**The colonial defence force**

***A brief guide***

Quite frankly, few senior staff officers and policy makers within the ECU actually have any idea of how complicated and bureaucratic its armed forces really are. Those who do come close to grasping the enormity of protecting nineteen-billion people spread over an estimated eight thousand separate colonies and installations are either so well paid they rarely lower themselves to explain anything to mere mortals, or they are so heavily traumatised that they seldom can be found outside of Stonewall’s Bar at CDF headquarters on Mars. Standard policy therefore is to seldom offer detailed facts and focus more heavily on public relationships and high profile media coverage. The CDF is therefore able to reassure the union’s citizens that it can protect the entire human race, while behind closed doors it grapples with the undeniable truth…

It totally bloody can’t.

There simply aren’t enough resources for the CDF to police the entire core zone, and the brutal truth is that should any of the major powers launch a war against its neighbour, the CDF could little more than stamp its foot, park a few cruisers around some ECU aid stations and watch most of its troops be recalled by their twitchy parent nations. The CDF therefore represents only part of the union’s peace policy, inspiring cooperation and integration between the nations’ soldiers in the face of external and non-sovereign threats. When coupled with a policy of corporate de-politicization of trade, resources, and services, the ECU does rather well in this mission.

Where the CDF comes into its own is in civil defence, disaster relief or ECU policy enforcement. Dubbed ‘The Grinder’ and ‘Star Cops’, the CDF has two branches, Military Command, responsible for all armed forces; and Civil Defence, responsible for law enforcement, intelligence and relief work.

**The grinder**

The CDF Supreme headquarters, or ‘The Grinder’ is located at the foot of Olympus Mons on Mars. More a vast office complex than a military base, SHQ is the administrative heart of the colonial peace initiative. Here the joint chiefs sit in regular conference with various union ministries to coordinate strategy. SHQ is however also connected via mass transit tubes to the Campus Martius, the vast subterranean network of munition and supply tunnels that burrow deep into the mountain and the plains beyond. The depot is defended by a brigade of colonial troopers and two battalions of marines, in addition to the defence monitor flotilla that protects the depot’s orbital mag-lift.

**The Joint Chiefs**

Seven high ranking officers make up the military advisory board of the joint chiefs, answerable to the union executive. The Chief of Staff to the CDF is essentially one of the highest ranking soldiers in the galaxy, and the post (as with all of the joint chiefs) requires a minimum of thirty years military service before appointment.

Each chief takes responsibility for a particular branch of the colonial military, including the fleet, supply and logistics, recruitment and training, the marine corp. among several others. The current Chief of Staff Is Major General Martin Duke, of the Colonial Defence Marine Corp. Duke has been in post for eight years following an illustrious career with a gallery of citations. He is however known as a cold hearted man with a cruel sense of humour and a habit of making young adjutants pee themselves during the weekly review. In 2168, Duke was subject of a court of enquiry regarding authorising the use of corrosive chemicals against replicant insurgents on Pontus. When the court fell into philosophical debate over whether synths were faulty equipment or sentient lifeforms, Duke rose from the dock and walked out, telling the union delegates to “Get back to me when you’ve decided who the fuck I can or cannot bomb.” The enquiry was kicked into the long grass shortly after as not being in the public interest to conclude.

Becoming the best

CDF recruitment and training facilities exist all across the Core Zone and Outer Rim territories, but the main officer training college is based at Fort Armstrong on Lunar I. There are two types of serviceperson in the CDF; regulars on rotational service secondment from the various national powers (usually for six months or in the case of the CDMC up to two years), and those recruited from the civilian population across the union. This is both a benefit and a major drawback for the CDF, while the steady influx of seasoned combat troops *can* allow the CDF to form pre-hardened brigades, in practise those selected for CDF service tend to be some of the worst performing troops the various nations can offer.

Recruitment for the CDMC is however very different than that of regular CDF regulars. In 2133, it was realised that union nations were reluctant to have their best troops seconded, and that further legislation was needed to enforce the requisition of elite personnel. The Colonial Defence Procurement Amendment 317 gave the CDF the rights of access to nations’ personnel files and priority secondment of personnel necessary for the creation of a rapid reaction marine force, known as the Colonial Defence Marine Corp. Personnel are drawn in small numbers, usually to fill specific skill quotas, and are either deployed as crack multi-national response teams or as directing staff for officer or marine training. This ‘cherry picking’ of personnel has allowed the CDF’s officer competency at Fort Armstrong to be counted as the highest in the galaxy.

For many, life in the CDMC offers excitement, travel, and prestige beyond what they might find serving back home, and many former marines volunteer for service when free of their parent military contracts. In the last two decades, increasing numbers of marine recruits have started to come directly from the civilian sector, causing marine corp. training and selection regimes to tighten and improve. While the CDF may have many problems, the CDMC is certainly not one of them.

The fleet – the long arm of the union

There are nine fleet sectors throughout the core and outer rim territories, each of which is commanded by a single carrier and battle group. The presence and appearance of the fleet is paramount in maintaining the public image of the CDF as a far-reaching peace initiative, and this is reflected in the duties the fleet performs. From patrolling the trade routes to hunting down pirates and smugglers, the fleet’s ships are always moving. The rationale behind such commerce-based actions is obvious; through maintaining the peaceful pursuit of trade across the union, the CDF keeps the peace between the nations and stops escalation of hostilities among the corporations from causing too much damage.

During the AI rebellion, the fleet engaged in large-scale actions for the first time, particularly when replicants seized the Zenobia fleet yards and commandeered a number of UAC capital ships in 2132. In the forty years following the outbreak of the AI rebellion, the CDF has engaged in ‘fleet actions’ over one-hundred-and-seventeen times against separatists, rebels, replicants, and the odd corporate-financed mercenary force. Despite being chronically under-funded, the fleet is finally beginning to prove itself as a premier fighting navy within the union.

The Air Corp.

Designated part of the fleet, the CDF’s air corp. is however an independent branch of the CDF in its own right. With squadrons stationed at air bases and on carriers across the core, the fighter jocks of the CDF have a reputation for fast flying and occasional aiming. The air corp. is also responsible for the operation and maintenance of all the CDF’s transport and cargo aircraft, including those used by the marines.