

AMBUSH ON LOSSEND

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Lossend, in the Timeon star system, is famous for its copper and diamond mines. LRM Enterprises is the largest mining interest on the planet, but several other large companies and many small operators and independent prospectors also have claims on the planet's surface. The sun shines for 40 hours during the day, pushing temperatures up to 55 degrees Celsius. During the 30 hour nights, the temperature drops to freezing.

While waiting for a connecting flight at Lossend's orbiting starport, Diamond Station, the player characters are approached by an LRM agent with a job offer. LRM needs beings from outside the company to drive supply trucks from LRM's main surface installation to one of its mining camps, a round-trip distance of about 2,600 km. The trip takes 50 to 55 hours. LRM Enterprises will pay the characters 1,000 credits apiece plus free passage out of the system on the next available company transport going their way

If the characters accept the job, they are put aboard the next shuttle flight to the surface. The shuttle arrives during Lossend's long, cold night. The characters are driven by aircar to LRM's corporate headquarters for a briefing on the mission.

The briefing is conducted by LRM's chief of security, Col. Liif Ban-Nep, a Human veteran of the Star Law Rangers. The briefing can be read aloud to or paraphrased for the players.

"The transport cartel here on Lossend is striking the mining companies, demanding more compensatory time off for drivers who make long hauls. It's not that we don't want to honor their demands, but our markets are depressed right now and we can't afford to hire the extra drivers that would be needed. That means our camps have been living on emergency supplies for the past eight days. Camps are set up so they can last 60 days without resupply, but a fire at Northslope Camp 7 has destroyed most of the emergency stores. In two days those miners will be alternately roasting and freezing, and starving in between, unless we get several truckloads of food concentrates and parabatteries through to them. We'd fly these supplies up, but none of our air vehicles has the range or capacity to do much good, and the camp hasn't the facilities to land or launch a shuttle.



"The trucks are loaded and ready to go. You're scheduled to leave as soon as possible. The camp is about 1,300 clicks up the Northslope road. You can average about 50 clicks per hour, so you should reach the camp in less than 30 hours. Each of the transports has two extra parabatteries wired into the cargo compartment so you can make the round trip without refueling; the camp has no parabatteries to spare.

"I won't try to fool you people, this could be dangerous. We suspect that the fire was started by cartel sympathizers, and the same people may try to stop this shipment. You can draw weapons from the munitions master before you leave. Any questions?"

Ban-Nep will answer questions about the road conditions, directions, and preparations, but will downplay the dangers, and will not mention hijackers at all. He will stress that the best protection for the convoy is in leaving quickly, before any saboteurs find out about the trip.

The characters can draw one sidearm, one shoulder-fired weapon, and up to 20 clips of ammo for each from the munitions master. No heavy weapons or poison grenades are available, and none of the trucks carry any weapons.

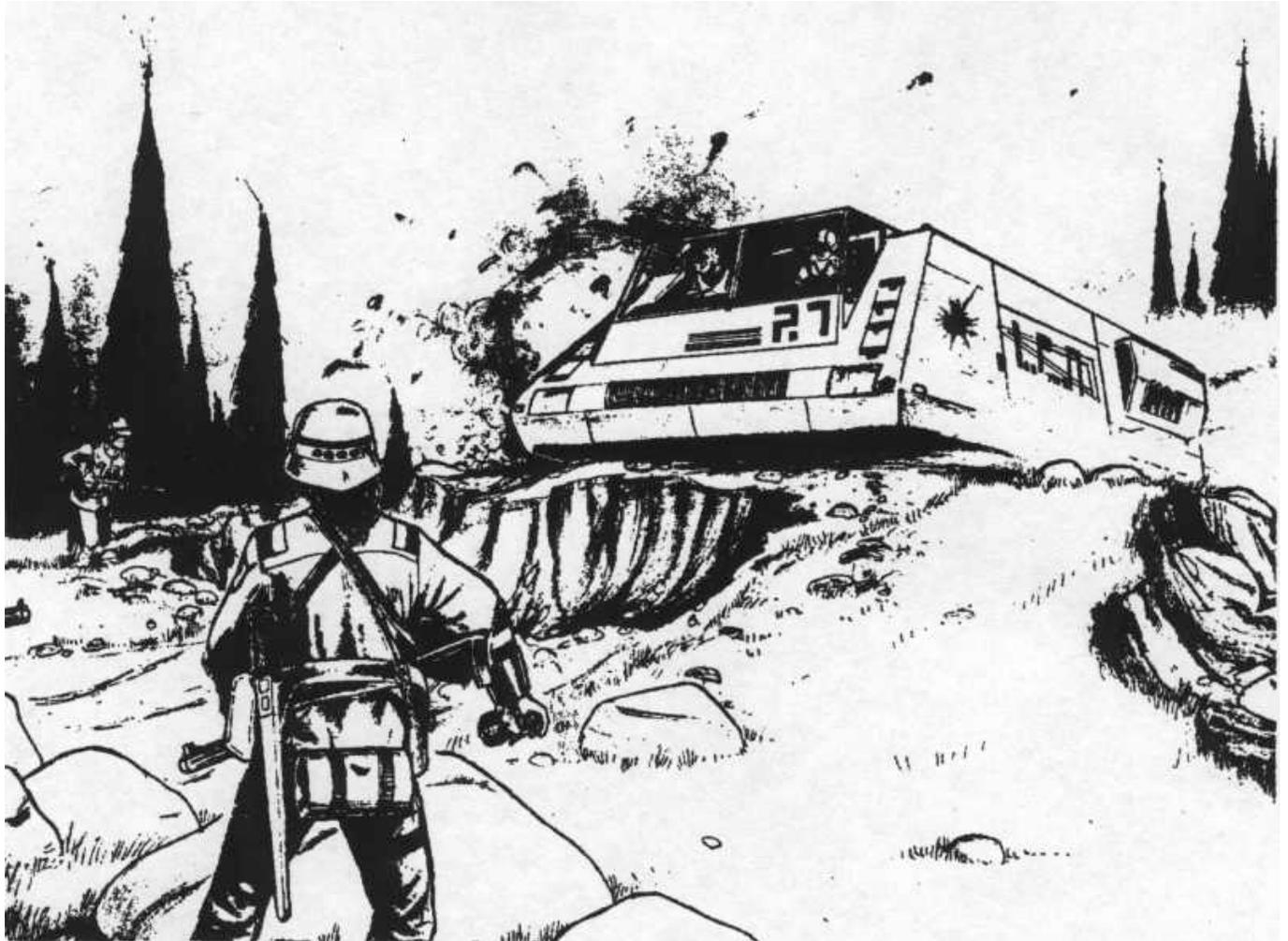
The supplies, in sealed standard reinforced cargo containers, are loaded into LRM hover transports. The number of transports equals the number of characters divided by two, so that each truck has at least two passengers. One character can rest or act as an observer while the other drives.

When the characters are ready to leave, roll 2d10; the result is the number of hours until sunrise.

The Northslope Road passes through several hundred kilometers of scrub brush and rolling, rocky hills before reaching the base of the Northslope, a rising plain covered with low woody plants and thousands of boulders. The smallest of these boulders are only a few meters across, while the largest tower hundreds of meters over the road. The road is surfaced with crushed rock, and is not in particularly good condition. The first few hundred kilometers are fairly straight and level, but the road becomes a twisting, serpentine track once it reaches the Northslope boulder fields and canyons.

Ban-Nep's briefing, of course, is almost entirely untrue. The transport driver's cartel is not on strike, and there is no emergency at Northslope Camp 7. LRM transports are disappearing along this road, and Ban-Nep is using the player characters as bait to find out what is happening. The cargo containers in the transports are filled with gravel and packing material. Suspecting hijackers, Ban-Nep has spread rumors through underworld contacts that the trucks are carrying upgraded computer programs, records on company procedures and installations, new prospecting equipment, and the monthly payroll for the camp.

Unknown to the players, a single aircar carrying extra parabatteries and computer-enhanced optical ground scanning equipment is tailing the convoy at high altitude, filming the convoy and trying to locate the suspected hijacker's hidden base.



Hijackers will attack the convoy as it passes through a narrow gorge on the Northslope. The attackers are armed with enough heavy weapons (heavy lasers, machine guns, recoilless rifles, and rocket launchers) that one heavy weapon can be fired at each of the first and last trucks, hoping to stop those trucks on the narrow road and trap any others between the two wrecks. The weapons are positioned 50 meters from the road on both sides, behind hard cover. The gunners have +20 skill bonuses to hit with the weapons, and the transports are large targets. The hijackers will use doze grenades fired from grenade rifles to capture any characters who abandon the trucks. If the characters refuse to surrender, the hijackers will try to fire doze grenades through the windows of the vehicles (shooting out the windows with small arms fire, if necessary). The hijackers outnumber the player characters in the convoy about 2 to 1.

Ten minutes after the convoy is captured, a heavy jetcopter with a cargo sling arrives and the hijackers begin transferring the cargo crates back to their base. Once the first

crates are opened at the hijacker's base, the outlaws (and the characters) discover the trick. When the jetcopter returns to the road, the hijackers open all the crates immediately and find nothing but gravel and packing foam. The angry hijackers set off incendiary grenades in the cargo containers and empty vehicles and head back to their camp, taking the captured characters along.

The hijackers live in prefabricated buildings stolen from LRM camps and trucks, and covered with camouflage netting. The characters will be kept under guard in one of these buildings.

After five hours, the camp is attacked by 20 LRM security police armed with needler rifles (firing anesthetic needles) and laser pistols, and 6 LRM police armed with grenade rifles (firing doze grenades) and automatic pistols. All LRM police wear skeinsuits and albedo screens. Unless the characters find some way to identify or protect themselves, they will be mistaken for outlaws, attacked, and captured.

If captured as outlaws, the characters will be in constant danger until released. The real hijackers think the characters were working with LRM, and will attack them at every opportunity while in jail. Ban-Nep will look for the characters if they are still in jail 15 hours after being captured.

Once released, the characters will be de-briefed and paid according to the agreement, plus 1,000 credits each as a bonus for hazardous duty.
