beyond the limit. What remained of the enemy squad glowed like a junkyard of fused, blasted, cenite armor. My weapons instructor’s intonations suddenly had real-world meaning. *The tacstar is a micronuke designed for shock troops to rapidly impose tactical superiority over the enemy.* I guess if anyone qualified as shock troops, we did.

“All right, gang,” Snow Leopard said with finality. “Let’s mop up.”

Our helmets now off, Merlin and I ended up in the central hive of the obscenely opulent HQS building. Slaveblock 1 had been impressive, but the slavers had saved the best of their stolen riches for their headquarters. Rare and exotic woods paneled the walls and ceilings. Tapestries that surely could have ransomed

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small planets now lay shredded, blood soaked and crushed by Legion boots. Millennia-old pottery and glassware lay shattered, bits and shards strewn with a careless abandon that must be the stuff of archaeologists' nightmares.

Here the *Fortune's All-Sub Crimson Souls* had planned their raids, counted their loot, and raped and tortured their captives. Here it had ended for many of them. They'd terrorized countless worlds but now their bloody, dismembered corpses littered the floor. Smoke still hung in the air and stunk heavily of gore and exhaust gasses of E's and SG's.

The smell was getting to me. I started to put my helmet back on, but several of the nearby slaves saw what I was doing and gasped, apparently terrified that more fighting was imminent. I stopped. The young, attractive girls, some of them still naked, huddled in groups of two and three in the corners, consoling each other. Most were on one side or the other of absolute panic. Looking them in the eye seemed to calm them down a bit. I don't think they really understood what was happening. Some probably thought we were just another bunch of slavers.

"Whooo!" Psycho careened into the room, popped off his helmet and strutted around in his armor, the Manlink thrust out in front of him like a great cenite penis. "Mother did it again! Did you see those stars?" A little guy, he had short blond hair, vacant blue eyes and a wild grin. "Say hello and die! Thank you, Mommy. Thank you!" He stroked 'Mother', his Manlink. "Deadman! I haven't had this much fun since...well, since yesterday!" Psycho had earned a reputation as a total maniac. He'd actually *liked* Planet *Hell*.

"Snow Leopard, we've ID'd Saint Mongro." Cool Hand stood over a large corpse sprawled in a pool of blood. The dead man's blue, pockmarked face was frozen in a harsh scowl. His filmy eyes stared into infinity. A dead slave girl lay crumpled beside him.

Someone on *Veltros* had said it, and now I understood. *The dead always look the same, like lumps of clay.*

Cool Hand poked Mongro gently with his E, consulted a datacard and muttered to himself, "That's certainly him." Tall and rangy, Cool Hand had a thin, handsome face and wavy brown hair. He seemed perfectly casual about having found the *Crimson Soul's* notorious leader.

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Snow Leopard drifted over and glanced down at the corpse. He removed his helmet, revealing straight white-blond hair, hot pink eyes and a chunky face so pale we could see blue veins pulsing at his temple.

“Record it,” he said coldly, and turned away.

“Get any interesting kills, Thinker?” Dragon asked me. His sweaty forehead sported a nasty bruise, but he didn’t seem to notice. He moved like a great cat, balancing his E on one shoulder. His deep-set eyes glared at me. Dragon was a first-class killer. I always felt better with him around, tattoos and all.

I wasn’t sure if he really expected an answer. “Well, nothing worth writing home about,” I replied.

He actually smiled. “Good! Keep it that way. Interesting means you let them get the drop on you!”

Before I could figure out how to reply, a commotion broke out down one corridor. Shouting, shrieking, a gang of girls went at it, jumping on each other wildly. A catfight! I ran, but by the time I arrived War Hound and Ironman had separated most of the combatants. One girl writhed on the floor as the others continued kicking and spitting at her, screeching invectives and convulsed with hatred.

My natural voice needed no amplification this time, “Break it up! What is this? Stop that!” I threw the attackers to one side, straddling the downed girl to protect her. The others very quickly learned not to hit me in my armor. Cradling bruised knuckles, they circled like wild dogs, bristling with hatred.

Ironman interrupted, “It’s Black Ice, Thinker!” He held several of the slaves back. “That’s what they’re saying. It’s Black Ice!”

Black Ice! I suddenly recognized the girl as a Mocain, hair cut short to the scalp, hooded eyes and no eyebrows. Her pale skin had a greenish cast. As the Deputy Chief of the *Fortune’s All-Sub Crimson Souls*, she bore responsibility for the deaths of thousands. The Mocains were our enemies. They were also the System’s master race, but this one had turned outlaw. Clad in a torn top, litpants and boots, she bled heavily from the nose and mouth. *Black Ice—alive!*

Snow Leopard arrived and took charge. “Priestess, I want a genetic ID on this one. These Mocains all look the same to me.”

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Priestess elbowed through the crowd and pressed a medprobe to the girl's neck, then consulted it and checked Cool Hand's datacard. Priestess was Beta squad's angel: dangerously beautiful, with silky black hair, smooth pale skin and vulnerable lips. Every day that passed drew me closer to the realization that I wanted her to be *my* angel. My heart always sped up when she was nearby, but I certainly didn't want her or anyone else to know it.

"That's her all right," Priestess said. "Black Ice. Genetic ID is confirmed."

"Thank you, Priestess." Snow Leopard lowered the barrel of his E to the Mocain's forehead. Her eyes widened for just a frac. Then her head exploded, spraying everyone with blood and gore.

I blinked back the horror. Several of the former slaves shrieked in terror, but more than a few danced gleefully around the room, not bothering to wipe away the blood. They held hands and sang some unintelligible rhyme with wild, feral looks on their faces. I wouldn't forget this one.

"Prepare to evac the civilians," Snow Leopard said calmly. He had ice water in his veins. I sometimes thought he could have been a biogen, one of those synthetically grown humans engineered for specific, singular tasks. To me, he was the ultimate squad leader. Only a few years older than the rest of us, he was certainly different. *How could he be unmoved by this?*

Priestess paused beside me and said in a low, hopeful voice, "It's good, Thinker," she said. "What we're doing here is good."

I looked up at her. "If you say so," I replied as I reached for an embroidered shawl to wipe the blood and brains from my face and armor. *Welcome to the Legion*, I thought.

The rest was a blur. I did what I was told and moved like the efficient machine the Legion had forged. Now that the area was pacified, tech-teams moved in to gather what intelligence they could from the ruins. We sedated many of the former slaves, and evacuated the lot of them off-planet to our ship, the cruiser C.S. *Spawn*. The lifies, our med-techs, took custody of them. I didn't envy them their jobs. There would be many tearful reunions as the Legion reunited them with their families, but I knew that despite our best med-tech and therapy, many would never be quite sane again.

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I was exhausted, tired beyond anything I believed possible. It was time to report. Our squad assembled, still in armor, hauling weapons and equipment, in the Captain's small office. We struggled to fit everyone inside. Snow Leopard stood at attention in front of the Captain's spartan desk. The Captain waited patiently.

Snow Leopard was all business, "Sir! Squad Beta reports successful completion of the mission on *Alshana 4*. Two hundred sixty one slavers terminated, six hundred eight female captives recovered. Squad had zero casualties. Thirteen captives were killed in the crossfire. Thirty were wounded and are under treatment."

"Thank you, Beta." The Captain stood up, dressed in his blacks. He appeared to be very young, but in the Legion it was hard to tell. Our biotech kept us young and virtually immortal. His slightly slanted eyes hinted at a little Assidic blood. "It's a shame about the captives, but it can't be helped. You did a good job, troopers." The Captain knew all about how the raid went. Everyone knew that he'd closely monitored our every move. Snow Leopard's report was just a formality.

"Let's see," the Captain said, sifting through a pile of printouts and datapaks on his desk. "All right." He picked up a printout. "Snow Leopard, based on the results of your Final Problem on *Alshana 4*, your squad has been certified by 22 Legion Training Command as graduates of the *Hell Course* and fully fit for regular combat. Reassignment is authorized to an active-duty unit." He paused and looked up, smiling, "Congratulations to all of you and welcome to the ConFree Legion."

We greeted the news with a stunned silence. Finally Psycho said, "Aw right!"

It had been a long hard road, but we'd done it. *We'd arrived!*

"Thank you, Sir!" Snow Leopard spoke up. "On behalf of Beta, we thank the Legion!"

The Captain chuckled with a knowing expression. "I've got your assignment here, too. 22nd Legion, 12th Colonial Expeditionary Regiment—that's the Black 12th—CAT 24, Second of the Ship—BE 14, *Atom's Road*. That's the *Spawn's* battlestar. She's a good ship."

"Sir! We are honored to be assigned to *Atom's Road!*"

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“We’ll be underway to *Atom* as soon as we transfer your refugees. *Atom* will be starlaunching as soon as we arrive. The entire 12th has been recalled and will be on board. We’ve got a major mission, boys—a Systie intrusion into ConFree vac. It’s very serious. We’ll be facing the DefCorps this time, not some half-assed slaver gang with a little borrowed DefCorps hardware.”

“Sir! We won’t fail you! What’s the target?” Snow Leopard asked.

The Captain looked down at his notes. “*Andrion 2*,” he said. “It’s in the Outvac—quite a ways out. Over 750 light-years from the Crista Cluster. Nobody’s ever been there. But we’ll fix that.”

“Yes, Sir!” Snow Leopard sounded supremely confident.

The Black 12th, the 12th Colonial Expeditionary Regiment, under the 22nd Black Legion! The 22nd had an ancient and glorious history. In the Plague War, it had been known as the Rimguard, and the Rimguard motto, Deliver Us From Evil, had a special meaning for all Outworlders. We still carried those words on our blacks.

I swallowed hard. *Into the Outvac. Seven hundred and fifty light-years. I must be insane!* In a few days, I would really do it. Until now there had always been the vague idea that if I wasn’t good enough or brave enough the Legion would just send me back home. I didn’t expect or want to go back—it was just a kind of mental back door or escape hatch. Nice to know it was there. It was just a dodge, a way to avoid accepting the full reality and consequence of joining the Legion. Some part of me hadn’t quite grasped my decision to forever leave my old life behind.

Not anymore. The final string was cut and I was suddenly dizzy.

Then Psycho was shoving me, “Come on, Thinker, wake up! Time to go and get out of these stinkin’ suits and grab some eats!”

The meeting was breaking up and I was impeding the rough flow of tired, armored troopers making their way out of the Captain’s office.

“Yeah,” I said. “Time to go.”

GLOSSARIES

Veltros Training Command - Basic - Intro -
Science. Date: 312 CGS
TRAINING USE ONLY - COPY 401

Unit 6 - Legion Science Definitions

You will familiarize yourself immediately with the following basic science definitions. Those of you with future need to know will be familiarized in detail with appropriate subjects.

Antimat drive –

1. The antimatter annihilation propulsion system that powers most current spacecraft.
2. The stargate technology that creates a traversable wormhole in spacetime, enlarging a quantum wormhole to bridge two distant points in spacetime, manipulating quantum effects and antimat power to hold the artificial wormhole open with negative pressure for the duration of the sub-lightspeed flight through hyperspace. Antimat propulsion is a proven, reliable method of starship propulsion and artificial wormholes have opened up the galaxy to the human species.

Artificial Wormhole – The artificial rotating wormhole, enlarged from a natural quantum wormhole and manipulated with quantum effects and antimat power to form a controlled dimensional vortex through hyperspace, held open with negative pressure, and connecting two distant points in spacetime. See **Antimat Drive**.

Biogen – An artificial human, generated from human genetics but normally grown on a metal or fiberite framework. Biogens are sentient beings but are carefully programmed to function as required. The latest fiberite models are not easily distinguishable from humans.

Cloaking – Visual and electromagnetic camouflage for small starships and other small craft that renders the cloaked ship invisible to enemy forces. This Legion technology is COSMIC SECRET.

EnviroSim Room, E-Sim Room, ES Room – An artificial but realistic holo-generated simulated training environment useful in familiarizing Legion troopers with new or unfamiliar targets. ES Rooms project the new environment visually around the trooper who moves within a changing holo sphere while responding to a series of challenging pre-programmed developments.

Eyemote – A subminiature recon probe the size of a dust mote that provides realtime audio and video images of a target environment. Eyemotes are virtually undetectable, although they can be destroyed by routine air filtration.

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Holcard – A holo card that generates a holographic light projection of a still image when activated.

Holo –

1. A still holographic image, either a solid or a light image.
2. A moving holographic image of a subject or an environment transmitted from within an ES Room equipped with two-way imaging.

Hyperspace – The alternate dimension, which we use as a bridge to travel to distant points in our universe through artificial wormholes. Although we penetrate this dimension with our wormholes, we do not enter it. It still appears physically impossible for anything from our universe to actually enter this dimension.

Iomags – A powerful artificial magnetic field used to accelerate promat to generate an iomag shield, a fail-safe containment chamber for antimatter generation and storage. See **promat**.

Natural Dimensional Stargate, Natural Dimensional Vortex – Unstable areas of spacetime that are heavily influenced by the presence of nearby adjacent universes. Stardrive initiation is forbidden in these areas because of the danger of destruction of the ship or of exiting into the adjacent universe and the inability to return. Antimat drive starships are capable of penetrating adjacent universes by accident but no ship has ever returned from such a disaster.

Promat – An artificial elementary particle created by ConFree with properties useful in antimatter generation/containment systems.

Psycher – Mentally gifted persons, normally female, generally capable of telepathy, who are brought to their full potential to serve the state.

Solcard – A holo card that generates a solid holographic projection.

Solid – A solidified holographic projection generated by a solcard, generally permanent or decorative.

Universe, U1 – Our Universe, designation U1, is one of many universes. An ever-changing network of quantum wormholes in spacetime connects our universe with a multitude of other universes. Many other universes are not directly connected to ours. D-neg, a source of negative pressure that fills the adjacent universe Plane Prime, is not present in U1 but it is D-neg's influence that has created the dark energy that expands our own universe.

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**Veltros Training Command - Basic - Intro -
Weapons. Date: 312 CGS
TRAINING USE ONLY - COPY 401**

Unit 9 - Fleetcom, Legion, DefCorps, & Omni Weapons

You will familiarize yourself immediately with the following descriptions of Fleetcom, Legion, DefCorps, and Omni weaponry. Assuming you pass the classroom phase, you will qualify with all the Legion and DefCorps infantry weapons listed below, and you will be familiarized with the Omni and Fleetcom weapons systems as well.

FLEETCOM WEAPON SYSTEMS

Fleetcom is a formidable galactic force that guarantees stellar superiority for ConFree and the Legion. Without Fleetcom the Legion could not survive. After certification you will be briefed in detail on the following major Fleetcom weapons systems. For now, memorize the following descriptions, and respect your Fleetcom colleagues. There is an endless list of “vacheads” on the Legion Monument to the Dead.

Antimat Weaponry – Fleetcom starships are equipped with ship/ship and ship/planet strategic antimat strike weapons. All capabilities and details are classified COSMIC SECRET.

Battlestar, Expeditionary (BE) – Fleetcom battlestars are sectoral superiority starships fully equipped to seize strategic control of an entire star sector. Each Battlestar provides pods for four Fleetcom attack cruisers with their own full complements of fighters and attack craft. In addition, the battlestar has its own organic squadrons of tacships, a fighter force, interceptors, assault carriers (aircar), assault shuttles, cargo shuttles, a captain’s yacht, and unlimited deceptors. Expeditionary battlestars are equipped to carry regimental-sized Legion units.

Chainlink Skysweep – This air superiority and battlefield superiority artillery weapon is normally mounted in Legion fighters and fires tacstars and opstars.

Cruiser, Star (CS) – A Fleetcom cruiser is a star system superiority starship designed to seize operational control of an entire star system and all planets. A Fleetcom cruiser is equipped with a squadron of Fleetcom fighters, assault carriers (aircar), assault shuttles and a specialized complement of Legion troopers.

Deathstar – Fleetcom starships are equipped with the Deathstar defensive weapon. All capabilities and details are classified COSMIC SECRET.

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Deceptors, Stellar – These drone targets mimic the characteristics of friendly spacecraft and are designed to draw fire away from legitimate targets. Used by ConFree and System forces.

Fighters (FF) – Fleetcom fighters are spacecraft designed to seize air and near vac superiority over a target world, or to assure near vac superiority in their starship's zone of defense. Fighters assigned to a starship are expected to sacrifice themselves when necessary to save the ship.

Inboard 4S – Fleetcom starships are equipped with the inboard space superiority sector sensors system. All capabilities and details are classified COSMIC SECRET.

Interceptor, Star (IS) – Fleetcom long-range interceptor starships are designed to intercept and neutralize intruding enemy starcraft in far space.

Opstar – The opstar is a mini-nuke designed to clear a battlefield rapidly of enemy forces.

Plasma SS Autoscan M4 – Fleetcom starships are equipped with the strategic plasma autoscan M4 weapon. All capabilities and details are classified COSMIC SECRET.

Shields – Fleetcom starships are equipped with electromagnetic shielding designed to deflect enemy attacks. All capabilities and details are classified COSMIC SECRET.

Shuttle – A shuttle is any spacecraft designed to ferry personnel or cargo between orbit and downside.

StratLaser O/D Systems – Fleetcom starships are equipped with strategic laser offensive/defensive systems. All capabilities and details are classified COSMIC SECRET.

Stratstar – The stratstar is a strategic nuclear strike delivered by missile. Fleetcom starships are equipped with ship/ship and ship/planet stratstar missiles. All capabilities and details are classified COSMIC SECRET.

Tacship, Star (TS) – A tacship is a special-mission starship often used to deploy Legion recon units or other special mission units. It is fully capable of gaining vac superiority over a lightly-defended planet.

LEGION INFANTRY WEAPONS

The following weapons systems will keep you alive. Assuming you are certified, you will come to know them all intimately. Respect your weapons! Many Legion troopers died to perfect them for you.

Marshall Thomas

A-suit – The Legion A-suit is a lightweight superdense cenite armor selfsealing hydro powered combat vac suit, and is the most effective personnel armor yet devised. The current AranArmor SciSystems *Invincible* Battlesuit Model 6 is a fully integrated weapons system with tacmods, tacmaps, and links to Fleetcom and Legion battlenets. It is equipped with renewable potable water supply, a limited internal comrats capability, access ports for med syringes and disposable tubes for liquid and solid waste. A-suit hydros provide Legion troopers with superhuman strength when required. The A-suit tacmod assures one-round hits for all ordnance. Warning: The A-suit remains vulnerable to direct non-angled hits by auto xmax and laser as well as tacstars, airsats and soilsats. Omni genetic probes/genetic snakes can also overcome cenite armor unless countered properly.

Aircar, assault – The armored aircar is the primary air assault weapon for a Legion squad. The current nuclear-powered *Quasar* Model 1 aircar is a highly maneuverable subsonic vertical launch/landing aircraft that can hover motionless through two primary air-effects rotors in its fuselage and can reach combat speeds to engage enemy aircraft when necessary. It is equipped to insert a fully armored & equipped nine-man squad downside and subsequently provide aircover with tacstars, laser and stunstars as a battlefield superiority weapon. Range is unlimited.

Biobloc – The biobloc *BioScyth* weapon system targets and destroys the genes of human and nonhuman species and subspecies by manipulating the natural biofreq of the organism to stimulate an immediate massive immune response to the target's own genes, resulting in suffocation and rapid death. ConFree has a no-first-use policy with biobloc against human targets. We retain the capability because the System has equipped the DefCorps with it. The E Mark 1 has a biobloc capability but is unable to target Omnis.

E Mark 1 – The standard individual weapon of the Legion trooper, this compact shoulder-fired tube-fed general purpose battlefield superiority rifle is equipped with a zoom scope, laser sights, darksight and flash, multiple barrels and standard xmax, xmin, fighting laser, v-max, v-min and biobloc capabilities. Max effective range is 2,100 mikes for x and 4,000 mikes for laser. It is equipped with a grenade launcher for contac, smoke, gas and biobloc grenades and ports for flame and flares. The miniature caseless armor-piercing explosive xtex rounds are fired electronically and full auto rate is 2,000 rounds per frac or 100,000 per mark. The weapon has no moving parts except for the rounds themselves and the xtex generator that creates and feeds the rounds into the firing tube. X, laser and v capabilities are

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integral to the weapon; the other rounds require replenishment of ampacks. It is fully integrated with the trooper's tacmod and provides one-round hits on all targets. The E is a reliable, rugged weapon.

E-sled, E-car – The *Airglide* air effects sled, or E-car, is an unarmored, open-topped transport vehicle designed for rapid transport of heavy loads or for personnel transport of a nine-man Legion squad.

Grenades, contac – The GC concussion and GF fragmentation grenades, both using contac explosive charges, are available in hand and autolauncher models. Effective casualty-producing radius is 25 mikes.

Grenade, Incendiary – The *Vulcan* GI incendiary plasma grenade is available in hand or autolauncher models. Effective casualty-producing radius is 20 mikes.

Grenade, deceptor – The *Veil* GD deceptor grenade scrambles all tacmods by generating electromagnetic interference and thus shielding the movements of friendly units. Effective radius is 200 mikes.

Knife, Cold, Mark 1 – The standard Legion battle blade is made from a single slab of cenite and is virtually indestructible.

Knife, Cold, Boot, Mark 2 – The Legion boot knife is an emergency cenite blade, also virtually indestructible but more compact than the Mark 1.

Knife, Hot, Mark 3 – The *Gabriel* standard Legion hot knife is clad with plasma arcjet strips and can burn its way through most non-cenite metals.

Manlink – The *Manlink* is a specialized man-portable shoulder-fired lightweight full-auto tactical artillery weapon that fires tacstars and stunstars. One trooper per Legion squad is normally equipped with the Manlink. Max effective range is 4,000 mikes.

Mini – The *Mini* individual handgun is capable of xmin, v-min and laser fire. It is being phased out of the Legion inventory as a standard issued weapon.

Stunstar – The *Stunstar* is a *Manlink*-launched non-lethal nerve weapon designed to disable the enemy by inducing loss of voluntary muscular activity and loss of consciousness. Stunstars interfere with normal nerve impulses and have proven useful for taking prisoners.

Tacstar – The *Tacstar* is a *Manlink*-launched micro-nuke round designed for shock troops to rapidly impose tactical superiority over the enemy.

Marshall Thomas

Torch – The *Dragon* torch is a man-portable plasmapak tool designed for cutting through battlefield obstacles with a plasma jet.

V, v-min, v-max, v-bolt – V bolts are precision non-lethal anti-personnel rounds designed to stun and incapacitate without permanent injury. The V weapons system is integrated into the E battle rifle.

X, xmin, xmax – The general-purpose *xtex* armor-piercing explosive rounds are highly effective and can penetrate cenite armor when fired on full auto xmax.

DEF CORPS INFANTRY WEAPONS

The DefCorps is a formidable, experienced fighting force with excellent weaponry, much of it copied from Legion technology. The DefCorps trooper is tenacious and skilled. He does not fight for the System, but for himself and for his comrades. In most cases, he will not stop until you kill him. Respect your enemy!

A-suit – Like the Legion A-suit, DefCorps armor is a lightweight superdense cenite armor selfsealing hydro powered combat vac suit. The current *Atlas* model can be identified by the bronze-colored patina. Systie cenite armor is not up to current Legion standards, but it is effective personnel armor. The DefCorps A-suit is a fully integrated weapons system with tacmods, tacmaps, and links to Starfleet and DefCorps battlenets. It is equipped with renewable potable water supply, a limited internal comrats capability, access ports for med syringes and disposable tubes for liquid waste. A-suit hydros provide DefCorps troopers with superhuman strength when required. The DefCorps A-suit tacmod assures one-round hits for all ordnance. The DefCorps A-suit is vulnerable to direct non-angled hits by auto xmax and laser as well as tacstars, airsats or soilsats. Omni genetic probes and genetic snakes can also overcome cenite armor unless countered properly.

Aircar, assault – The DefCorps *Pterosaur* model nuclear-powered armored aircar is the primary air assault weapon for a DefCorps squad and is equipped to insert a nine-man squad downside and subsequently provide aircover with tacstars, laser and stunstars as a battlefield superiority weapon. The DefCorps aircar is inferior to the Legion aircar in both speed and armor. Range is unlimited.

Biobloc – The DefCorps biobloc weapon system targets and destroys the genes of human and nonhuman species and subspecies by manipulating the natural biofreq of the organism to stimulate an immediate massive immune response to the target's own genes, resulting in

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suffocation and rapid death. The System has refused ConFree proposals to outlaw this weaponry. The SG battle rifle includes a biobloc capability.

Grenades, contac – DefCorps M2 concussion and M4 fragmentation grenades, both using contac explosive charges, are available in hand and autolauncher models. Casualty producing radius for both is 25 mikes.

Grenades, deceptor – DefCorps M4 deceptor grenades scramble all tacmods by generating electromagnetic interference and thus shield movement of their units. Effective radius is 200 mikes.

Knife, Combat, M1 – The standard DefCorps battle blade, like the Legion Mark 1, is made from a single slab of cenite and is virtually indestructible

Manlink – The DefCorps Manlink *Equalizer* Model is modeled after the Legion Manlink. It is a specialized man-portable shoulder-fired tactical artillery weapon that fires tacstars and stunstars. One trooper per DefCorps squad is normally equipped with the Manlink. Max effective range is 4,000 mikes.

SG – The standard individual weapon of the DefCorps trooper, the *StarGuard* (SG) compact shoulder-fired tube-fed general-purpose battlefield superiority rifle is a virtual clone of the E Mark 1, equipped with a zoom scope, laser sights, darksight and flash, and standard xmax, xmin, laser, and vac capabilities. Max effective range is 1,800 mikes for x and 3,600 for laser. It is equipped with a grenade launcher for contac, smoke, and gas grenades and ports for flares. The miniature caseless armor-piercing explosive xtex rounds are fired electronically and full auto rate is 1,750 rounds per frac or 87,500 per mark. The weapon has no moving parts except for the rounds themselves and the xtex generator that creates and feeds the rounds into the firing tube. X, laser and v capabilities are integral to the weapon; the other rounds require replenishment of ampacks. It is fully integrated with the trooper's tacmod and provides one-round hits on all targets. The SG is rugged and dependable.

Stunstar – The DefCorps Stunstar is a Manlink-launched non-lethal nerve weapon designed to disable the enemy by inducing loss of voluntary muscular activity and loss of consciousness. Stunstars interfere with normal nerve impulses and have proven useful for taking prisoners.

Tacstar – The DefCorps tacstar is a Manlink-launched micro-nuke designed for shock troops to rapidly impose tactical superiority over the enemy.

OMNI WEAPONS

The Omnis are extremely dangerous alien warriors with immense psychic powers, which we cannot match. They have utter contempt for us. They consume human flesh and blood, and have exterminated over two billion humans. We do not have a clear understanding of their weapons systems. We are currently researching promising methods to counter their psyprobes and mag fields. Their weapons are formidable but they are not invincible. Our mission against the O's is clear – victory or death. Failure means extinction for our species. Learn how to counter all the weapons systems listed below. Your life depends on it! We have not yet learned how to effectively kill an O. Until our priority research efforts bear fruit, our battlefield tactics consist of retreating under fire while laying down a heavy barrage of counterfire to delay the O advance and observe the effects of our weaponry on the O's.

Airsat – Omnis use explosive charged air (airsat) extensively to passively guard against intrusion in areas under their control. Your tacmod will alert you to the presence of airsat. Detonation is fatal, even in armor. Deliberate detonation of an entire cloud of airsat is possible from a distance but is a lengthy process that will attract the enemy.

Counter airsat by avoiding it.

Biobloc – This Omni airlaunched weapon targets the human genetic biofreq through airbursts and can be fatal within a 50-mike radius kill zone. Experience has shown that tacstars can be used to disperse biobloc bursts, but this is a dangerous procedure.

Counter biobloc with tacstars.

Laser – The Omni is equipped with an individual weapon that incorporates an effective fighting laser. There is no defense other than killing the O. Research continues on the best method of killing an O.

Counter Omni lasers with counterfire while retreating.

Mag Field (Force Field) – The Omni individual defensive mag fields (force fields) are very effective defensive weapons, identified by an incandescent violet glow that emanates from the O when the field is functional. Once the field is down, we believe the O can be taken out with x or laser. Ongoing research centers on penetrating the field to take it down. The O's mag field is impervious to tacstars, but tacstars do seem to hinder the O's to some extent.

Counter mag fields with tacstars; use x or laser when appropriate.

Psyprobe – The Omni psychic mind probe (psyprobe) is their ultimate weapon and it has so far guaranteed their dominance over all human

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opponents. The psyprobe allows the O's to take mental control of their human opponents. The probe only appears effective at relatively close ranges, about a 15-mike radius. Promising research is underway on psybloc methods to counter the Omni psyprobe. The Omni's psychic powers are superhuman and without an effective psybloc we will come under their mental control.

There is no current defense against Omni psyprobe other than rapid retreat.

Soilsat—Omni use this charged soil weapon (soilsat) extensively to passively guard against intrusion into areas under their control. Your tacmod will alert you to the presence of soilsat. There is no practical de-mining procedure.

Counter soilsat by avoiding it.

Spheres, genetic (energy spheres) – Omni self-guided genetic spheres (energy spheres) seek human genetic material with great accuracy and burn a microscopic pinhole through cenite armor to the human target within while countering the A-suit's autoseal capability. Death is certain once the sphere contacts the A-suit. We have had limited success in targeting genetic spheres with auto xmax. Research is ongoing in countering this weapon.

Counter genetic probes with auto xmax.

Strands, genetic (Snakes) – Omni genetic strands (genetic snakes) are artificial lighter than air strands of cellular material grown from Omni leucocytes, programmed to seek out, wrap around and consume human genetic material. Like genetic spheres, genetic snakes are capable of rapidly burning a pinhole through cenite armor to target the human within. V-max has proven effective in destroying genetic strands in the air. We have also had reports that the strands are combustible; further research is underway.

Counter genetic snakes with v-max or flame.

Plasma (Starmass) – The Omni enhanced plasma weapon (starmass) approaches stellar temperatures and rapidly weakens cenite armor. This weapon is increasingly used by individual O's in combat situations, presumably because of its effectiveness. Combat is not possible within a plasma blast. Immediate retreat is mandatory, followed by an attack on the O.

Counter plasma by outrunning it.

Tacstar – The individual Omni combatant is equipped to repeatedly launch a nuclear microburst weapon similar to our tacstar.

Counter Omni tacstars with counterfire while retreating.

Xmax – The Omni's individual weapon is capable of rapid-fire xmax rounds.

Counter Omni xmax with counterfire while retreating.

End Unit 9