

“Nanoworlds”

By Jonathan Padfield

The major events leading up to the Human/Pleatorian war (end of current community standard stellar year):

Commissioned, further to previous reports, by the Interplanetary Community.

Although there had been many minor insurrections both on planet Abidos and Earth before the first event detailed in this report, it is felt that they were classified by the United Nations of Earth as nothing more important than the ambient terrorist activity every planet has to deal with. Indeed, after the following event a special committee was set up to investigate the Pleatorian situation and offer UNE president Arthur Hawkins options to quickly resolve the situation. At a key point further down the line, this committee suggested war. The executive decision as to the plausibility of this action is still not condoned by this community.

The gRNoea, a Pleatorian cargo vessel, had just left orbit around Abidos when she was intercepted by 7 “gridlock” local patrol craft. The suspicion of Abidosian authorities was that the crew of the gRNoea had been responsible for delivering 200 cases of phase breach rounds in a terrorist sting operation conducted by local enforcers. By pure coincidence, all 7 “gridlock” flight officers were human. Following standard procedure, the “gridlock” craft forcibly breached the hull of the suspect vessel and the officers docked to, and boarded the ship with the intention of arresting suspects and confiscating contraband. What followed was a bloody walkway by walkway shootout, in which several high velocity shots were fired (the high velocity SMG AS19 fires compressed air assisted rounds and is primarily designed for extraneous use during space walks – the crew of the gRNoea apparently had no other weapons), the hull was breached on two decks and three out of the seven Human officers were killed. The guilt of the gRNoea crew had now definitely been established and with apparently no way out they decided to take the remaining officers hostage, offering their lives in exchange for safe passage out of the Lucian system.

This situation, although jurisdictionally a local enforcement issue, was monitored from his orbital deployment craft by General Frank Oberman. The General had been stationed in orbit of Abidos for two years, his primary objective, although constrained by the Presidential authority directive (via interstellar net), was to ‘keep the peace’. Peace keeping has always carried an air of ambiguity to it, those charged with this duty having wildly differing ideas as to what constitutes reasonable use of force and when such force should be deployed. That notwithstanding, this incident was definitely a breach of the peace and Oberman decided to act. An excellent soldier though he was (his planetary invasion techniques had cut the simulated saturation time in half), Oberman was not known for his prowess as a negotiator; he quickly tired of the antics of the hostage negotiator provided by local law enforcement and took charge of the situation, as was his prerogative. The General believed that with the information obtained by his intelligence officers, he could override the command codes on the gRNoea, deactivate the security grid and destroy the ARM network (Atomic Repeller Module Network – the standardised method of magnetic shielding within UNE space). The first part of the plan proceeded as intended, Oberman’s spies had indeed cracked the 20 billion bit encryption used by certain Pleatorian terrorist cells. Security aboard the gRNoea was off-lined and marines performed a “drill and clamp” operation, where the hull of a ship is pierced using a laser drill and a deployment craft is clamped to the hull, equalising pressure on both sides. What followed was influenced by two major factors. Firstly, the marines deployed in this action had been training for two years on Abidos without seeing any real action. They had been confined to barracks on the two orbital deployment craft and it is certainly possible that they had become agitated and a little trigger happy; they had undoubtedly only experienced the dregs of those Pleatorians living on Abidos – there was no love loss. Secondly, General Oberman spoke personally to the marines before they were despatched and he implied that the crew of the gRNoea were all expendable, the Human flight officers should be saved at all costs. The General was hyped by the situation, severely patriotic and angry that once again Human lives had been put in danger by terrorists.

Immediately the marines boarded the gRNoea, they were confronted by the Holographic Multiplicity System. This system, with the use of hidden projectors, provides the appearance of extra troops to fight alongside actual ones. Although the holographic soldiers are composed entirely of light, they serve to confuse and disorientate. Shots fired will pass straight through them, they can block line of sight, mask movements of real people and, in extreme circumstances, lead enemies targeting astray to such a degree they will end up firing on each other. This defence system is most effective when used in confined metallic corridors, such as those on the gRNoea. It is hard to confuse marines equipped with the latest electronics for very long; a power distribution analysis soon revealed the location of projectors and the

Holographic Multiplicity System was shut down. However, one marine had been wounded and her comrades had become unnerved, they proceeded to sweep the vessel, treating all terrorists as armed and extremely dangerous. No chance for surrender was given.

Although this action quickly defused the situation, the cost was high. Three flight officers and nineteen terrorists left in body bags, this only served to aggravate Pleatorian extremists on Abidos and assure the gRNoea crew's martyrdom. It showed the Pleatorian high commission that negotiations with Earth would be extremely difficult if Oberman was the kind of man they would be dealing with. It did not help that this situation occurred just beyond the orbital perimeter of Abidos, this meant that the press could get to the site of the incident very quickly and cover it extensively. Also, Oberman's actions were hailed by President Hawkins, when he should have been condemning the loss of life. Everyone wants terrorists to be brought to justice, but when one is faced with the bullet ridden corpse of a Pleatorian, it is hard to attribute blame through the obvious pain that being must've felt.

General Oberman would be a good war commander, but his reactionary attitude here did nothing to reassure the Pleatorian population of Abidos of their equality. President Hawkins should have had the final word before the undertaking of this action – he should have ordered General Oberman to *arrest* and not kill the terrorists. This was a major political foul-up, it spread fear and drove more Pleatorians to join the terrorists.