

NO FIXED ABODE

Whether through choice or necessity, not everyone has a fixed planetary (or even station) base or mailing address. There are many opportunities open to people willing to travel, whether they are mercenaries, entertainers, or scientific consultants. Many spacers, like Admiral Elli Quinn (p. 125), willingly choose this way of life over “dirtside” existence.

MERCENARIES

A typical company of mercenaries is *organized* – it has a book of regulations, fixed pay scales, insurance packages, paid vacations, pensions, and retirement plans – and, of course, medical care. The better companies arrange cryo-revival for their troops where possible, and dispose of the fallen with dignity. A mercenary fleet is often a free coalition, composed of a number of ships, where the captains own their ships, serving under an elected commander. The commander negotiates with would-be employers and pays the fleet’s wages. The mercenaries on each ship have signed contracts with their captains or with the commander of the fleet.

Certain aspects of mercenary behavior are regulated by interstellar law and custom, as interpreted by the great powers for their own convenience. A mercenary fleet is required to post warning buoys on merchant shipping lanes in its area of activity. Of course, not all mercenaries abide by this – but their employers may insist that they do so, if only to retain popular goodwill in a private dispute. If a planet is engaged in civil war, both sides will probably insist that their mercs keep strictly to the law. After all, annoying the galactic powers might push them to support the other side . . .

The great powers will take action against mercenary fleets that become a nuisance. The fleet of “Admiral” LaVarr had an interesting business plan: its warships would arrive in orbit around a world, and stay there until they were paid to go away quietly. When the Tau Cetan fleet caught up with them, LaVarr was executed. Similarly, after the Dendarii assisted the mass Marilacan escape

from Dagoola IV, Cetagandan assassins were promptly sent after Admiral Naismith. (The problems of acquiring a reputation . . .)

Particularly good (or spectacularly bad) mercenary companies acquire a reputation among planetary powers and merchant traders.

The Dendarii Mercenaries

The Dendarii Mercenaries (once the Oseran Mercenaries) are currently led by Admiral Elli Quinn. The Dendarii were invented by Miles Vorkosigan in a moment of panic, but have become one of the galaxy’s most famous and effective mercenary fleets. They are an elite and relatively small force, specializing in daring rescues, covert operations, intelligence gathering, and hit-and-run raids. The Dendarii also serve as a private, deniable strike force for Barrayaran ImpSec, though this is currently only known to Admiral Quinn, Master Sergeant Taura, and certain people on Barrayar.

Miles Vorkosigan founded the Dendarii while attempting to smuggle a shipload of weapons onto Tau Verde IV during a civil war. To impress the crew of an Oseran Mercenary ship he had just captured, he claimed to represent an elite force called the “Dendarii Mercenaries.” He had to keep accepting new recruits in order to keep his head above water; by the time the war was over, the Oseran Mercenaries had *become* the Dendarii Mercenaries. To avoid breaking Vorloupulous’ Law (p. 14), Miles persuaded Emperor Gregor to take the Dendarii as a personal Crown Troop. Three years later, Miles used the Dendarii to investigate the situation around the Hegen Hub, and led them in defense of Vervain against the Cetagandan assault. After that, his role as “Admiral Naismith” was formalized with ImpSec, and for the next 10 years, he directed the Dendarii on private missions for ImpSec between more normal mercenary contracts. After his death, cryo-revival, and ensuing seizure disorder, Miles was forced to allow Admiral Naismith to “retire.” Admiral Elli Quinn took command of the Dendarii in his place.

Then another voice from the back popped up. “What kind of insurance package does the, the Dendariis have? Do we get a paid vacation?”

And another: “Do we get any perks? What’s the pay scale?”

And yet another: “Will our pensions carry over from our old contracts? Is there a retirement plan?”

– The Warrior’s Apprentice