

Charles Class II Commercial Transport/ Planetary Interface Craft



Construction Data

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>Model Numbers</i> | Mk I | Mk II |
| <i>Date Entering Service</i> | 2281 (2/1602) | 2290 (2/2603) |
| <i>Number Constructed</i> | 64 | 38 |

Hull Data

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------|-----------|
| <i>Superstructure Points</i> | 4 | 6 |
| <i>Damage Chart</i> | A | A |
| <i>Size</i> | | |
| Length | 51 m | 51 m |
| Width | 30 m | 30 m |
| Height | 15 m | 15 m |
| Weight | 9950 mt | 12,950 mt |

Cargo

| | | |
|--------------------|---------|---------|
| Cargo Units | 105 SCU | 105 SCU |
| Cargo Capacity | 5250 mt | 5250 mt |
| Landing Capability | Yes | Yes |

Equipment Data

| | | |
|------------------------------|------|------|
| <i>Control Computer Type</i> | L-14 | L-14 |
| <i>Transporters</i> | | |
| standard 6-person | 1 | 1 |
| cargo | 1 | 1 |

Other Data

| | | |
|---------------|----|----|
| <i>Crew</i> | 10 | 8 |
| <i>Troops</i> | | 60 |

Engines and Power Data

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--------|--------|
| <i>Total Power Units Available</i> | 13 | 13 |
| <i>Movement Point Ratio</i> | | |
| unloaded | 1/1 | 1/1 |
| loaded | 2/1 | 2/1 |
| <i>Warp Engine Type</i> | FWI-1 | FWI-1 |
| Number | 2 | 2 |
| Power Units Available | 5 | 5 |
| Stress Charts | N/P | N/P |
| <i>Maximum Safe Cruising Speed</i> | | |
| unloaded | Warp 6 | Warp 6 |
| loaded | Warp 5 | Warp 5 |
| <i>Emergency Speed</i> | | |
| unloaded | Warp 7 | Warp 7 |
| loaded | Warp 6 | Warp 6 |
| <i>Impulse Engine Type</i> | FIA-3 | FIA-3 |
| Power Units Available | 3 | 3 |

Weapons and Firing Data

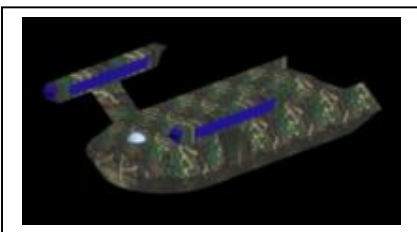
| | | |
|-------------------------|------|------|
| <i>Beam Weapon Type</i> | FL-2 | FL-2 |
| Number | 1 | 1 |
| Firing Arcs | f | f |
| Firing Charts | F | F |
| Maximum Power | 2 | 2 |
| Damage Modifiers | None | None |

Shields Data

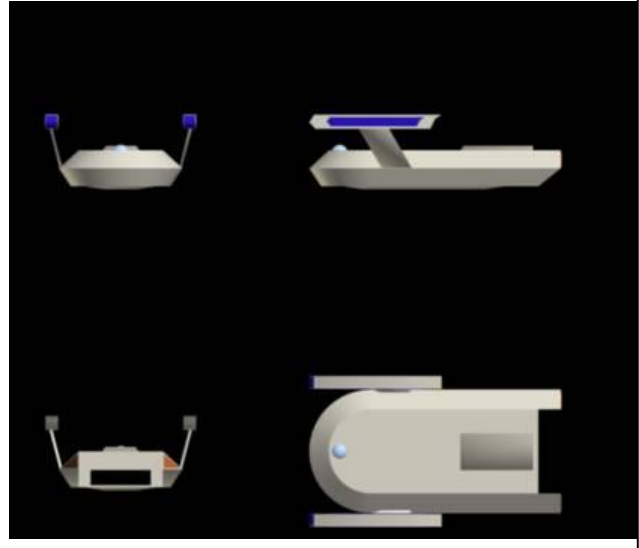
| | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|
| <i>Deflector Shield Type</i> | FSB | FSB |
| Shield Point Ratio | 1/2 | 1/2 |
| Maximum Shield Power | 11 | 11 |

Combat Efficiency

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>D-- (unloaded/loaded)</i> | 58.7/39.7 | 61.6/42.6 |
| <i>WDF--</i> | 0.5 | 0.5 |
| <i>CE-- (unloaded/loaded)</i> | 0.3/0.2 | 0.3/0.2 |



Charles Mk II Planetary Interface Craft



Notes:

The *Charles* class commercial transport, first entering service in 2281 (2/1602), is the first starship created and manufactured by Stratford Starbuilders, Ltd. In the past, this fledgling firm had been known for slight, if unspectacular, growth and success in producing small quantities of shuttlecraft for commercial service. Stratford, now having entered into the interstellar shipbuilding market, has done so with a most unusual vessel.

Upon first examination, the most outstanding physical characteristic of the *Charles* is in the location of its warp propulsion units, which are actually forward of the main hull. This has led some harsh critics to call the starship a "back-ender" because when it is in transit, it appears from a distance to be moving in reverse.

As a transport, the *Charles* possesses several strengths and weaknesses. Unlike most starships intended as cargo carriers, the *Charles* was designed around its offensive and defensive systems and ample computer capacity a binary shield transducer and shipboard laser were designed parameters. In fact, the shielding is among the best found on any commercial vessel of any size anywhere. Overall, the builders sought an efficiency balance between equipment mass and superstructure limitations. This incidentally led to a high unit cost due mostly to the design requirements themselves.

Ironically, cost was never a consideration- except in the single area of crew comfort, which is sorely lacking and often described as "cramped." The relatively high ship price, combined with interior furnishings and life-support systems that could be charitably called "spartan", have proven to be a major marketing drawback for mass production. Even so, the vessel is a solidly-constructed, well protected, and functional (if odd looking) design. Another positive feature: the cargo area is exceptionally easy to load or unload, either by transporter or through large external hatchways mounted in both sides of the hull.

Internally, the *Charles* class is a "four-decker", with the top deck serving as the bridge and fire control center, and the second deck containing the crew quarters and transporter. The third deck includes the computer system, engineering, and assorted support equipment, and the bottom double-height deck is almost exclusively devoted to the cargo area and the cargo transporter.

Even so, the *Charles* is often compared unfavorably with the much cheaper *Mission* class transport which actually possesses a larger cargo capacity. Fortunately, the *Charles* is reasonably popular with its crews, most of whom are Andorians who appreciate having even a small weapon aboard their merchant ships.

To date, two Mk I *Charles* transports have been lost or confirmed destroyed. The *SS Governor of Paris*, operating along the Gorn border, was attacked and destroyed in 2283 (2/1810) by a Gorn SS-3 class destroyer. Sadly, this attack came only a few standard days before the UFP and Gorn Alliance signed the Frontier Accord, limiting military activity in the disputed area.

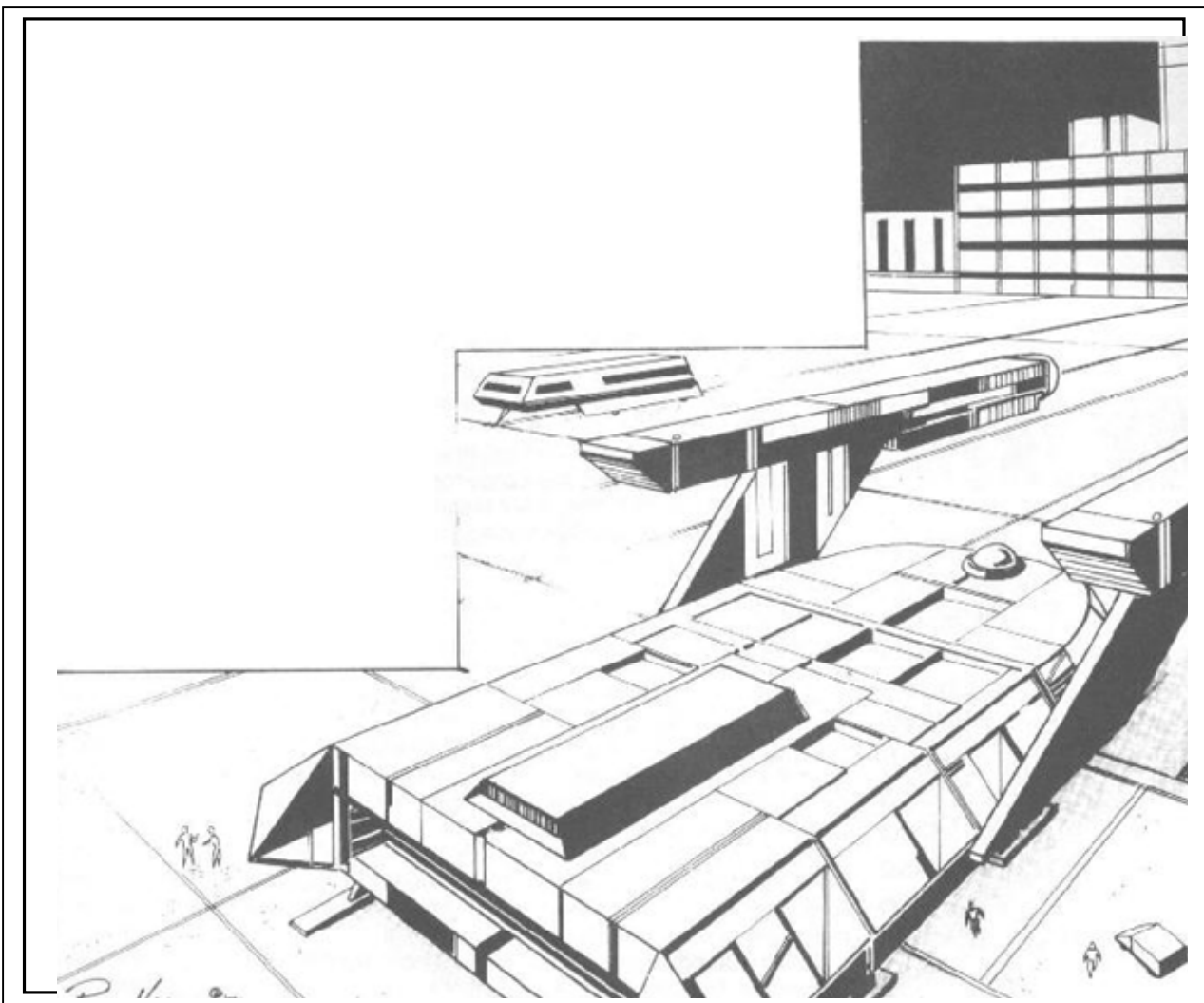
The *SS Sir John Stanley*, the second class casualty, was operating in the vicinity of Melkotian space during the early part of 2285 (2/20). The vessel departed from Daran V with a cargo of assorted luxury goods and missed a routine subspace radio contact in April of 2285 (2/2004). The ship's master, an unsavory merchant trader named Beard, reputedly boasted of his intentions to conduct trade with the Melkots, but it is not known whether such contact was even attempted. After several weeks, Starfleet vessels were called in to thoroughly search the area, but no trace of the *Sir John Stanley* was ever found.

Despite, or perhaps because of Stratford's design innovations, the *Charles* was initially not as widely (or as quickly) accepted as originally hoped. The manufacturing firm was one of the smallest of its kind in the Federation, and its staff engineers worked diligently to acquire a small share of the market with this vessel. Most emphasis was placed in marketing the vessel to independent Orion and Andorian crews, who often place greater emphasis on weapons and less importance on accommodations or personal comfort.

After roughly four years of being on the market, Merchant Marine Command increasingly found *Charles* class transports involved in illicit activity along the Orion borders and within the Triangle. Smugglers and runners had found that the *Charles* was perfectly suited for quick "grab-and-go" operations to and from planets. Crews could land hard and fast on a planet's surface, load or unload illicit cargo to contacts waiting nearby, and quickly return to space and warp out. The tough little ship could take a beating, land virtually anywhere planetside, and had ample shielding and good speed. After several encounters with the *Charles* on the other side of the law, Starfleet began to take notice of the ship.

In 2289 (2/25) Starfleet Marine Command approached Stratford Starbuilders and began talks about using the *Charles* as a dropship or planetary interface craft (PIC or "pickle" in Corp slang) for the Marine Command. The result became the *Charles* Mk II, first commissioned in 2290 (2/26). The Mk II version is modified to carry 60 marines and their full gear and support equipment. In addition, a point defense system has been installed to protect the *Charles* and its troops during planetary operations against inbound missiles and other dangers while planetside. The ship's superstructure has also been reinforced and the laser has been retained. The top-mounted warp nacelles free the flight crew of the *Charles* from worrying about damaging the nacelles during landings. In addition, the forward mounting of the engines gives free access to the troop bay for operations.

Stratford Starbuilders now holds a lucrative contract with Starfleet Marine Command. Orders continue to be filled for *Charles* Mk IIs. In addition, sales of the Mk I to the private sector have increased. Stratford Starbuilders, Ltd. maintains its headquarters on Terra, but its shipyard bay is at Salazaar, where the *Charles* Mk I is produced at an average rate of seven per year. The Mk II is also produced at Salazaar at a rate of six per year.



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