

Special Assembly of the Martian Congress, 2237



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General Background:

In the year 2040, Armstrong Base was founded on the surface of Mars by the United States of America. The People's Republic of China founded their own base in 2044, followed by the European Space Agency two years later. Now, 197 years after the first colony was founded, the surface of Mars houses 45 self-sufficient colonies each run by their respective countries. Depending on the GDP of their home countries and the time at which the colonies were established, each one generally houses 10-15,000 citizens, and each and every one has a job that is crucial to the survival of the colony and the rest of the planet. While most colonies need no resupplying from Earth, almost all are heavily dependent on each other for support, as each one has become specialized as to not overextend their small population. Goods and people are transported between the colonies through the use of high-speed, automated, transportation, named the Martian High Speed Rail (MHSP), that was first installed in 2165 and continues to run today. The MHSP is overseen by the Martian Congress and is funded by taxes from the colonies, making it free to use for all Martian colonies and citizens. With that in mind, many colonies such as the United States of America, the ESA joint base, and the DPRC colony have become fully independent from the rest of the colonies and operate without support. For more information on the economic status of the colonies, reference the Martian Development Index.

A Short History of Mars:

After the first 10 colonies were established, it was evident that with the 11-minute time delay between Earth and Mars and the transfer window that occurs every two years, the colonies of Mars required a system of governance that was more immediate and tailored to the needs of the colonies. It was at that point that the Martian Congress was established, and with each new

colony, the Martian Congress grew in size, with each colony allocated one representative. Based on the 2122 founding charter of the Martian Congress, the member nations have the same power as the United Nations Security Council, meaning that they can, within limits, pass laws and regulation that affect the planet on a widespread scale.

Under the Charter of the Martian Congress, citizens of member nations of the Congress are allowed to pass freely from nation to nation, similar to the European Union of the 21st century. The Charter also establishes a centralized currency that is equivalent to the value of the U.S. dollar and a guard force entitled the Martian Legionnaires used by all member nations to help maintain public safety and implement policies passed by the Martian Congress. The Legionnaires have a wide range of utility and have been trained for military service, humanitarian aid, and other fields of expertise. For all intents and purposes, the Legionnaires serve the same function as the U.N. Peacekeepers of the 21st century. There is not a centralized scientific program within the Congress, but each independent colony is responsible for their own research, with Tier One countries having more developed programs than the lower tiers. (See the Martian Development Index the end of the document)

The Martian Congress Emergency Powers Act (EPA), passed in 2132, gives the Martian Congress the ability to call a special session of Congress during times of extreme crisis. The EPA was passed after a massive Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) took out the power grids and caused damage to satellites and communications arrays. The unexpected event resulted in a two week blackout in many Tier Two and most Tier Three colonies and a death toll of an estimated 985 people. Yet the terrible deaths could have been avoided with more preparation on the part of the Martian Congress, which did not have the ability to make quick decisions and protect its citizens. Following the CME, the EPA was unanimously passed, giving the Martian Congress the

ability to call emergency sessions and pass resolutions with a supermajority (2/3) vote that can: deploy the Martian Legionnaires; establish Congressional protection zones inside colonies that are under the jurisdiction of the Martian Congress as a whole; and, under extreme circumstances, nationalise resources and labor for the protection of Mars as a whole.

In 2168, the Martian Congress passed the Safety of Martian Citizens during Dispute (SMCD) law, barring economic sanctions that would negatively affect the health of a colony, including but not limited to: agricultural products, production resources necessary to the survival of the Martians, and emergency supplies. The law was passed after the United States of America attempted to use sanctions against the Egyptian base during a time of conflict on Earth between the two nations. The dispute resulted in the deaths of 200 Egyptians on Mars when they could not power their life support grid.

The Outbreak of “Jezera”:

In 2056, the Canadian Space Agency (CSA) founded the Martian Ancient Life Research Base (AFLB) at Jezero Crater, where there was believed to be evidence of past life on Mars. Not only did the CSA research team find fossils from a time long ago, they located frozen water in which was living bacteria that had survived frozen for millions of years. Now, the CSA continues to mine ice for research, but they also use samples to re-supply their own water cycle and the water cycle of other bases throughout Mars. Since 2072, the CSA has acted as Mars’ main water supplier, and their place in the trading cycle is integral to the survival of all colonies.

In recent days, new bacteria has been discovered within deep sections of the ice and exposure to this bacteria has caused CSA researchers to become violently ill. Infected Martians have experienced temporary blindness, and partial or full paralysis that has resulted in several

deaths as a result of the brain losing functional capabilities and heart failure. Little is known about the virus or how it spreads, it is believed to be through either saliva, air, or touch.

Some have speculated that the Jezera virus was manufactured by the CSA as a biological weapon in response to recent antitrust legislation passed by the Martian Congress to stop a Canadian monopoly on water. While there is no evidence to substantiate this claim, the timing and lack of cases within the Canadian colony have raised suspicions by many. The Canadian embassy on Mars denies the allegations, while their Earth counterparts have denied requests for comment.

The Martian community as a whole is unprepared for a viral outbreak, with limited medical infrastructure. Many colonies, particularly those in Tiers Two and Three, do not have hospitals due to the lack of disease within the colonies' sanitized environments. Even those with hospitals do not have epidemiology programs capable of handling the likely increase in cases. As a result, nearly all colonies and their citizens are vulnerable to the virus. Programs must be implemented as soon as possible to provide relief. On top of this, the Earth-Mars transfer orbit will not occur for another month and, even with the fastest rockets, another five month travel time means that it will be at least six months before resources from Earth are available. This means that the Martian Congress must resolve this crisis with the resources available to them on Mars without assistance from Earth. The colonies in Tier One have the resources and means of producing enough PPE for the entire planet within the span of 8 weeks. Distribution is not centralised and needs to be organised via the Congress. Colonies in Tiers Two and Three have the production infrastructure to produce basic necessities but lack the resources to produce useful protective equipment. As it stands, 600 people have contracted Jezera and 32 people have died.

In response to this outbreak, an emergency session of the Martian Congress was called to discuss mitigation measures and treatment for sick citizens. It is the responsibility of the Congress to ensure the safety of its citizens and implement measures to ensure that colonies will not be vulnerable to events like these in the future.

Questions to Consider:

- Will a quarantine be implemented and if so, how will it operate?
- Will the member nations band together to fight Jezera or fend for themselves to keep their citizens safe?
- How will the medical infrastructure be improved to combat the immediate crisis and how will this infrastructure be sustained long-term?
- How will resources for research be obtained and who will provide them?
- How will goods be transported in a safe, sanitary manner?

Links:

[Martian Development Index](#)

[Opening Letter](#)