

INTRODUCTION

The Orions are an enigmatic people who keep secrets from all outsiders and guard their privacy fiercely. They are also excellent observers and have been able to adapt to their surroundings for millennia as benign and oppressive spacefaring cultures alike rose and fell around them. Through it all, the Orions persevered and eventually flourished. They are a resourceful and proud people who are tied inexorably to the stars.

SCOPE OF THIS MANUAL

This manual attempts to compile Orion vessels frequently encountered by Federation interests (whether private or governmental). It also describes vessels used by the Orion Space Navy and the various Orion governments.

Orion starships have plied the spacelanes long before the formation of the Federation. The Orions use a plethora of ship designs- both out of necessity and design- and it is a constant chore of Federation Intelligence to sort and list these vessels. Listed herein are those vessels of which the Federation has adequate, substantiated data.

It is important to note that it is an aspect of Orion culture to customize individual ships. Although ships of the Orion Space Navy (OSN) may be standardized for efficiency in support and maintenance, private vessels and those in service with local planetary governments will almost certainly vary in statistics. The models and variants included in this manual are those that best represent the particular vessel type.

THE ORION NEUTRALITY ZONE AND OTHER ORION AREAS

Orion territorial influence can be divided into three main groups: the Orion Neutrality Zone, independent Orion colony worlds and Orion interests in the Triangle. Each of these divisions will be explored below.

THE ORION NEUTRALITY ZONE

The Orion Neutrality Zone is the recognized, sovereign and independent Orion-controlled territory, which lies to the galactic south of the Federation. Here, Orion law and regulations reign over the citizenry and the millions of traders and merchants who pour into the famous Orion ports. This is the major concentration of Orion civilization in the galaxy. Sometimes referred to as the Orion Colonies, the "capital" of the colonies is the world of Botchok. It is in this area that the OSN operates and patrols the space within.

OTHER ORION COLONIES

Several former colony worlds lie outside the ONZ in Federation and Klingon space as well as the Federation/Klingon Neutral Zone. These are usually ancient Orion colonies which lost ties with the Orion governments and became "lost" sometime in the past, only to be rediscovered at a later date. Most of these worlds have reestablished ties to the Orion home world, but the majority remains independent or even members of the Federation or Klingon Empire.

ORION TRIANGLE INTERESTS

Lastly, the Orions are a strong influence in the Triangle, mostly notably in the form of the Orion Frontier Mercantile Association. Although technically an independent entity, the OFMA is backed by Orion military forces from the ONZ and Orion-built vessels

make up the majority of the OFMA fleet. Independent Orion traders and corporations from the home territories also conduct business within the Triangle.

STARSHIP DYNAMICS IN ORION SPACE

Space travel has been a way of Orion life for millennia. Although the bulk of Orion ship traffic is private, commercial traffic, armed ships in service with various planetary governments and the Orion Space Navy share a significant role for the Orions. Also included in this assessment are the many, infamous pirate vessels that have plagued the Orions and their neighbors for centuries.

COMMERCIAL AND PRIVATE VESSELS

Commercial vessels make up the bulk of Orion space traffic. Transports and vessels of all makes and models enjoy the lenient and prosperous ports with Orion space. In fact, one of the most profitable businesses within Orion space is the renting and selling of space vehicles. Orion culture is one of the stars and there is always a ship to be bought or a vessel to be sold.

Major corporations in Orion space have small armadas of commercial and private vessels, ranging from transports and freighters to couriers and warpshuttles. Indeed, some of the most important Orion corporations have armed vessels which defend their business interests. This is legal in Orion space.

LOCAL INTRASYSTEM GOVERNMENTAL FLEETS

Orion governmental structure can be split into two main elements: the government of Botchok, the "capital" of the modern Orions and those worlds affiliated with Botchok- the "colonies". Several of these so-called colonies are semi-autonomous and rely upon their own small fleets to provide protection against spaceborne threats. These vessels almost always stay within the territorial jurisdiction of the planet (or system) to which they are attached. Sometimes, as is the case with Orion culture, many of these local governments are also the sole or most important corporations within a system or on a planet and provide both jobs and protection.

THE ORION SPACE NAVY

The Orion Space Navy (OSN) is the military arm of the Orion government on Botchok. Often treated and looked upon as only a token force, every interstellar government- Federation, Klingon and Romulan included- has learned the hard way to never underestimate Orion resolve or cunning. Indeed the OSN is a force to respect.

The OSN has suffered from lack of funding, lack of adequate officers and crew and lack of prestige for many years. In fact, the OSN has been forced to- on several occasions in the past- rent ships and crews just to perform routine maneuvers. Most Orions never consider joining the OSN. Indeed, most Orions feel the OSN unnecessary, especially with corporations and local planetary systems providing their own protection.

In 2270 (2/12), Refner Gyron became president of the Botchok Planetary Congress (BPC). Addressing the internal turmoil caused by the "Babel Incident" of 2267 (2/09) when three Orion corporations were brought down after being linked to the attempted disruption of the Babel Conference, President Gyron embarked on a restructuring of the OSN so that it could better tend to threats inside or outside Orion borders. Initially limited to strengthening the BPC's control over civil strife,

conservative elements within Gyron's cabinet and within the OSN urged the president to continue to strengthen the navy. By 2280 (2/19), the OSN had drastically increased its efficiency in command and control, better deployed itself to respond to threats across the territories and increased the potency of its vessels. President Gyron's program has created a renewed sense of pride and vigor within the OSN. The Federation and Starfleet has watched this build-up and restructuring with a concerned eye, however.

Besides patrolling and defending the Orion Neutrality Zone, the OSN also escorts private and commercial Orion vessels to and from Orion interests in the Triangle. They also engage in pirate control within the ONZ. In this regard, they occasionally work in concert with Starfleet vessels.

ORION PIRATES

The issue of pirates and piracy has always been a thorn in the side of Orion/Federation relations. The Orions tend to crack down on piracy when it suits them politically. However, even the Orions sometimes reach their fill of their own pirates.

Officially, the BPC would love to deny the existence of the so-called "Orion pirates" and claim that they are part of a romanticized myth which may have been true in the distant past, but no longer. Unofficially, every Orion knows that there are pirates, but prefer to consider them as "privateers of a different ilk." Piracy is a part of Orion culture and has been for millennia. In some regards, the pirate life is the ultimate life for an Orion: entrepreneurship, profit, adventure, danger and excitement.

Most Orion pirates are affiliated with loose knit bands; rare is the truly independent pirate. Most of these pirates raid specific industries, such as mining interests, and fence their stolen and captured goods to unknowing (or knowing) buyers. These pirates are ruthless and well-organized and tend to be cut-throat and violent. They are also most often very patient with long memories, making them deadly foes.

Some pirate bands raid any type of commerce. These bands tend to be the most daring, but less organized. However, woe be to the one who gets in the way of any pirate and his prey.

Orion pirate vessels are a myriad lot. Many are unique designs while others are stolen vessels or vessels directly copied from existing plans. These ships mount an array of different technologies, from Romulan blasters to Klingon impulse drives to Federation shields. It is safe to say that no two pirate vessels are exactly the same. One interesting item to note is that several pirate designs have become so popular with Orions that "official" adaptations of the design have been created and sold to private interests. The OSN has even copied a few of their designs directly from pirate mounts.

In short, any type of shipping (or for that matter, any lucrative target) is fair game for pirates. Orion pirates will prey on Orion shipping just as soon as they will Federation shipping. However, there is a certain "honor among thieves" when Orion pirates raid Orion shipping: certain targets are off-limits and the pirates are usually much less violent. Even the Orion victims seem to understand this strange pirate "code of honor."

A FINAL NOTE

It is important to remember that although classified by Starfleet as blockade runners, several models of Orion starships are the equivalent of Starfleet destroyers and light cruisers. In addition, Orion crews are to be respected: although not as well trained as their Starfleet counterparts, they are as tenacious as any opponent faced by Starfleet and have been known to sacrifice their lives in certain situations to the surprise of their Federation counterparts. If an Orion cannot win a battle or flee from it, he will not surrender.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Users of this guide are urged to consult the works below (both by FASA) for additional information on Orion starship usage and design:

The Orions: Book of Common Knowledge, pp. 74-75.

The Orions: Book of Deep Knowledge, pg. 35.



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