

# The Corliss Conglomerate

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The strength of the Corliss Conglomerate has always been its adherence to the philosophy of free trade. Its location along the trade route known as the Nisami-Watts Corridor made it the famous rest stop, shipping depot and trade center for the cluster. This system boasts one of the largest trading stations spinward of New Constantinople. It also operates one of the stronger commodity exchanges in the entire sector. This is where everyone stops to trade, exchange goods, and relax a little at Boone's Saloon, while they gamble away some of their recently acquired gains. Since it is a stopover for almost every vessel in the vicinity, it has large ship docking, repair and servicing facilities. Passenger shuttles and taxis are a common sight as they ferry crew from their parked vessels to the various stations in orbit. Fueling stations and fuel tenders are a common sight among the docked ships. Saffron Industries is one of the larger Corporations based in Corliss, offering a wide range of manufactured products to upgrade ships. The fuel so critical to the success of this glorified "truck stop" operation is supplied by the other member system of the Conglomerate: Nisami.

Corliss made a very successful and lucrative deal with neighboring Nisami when it agreed to help them rebuild after the War of Dissolution. Together, the planets of the Nisami system comprise the greatest concentration of fissionable material in the entire region. Unfortunately, the stations and processors were devastated during the war, leaving the gas mines inactive for too long. Corliss came to their rescue and rebuilt the fuel processing stations and refineries, but extracted a high price for their efforts: in return for their help, they owned an exclusive monopoly on the fuel at prices they could control. The people of Nisami have become somewhat embittered by the deal that was struck with Corliss so long ago, and rankle under the administration of Director Mastrantonio, whose primary interests are with Corliss only. The gas miners and refiners of Nisami are seeking ways to sell their fuel to other customers, even if it violates the trade pact with Corliss. The conglomerate still controls these two systems, but their strength has weakened in recent years due to predation by pirates, hostile trade practices of CMC, and the decline in commercial trade traffic through their system. Slowed trade, fewer convoys, and talk of a new trade route through a jump gate have all contributed to the economic slowdown. Together these forces have eroded the strength of the Corliss Conglomerate and its aging Defense Forces (CDF). Having relied heavily on arms purchases in the decades following the war, the CDF has not seen any fleet upgrades in the past fifty years. The Corliss system would very much like to eliminate the CMC in Watts, as their trade practices have been ruthless over the years. Fortunately for the Conglomerate, the CDF continues to be a force to reckon with, despite their aged vessels. Even well-equipped mercenaries like the Takanan Raiders are reluctant to tangle with the wily and seasoned officers and crew of the CDF. Director Mastrantonio is currently seeking a truce with the Raiders, possibly even an employment agreement with them, but to date this meeting has been hindered by a series of incidents that appear to be the work of agents of the CMC. The Conglomerate has also recently suffered a decline in business resulting from attacks by other mercenaries on their valued customers. The Director suspects that the CMC may have hired the Fist of Akra mercenary clan to harass the flow of traffic to Corliss. Nevertheless, he continues to negotiate with the commander of the Fist clan to bring the system of Akra into the Conglomerate. This is a proposition the mercenaries seem willing to entertain, since they require the fuel and supplies the Conglomerate offer them.