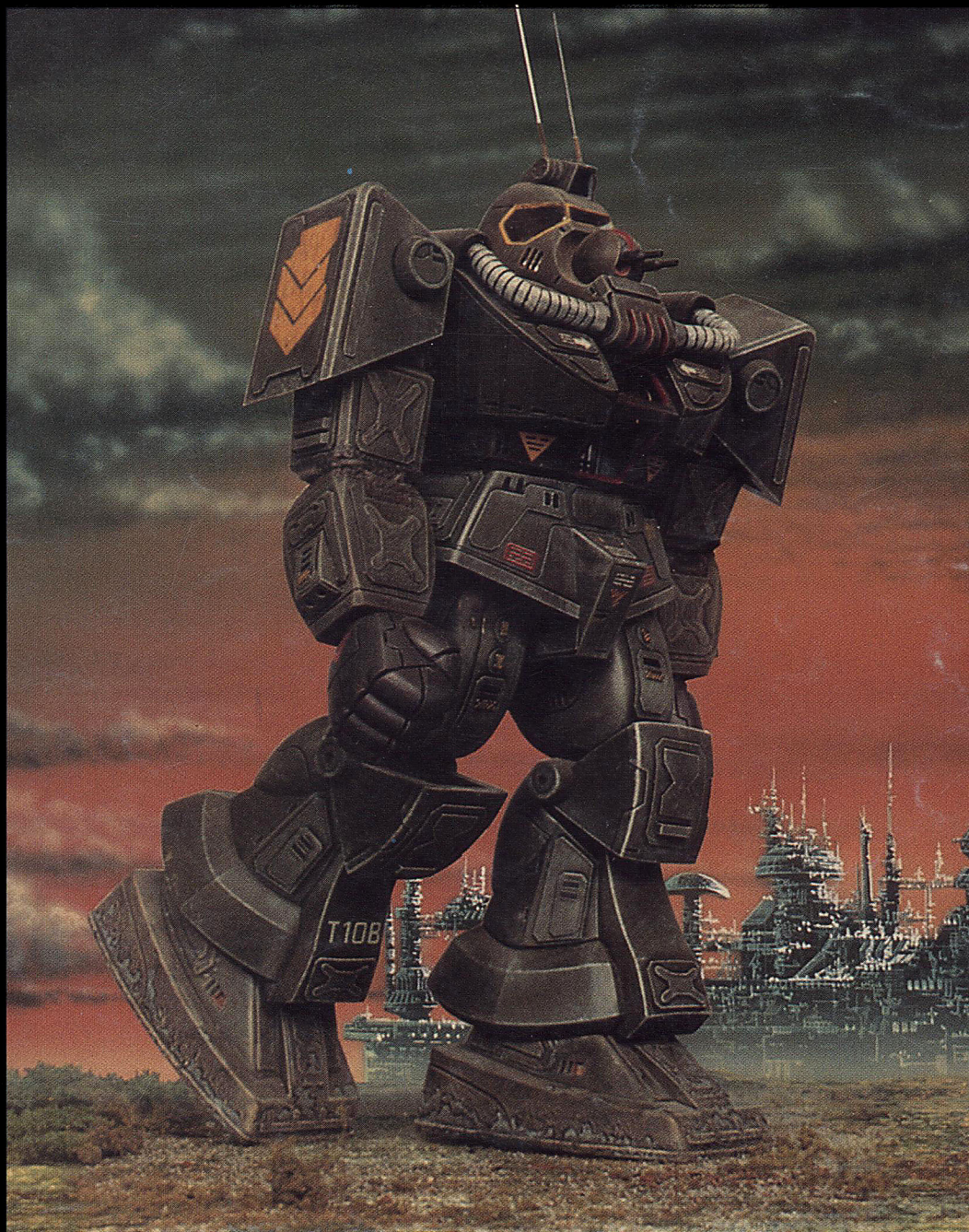


Issue # 14

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THE MAGAZINE OF COMBAT IN THE THIRTY-FIRST CENTURY



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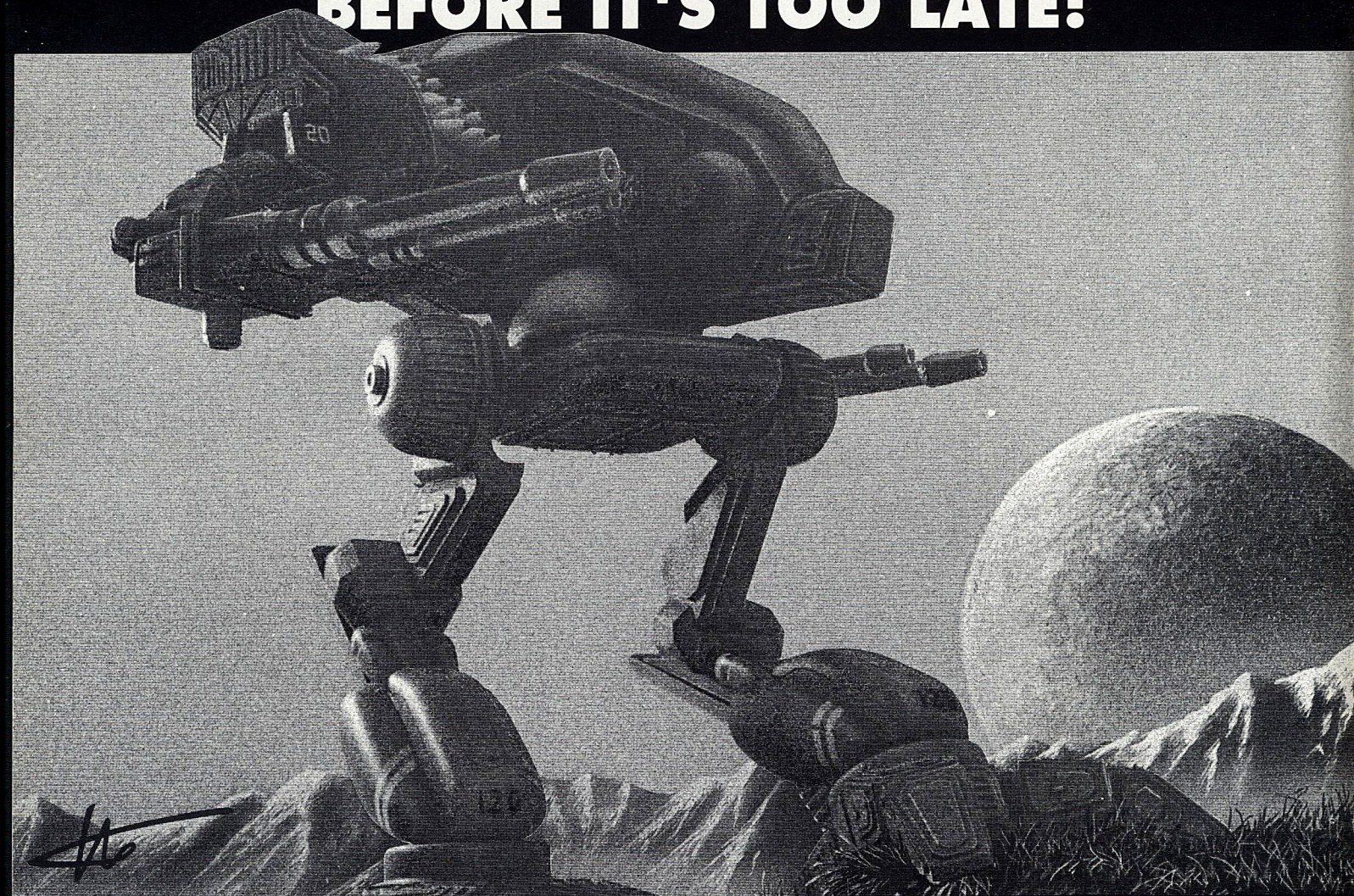


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The Magazine of Combat in the 31st Century

Issue #14
May 3050

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additional *Bad Weather & Terrain Rules* by Spydre Connors
Baptism of Fire by William Webb Jr.
To Haul Down the Jolly Roger by Robert L. Hendricks Jr.
The Mercenary in Mid-Century by S. Craig Harris
Battle For Alamut, *Roo Scout* by Stefan Paul Melin-Dempsey
A Lust For Lostech by Stefan Paul Melin-Dempsey and Hilary Ayer
Honor Has No Price, *News from the Front* all uncredited writing this issue by Hilary Ayer
The Spider Meets The Ax by John A. Theissen
Huntress by Robert Benadetti
Omega by John Gannon
Hiring Hall, *The Stalking Rhinos* by Michael T. Hebert
Lost in Transmission by Spydre Connors

About the Cover:

This issue's cover features a Wolverine patrolling the Newcomb 'Mech repair facility on Persistence. According to an unconfirmed report, this facility has now fallen to the Jade Falcons.

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OPENING SHOTS

THINGS SEEM PRETTY BAD JUST NOW

I don't care how much it costs. This is the first time you'll ever hear an editor say that. We are offering a double news bounty for any item, no matter how insignificant, which has information about this new enemy. Triple for weapons info.

For those of you safe in Marik space, or Liao, or far on that side of the Periphery, those few who haven't heard, we are under attack. Steiner/Davion. Rasalhague. The Draconis Combine: all have lost worlds. All of the Successor Houses are in danger of attack. The foes *seem* to have various names; the 'Jade Falcons', the 'Wolf Clan', the 'Ghost Bears', the 'Smoke Jaguar Clan'. It is not certain yet whether these are all one enemy or four separate groups from the same source. They all *seem* to have weapons that hit impossibly well at impossible ranges. Or so it *seems*. ComStar transmissions *seem* to be interfered with. Official messages are not getting through. What we hear is side-notes to 'letters home' from people behind the lines who are lucky enough to have survived. We know that sixteen planets have been taken. We know that twenty more are under attack. Rasalhague is worst hit. These 'Clans' are taking on some of the best regular troops in the Known Sphere — and turning them into jelly. Nobody knows who's doing it. Or how. Or why.

Panic is not the only response, though it sure *seems* tempting.

Apologies to the regular troops who read this. You folks are brave and disciplined and I'm sure your mothers love you. But what I have to say is to the mercenaries.

It's our time now.

We know better than the regulars what it is like to be scared, to be out of our depth, to be fighting impossible odds, to have nobody to cover your rear, TO HAVE NO PLACE TO RETREAT TO. We fight hungrier, against worse odds, and meaner than they do. That's standard. We also know how to face the unfaceable. Because we've had so bloody much practice at it, that's how.

Now is our time to teach.

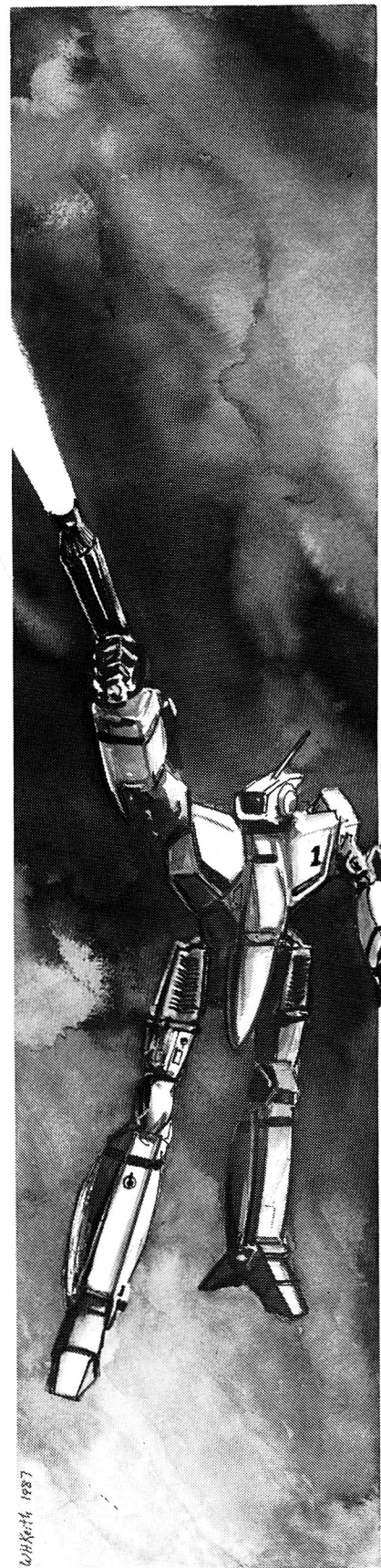
When you don't know who the enemy is, keep alive and gather intelligence. When he slaughters civilians, attacks without warning, gives challenges for incomprehensible reasons...keep silent. Mourn if you must, but do what you truly must. FIND OUT. That's what we do.

They say that mercs are stubborn in defeat. We are. We are stubborn in lost causes (especially when we have no alternative). It's a lost cause to resist these — I almost said people. *Are* they people? We've heard their voices. The voices *seem* to sound human. But let's not make *any* assumptions. They don't fight like human beings. Their tactics are incomprehensible. We don't know yet *why* they do what they do. We don't know yet *how* they do what they do. We don't know who they are that *do* what they do.

Stay alive out there, guys. Regulars, mercs, former soldiers, civilians. We're all in a war now. If you don't know it, you're like the Terran ostrich which sticks its head in a deep hole to hide from its enemies — you're fooling yourself. We're in a war now, a war of endurance. Like any other war, there will be casualties. Keep the accounts, brothers and sisters. They shall be settled.

These 'Clans' have already taken their best shot. They've been whittling at us in secret; now they've struck without warning. They had their chance to surprise us, to do us damage as unknown enemies. From now on, whenever they hit us, we'll be learning more about them.

And when they've taught us enough, it'll be our turn to teach *them*.

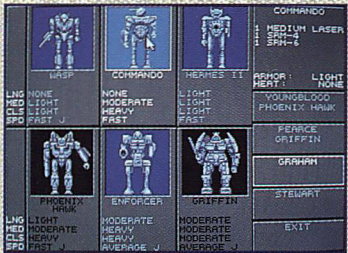


— Hilary Ayer, Skondia, April 19, 3050

STRIKE BACK



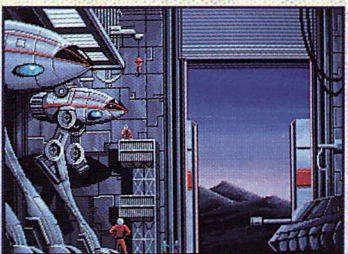
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News From The Front: *Inner Sphere Invaded!!*

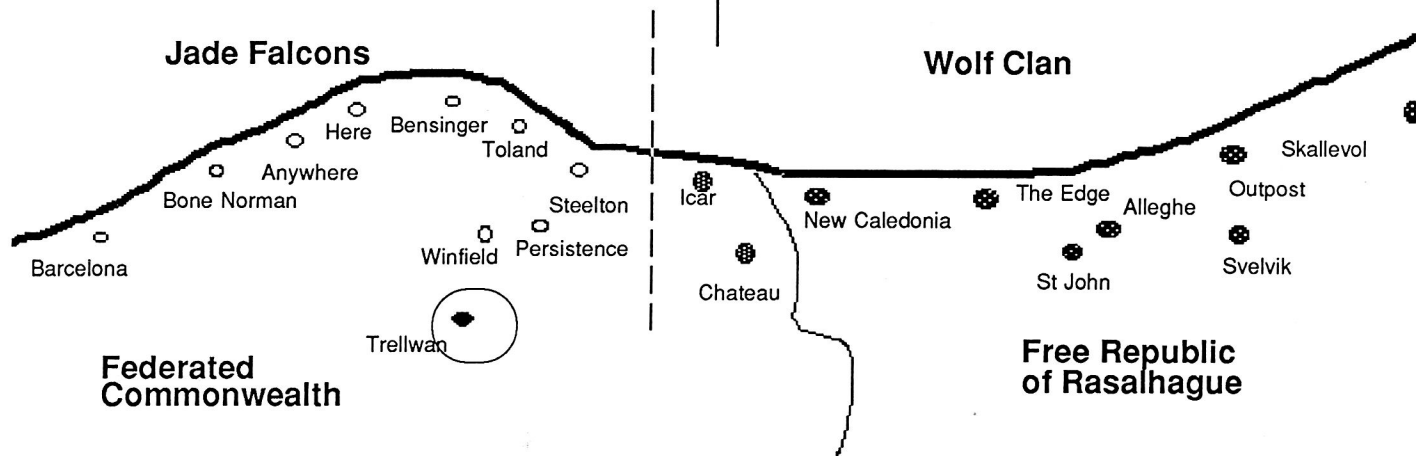
Periphery worlds were falling silent, one at a time. We weren't surprised when we didn't hear from the Duchy of Oberon, the Elysian Fields, The Greater Valkyrate. Sometimes political or technical considerations put segments of these realms out of touch for several months at a time. Oberon was the first large group to lose contact, but the Duchy seemed headed for a civil war, so we weren't concerned. The Elysian Fields is reached by relay through the Duchy, so we didn't hear from them either. We were surprised not to receive boastful communiques from the Ryans and the Morgaines of The Greater Valkyrate. It's not their way to be silent. The last we heard from them was an unconfirmed sighting placing them in the Oberon Confederation fighting another pirate group. It was this during this action that a Kell Hounds unit was destroyed. As for Santander's World and Star's End — silence from them could only be a blessing. Or so we thought.

It became clear that new pirates were out there. Rumor had it that the 'new pirates' had incredibly advanced weapons. But we're seasoned to rumors — Periphery Realms where the Star League never ended, alien civilizations based on the lizard, the return of the House of Cameron: several of these have been reported to BattleTechnology within the past month! We ignored most of this rumor as exaggeration. And so did most of you.

In March of this year, a thrust by a force referring to themselves as the 'Jade Falcons' conquered Barcelona and Bone Norman in days. Anywhere, Here, Bensinger and Toland fell within the next week. It is believed that a few groups of trained guerilla resistance fighters remain on Here, but no news has come from the planet since it was conquered. An offensive beginning on April 13 swept over Steelton, Persistence, Winfield, and Trell 1. As of this writing, Trell 1 is holding out, but there is little hope for the planet. Kommandant (and Heir to the Federated Commonwealth) Victor Steiner Davion had to be forcibly evacuated from his first command on April 15.

The Draconis Combine had better luck — and worse. Their attackers call themselves the 'Smoke Jaguars', or the 'Smoke Jaguar Clan'. Richmond, Idlewind, Tarnby, and Bjarred fell easily. Front line troops seem to have left these worlds to a garrison and moved on. The closer you get to the Alshain District, the heavier the fighting seems to have been. Schwartz fell quickly, but cost the invaders a DropShip. Rockland gave them a stiff fight; smuggled-out transmissions indicate that its two major cities were reduced to rubble before the invaders conquered.

On Turtle Bay the 'Smoke Jaguars' faced the Fourteenth Legion of Vega. Once the Legions of Vega were the scum



of House Kurita; now they are among its best units. These were the units first reformed by Kanrei Theodore Kurita. They had been scattered across Combine space by his father the Coordinator, but the nucleus of the Legion remained, proud of its traditions and stubbornly brave in their defense. It took two weeks to conquer this world; guerilla resistance organized by the yakuza remains stiff. But the young hope of the House of Kurita, the Kanrei's son Sho-sa Hohiro Kurita, remains missing after the conquest of the planet. Our yakuza sources report that he is a prisoner of the 'Smoke Jaguars'.

At least the Draconis Combine has only one force against it. Near the Rasalhague border House Steiner has lost Icar and Chateau to the 'Wolf Clan'. This same 'Wolf Clan' has taken Skallevoll, Outpost, Svelvik, Alleghe, The Edge, New Caledonia, Balsta, and St John in Rasalhague space. None of these worlds were taken without stiff fighting. All of them were quickly conquered. New Caledonia held out the longest; its surrender was announced the first of April.

Rasalhague's second enemy is a force called the 'Ghost Bears'. So far they've conquered Thule, Damian, and Holmsbu.

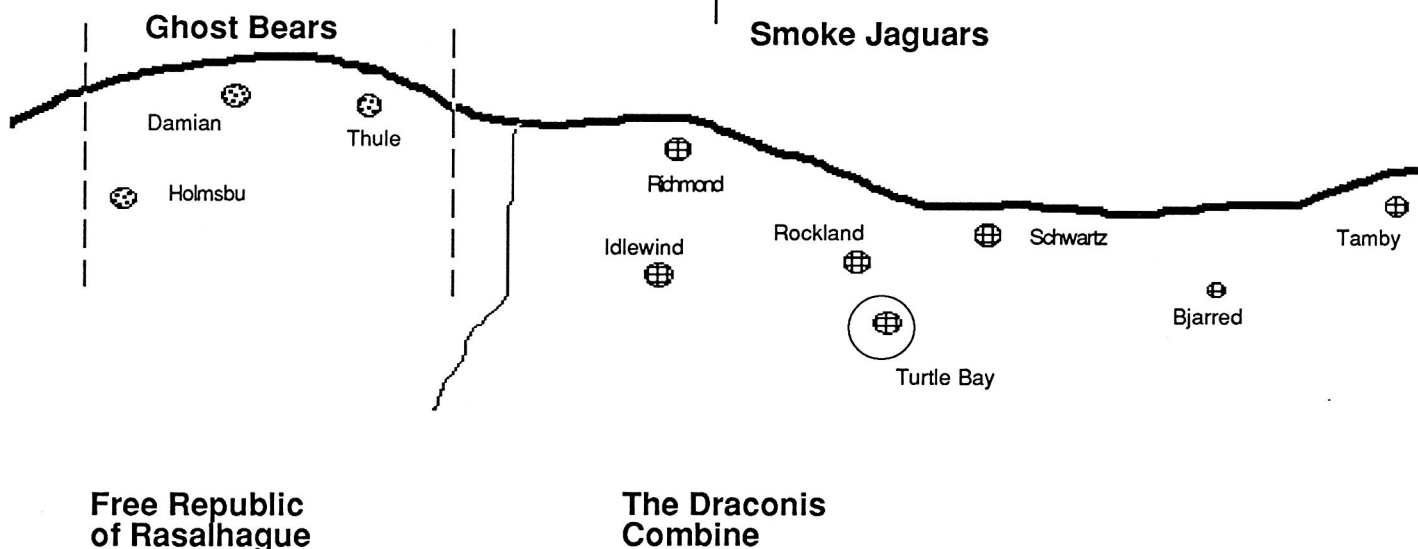
Why were so many worlds taken so quickly? The invaders seem to have weapons which hit at longer ranges than any of ours. They have weapons which do more damage than ours do. And they must have something which blanks ComStar's transmissions; world to world the first warning of invasion came when invader JumpShips appeared in jump points in the home system.

The few reports we have from the New Caledonia campaign mention defenders ambushing at close range

from the rugged and rocky spurs which Caledonia I is famous for. The rocks hold heat so well that they are effective camouflage for a 'Mech lance. And the closer in our forces were able to take the battle, the smaller the invaders' margin of superiority becomes. Their AeroSpace fighters are as good as our best, but not significantly better than our best.

Inner Sphere response so far? Isle of Skye Troops from the Federated Commonwealth are moving toward the Periphery border. Can Hanse Davion be gambling that House Kurita will be too busy on its own Periphery to attack? The Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery is shifting troops from the Dieron Military District bordering the Commonwealth to the Periphery border. They are also moving troops from the thinly-held Rasalhague border. It seems that neither of the Biggest Powers wants to attack the other. Each needs to be strong to hold off the attacks by the new forces. Rasalhague is fighting with honor, but not with style. They are throwing everything they have into the fight. No world is being taken easily. Yet despite their courage, world after world is being taken.

All Wolf's Dragoon units have left their current assignments; they appear to be heading for their home world of Outreach. The Eridani Light Horse, newly re-contracted to the Commonwealth, is moving to that front as well. Both regiments of the Kell Hounds requested and received permission to relocate to the frontier world of Sudeten as of April 15. Kell Hound Intel gives an 86.5% probability that these clans are the pirates who blasted their unit last August, and a 78.3% probability that the unit involved was



The Grim Score Card

Months 1 & 2

House	Won	Lost	Still Fighting
Federated Commonwealth	0	12	0*
Rasalhague	0	11	0
Draconis Combine	0	7	0
<i>Invader Force</i>			
Jade Falcons	10	0	0
Wolves	10	0	0
Ghost Bears	3	0	0
Smoke Jaguars	7	0	0

* News flash at presstime

— Trell System Falls May 10, 3050!!

Defense Minister's Narrow Escape!

EXCERPTS FROM INTERVIEW, MARCH 15, 3050
GENERAL CHRISTIAN MANSDOTTIR, DEFENSE MINISTER, FREE REPUBLIC OF RASALHAGUE
ABOARD THE JUMPSHIP *MJOLNIR* EN ROUTE FROM THULE TO RASALHAGUE

BATTLETECHNOLOGY: REPORTER MADDELENA BRANDT REQUESTED AN ASSIGNMENT TO WHAT WAS TO BE A ROUTINE FACT FINDING TOUR BY RASALHAGUE DEFENSE MINISTER GENERAL CHRISTIAN MANSDOTTIR. HE WAS TOURING SYSTEMS WHICH HAD BEEN HIT BY THE NEW "HI-TECH BANDITS" IN THIS LAST WINTER. MIS BRANDT AND THE DROPSHIP CARRYING THE MINISTER GOT A LITTLE MORE THAN THEY WERE READY FOR AS THE GHOST BEARS ATTACKED THULE ON MARCH 6TH WITH THE MINISTER

ONPLANET. ONLY PROMPT ACTION BY THE FIRST DRAKON AEROSPACE WING ASSIGNED TO THE MINISTER'S PROTECTION WON HIM FREE AS A FLIGHT OF THREE FIGHTERS OF AN UNKNOWN TYPE RESEMBLING STUKAS OR CORSAIRS HARRIED HIS RETREAT.

BATTLETECHNOLOGY: MADDELENA BRANDT, SIR, FOR BATTLETECHNOLOGY. I'LL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME.

GENERAL MANSDOTTIR: YOU'LL TAKE IT NOW OR LATER, MY DEAR LADY, SO IT MAY AS WELL BE NOW, JA? BUT A MOMENT ONLY. YOU CAN SEE OUR NEED FOR WORKING TIME JUST NOW.

BATTLETECHNOLOGY: YOU ARE THE FIRST MILITARY STRATEGIST TO SEE THIS FORCE IN ACTION, GENERAL MANSDOTTIR...

GENERAL MANSDOTTIR: AND ALMOST TO FALL PRISONER TO THEM, YES.

BATTLETECHNOLOGY: WHAT IS YOUR IMPRESSION OF THEM AS A FIGHTING FORCE?

GENERAL MANSDOTTIR: THE AEROSPACE FIGHTERS THAT ATTEMPTED TO PREVENT THE DROPSHIP *BRAGI* FROM LEAVING THULE WERE ABLE TO TARGET AND FIRE AT THREE TIMES THE RANGE OUR FIGHTERS HAD. SO TECHNOLOGICALLY, THEIR AEROSPACE WAS BETTER. THE PILOTING AND GUNNERY PER SE DID NOT SEEM THAT FAR BEYOND US. THE GROUND REPORTS ARE ANOTHER STORY, AND A FAR GRIMMER ONE.

BATTLETECHNOLOGY: CAN YOU GIVE US ANY PERSPECTIVE ON THEIR CAPABILITIES?

GENERAL MANSDOTTIR: THE COASTAL CITY OF BJORNHAVEN CONTINUED TO TRANSMIT UNTIL THE TELEVISION STATION WAS OVERRUN. THEY SHOWED A FIGHTING FORCE THAT LOOKED LIKE ORGANIZED CHAOS. THEIR UNITS WEREN'T SPECIALIZED AS OURS ARE; ONE UNIT HAD THREE MEDIUM 'MECHS, SOMETHING LIKE A LOCUST, AT ABOUT TWENTY TONS, AND AN ASSAULT 'MECH WITH A PPC WITH A VASTLY EXTENDED RANGE. THE RANGE OF THEIR WEAPONS IS LONGER THAN OURS BY AN UNKNOWN FACTOR. THE REST OF OUR FINDINGS ARE STILL BEING RESEARCHED.

BATTLETECHNOLOGY: CAN YOU COMMENT ON THE REPORTS OF A SORT OF SMALL 'MECH OR LARGE ROBOT THAT FIGHTS EVEN AFTER LIMBS ARE BLOWN OFF OF IT?

GENERAL MANSDOTTIR: IF WE HAD REPORTS OF SUCH A FIGHTING UNIT, THEY WOULD BE CLASSIFIED.

BATTLETECHNOLOGY: BUT ARE THERE SUCH REPORTS, SIR?

GENERAL MANSDOTTIR: AS I WARNED YOU, MISS BRANDT, MY TIME IS LIMITED. EXCUSE ME. (TURNS TO AN AIDE).

from the 'Wolf Clan'. St Ives released their second battalion with no difficulty.

Sudeten is a general rendezvous point for the Federated Commonwealth. The First Kathil Uhlans, the Deneb Guard, the Arcturian Guard, Lyran Guard, Royal Guard, and the Skye March Regiments have been formed into a new Army Group under the direct command of Marshal of the Armies Morgan Hasek-Davion. Crucis March troops are moving up from the Federated Suns portion to take their places.

Wartime security — not to say paranoid secrecy — is tight. However, as new troop movements are made known to us, BattleTechnology will keep you informed.

Baptism of Fire

Situation:

Periphery border

Oberon Confederation, Federated Commonwealth,
Free Republic of Rasalhague, Draconis Combine...

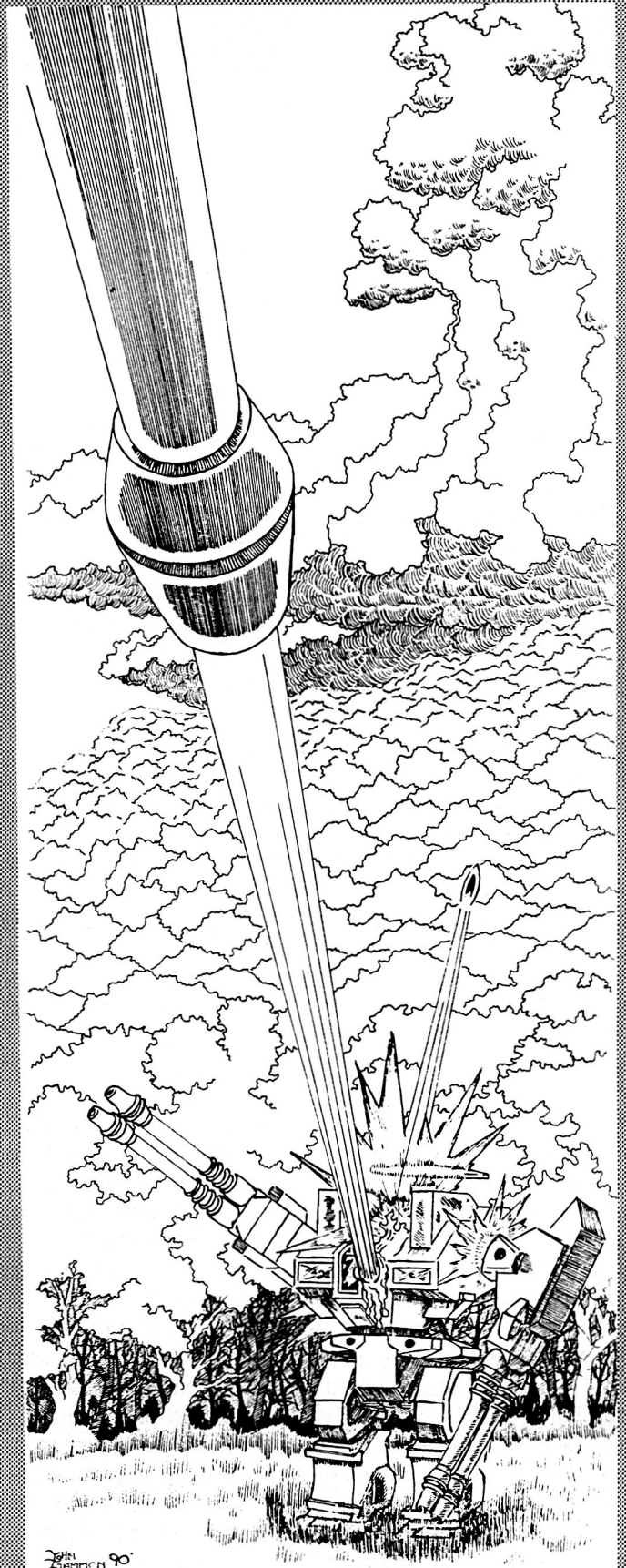
May, 3050:

The entire border is under attack! Reports are varied, wild and frenzied. They don't make much sense. Aliens. Unusual designs. Ruthless invaders. Evacuations. Mass hysteria. Help! Entire planets laid waste! Major Houses under attack from Beyond! This is a small sampling of the many stories and rumors coming out of the front.

There is little information to be had. What information there is, is not confirmed or validated. It's just all the information there is. This letter was released by the family of Ishmael Jones. It was received on a Tekcom Battle Recorder which somehow made its way back. Mechwarrior Jones was serving with the 42nd Light Regiment called the Crimson Knights, a mercenary unit formed a few years after the Fourth Succession War. Colonel Horatio "Crimson" Kelly had stationed one of his battalions on the agricultural planet of Winfield to beef up General Davis Winfield's forces in response to increased activity out in the Periphery. The rest of Col Kelly's command has yet to be heard from. The Colonel is said to have survived the attack on Winfield, but his whereabouts are not presently known. Attempts to contact him have been unsuccessful. BattleTechnology surmises that he is being debriefed in depth somewhere on Luthien in an attempt by the Draconis Combine General Staff to understand just what his unit did encounter on the planet.

Mechwarrior Jones' letter is mildly hysterical, but he eventually settles down to give a fair account of the events on Winfield. An interesting point which should be noted is that a Major Jake T Ryker, Senior Executive Officer in the Crimson Knights, was reported seen on Persistence after the attack there. He was reported missing on Oberon VI over five years ago, and is currently undergoing debriefing along with Col Kelly. We look forward to the release of any information by either of these two officers.

Here is the account of Mechwarrior Jones.



28 April 3050
1700 hours
near Felsonville, Winfield

Personal Diary
Jones, Ishmael

To: Annie Jones
[Classified]
Dear Sis,

I still can't believe that yesterday was my birthday! Why did they have to come on my fargin birthday!! I thought it was over, I mean the war and all. Peace. They were all talking about peace, and how things were going to be a lot different now. I mean we were out there in the trenches while all the brass was just watching it all happen from afar. Well, they were right! Things are going to be a lot different now! We still haven't figured who hit us! New stuff. No, I don't mean 'new' old Star League designs...I mean stuff we ain't never seen before! Weird designs, like insects riding on each other's backs! Crossbreeds, I guess. Like maybe the body of a Catapult with legs and arms that look like a Marauder. And other ones too, that I don't have time enough to describe to you right now.

Dad's Orion is gone. Took a solid gyro hit. I'm Disposessed, but I'm alive. I never thought I would be so happy just to be alive. We salvaged what we could: me, Parac, Baksay, and Anderson. Mazgay didn't make it. Collins didn't either. Mazgay's Rifleman looked like an old Roman candle, autocannon rounds going off one at a time. Collins bought it when Anderson's Battlemaster went down. Mine was the last to be left standing. Anderson's 'B-mer' went down to engine hits, and Baksay's 'Hammer' had its legs cut right out from under it. Right now Lt Parac's Griffin is all we've got left. It took some fancy footwork and a lot of jumping around just to escape. And we were only fighting two of them! I guess I am rambling a little, but there is so much to tell and no time to write it all down. I'm putting it all down on my recorder and sending it to you. I just hope you'll get it. They are bound to come to look for us at sunrise. If it hadn't been for General Winfield's guys showing up when they did, we would all be dead already.

We are in position on a small outcropping on the side of a hill, overlooking a shallow valley. It was a perfect spot to watch these 'Birds of Prey' turn from finishing us off to annihilate the General's command. (We call them 'Birds of Prey' because of the green emblem of a bird of prey we saw on all of their units. Looked like a falcon or a hawk or something.) All we could do was watch, Sis! The Griff was shutdown because of heat. Although it had taken damage to armor, there is nothing seriously wrong with it. Parac had kept up a withering rate of fire while running and jumping for his life. It couldn't take the abuse any more; finally it shut down. Fortunately for us, it was well hidden in the trees. It's my watch now. I'm on till 2200 hours.

2210 hrs.

Off duty now. It was reeeeeeal eerie watching those Bogies down there, Sis. We could vaguely overhear their voices filtering up thru the trees. The Lieutenant came over and let me join in on the latest scuttlebutt. We're going to move out at 0200. We're gonna try to get as far as Felsonville, where they will evacuate everyone who can make it there. There is a Union-Class DropShip and a number of freighters...should be enough for us all. I just can't help but wonder where we can evac TO? And if we do get off planet, what might be up there waiting for us? It's not easy hiding a JumpShip, you know!

2255 hrs

I just finished helping the Lieutenatnt make some adjustments on the Griff. Anyway, I've got some time now, so I guess I'll go back to the beginning and detail as much of the story as possible. I just hope you get this so it can be of use to somebody. As a Mechwarrior yourself, you understand that the more you know about the enemy, the better your chances.

Remember how I was looking forward to our assignment here to support Lt General Davis Winfield's Regiment of Reknown? To operate with a unit with a rep like theirs would give a quick boost to our unit's chances. Only one of our battalions is stationed here, but we add options and flexibility to the General. We were expecting garrison duty, fighting off pirates, that sort of thing. Then we started getting the reports from Toland, Steelton, Apollo, Persistence, all across the Periphery fronts. Requests for reinforcements, then requests for evacuation. So we set up standard lines of defense with fall back areas and rendezvous points. The only thing was, we didn't expect them to be so damned good!

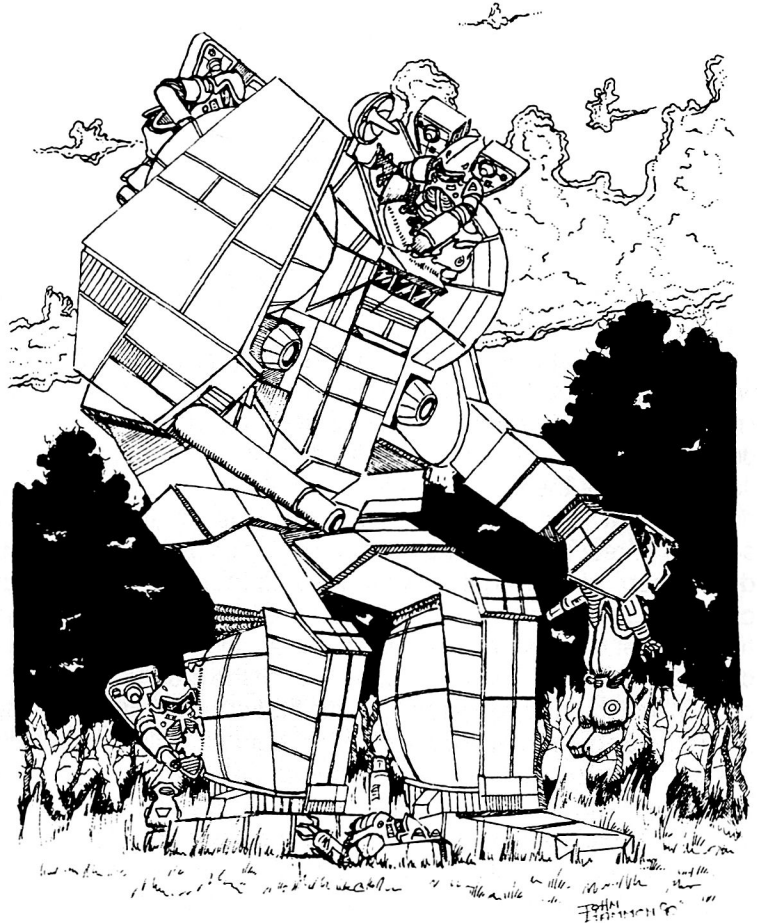
The General set up his Command company towards the rear, with a light company attached to maneuver around the enemy when they committed to an attack. He'd stationed a medium company around Felsonville with a heavy fire support lance inside the perimeter. He anchored each wing with a full strength battalion to ensure that he wouldn't be outflanked. We had all heard how hard and fast these guys move from the reports out of Persistence, so we were glad to see the General takeing extra precautions. We of course drew front and center duty. I admit I didn't feel too bad being flanked and supported by three elite Battalions. Nice-n-cosy, that is until "they" arrived at the party.

We were set up in a gentle valley. We were going to sucker them into the valley and draw them into a wicked crossfire. We wanted to show Winfield's guys how good we could really be. From the stories we had heard about the Invaders, we were not going to take any chances. Hit them before they hit us. Capt Ariel Van Horn had her Archer and

a lance of Crusaders set up high on the hill opposite us. Her two other lances were positioned lower for a smashing flank attack. Lieutenant Parac had our lance overlooking this side of the valley, and the other two further forward lying in wait for the enemy to pass. Capt Goss was down in the hole with his Awesome, a T-bolt, a Grasshopper, a Warhammer, and two other heavy lances, mostly Ostrocs, 'Hammers, Marauders, and some lighter Mechs. Wolverines, I think, and Centurions.

When they came, they were not more than two battalions strong. We couldn't believe it. This was going to be easy, Sis! They didn't even try to go around us. They cam straight at us. They seemed so arrogant, so confident! As though they were looking for a good fight and couldn't be beat. This was going to be a walk in the park! Four battalions against two. So we opened up on em at optimum range and commenced battle feeling like we had this one won hands down! After the dust had settled from the first volley and every single target was still advancing, we couldn't help but wonder just what it was we were up against. Before we could get off our second round of shots, they seemed to double their rate of speed and began a series of maneuvers more akin to Aerospace fighters than BattleMechs. They began to separate into groups of five and advance right for our units on the hills! It was like they knew exactly where we were positioned! So the order came through to open fire on each group that was approaching. That's when all hell broke loose. I don't know what they use for power, but their PPCs were slamming into our guys with devastating results. At long range! About 600 meters! It looked more streamlined, more concentrated! I watched two Centurians and an Ostroc literally exploded into molten slag from direct hits by three of the Bogies.

Then they hit our team. Two of em had come after us. Looked like maybe a 60 and a 70 tonner. One of them let loose a barrage of missiles which struck the center of Mazgay's Rifleman. At the same instant, he was struck by the brightest bolt of blue lightning I have ever seen from a large laser. The Rifleman exploded, and slowly disappeared as the AC rounds went off one by one. I had never seen that happen before. Just as I was getting over my shock, the Lieutenant gave orders to close, to score some hits before we were all dead. I lurched forward at the same time as Anderson and Baksay. I hit the Bogie to my left with my autocannon at the same time as Anderson hit him with his PPC. My autocannon didn't do much damage, but Anderson's PPC was a solid hit! However, it hardly affected the Bogie. He let fly with what I can only describe as an equivalent to one of the old ultra autocannons — only



this one was a big one! The B-mer took not one, but two shots square in the chest and staggered backwards as the Bogie fired off another large laser — from 500 meters! That shot nearly severed the Big Guy's arm. These devils were either great shots or *incredibly* lucky. That's when I saw the second one fire a volley of missiles at Baksay's Hammer and hit with all of them! It looked like lower center torso to me, but Baksay cut loose with both PPC's and struck the Bogie in the left arm, taking it off. I was glad that some of us were doing ok.

I had a good lock on target with my LRMs, but missed wide as they were coming on fast now. We got a transmission from the Lieutenant that he was on his way, which was a good thing because on the very next volley we lost two units. Anderson's B-mer went down from another large laser shot to the chest. It penetrated right through to the engine housing. I couldn't believe the Big Guy went down so quickly. We had these guys outnumbered two to one, but we were losing fast! A single PPC struck the B-mer's right arm

again but it didn't matter because Anderson punched out and landed behind us and to our left. I dumped the autocannons and two medium lasers into the Bogie striking him with all three shots. The autocannon slowed him down with a clean shot to the hip. Both lasers lanced the center torso but didn't penetrate. About that time, I saw Baksay's unit wink out on my screen for a moment and then reappear. I turned to see him on the ground with one leg missing. I signalled for his condition report and locked weapons on the b—— that shot him so I could exact revenge. Just as I was about to open up, Lt Parac jumped his Griffin in behind him and hit him square in the back with a PPC. So I redirected my shot to my original target and fired. It didn't go off, Sis! I hit reset and punched it again. I was trying to break left when I caught the damned laser square in my lower chest. I fired off two medium lasers and the SRM 4 and instinctively ducked, expecting him to hit me with the twin autocannons. Just then, I got the green light for mine. As I turned to the right I saw at least two of my SRMs strike his left arm. As soon as I fired, I felt not one but two large explosions way down deep. I knew right away that I was in trouble. The computer didn't even have time to warn me before the shots hit. He must have got his rounds off just as I got mine back on line. I never saw where my round hit. I hit the ground with a crash that trashed my gyros. If Parac hadn't been there to divert the Bogie's attention, he surely would have finished me off. Unfortunately, while Parac was helping me, the other Bogie was going after Baksay. He was only down, not out. The Bogie's shot veered, severing Baksay's other leg. Baksay caught him solidly with a PPC to the already-damaged torso and something exploded. It still didn't finish him off. It just knocked him back long enough for Parac to turn once again, and for the second time catch the Bogie square in the back with another PPC shot. It was almost beautiful, it was such a clean hit. The strange Mech's head was just gone! Cleanly severed right at the shoulders. The body stood there as if it were defying death.

I was trying to climb out of my cockpit. Sis, don't ever try this, it ain't easy. In the meanwhile, Parac was having to jump around a lot, redlining the Griff in order to avoid the fire from the remaining Bogie. With the hip damage the Bogie had already taken, and with no autocannon for his use, the Lieutenant was able to outmaneuver him, and put him on the defensive. That was when I noticed a large force approaching up the valley. It was one of Winfield's battalions! It didn't matter which one; we were just glad to have help! Just in time, too. The Bogie broke off and fled not knowing that Parac's Griff had shut down among the trees. I was trying to help Anderson get untangled and out of his mess when Baksay came up to assist. Collins, Anderson's gunner, broke his neck when he was ejected or when he hit the ground. We had lost track of the Lieutenant up in the

woods, but had a good clear view of the battle shaping up in the valley below. We really took a lickin'. Three of our units down to one of theirs. As we watched, we hoped General Winfield would fare better.

We watched in disbelief as the Invaders began a long range assault on Winfield's units. They fired some sort of "mass homing" barrage of missiles. Winfield's guys couldn't get spread out fast enough! They took a beating as they ran into a mine field - laid even as they ran toward it by the Bogie's LRMs! By the time our guys closed range, we could tell that they had already taken damage and suffered many losses. That was when the Birds opened up with their PPC's and with something that could only be a Star League Gauss Rifle. Their accuracy was devastating. The only Mechs that survived the pounding were the heavies. The smaller fast jobs managed to evade much of the incoming fire. Overall, the battlefield was beginning to look like a junk yard. By the time they finally met, the forces were even, at least numerically. Then we noticed these little guys, like troops in some kind of battle armor. They were — attached to the larger Mechs. When they dismounted, they would attack in groups of five on a single target. It looked like they were equipped with small lasers and a short range missile pack. We saw no fewer than a dozen of our guys get finished off by these 'ants'. Captain Goss has been a warrior for nearly fifty years now. He crushed one of them beneath his Awesome's feet, and popped another one's head off by smashing it with his battle fist. To see him go down trying to fight off a bunch of little ants was sickening. After they had him down on the ground, we watched two of em stand on his chest and fire shots directly into the cockpit. One of em reached into the cockpit and pulled out what was left of him. That was when I vomited.

2320 Hours:

These guys are ruthless, Sis. Really scary! Who are they? Where did they come from? I've heard the rumors about the incidents out in the Periphery. Like Oberion VI and the Bandit kingdoms. Colonel Kelly sent Major Ryker out there over five years ago, and he never returned. I don't know what's going on, Sis, but it's big. Real big! The whole Periphery Front is under attack!

Winfield's guys were battered, but they seemed to do better at closer range. Especially the heavier guys, the Atlases, Awesomes, T-bolts, Orions. Unlike our B-mer, theirs scored some kills. The only problem was, we were still losing more than they were. The order was given to fall back. That was what saved us. Van Horn had already executed the maneuver back to the next defence zone. Goss and most of his guys never made it past the initial attack. However, we knew our country, they didn't. They suffered at each of the fallback points because of the nasty

surprises we set up for them. We halted their advance, but they were almost within striking range of the city. Come morning, they'll surely overrun Felsenville. Then they'll send out cleanup parties to find guys like us. Our best guess is that Winfield is down to about two intact Companies, with another two of mix and match leftovers. The Invaders are forming up on a ridge overlooking town. From what we counted, they lost one for every two or three kills. That puts them at about Battalion level plus one or two Companies. From what we can tell, the best results were achieved by closing range, either by heavier 'Mechs which can withstand more damage, or lighter, faster units which are more difficult to hit.

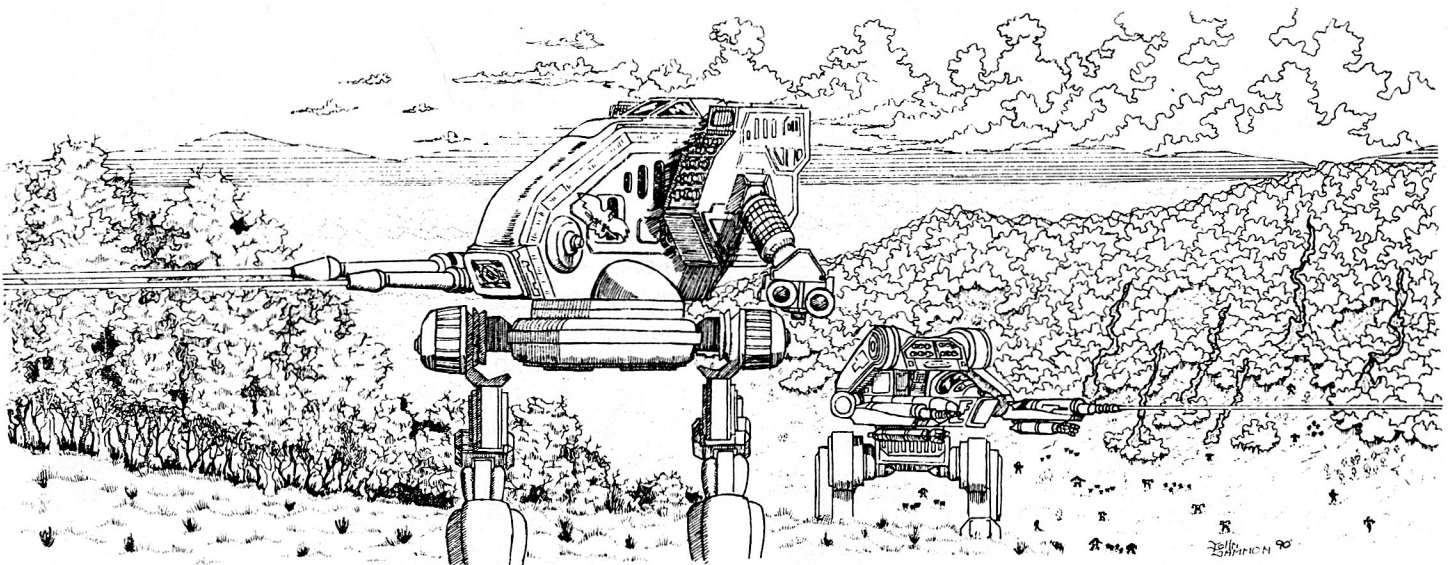
Sis, their weapons and designs were unlike any I had ever seen! They had better armor, better ranges for their weapons, and about double the rate of fire! We were totally outclassed! They must have come up with a better power plant in order to maintain their speed and an accelerated rate of fire. They must have also had some new kind of target acquisition and lock-on system too. They were hitting with everything! Auto's, PPC's, both long and short range missile systems. Their autocannons had a doubled rate of fire in all classes! They had something like an Anti-Mech shotgun! Their PPC's and lasers had a longer range and increased power. And that old League cannon is devastating. Where did they get that? Where did they get ammo? I don't know, maybe they copied some old designs? There are all sorts of rumors about Kerensky. But they aren't old League designs — they don't look anything like the pictures! They're new, alien! They operate in groups of five, not four. I don't know if it's important, but they all acted alike. Well trained!

2350 hrs:

Look, I gotta go now, Sis. We're getting ready to move out. The Lieutenant's got word that the Colonel is going to meet us on the opposite side of the city for pickup. Tell Mom I love her and that she ought to move inward with the relatives. It will be safer there. That goes for you too! If I hear about you joining up, I'm gonna break outa here and come bust your butt myself! Gotta go...Love...Big Bro.

POSTSCRIPT:

THERE WERE SURVIVORS ON WINFIELD. THE TOWNSPEOPLE HELPED THE FARMERS SET THE FIELDS AFIRE WHEN THE ATTACK CAME. THIS DELAYED THE ASSAULT LONG ENOUGH TO EVAC A NUMBER OF THE TOWNSFOLK AND SOME OF THE MILITARY UNITS OFFPLANET. JONES, BAKSAY, PARAC, AND ANDERSON ALL MADE IT, AS DID COLONEL KELLY, CAPTAIN VAN HORN AND SERGEANT SHUMER. THE 42ND LIGHT SWORD FIELDIED 36 'MECHS THAT DAY. ONLY A FEW SURVIVED. IT WAS INDEED A BAPTISM BY FIRE. FIRE TEMPERS STEEL. THE 42ND WILL FIGHT AGAIN. BUT WILL THERE BE ANYTHING LEFT TO FIGHT FOR?





There's a story about two cadets looking at a Leopard-class DropShip. "I wonder how much it would take to buy one of those," muses Cadet A. Cadet B, something of a smartass, caps with "If you have to ask, you can't afford it!"

That was the little joke to begin my lecture. If you were still yawning, like Clevitty over there, you'll have to ask someone to tell you the punchline later.

The topic in your previous class was the difference between ethical and moral behavior. Ethical behavior adheres to a set of guidelines; didn't I say, while moral behavior adheres to the mores, or accepted patterns, of a particular society or social group? It has often been postulated that

there may be a universal set of ethics. Mores can't be universal unless all societies are the same. Now that thought would terrify even me.

I heard you talking about the lecture on your way to my class. Honor. Is honor a universal ethical standard? That's about what I would have expected from an Academy class! Honor is universal, eh? And honor has no price to pay, therefore it is adhered to solely for ethical reasons? Do you agree with that, Novice Zhong? You do! Let me see what you make of this example:

Sitting around barracks, my lance did a lot of talking. It's cheap, you see. The other Warhammer pilot, Andy Chang, came from the sort of family where they teach you that honor is something you owe—to your family. Mack Kade-gawa felt that honor came out of the business end of his Battlemaster's PPC. That is, honor to him meant doing well in battle, taking out a lot of the enemy. I was certain of nothing, except that I didn't care for their definitions.

We didn't always sit around in barracks. Sometimes we had leave, and had money at the same time. In that case, no problem. Sometimes we had money and no leave. There are mailorder catalogs, places like Thornhill Arms and Arcon Industries. You sit around and stare at the bright pictures, and finally you get to believing that "only fifteen C-bills down, and 25 a month" is a good price for a gadget to replace your antenna without opening your canopy, or that if your teeth manage to blind with their whiteness, you possess irresistible charm. In that case, the money is soon gone. No problem. Then there's the case of having leave, but no money. That can be a problem.

The Ladies' Culture League of Milos gave theater tickets to any soldier who was willing to clean himself up on a Wednesday night and leave his sidearms in camp. Various of their unmated children served as volunteer ushers. I do not wish you to picture a VidStar Classics production; Henry the Fifth's right hand general had long blond braids and a lisp. Occasionally the curtain would fall down bump in the middle of the show. (We always cheered when this happened.) Chinese opera (every third Wednesday of the month) is hard to do well, though some of the travelling

HONOR HAS NO PRICE

singers were good. It did beat the bull sessions in barracks.

That particular week the play was Shakespeare's Henry IV, part 1. There's a famous speech in it about honor..I'll get to that in a minute. We were too broke to be drinking, we hadn't even that excuse. We were, well, giddy. We were laughing too much. Every mistake in the show brought out a storm of laughter. We laughed till we turned red in the face and choked. The play is about a man who wants to look good when he becomes a king, so he spends time with unworthy companions, so that when he gives them up, he'll shine by comparison. There's another man, Hotspur, who eats and breathes and lives for honor. His every action is judged as to whether or not it adds to his reknown. "From this nettle, Danger, we pluck the flower, Safety." That sort of thing. But the famous speech about honor is given by a fat old man with more sense than bravery, Sir John Falstaff. "What is honor? A word! Who has it? He who died last Wednesday!" Falstaff seems to claim that honor is just a word thought up by men to get other men to do what they want them to do.

As I said, we were in one of those mischievous moods. Sometimes things seem logical when you're in a mood like that that just don't seem to make any sense at all later.

We were quoting the play at the top of our field-trained lungs all the way through the lobby. And somehow, it seemed only natural — you see, the converted store had only one entrance, one exit, for the public. Well, we ambushed them. We decided to find out if anybody knew what honor was, or felt they knew, or ever had known. I can't defend it. I was there, and I did it. It was less dishonorable than sleeping on watch, that's my only consolation.

One of us would stop one of the audience, and the dialogue would go something like this:

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but you can't leave yet."

"I beg your pardon?"

"You can't leave until you tell us what honor is."

"Honor is not being rude to old ladies — now get out of my way!" (We did.)

"Honor? I guess, well you know, doing what your mom says and not letting guys get weird with you and stuff."

"I th..think honor is n.not possible in the Thirty First Century. You need to have standards to have honor."

"It's like in Rocky 40. Honor is getting beat up if that's the best you can do."

"Not cheating on tests."

(Red faced terminal giggles.)

By this time, Mack and I were picking out people in the lobby, calling back and forth *Here's a good one!* and *Let him go, he wouldn't know it if it bit him!* In retrospect, we were making a real nuisance of ourselves; people couldn't get out. Everybody was trying to leave the theater now; the lobby was packed with bodies.

That's why we didn't see the white uniforms. Com Guards, dress uniform, surrounding somebody tall. We were not so carried away by our own stupidity that we would have tried it on them. The first thing I knew somebody was holding Andy high off the ground. A mild voice asserted, "I think you'd better move *now*, my son." Andy's legs were scrabbling in the air, asserting his willingness to move now, anywhere, just let go! His voice seemed to have deserted him. I looked across the lobby. Mack was staring, frozen. No help there. My feet were walking across to the little knot of people. *So that's what the ComGuards look like! They look like football players from high-gravity planets! And nobody had asked them to check their weapons at the door!* I was attracting notice. My feet kept taking me toward them. The crowd cleared a way.

"Excuse me, sir." My voice came out in a strangled whisper. I cleared my throat. They looked at me. The tall man looked faintly amused.

"Huh, uh, would you mind letting my friend here stand? I'd really appreciate it. Sir."

Andy fell with a crash. He stayed down, but his eyes were darting wildly.

"Why are you impeding the Precentor Martial's passage?" I faced the narrowed eyes of the nearest bodyguard.

"Unintentionally. Really. Honestly. We, we were just playing, and I guess it got out of hand. We never would have tried it on you. Sir. Sirs."

"Bring him here, Adept." It was the tall man, the one they all deferred to. I could see the long scar down his face where he had lost an eye. I felt embarrassed and stupid. Right then and there I'd have traded the rest of a long life if I could have sunk through the floor. But no such luck. I tried to explain.

He responded more seriously than I deserved. "The Socratic method of teaching in one so young? You were trying to instruct them in honor? Just what lesson were you intending to teach by this means?"

"Lesson, sir? I don't know enough about it to be teaching a lesson. It's just that we talk a lot about honor, you know, MechWarriors. If you haven't got some, well some reason

for fighting, you're just a killer. And if you're like the soldiers that have no standards about what they do when they fight...we've got a woman in our unit who left the Draconis Combine because the ISF security officer ordered her to kill unarmed hostages. You have to have something to call honor. I guess we got carried away, maybe because none of us know."

"What honor is?" His gaze was far away. "In this age, you seek to live with honor?"

An hour seemed to go by. I tried not to breathe, not to recall his notice to me.

One of the ComGuard "linebackers" cleared his throat. The Precentor's gaze targeted on him.

"Sir," now I really felt like a fool! "I wasn't particularly being honorable. I didn't really feel I had a choice. We'd all been making fools of ourselves, you know. I didn't even know I was going to approach you till I did it." I felt it was important to be honest here.

"I know my schedule, Adept. Perhaps for your interest in my affairs, *you* can answer the soldier's question."

"I think I can, Precentor."

"Please. Enlighten us."

"For a working definition only, Precentor. Honor is not something you talk about; it's like the things we are taught early in training. A teacher can't describe it, he or she can only point to it until you see for yourself. Honor is not an idea about behavior; it *is* behavior. And it takes a lifetime to comprehend it."

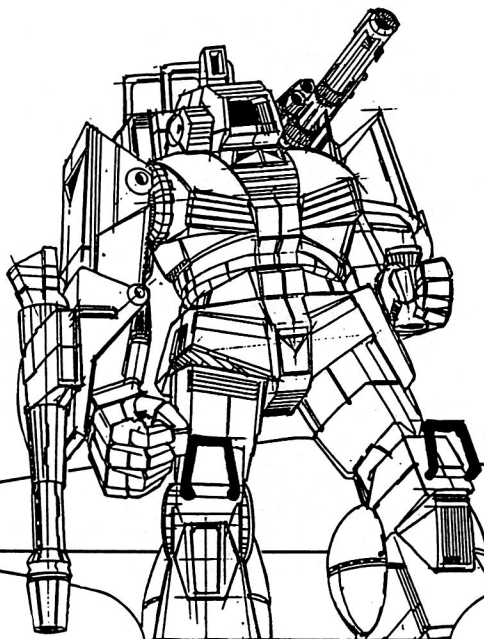
"Simplistic, but acceptable. Have you seen an example of it this evening?"

"Yes, in this sergeant here. He can't have wanted to come up and speak to us. But we had one of his men here, so honor said that he had to, in order to take care of that one there." He waved a hand at Andy, who blinked.

"You went forward, not back. That was the direction honor indicated." He paused. The room was silent as ice.

"Well...as most of the philosophers insist: you've come

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through a crisis with honor, your life is supposed to have changed? Do you think it has?" His tone was ironic.

I didn't feel much of anything. Under the interested gaze of five troopers — and this extraordinary man — I felt calm. Odd, wasn't it? I supposed idly that I wasn't going to die after all. The idea of going back to camp seemed faintly absurd.

My voice was calmer now. "Do you know, sir, I believe it has." Even to myself I sounded surprised.

A faint lift of his eyebrows was my salute. "Then what do you intend to do next?"

It was like falling through a trapdoor only to land on the opening tilt of another. "Next, sir?"

I thought. I couldn't put words to it, but I felt that I had closed a door in my life. And this man standing before me, with his massive patience, held the key to the next door.

"Where can I go to learn that?" I asked him impulsively. "To learn what to do next, and how to be...useful?"

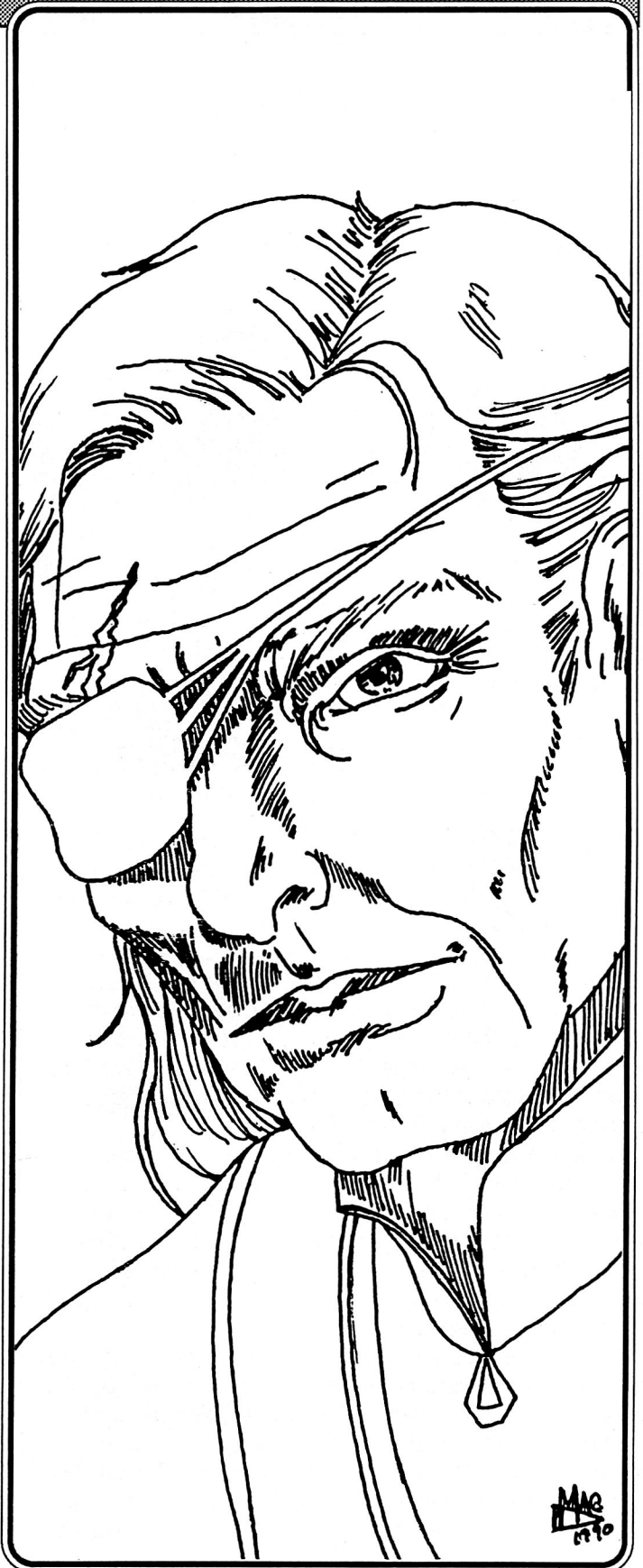
"That's always the hard question," he answered, his Lyran accent making the words slow. "I'm not certain that anyone can answer it, but it's still worth answering. At ComStar, we try to find those answers. Come to us when you're ready." He gave a little nod, almost friendly, then turned on his heel and left.

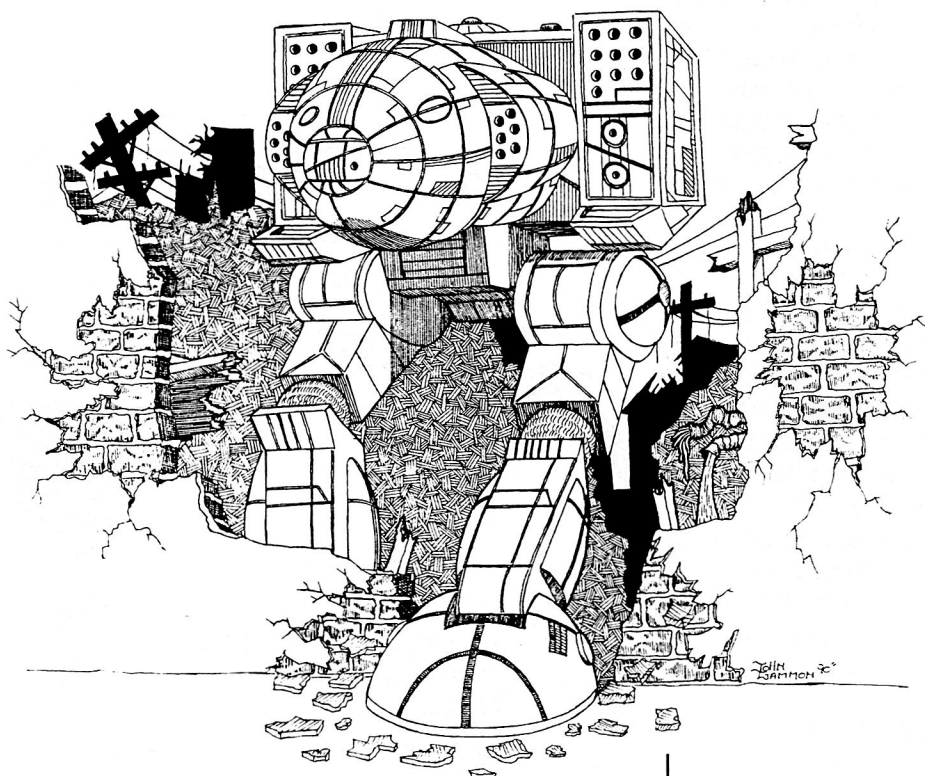
I took a deep breath. The room seemed very small.

Two months later I was in ComStar. Six years later, here I am at Sandhurst teaching you young gentlepersons how to write a coherent essay.

Very well, Acolytes. Did I pay a price in this instance? Wasn't the price of being thought honorable that I had to act honorably? Would The Precentor Martial even have spoken to me if the play hadn't challenged his own ethics, perhaps his memories? Turn in a ten page essay a week from Monday. For once, you may draw upon your personal experiences before ComStar training.

THIS PERSONAL-EXPERIENCE STORY BEGINS BATTLE TECHNOLOGY'S SERIES OF PROFILES ON CONTEMPORARY POLICY MAKERS OF THE THIRTY-FIRST CENTURY. THIS ANONYMOUS ARTICLE ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE SEPTEMBER 3049 ISSUE OF COM STAR'S FREE MONTHLY MAGAZINE, **COMSTAR TODAY**. COM STAR ASKS US TO REMIND YOU THAT THE MAGAZINE IS AVAILABLE ON THE SEVENTEENTH OF EACH MONTH AT ANY COMSTAR FACILITY, EDUCATION CENTER, OR READING ROOM.





To Haul Down the Jolly Roger

by James Rather

ON 9 JULY 3049, THE 8TH ARMORED CAVALRY, A MERCENARY REGIMENT EMPLOYED BY THE FEDERATED SUNS, CONDUCTED COMBAT DROPS ON THE PLANET TORTUGA PRIME. THE LANDINGS WERE PART OF 'OPERATION SWIFT JUSTICE', AN AFFC PROJECT AIMED AT REMOVING THE THREAT POSED BY THE VARIOS OUTLAW BANDS ALONG THE FEDERATED SUNS/PERIPHERY BORDER. FOR THIS PHASE, THE TARGET WAS THE TORTUGA DOMINIONS. THE DOMINIONS PIRATES, AT THAT TIME LED BY DAME PAULA TREVALINE, HAVE RAIDED WORLDS IN THE FEDERATED SUNS, THE TAURIAN CONCORDAT, AND THE OUTWORLDS ALLIANCE SINCE THE END OF THE REUNIFICATION WAR NEARLY TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY YEARS AGO.

ALTHOUGH THE OVERALL OPERATION WAS A STUNNING SUCCESS, VICTORY WAS NOT WITHOUT ITS PRICE. THE 8TH CAV SUFFERED HORRENDOUS CASUALTIES, NEARING THE 75% MARK. TWO OF THE MANY DEAD WERE COLONEL HENRY MORGAN AND LIEUTENANT COLONEL THATCHER SHIELDS, THE REGIMENT'S COMMANDING AND EXECUTIVE OFFICERS. A COMPLETE LIST OF CASUALTIES, AS OF THIS WRITING, HAS NOT BEEN RELEASED.

SOURCES CITE FAULTY INTELLIGENCE REPORTS AS THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF THE NEAR DISASTER. TOLD TO EXPECT A MAXIMUM OF TWO COMPANIES OF BATTLEMECHS, THE DAVION TROOPS WERE NOT PREPARED TO FACE THE 108-'MECH REGIMENT WAITING FOR THEM. NOR WAS THERE TIME TO CALL THE 1ST OUTLAND GUARDS FOR ASSISTANCE. THE BATTLE FOR TORTUGA WOULD HAVE PROBABLY BEEN LOST IF NOT FOR THE EFFORTS OF CAPTAIN ROBERT

HENDERSON, COMPANY COMMANDER OF THE 42ND 'MECH COMPANY. SEEING THAT THE MISSION WAS SERIOUSLY THREATENED, HE RALLIED THE SURVIVING BATTLEMECHS AND JUMP INFANTRY USING A CAPTURED CN9-A CENTURION, HE LED THE ASSAULT ON PAULA TREVALINE'S CASTLE FORTRESS.

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF INTERVIEWS TAKEN FROM SURVIVING MEMBERS OF THE 42ND 'MECH CO AS THEY WERE ENROUTE TO NEW AVALON FOR AN AUDIENCE WITH FIRST PRINCE HANSE DAVION. THE EXCERPTS HAVE BEEN PLACED IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER, SO THAT THE READER CAN MORE CLEARLY FOLLOW THE ACTION. IT MUST BE REMEMBERED WHEN READING THIS ACCOUNT, THAT THIS IS NOT A STORY OF HIGH ADVENTURE AND GLORIOUS BATTLES AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF THE COMMONWEALTH, BUT A TALE OF MEN AND WOMEN MUCH LIKE YOU AND ME. THEY HAD A DIRTY JOB TO DO THAT TOOK THEM FAR FROM THEIR HOME. THEY WERE IN TURNS TERRIFIED, ANGRY, AND AMUSED, BUT ABOVE ALL, THEY SHOWED MAGNIFICENT COURAGE AGAINST AN IMPLACABLE FOE AND A DEVOTION TO DUTY AND TO EACH OTHER THAT WE WOULD DO WELL TO EMULATE...

Capt Robert Henderson Company Commander, 42nd Mech Co

"Colonel Morgan made sure that we all were aware that this was a model operation, and that subsequent campaigns would be based on our actions. Well, it started off on a bad foot. We faced some pretty heavy fighter

opposition throughout the trip from the jump point to the drop zone, only breaking off as we made our final approach. At the time, I thought it was unusual, since a DropShip kicking out 'Mechs is a pretty easy target. Now I know they were just bird-dogging (conducting aerial surveillance and relaying location and targeting data — ED) us.

The drop was textbook perfect. The initial defensive formation couldn't have been better. I was really proud of my people. Anyway, we'd come down on the outskirts of Tortuga City, one of the very few settlements on the whole planet. The buildings were run down and dirty and there was garbage everywhere you looked. God, the garbage! There were areas so congested some of the smaller 'Mechs crawled over them instead of going around. From the DZ, we could see heavy smoke and fire, deep into the city. Presumably it was from the fighting since some of the other companies had hit dirt before we had.

When I checked in with regimental command, I was told that one of the armored companies had been ambushed by infantry. We hadn't been told to expect any organized infantry, so I assumed it was just a Molotov Cocktail party. Since we had excellent tank crews, I felt the situation would be under control shortly. I ordered the company to proceed with the mission..."

Private Peter Darr
Recon Lance MechWarrior, 42nd 'Mech Co

"I signed on with the Cav just before the war ended, so this was my first real combat drop. I'll tell ya man, that was one hairy ride!

Anyways, when we moved into the town, I was really nervous. I dunno, from what the other guys were tellin' me, I expected pirates with mortars or inferno launchers to be wait'n around every corner, so I was pretty jumpy, you know? About ten minutes in, we did take some small arms fire, but a rifle can't even chip 'Mech armor. 'Specially on my Panther. My brother gave it to me. He's in the 1st Ceti Hussars. Said he captured it from a Kurita officer on Donenac, and that the snakes always beef up the armor on their officer's 'Mechs. Is that true?

Cap'n Henderson said to ignore the small arms fire and move on. After awhile it must have started bothering people, 'cause I saw Alec, I mean Private Lutz, turn his Thunderbolt around and blow three or four buildings to bits with that big Sunbeam laser of his. They really came apart! Normally, even a large laser won't do *that* much damage to a building, so there must not have been much to 'em.

The Cap'n ordered him to cut it out and get his butt moving. Pretty soon, we had to split up into lances 'cause the streets weren't wide enough to let the whole company travel together.

When nothing else happened for awhile, I started switching

through the other regimental channels on my emergency radio, just to see how everybody else was doing. There were an awful lot of contact and ambush reports coming in. I thought it was kinda funny, so I called it in to the Captain."

Captain Robert Henderson
Company Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"...So Darr calls me and tells me that he's been listening to other company's freqs and that it sounded like there was something 'wierd going on'. He's brand new to the regiment and only about 20 or 21, but I gave him the benefit of the doubt and checked it out myself.

Our M12 briefing had said to expect only about twenty to twenty five 'Mechs and that they would probably be centered around the castle. Since the 8th Cav had 60 BattleMechs and 35 tanks, HQ really wasn't expecting much of a problem.

The contact reports I heard indicated that the enemy had considerably more than twenty five 'Mechs. I needed information, and I needed it now. If the reports were at all accurate, we could be in some serious trouble. So I ordered Master Sergeant Amond, who pilots a Phoenix Hawk LAM, to go airborne and get me some answers."

Master Sergeant Nolan Amond
Recon Lance Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

...After converting and taking off, I climbed to about 500 meters and began doing slow circles, downlinking telemetry to Captain Henderson and Lieutenant Byzik. At this point, the 42nd was still seven or eight clicks almost due east of the castle. The main body, built around the 8th and 25th 'Mech Companies, was bogged down about four clicks to the north. I could see the 61st or 103rd.

The main body had been ambushed and split apart by at least five enemy 'Mech companies, with two more moving into position. After reporting this, I conducted a strafing attack against one of the reinforcing units, damaging a Warhammer, and UrbanMech, and so help me, and ancient EMP-Emperor, still bearing Terran Hegemony markings. God knows where they got that one!

Returning to the main battle site, I observed at least seven Cav 'Mechs down, and about twice that number of pirate machines. I also noticed that Colonel Shields' big Orion had been virtually disemboweled.

Lieutenant Egon Byzik
Company Exec, 42nd 'Mech Co

"I tell you, I've known Bob Henderson for years, but when we saw the pictures the Master Sergeant was sending, it was a stranger on the radio that day.

"Warriors, we have friends in trouble. Let's go earn our pay", he said. His voice was so cold it was frightening. He

ordered Aimond to continue harassing the pirate 'Mechs and for us to form up on him in arrowhead formation. With that, his Shadow Hawk turned and trotted away."

Lieutenant Penny Beck

Fire Lance Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"The company had advanced maybe one kilometer when three pirate 'Mechs stepped into the intersection ahead of us. A Wolverine, a Panther, and a Griffin. They immediately opened fire.

I was on Robert, er, Captain Henderson's right flank, so I saw the 2K Shadow Hawk's PPC drop down over his shoulder and return fire. He fired pulse after pulse, but never slowed down. Egon and I were also shooting, but not with the same accuracy Captain Henderson was. He was scoring hits on all three pirates. I have to give them some credit. Not many people would have stood their ground with a full 'Mech company bearing down on them.

When they didn't move out of the way, we shoved our way through. Captain Henderson punched the Panther in the face, almost shearing off its head. I fired point blank into the Wolverine's chest with my Warhammer's starboard PPC, and Egon did the same to the Griffin. One, two, three, just as simple as that. We were lucky none of them exploded, because it would have caught the 'Mechs behind us."

Captain Robert Henderson

Company Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"Master Sergeant Aimond advised us to move around the area where he had pinpointed the reinforcing pirate 'Mechs. He said that he had vectored the 61st and 103rd 'Mech companies into the area.

I was continually trying to raise anyone in the main body, but was only getting static on the radio. That meant there was a jammer out there somewhere."

Master Sergeant Nolan Aimond

Recon Lance Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"As the company was moving around the secondary combat area, I flew back toward the ambush site. As I approached, the ECM (Electronic Counter Measures — ED) alarms began going off. There was a lot of broad band jamming going on. The problem with active jamming is that any EW-capable unit can use it to backtrack to the emitter. Sure enough, there was a standard Phoenix Hawk standing on top of a building watching the fighting. He had the more bulbous head that is a sure giveaway of a 'Mech with and ECM package onboard.

Lining him up, I made my run. Since an intentional head shot is so difficult, I aimed at the roof. It crumbled under his feet as I poured everything I had into it. When the dust cleared, it was very satisfying to see only his head and jumpjet heat exchangers sticking out from the hole. Converting from fighter to LAM mode made slagging him almost

too easy. Considering what was happening, in my opinion that 'Mechjock didn't suffer near enough..."

Corporal Leigh Moreau

Fire Lance MechWarrior, 42nd 'Mech Co

"When we finally joined up with the command battalion, it was almost too much. There were shattered and burning 'Mechs and armored vehicles everywhere. What was left of 8th Company was gathered around Colonel Morgan's fallen Marauder. When I saw it, I knew he was dead. The dorsal autocannon was gone, and from the way the side was blown out, the ammo magazine must have gone too. Smoke was just pouring out everywhere. I prayed that if he was still alive, that he would die very soon. Nobody deserves to go that way, especially not Colonel Morgan."

Capt Robert Henderson

Company Commander, 42nd Mech Co

"When the ambush hit, both the main body battalions were in what, at one time, must have been a large public park. When we got there, it was a MechWarrior's concept of Hell.

There were fire and smoke everywhere. The dark red light was pierced by brilliant red, blue, and green laser and PPC bolts. The air was filled with the crack of autocannons, and the booming roar of the shells exploding. The ground was littered with wrecked 'Mechs and vehicles.

Still-operational machines, stalking their prey, or being stalked, would crash and stomp through the smoke like demons from the abyss. Those are the kinds of surrealistic images I had of those first few minutes in the combat zone.

The problem with fighting pirates is that, by and large, they don't think in military terms. By that, I mean most civilians have a mental picture of 'Mech-to-'Mech combat as being a giant free for all. I'm sorry, but all fiction to the contrary, it just ain't so. If it were, our training wouldn't emphasize teamwork the way it does. You have to fight as a unit, whether it's a lance, a company, even battalions and regiments. That's what made the Star League regular army what it was. They trained as a team, fought as a team, and in some cases, they died as a team.

The mentality of someone like those bandits goes against everything a professional soldier has been taught to believe in. They prefer the every-man-for-himself style. So, in a way, that contributed to the heavy casualties we took that day."

Lieutenant Penny Beck

Fire Lance Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"The devastation was horrible. For me, after seeing so many friends dead, all thoughts of the 'mission' were gone. There was an overpowering need for revenge. Captain Henderson didn't need to say anything. He led and we

followed.

Our arrowhead formation opened up so individuals could use their full battery of weapons. The pirates made no effort to act together, and because we refused to be drawn out, we drove them back. They threw wave after wave of 'Mechs at us, and each time, we threw the attacks back, hurting them a little more each time. That's not to say that we didn't take our share of losses. I lost half my lance, but when someone fell out, someone from one of the other companies would jump in and take the spot.

I heard Captain Henderson on the regimental command net, now that the jamming was gone, calling for all combat-capable 8th Cav units to form on him. Pretty soon, there were several arrowheads in the fighting, even what was left of the 61st and 103rd 'Mech Companies! For the first time that morning, we were on the offensive!"

Staff Sergeant Lucy Toyama
Command Lance MechWarrior, 42nd 'Mech Co

"The noise was goddawful! Autocannons of all calibers, lasers, PPC's, missiles! Everything all at once! I gotta say, it was some of the best fighting I've ever done. In the first fifteen minutes, I musta ached five or six 'Mechs myself. Then all of a sudden, they was gone! Just took off. Cap'n Henderson right away sent out scout patrols and told the rest of us to take five. Almost everybody cracked their hatches for some new air.

Standing in Hellzapoppin's hatch, Hellzapoppin's my Ma-rauder, I checked out the rest of our 'Mechs. Lordy, lordy, lordy, you ain't never seen a more beat up bunch'a machines in all your life! Everybody had pock marks, impact craters, burns and melted armor. Some had lost limbs, or had armor breaches. I still don't know what was keepen' the Cap'n's Hawk together. His particle cannon and left arm was gone, shot away. There were a lotta big holes and rips in his armor, and I could hear a grinding squeal coming from one of his knee actuators as he come a hobblin' by.

Whilst he was making his rounds, Lt Beck was right there with him. Us poor ol' dumb 'Mech jocks wasn't supposed to know, but those two been tight ever since she come to the company. It kinda made us happy to know that he had somebody, what with his responsibilities and all. Even more, 'cause she was one of us."

Captain Robert Henderson
Company Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"My Shadow Hawk was ready to shut down at any moment. There were more malfunctions than working systems, but the old girl kept plugging along. The thought of giving her up was almost too much to bear. That 2K had been my first BattleMech, a relationship very much like

one's first love. To continue the missions with her would be suicide, but shutting her down meant leading from a tank. The clincher was the realization that my people still needed me, so shutting down was my only real option.

As fate would have it, two of my scouts brought in a pirate with a CN9-A Centurion. Seemed he didn't have much belly to fight us with his friends, so he hid. When the patrol found him, he surrendered, offering to trade his 'Mech for his life. Needless to say, we came to an understanding, he and I."

Captain Robert Henderson
Company Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"When we gathered all the survivors from the other companies, Captain Henderson separated the wounded and sent them back to the DZ with a BattleMech lance as escort.

FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT MORNING, WE WERE ON THE OFFENSIVE!

He also sent back all the tanks and regular infantry.

We started out with sixty 'Mechs, thirty five tanks, and a battalion of infantry. Now, as we set out for the final stage of the mission, we had twenty five 'Mechs and about a company of jump infantry. Captain Henderson had the jumpers follow half a klick behind to keep them out of trouble and to alert us if someone tried to jump us from behind. He ordered Master Sergeant Aimond to buzz the castle and shoot anything that moved."

Captain Robert Henderson
Company Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"Resuming the mission, our new strike force marched, in formation, up the main road leading to Paula Trevaline's castle. We shot up buildings, signs, vehicles, everything. I even saw Private Darr take a shot at a creature that must be the local equivalent of a dog. This fire was meant to draw out any ambush, because any 'Mech we killed out in the street was one less we would have to fight at the castle.

Our LAM could be seen diving at unseen targets around the castle, dancing his way between the streams of cannon shells we couldn't see and the laser fire we could. I prayed the smoke I could see was from burning 'Mechs. Considering the condition of some of our machines, a battle of any length could make CLG (combat loss grouping, the concept of several units going down at about the same time due to cumulative damage —ED) a problem."

Master Sergeant Nolan Almond
Recon Lance Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"I had been able to damage several enemy 'Mechs, but got no complete kills. By my count, there were about thirty 'Mechs in and around the castle's courtyard. None showed any substantial damage, other than what I gave them, so I had to assume the rest had withdrawn for repairs. All this information, and I couldn't report it, because the same hit that prevented me from converting out of fighter mode had also damaged my comm gear. To the north east I could see the explosions and devastation being caused by the approaching Cavalry strike group. After a couple of hours of sweating in that damnably small cockpit, the sight made me mighty proud of those people."

Sergeant Melaine Bishop
Recon Lance MechWarrior, 42nd 'Mech Co.

"The castle was a dark, medieval thing. Complete with gables and gargoyles on the battlements. It dwarfed the Battlemechs standing in its shadow. Our formation came to a halt when we entered the field surrounding the castle's outer wall. The enemy machines stopped too. High above us, I saw the Master Sergeant's LAM heading back towards the DZ, trailing heavy smoke. I remember hoping that he would make it." "The Skipper stepped out in front and he must have issued some kind of challenge, because this great big Enforcer walked out towards him. They began circling each other. The Enforcer fired several times, but never came close to the Skipper's Centurion. Without warning, the Centurion shoulder-rolled and gutshot the Enforcer twice at point blank range, knocking it down. Before it could get up, the Captain knife-edged his hand into the cockpit."

SStaff Sergeant Lucy Toyama
Command Lance MechWarrior, 42nd 'Mech Co.

"The Cap'n's slaying the Enforcer was our signal to engage, so's I picked me out a nice, juicy T-bolt and proceeded to ruin that poor boy's whole day. Almost winged Petey Darr's Panther in the process. He still don't believe I wasn't tryin' to kill him. Hell, I couldn't kill Petey, he's the cutest fella in the whole outfit!"

Corporal Hugh Moreau
Fire Lance MechWarrior, 42nd 'Mech Co

"I swear, we just lost 'em. During the fighting, everybody forgot all about the jump infantry. All we wanted to do was pound some pirate 'Mechs into scrap. Really! "

Capt Robert Henderson
Company Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"I did everything I could to try and lead the fighting away

from the main gate of the castle. I didn't see them go, but knowing Chris Bush, their CO, he probably was inside before we got there. Besides, I was too busy trying to get rid of three of the Enforcer's friends."

Editor's Note - During the fighting, troops from the 8th Cav's Bravo company infiltrated the castle. They captured records and files detailing the pirate's various raids and listings of the property stolen. They also managed to flush Dame Paula Trevaline, along with several of her top aides, from their primitive command post, leading to their eventual capture by the mech forces, waiting for them outside.

Lieutenant Penny Beck
Fire Lance Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co.

"Now that they were on the defensive, they fought with more determination than before. Maybe desperation is a better word. They weren't using the wave attacks anymore, and only now were they trying to coordinate their attacks, not that it did them any good. Maybe they realized they were fighting for their way as much as for their lives. I guess that to a degree, I felt a little sorry for them. No matter what choices they made now, death was the only future any of them had. Hell, we were the only judge and jury many of them would ever see. I know that kind of attitude won't win me any friends, but that's just the way I feel."

Capt Robert Henderson
Company Commander, 42nd 'Mech Co

"If possible, the fighting was even more vicious than at the ambush site in the park. With the end in sight, the enemy troops became desperate and desperate men commit desperate acts. We were down to about thirteen 'Mechs, they had about fifteen. We were slowly getting the upper hand, when Captain Bush called and said that Trevaline had been found, and was trying to escape to a Leopard class DropShip. Lieutenant Beck, Staff Sergeant Toyama and I disengaged and headed for the DropShip pad had said was behind the castle." "Sure enough, we found a Leopard there, warmed up and ready to go. The loading ramp was still down, so the passengers were not aboard yet. That was fine with me, I felt patient. A few minutes later, several people ran out of the castle, heading for the waiting DropShip, which had all of Hellzapoppin's weapons trained on the cockpit. Suddenly, Dame Paula Trevaline found herself staring up the smoking barrel of a class 10 autocannon. Thinking of all the friends and fellow warriors gone because of this woman, I can tell you that I was tempted to pull the trigger. Instead, I covered them until the infantry arrived to take them into custody." "The fighting that was still going on in front of the castle, stopped when I forced Trevaline to radio her people to surrender their weapons."

When the Battle for Tortuga Prime was over and the 1st Outland Guards RCT was installed as garrison/occupation force. Two days later, we boosted off planet. I, and I'm sure many others feel the same, couldn't help but think that after this one, we had left the best part of ourselves behind."

In military terms, the operation against the pirates of the Tortuga Dominions was a stunning success. Vast areas of interstellar space were made safer and are now more secure places to live. The threat of marauding corsairs dropping from beyond the stars to rape, pillage and plunder has been removed. In human terms, the 8th Armored Cavalry is still resting and rebuilding on Fallon II, designated in their new contract with the Federated Suns, as their home base. Captain Henderson has been promoted by the people he now commands, to full Colonel, in command of a brand new 8th Cav. First Prince Hanse Davion awarded him the Golden Sunburst for "answering the call to duty in the face of near impossible odds". He also carries the memory of Tortuga Prime, and all that was lost there. For Lt. Byzik, Lt. Beck, MSGT Amond, SSGT Toyama, SGT Bishop, CRP Moreau and PVT Darr, life is much the same as it has always been. There is much to be done if the Cav is to fight again.

There is a rumor amongst the Cav mechwarriors that Col Henderson and Lt Beck may wed soon. For them all, the mission continues. Their next part in 'Operation Swift Justice' was to be a similar raid against Redjack Ryan, with the help of the 10th Donegal Guards of the Lyran Commonwealth. Recent events have made that impossible. Yet with the high level of training the Cav has reached, it is certain that they will be used soon. The mission continues.....

ABOUT THE WRITER

JOURNALIST JAMES RATHER HAS BEEN A TWENTY YEAR VETERAN WAR CORRESPONDENT FOR THE FEDERATED NEWS SERVICE. HE HAS COVERED THE SUCCESSION WAR AND COUNTLESS 'PEACETIME' SKIRMISHES. IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT FRONT LINE TROOPS HATE TO SEE HIM ARRIVE, BECAUSE IT USUALLY MEANS SOME ACTION IS SOON TO FOLLOW.

IN ADDITION TO BATTLETECHNOLOGY, MR. RATHER HAS FREELANCED FOR SOLDIER OF THE INNER SPHERE AND MODERN MILITARY REVIEW NEWS MAGAZINES. HE HAS ALSO WRITTEN SEVERAL BOOKS ON THE MILITARY ORGANIZATIONS OF THE INNER SPHERE. CURRENTLY, HE IS WORKING AT HOME ON NEW AVALON, WITH HIS WIFE MARLENE, ALSO A PRIZE WINNING JOURNALIST, ON A NEW BOOK, THE NEW AFFC AND THE LIONS OF DAVION.

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THE MERCENARY IN MIDCENTURY

Part One

The following article does not necessarily represent the official editorial opinion of BattleTechnology Magazine.

Since the end of the Fourth Succession War twenty-two years ago, some interesting trends would seem to be noticeable in the mercenary trade. This article will study some of the more prominent ones.

Many of the larger and more reputable mercenary units (most notably the Eridani Light Horse, and Wolf's Dragoons) have sought to remain with a single employer for longer and longer terms. The Eridani Light Horse has remained with the Federated Suns/Commonwealth nearly fifty years now. Wolf's has stayed with the same employer since mid-3028, an unprecedented step.

This same tendency is observable in other Houses, for example House Liao continues to renew charter arrangements for Marshigama's Legionnaires, among several other long-time units. In many instances, these mercenaries are treated almost as House troops. Marik, which has added more mercs to its forces than any other of the Great Houses, has retained, again, many of its 'old guard' mercenaries.

The Free Rasalhague Republic has retained no long-term units, for both economic and social reasons. The Draconis Combine, at the end of the Fourth Succession War, either absorbed or drove off its mercenary forces. It no longer hires mercenaries, at least in its own name.

Smaller units tend to emulate the larger ones with varying degrees of success. For formations of battalion size and smaller, life and the hiring market haven't changed so greatly.

The employment picture grows grimmer for the newcomer or the group with a record of failure, disobedience, atrocities and mayhem. No names will be named here, but certain units are well-known for occasional barbarities. Some make a habit of it. Such units find employment more and more difficult and less and less profitable.

Some mercs are making a conscious effort to improve their public images, often using surprisingly sophisticated tactics. Many organisations employ full-time public affairs

personnel, while others make use of professional agencies.

Publicized incidents of wrongdoing are on the downswing. Whether this reflects actual improved behavior or better media control is yet to be determined. Some units, notably Little Richard's Panzer Brigade, actively suppress independent (non-Panzer or non-Capellan) reporting from on or near the battlefield. (The Panzers are still under suspicion for a number of thefts from the Lyran Commonwealth.)

This trend seems to have been instigated largely by House and ComStar actions during the last 20 years, in which minor offences such as light-finger discounts on parts and vehicles are less tolerated than before, when House officers seemed to expect that mercs would pick up loose items and make them disappear. Tighter control at nearly all levels is making this a far less profitable course. Even trusted units are caught up in this harsher atmosphere, to varying degrees.

Quite a number of merc units have affiliated themselves permanently with a House. This has often been done to units in the past (the 'Company Store' operation,) but of late many units are voluntarily signing on as regulars. In most cases they are negotiating conditions regarding leadership, deployment, and other factors. As a prime example, the Wild Geese Battalion, a medium-weight 'Mech force specializing in raiding, was turned over by its commander to Melissa Steiner Davion at her wedding. It is used as a training cadre for LCAF light raiding forces. The unit retains its severely plain uniforms and internal rank structure.

Many other forces have done the same, for varying reasons. Some to requite debt, as punishment for acts against an employer (usually as a sentence imposed by ComStar arbitration) or as in so regrettably many cases, when a unit is so battered and beaten as to be beyond self-repair. The 3039 War was rife with this sort of case. For example, the Kolchak Guards Tank Regiment (FC-employed) attached itself to the First Robinson Heavy Tanks as a four-lance company at war's end, where it remains to this day. Command in that company is hereditary in the Valdemare family of New Valencia Province of Robinson. Many other

mercenary formations have 'gone House' voluntarily within the last six years.

Interunit feuds and rivalries seem lately to be maintained for form's sake, with only two real hatreds remaining. Waco's Rangers continue to swear the 'Death Oath'. Last year, when a training unit of Wolf's Dragoons hired out for garrison duty on Andurien, House Marik almost lost it's long-term contract with the Rangers. It's said that small units of the Rangers took semi-official leave in spring of 3047 to make a non-official raid on the Dragoon's World of Outreach. Rumor further holds that the units were never heard from again. And the Fifth Syrtis Fusiliers continues to loathe things Capellan, especially MacCarron's Armor (The Big Macs). This feeling seems to be returned with interest.

Conversely, other feuding pairs and units appear to have gained a strong empathy, even a fellow-feeling, for one another. Usually this happens where the formations have shared a garrison together, or been alongside each other in combat. It can also happen between units who have never served together, though this is rare.

To sum up, today's mercenary leader has to be: 1) willing to sign up for longer hitches, if he goes on a retainer, 2) far more careful about his troop's actions on and off the field, and 3) more willing to consider the possibility of going regular, at least temporarily.

These trends reflect tighter market conditions, more careful House supervision, fewer potential employers within the Inner Sphere, and a perceived need for long-term security in the years to come. There are fewer and fewer options open, as Houses turn less of a blind eye to past mishaps and show far more willingness to eliminate a really bad outfit. (See BattleTechnology for November 3029 for the article on the destruction of the reconstituted Greenhaven Gestapo by combined forces of the Federated Commonwealth, ComStar, and the Capellan Confederation.) It therefore remains to be seen what the future holds for mercenary troops in the Inner Sphere. In this writer's opinion, there are storm clouds on the mercenary horizon.

CRAIG HARRIS IS A MECHWARRIOR ATTACHED TO KHORSAKOV'S COSSACKS, A MERCENARY BATTALION (SEE BATTLETECHNOLOGY #13) WHICH HAS RECENTLY COMPLETED A CONTRACT ON GALATEA AND IS LOOKING AROUND FOR OPTIONS. INTERESTED EMPLOYERS MAY CONTACT THE COSSACKS THROUGH BATTLETECHNOLOGY, DEPARTMENT HH-1003.

WATCH FOR PART TWO OF THIS SERIES IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF BATTLETECHNOLOGY.

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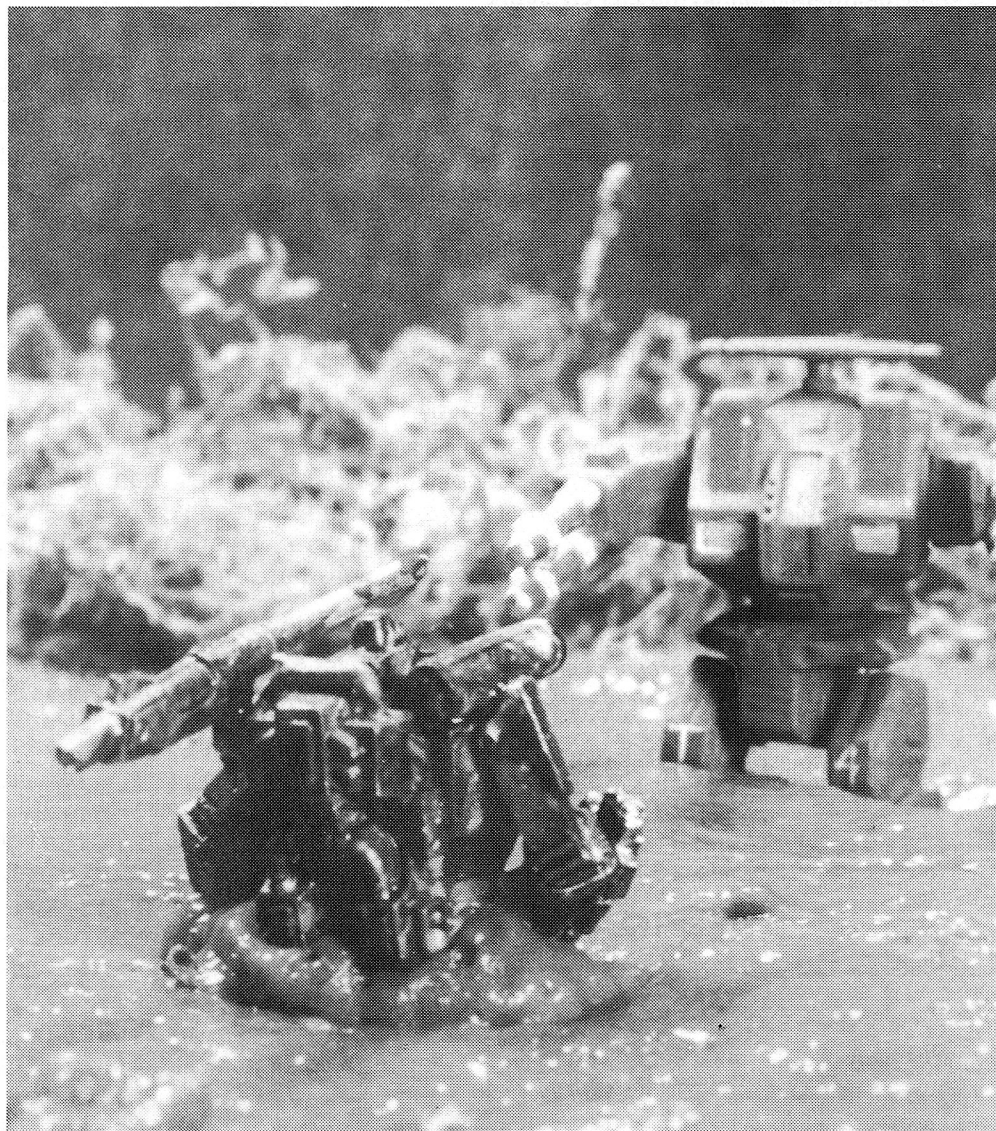
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WHEN THE LEVEE BREAKS

by James Rather

Gods, I hate the rain! I grew up on Jarett in the northern temperate belt, and we got heavy rains there, but nothing like the frog-stranglers we got on Telos IV. I'd been assigned to the Proserpina Hussars right out of the Sun Tsu Academy, and we got dumped into a garrison detail a few weeks later. We were stationed out of Deiston, a large trading center and spaceport in the heart of the southern farm belt. During the late spring and summer it wasn't too bad, but, as soon as autumn set in, it rained almost every day until spring came again. We learned from the Hussars who were being rotated out that if you stuck to the roads and the levees between the marshy fields, you'd be able to move freely. If anything other than hovercraft or light, jump-capable 'Mechs tried to cross the rice and phorail paddies,

you stood an even chance of bogging down and having to be towed out. Even considering our proximity to the Fed-Com border, things were pretty quiet. In fact, the biggest problem we had was keeping the mud out of the working parts of our 'Mechs. Sho-sa Nagano kept us out of trouble by running exercises and field problems, and pulling inspections. Between the maneuvers and getting our

'Mechs back in shape afterwards, we didn't have much time for shenanigans. Despite the weather, and the sort-of hectic schedule, Telos IV wasn't a bad assignment — until the early morning hours of November 12th. My lance had just stood down from Ready Watch for the day.

I was standing in the 'Mech hanger, talking with Bob Heyl, the battalion's master tech. Heyl was a tall, gangly man who never seemed to sleep. He always seemed to have a spanner in one hand and a full cup of hot coffee in the other. An unlit half-cigar and a perpetual scowl completed his standard kit. That morning, the dour master tech was in an even worse mood than usual. Sho-sa Nagano had ordered him to pull the main actuator packages out of his Warhammer's legs. A misstep during the week's

maneuvers dumped the 70-ton machine into an irrigation supply canal.

When Nagano-san managed to lever himself out of the muddy water, he found that the silt had gummed something up, reducing his speed to about 20 kph. The job had been long and difficult, complicated by the thick layer of sticky, black mud drying on the 'Hammer's armor. Heyl was liberally smeared with grease, spattered with 'mechdrek, and dusted with dirt chipped from the 'Mech's legs. He was in a thoroughly rotten mood. "Y'know, Taylor, if I had any sense, and a way off this mudball, I'd buy out my contract, move to Irece, and go back to fixing agromechs and skimmersleds,~ he growled, around the stump of his unlit cigar. "Sure, Bob," I chuckled. ~And three months later, you'd be right back in the army, swearing you're going to quit." Heyl was famous for threatening to desert after a particularly long or difficult job. The tech stared blackly at me, making me wonder if my good-natured jibe had gone too far. He opened his mouth to speak, but the public address system drowned out his words. "Attention, all personnel! All personnel report to ready stations. Satscan reports incoming DropShips. This is not a drill. All personnel to ready stations. " Heyl spoke three unprintable words and dropped his coffee cup, shattering the ceramic and splashing scalding liquid across the floor. Before the last fragment skittered to a stop, he was pounding across the bay, bellowing at the techs like a Midkiffian sea dragon. I was close on his heels, adding my own voice to the dozens already echoing through the hangar. The scene in the 'mech bay was one of total chaos. Pilots and technicians were scrambling up gantries to unlock and fire up 'Mechs. The deck officer stood in the center of the hanger, talking nonstop into his handset mike, trying to answer everyone's questions at once. Careless of any modesty, I stripped off my coveralls and pulled on my bulky cooling vest, then swung down into the cockpit of my Phoenix Hawk. Sho-sa Nagano's voice was already crackling from the speakers set into my neurohelmet as I pulled the heavy device into place. "Chu-i Ansano, take your armor in a wide circle to the west, in case they try to bypass the city. Chu-i Davis, take your company across the Molaye River and do a recon in force. If you run into heavy resistance, cut the Molaye River Bridge and fall back to map reference 31- ~ . We'll meet you there. Flight Officer Okara, be prepared to give us air support if necessary." "Sir," Okara's voice was tinny through the helmet commlink. "The meteorology office reports winds gusting up to 60 kph. It's going to be awfully rough on VTOLs."

"Dammit!" The Sho-sa's calm momentarily cracked. "All right, the gunships stay here, but be ready to fly if I need you. That's it. Move out." As I walked my 'mech out of the reinforced ferrocrete hanger, the heavily falling rain

drummed against the 'Hawk's armor like small arms fire. I could barely make out the shapes of First Company's 'Mechs ahead of me as they disappeared into the pre-dawn darkness. Moving as quickly as we dared through the rain-slicked streets, we hurried through the city, racing the enemy to the Molaye River Bridge. Other vehicles, mostly APC's and light armor~ belonging to the planetary militia)scurried here and there, preparing for the enemy's arrival. We'd barely reached Deiston's outskirts when Chu-i Davis's voice broke from the commlink. "Contact made. Recon lance reports 35 to 40 BattleMechs already across the Molaye River at map reference 37-A5. Molaye River Bridge has not been cut." "Unit designation and composition?~ Sho-sa Nagano's voice cut across the babble on the commlink like a laser torch. "Unit unknown, possibly mercenaries, but it isn't in the warbook. Composition's mostly heavies with a few mediums and lights," Davis replied. "Stand by, One . . . Omigod! That's a BattleMaster!" "Davis, get out of there! Do not engage. Withdraw and harry their leading units. We'll meet you at MR 34-C9." I broke out in a cold sweat at Davis's report. A BattleMaster.

Perhaps the most common of assault 'Mechs, that 85-ton monster massed 15 tons more than Sho-sa Nagano's Warhammer, and carried more firepower than my entire lance. "Silence on the line," the Sho-sa addressed the whole unit. "I know you all heard that. We won't be able to take them in a direct engagement, so we'll have to use what we've got to our advantage. If we can intercept the enemy at the edge of the paddies, perhaps we can lure them into the mud. "Second Company will deploy by lances in a line abreast, ahead of Third Company. Third will form a wedge, with command lance at the point. When we reach the Sobal plantation, form up in a shallow crescent, with overlapping fields of fire. "Chu-i Davis, when you rejoin the battalion, take your company into the woods north of the plantation at MR 35-F10. Wait for my command, then strike into their rear. "If we are unable to stop them there, we will fall back into Deiston and hold the city against them. Remember, you are all samurai, and the Dragon expects that you will do your duty." Sobal's plantation was one of the few large farms around Deiston which raised crops other than the variform rice and the tuberous food plant called phorail. A large portion of its fields were given over to soy and barley, providing relatively dry, solid footing for BattleMechs. According to Nagano-san's orders, we set up in what amounted to two 'mech fire-teams along the edge of a soyabean field, concealed in a line of trees which separated that field from the next. My lance was on the left wing of the crescent, with Fire Lance, Second and Combat Lance, Second arcing in and back to meet the left flank of Third Company, right where the Deiston road cut across the

fields. Once the shooting started, Combat, Second and Combat, Third would step out of cover and block the highway. I broke my mediums up into pairs, with my Phoenix Hawk anchoring the extreme left flank. Barely discernable through the wind-driven rain was Cathy Mohl's brown and green Shadow Hawk. Teamed with each of us was a Mech-Warrior recruit. Roy Crawford stood to my right, in a green and grey Wolverine, while Mohl was paired with a Dervish piloted by Jon Masura. As we stood there beneath the dripping trees, I felt cold and damp, as though the driving rain had soaked through my 'Hawk's armored skin. I shivered slightly, in spite of the stuffy, dry heat of the cockpit. Constantly, I scanned the readouts on my 'Mech Status Display, scanners, and transponder grid. My external pickups carried the steady rattle of the rain to my ears. As big and heavy as my Phoenix Hawk was, I could feel it moving

'Mechs. Davis turned his Valkyrie and triggered a flight of long range missiles. Even before his volley struck home, the Valkyrie was running for the relative safety of the trees. ~Steady . . . " the Sho-sa's voice sounded in my ears. "Steady. Pick your target." Bringing up my Harron heavy laser, I rested the big rifle-like weapon in the crook of a tree and locked the sights onto a dark splotch which my HJD claimed was a Dragon. Seconds ticked by, as the enemy 'Mechs closed on our position. Soon MAD or IR scans would give away our location. The range-finder clicked over to 270 meters. I studded in my 'Hawk's arm-mounted medium lasers, matching their tracking to that of the heavy. ~Steady . . . " droned Nagano-san's voice. ~Steady. That's it! Fire!" Immediately, every 'mech in our line opened fire. Three gleaming threads of intense light energy leapt from my PHX-I's weapons, causing the internal heat readiness to shoot up more than 10 degrees. Molten fragments of armor

were flung away from the Dragon's left torso and both arms as my lasers savaged the 'mech. Two Fed-Com 'Mechs had fallen before the combined fire power of our two full companies. Three more were damaged. Heavy return fire blasted into our concealed positions from the 'Mechs in the oncoming unit. A few of our machines were hit, but mostly the incoming rounds only succeeded in blowing trees into splinters. I snapped another trio of laser bolts at the Dragon. Both mediums missed the 60-ton monster, but the 3-megajoule blast from the heavy punched a deep crater in the DRG-IN's right leg. Raising its right arm, my target fired a long, rolling burst from its autocannon, followed by a blast from its left arm medium laser. The 60mm shells

Huge and frightening, the Dragon loomed out of the mist above my crouching Phoenix Hawk!

as the wind pushed against it and the gyro worked to keep it upright. Suddenly, the tension of anticipation was broken by the crack and thump of gunfire. Through the trees, across the field beyond, I could see a string of light and medium BattleMechs hotfooting it through the remains of last year's bean crop. Every couple of steps, one would stop and snap off a shot or two, presumably at their pursuers. Then the dull, dripping sky would ignite in artificial lightning as a dozen weapons were fired in reply.

Red circles began lighting up my transponder grid as the computer's Identify-Friend-and-Foe program translated scanner information to electronic images on the Heads-Up-Display. Laser and particle beams flared garishly into the misty semidarkness, while autocannon tracers and missile drives drew burning lines across the field. A blue-green stroke of energy knocked one of our recon 'Mechs off its feet, pitching the shattered Wasp face first into the mud. Another bolt of charged particles scorched past the withdrawing

chopped through the trunk of the tree in which I'd been resting my Harmon, scattering burning splinters for several meters. The laser carved armor from my 'Hawk's torso. The sudden loss of my firing rest caused me to stumble, my 'mech dropping to one knee. Before I could recover my balance, our line was breached. The leading elements of the enemy reached our position. A Wasp and two Stingers, leaping high into the air on their jump-jets, vaulted our line, landing behind our emplacements. A Thunderbolt from the Command lance spun its torso to level a Stinger with a barrage of laser and SRM fire. The fallen enemy's companies struck back, their weapons leaving black scorch marks on the T-bolt's ape-like form. ~ore laser fire burned from the heavy 'Mech's torso and arm, turning the Wasp's armor into hardened steel lace. A short, chopping backhand crushed the remaining Stinger's head. As more enemy 'Mechs closed with us, the firefight degenerated into a brawl. Through breaks in the fighting, I caught glimpses of

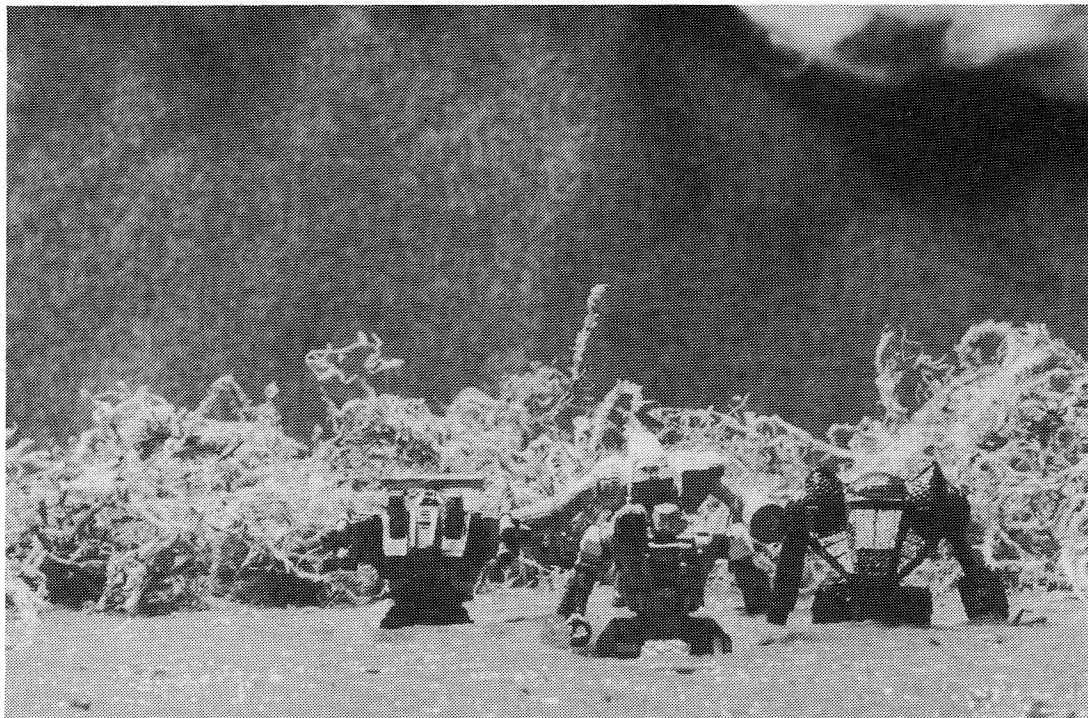
the savage battle. Tai-i Black's Marauder cut a Fed-Com Centurion in half with paired particle and laser bolts. A Hunchback in Combat, Second was blasted into smoldering junk by heavy LRM fire from an enemy Crusader. Huge and frightening, the Dragon loomed out of the mist above my crouching Phoenix Hawk, its left fist already swinging. In desperation, I tried to fire my jump jets, but the enemy's blow sent my 'mech sprawling before I could reach the controls. Near panic, I slammed my hand down on the fire control panel, triggering my entire arsenal. At point blank range, all three lasers and both machine guns blasted the Fed-Com ~mech. Scars and gouges appeared in the big machine's legs and torso. Staggered by the impact, the heavy 'mech overbalanced and fell over backwards. The slippery mud proved to be a nearly insurmountable obstacle as I struggled to regain my feet. The Dragon, too, was scrabbling for purchase, its awesome weight working against it in its attempts to rise. Even with that opponent out of the fight, we were still outnumbered and outweighed. At that moment, four huge black shapes appeared out of the rain. Dimly, through the stifling heat of my cockpit, I recognized the distinctive shapes of two Archers, an Orion, and the stocky, dome-headed form of a Battlemaster. As these four monsters waded into the fight, Sho-sa Nagano ordered a withdrawal. Lances, back off and scatter! Meet at the city, and we'll hold them there."

"Alpha Second, form up on me," I called over the commlink. "A-22, aye," Mohl replied. "A-24, roger." That was Masura. "A-23, respond," I ordered. "A-23? Crawford?" "I'm here, boss," Crawford answered. "I took a PPC hit that kind of scrambled my electronics. My tracking system is still on the blink." "Frack! All right, I'll take point. Mohl, rearguard. Crawford and Masura in the middle. Now, let's get the hell out of here." As we formed up to withdraw, the battle continued. Sho-sa Nagano and Tai-i Black, the only survivors of the Command lance, stood side-by-side, pouring particle and laser fire into the enemy ranks. A Firestarter from Combat, Third stayed behind as its mates withdrew, setting the rain-soaked trees ablaze with star-hot plasma, vented directly from its reactor. With luck, the smoke and flame would cover the retreat. Nagano-san's voice roared from the commlink. "Davis! NOW!" From the trees bordering the north edge of the soy field came a firestorm. First Company's surviving 'Mechs laid down a heavy barrage of laser, particle, and missile fire, aimed at the vulnerable rear quarter of the enemy formation. One of the newly arrived Archers stumbled and fell as a flight of missiles slammed into its back. The Orion turned ponderously, its heavy autocannon and shoulder-mounted missile rack spouting flame and high-explosive death. The surviving Archer seemed to catch fire, as 40 4-kilo missiles took wing.

Another volley from First Company threw the Fed-Com troops into more confusion, allowing our slower BattleMechs to escape, but the attack cost us dearly. Four out of nine 'Mechs which had survived the harrying race from the Molaye River had been reduced to burning wreckage, their shattered hulks lying half-buried in the rain-softened earth.

Leading my lance in a wide circle to the southwest, I led them out of the relatively dry bean and grain fields and into the leveed rice paddies more common to the area around Deiston. Masura's Dervish had taken a couple of severe hits in its left leg, losing its knee actuator. The crippled 'Mech's best speed was under 45 kph. Slow enough to make me worry about a pursuit force catching up with us. Several times, Masura tried to get us to go on without him. "I'm just holding you back, Sergeant," he said, fear plain in his voice. "Go on ahead. I'll stay here and hold them up a bit." Cathy Mohl finally got tired of his heroic urgings, and told him to shut up and march, or she'd grease him herself. When the FedCom mercenaries caught up with us, we'd all have the opportunity to die heroically. That opportunity came all too soon.

The weather grew progressively worse, until the rain was sheeting down so hard that my viewscreen was all but useless. Twice Masura's Dervish had fallen, due to the mud, and to the destroyed actuator. It took both Mohl's and my 'Mechs to pull him upright again. Just when it looked like we might have to leave Masura behind, the mercs caught up with us. We'd gotten to within a half klick of the South Road, which led directly into Deiston, when my Magnetic Anomaly Detector buzzed a warning. "Marj, we've got company!" Mohl yelled, but any further message was lost in the roar of incoming fire. Spinning around quickly, I nearly lost my footing on the rainslicked ferrocrete of the levee we were crossing. Four BattleMechs closed on us through the torrential rain. In the lead, still bearing the scars of our previous meeting, was the same battered, sag-bellied Dragon. Screaming like a banshee, Cathy Mohl dropped her main gun down across her Shadow Hawk's left shoulder and fired. Instead of the jackhammering roar of an autocannon, the long-nosed weapon spat out a ravaging thunderbolt of charged particles. The corporal piloted a DCMS/-2K version of the Shadow Hawk, which replaced the Armstrong autocannon with a Donal PPC. The particle gun surprised the Dragon pilot. As the cyan bolt seared the big 'Mech's torso, large pieces of armor spiralled away in burning chunks. The Dragon faltered and stopped in its tracks. Its three companions kept coming. Crawford's autocannon and my heavy laser joined Mohl's PPC in sowing destruction among the enemy. The lead 'Mech, a 50-ton Hunchback, fired a crashing four-round to shatter armor and cut myomers in my lance's already battered machines.



Crawford fired his jumpjets, landing with a mud-spattering splash in the ~horail paddy below the dam. Screaming "Come and get me!" the young 'Mechwarrior fired a long burst from his autocannon. The half-human sigh of the Whirlwind's firing was soon lost in the stuttering thunder of the Orion's larger gun. Fountains of mud and uprooted phorail runners showered the Wolverine as hastily aimed 100mm shells exploded in the paddy. Undaunted, Crawford fired again, adding his SRM 6-pack as well. More mud was flung into the air, but this time from armor fragments, as the Orion's guns blasted the Wolverine. Laser fire, autocannon shells, and missiles flashed between our embattled machines and those of our enemy. Grudgingly, we were forced to give ground, or be destroyed by the superior firepower of the Fed-Com mercs. Even when Cathy put a lucky PPC bolt into the Dragon's cockpit, sending the big 'mech to the bottom of the river, we got no respite. Another cluster of missiles battered my 'Hawk's flank, and blasted craters in the levee behind me. If something didn't happen soon, my lance would be wiped out. Masura's erratic fire blew a crater in the Rifleman's chest, but not before paired autocannon and laser hits neatly severed the Dervish's already crippled left leg. The green warrior ejected, but was cut down by shrapnel before he went a hundred meters.

Desperately, I wracked my brain for a way to save my unit. Suddenly, it came to me. "Everybody out!" I yelled into the commlink. "Mohl, Crawford, withdraw to the highway." "But, Sarge, that'll leave them a clear line of march" "Shut up, Cath, and do it!" Jump jets roared as the Wolverine and Shadow Hawk leapt back atop the levee. The ferrocrete

trembled as three pairs of steel feet pounded along the dike, racing to gain the highway before the 'mechs they carried were cut down. As soon as I reached the roadway, I spun about and fired, not at the pursuing 'mechs, but at the levee itself. Shards of ferrocrete scattered across the muddy field below. "Marj, what're you —" Cathy began; then, "Right!" Leveling her PPC, Cpl. Mohl sent a glittering charge into the levee. The impact of all that man-made

lightning caused deep cracks in the ferrocrete, permitting the waters of the swollen river to jet through. Realizing what was about to happen, the Fed-Com 'mechs turned and ran in a desperate attempt to reach safety. They were too late. Under the savage pounding of every gun in my depleted lance, the reinforced ferrocrete levee gave way, almost directly under the Hunchback's feet. The stout machine toppled sideways, disappearing into the raging torrent spouting from the broken dam. Hydraulic pressure from the unleashed river widened the gap in the levee, until the Orion also toppled into the sluicing current. The Rifleman barely reached the safety of an unbroken section of the levee. Once there, it turned and fired its guns in impotent rage, knowing full well that we were out of effective range of even those far-reaching weapons. When the rushing water subsided, all that remained of the Hunchback was a tangle of wrecked systems and twisted metal. The Orion lay where it fell, in meter-deep water, its cockpit stoved in by a chunk of ferrocrete. With no way left to reach our 'Mechs, the Rifleman fired a final, useless volley and retired from the field.

The fighting continued all that day and on into the night before the lines stabilized 25 kilometers east of Deiston. In the end, the mud and the rain stopped the Fed-Com advance. Unused to the slippery footing in the paddies, the Fed-Com troops bogged down trying to cross the fields. Our troops destroyed levees and bridges as they withdrew, slowing the enemy advance even further. At that point, the outcome of the battle (let alone the war) was still anyone's guess. But, I did know one thing for certain. I still hated the rain.

Rules Variants

BAD WEATHER AND TERRAIN

All commanders wish that any engagement they fight would occur under ideal weather and terrain conditions; neither too hot nor too cold, with clear skies and dry, solid ground underfoot. Unfortunately, most battles are fought in less than favorable conditions. Often, summer's heat adds to the strain already placed on overworked heat sinks, or winter's cold thickens lubricants and freezes joints. Rain, fog, and blowing snow or dust obscure vision, making it difficult to establish hard targeting locks on the enemy. Heavy precipitation turns battlefields into 'mech-trapping quagmires.

Aircraft are even more prone to the ill effects of bad weather than are ground units. Reduced visibility impairs the pilot's ability to maneuver his craft, often with fatal results. Some small, light aircraft, such as the Ferret light scout VTOL, are unable to fly at all in bad weather, particularly if strong winds are involved.

Infantry and tracked or wheeled vehicles

(BUT NOT 'MECHS) can easily bog down in muddy fields, drifted snow, or sand dunes. Only hover tanks are able to cross most kinds of terrain with impunity. However, even they are susceptible to being grounded if high winds disturb

TERRAIN MODIFIERS TO MOVEMENT AND SKILL ROLLS

Weather/Terrain Type

Cost Per Hex

	Ground	Air/Aerospace
Mud	+1 mp*	N/A
Ice	**see compendium	N/A
Fog / Rainfall/Snowfall	+1 mp/hex***	+1 mp/hex
Deep Snow****	+1 mp*	N/A

* Increase movement cost to enter hex by 1 Thus a muddy clear hex costs 2 MP to enter, a deep snow light woods hex costs 3 MP to enter)

**Even while walking, apply skidding rules, BattleTech Compendium

*** Infantry only. 'Mechs, because of visibility problems, while running, make piloting skill roll at -2 to avoid falling.

**** 1 level deep (5m) Other Effects are: treat as partial cover: +3 to hit, but all hits on the Punch Location Table

AIR / AEROSPACE SKILL ROLL MODIFIERS

Condition	Piloting Skill Modifications
Rain	+1
Heavy Rainfall/Snowfall	+2
Fog	+3
Rotor Hit (VTOL)	+1
Control Surface Damaged	+3
High Wind	+1
plus weight modifier	
Weight Modifier of:	
Jump Infantry(to take off)	+2
up to 25 tons	+3
25 to 55 tons	+2
55 to 75 tons	+1
75 to 100 + tons	0

their rather delicate air-cushion.

Following is a set of rule variants/additions for the BattleTech combat simulator system. These changes will allow combat instructors and civilian game referees to provide for the adverse effects of bad weather on the movement, combat, and maintenance of Battlemechs and other modifications to combat systems.

(see also **Hostile Environments**, P 57 in *The BattleTech Compendium*, published by the FASA Corporation.)

MOVEMENT

Bad terrain and inclement weather make movement difficult and dangerous for any unit exposed to such conditions. Apply the tables given here for movement costs and piloting skill roll modifiers when any units encounter the listed conditions.

Note that there is a special Optional Infantry Target Roll

TO-HIT MODIFIERS

Condition	Modifier
Fog/Blowing Sand or Dust/Smoke *	+2
Heavy Rainfall / Snowfall	+1 general targeting
Windy Conditions**	as below
No/Light Winds	0
Moderate Winds	-2 Missile Hit Table
	+ 2 to-hit w Streak SRM
High Winds	+1 to-hit Long Range fire
	- 4 Missile Hit Table
	+4 to-hit w Streak SRM
High Winds/Sandstorm	- 4 Missile Hit Table
	+4 to-hit w Streak SRM
	+2 to-hit Long Range Fire
	+1 to-hit Medium Range Fire
Cyclone	No Missile Fire Allowed
	+2 to-hit Long Range
	+1 to-hit Medium Range
	+1 to-hit Short Range

*as Compendium Smoke Rules: Beam Weapons Only

**applies to Autocannon, MG, and Missiles only

If another unit intends to tow the bogged vehicle out, it must enter the hex directly in front of or directly behind the bogged unit, and spend one full turn in that hex while tow cables are attached, etc.

If the towing vehicle enters a hex susceptible to bog-down, it too must make a piloting skill roll to avoid getting stuck while helping the other unit. It is possible for a bogged vehicle to be freed while the towing unit becomes entrapped.

When a vehicle is freed from a bog-down, it must roll 2d6. On any roll of 10-12, it has suffered damages to its tracks/suspension, which is rolled randomly in the usual manner.

Optional Infantry Movement Target Roll

Base Number:	
Green	5
Regular	4
Veteran	3
Elite	2

Bogdown Modification:	
Jump	-1
Mechanized	+1

See also air / aerospace rules

BOG DOWNS

When any Non-'Mech ground unit enters a mud, deep snow, or soft sand hex, that unit must make a piloting or driving skill roll to avoid becoming bogged down.

Bogged infantry and vehicles are considered to be trapped or immobilized in the first hex of bad terrain they entered on that turn. The 'Mech or vehicle retains the orientation it had when it entered the bog hex, but it may pivot on its torso, or rotate its turret (if any) in accordance with the rules governing such changes.

Freeing a bogged unit is often quite difficult, and sometimes attempts only make matters worse — the bogged vehicle digs itself in deeper, or a towing vehicle gets itself stuck. Frequently, one or both units are damaged in the attempt.

Trying to free a bogged-down vehicle necessitates a piloting skill roll. Success indicates that the bogged unit may leave the bog hex. If the next hex contains terrain favorable to bogging down, another piloting roll must be made to avoid getting stuck again. (This may seem excessive, but anyone who has attempted to drive a ground car through mud or deep snow will appreciate the difficulty of such an undertaking.)

Piloting Skill/Bog Down Roll Modifiers Table for Non-'Mech Vehicles and Infantry units

Condition	Modifier
Ground Vehicle/ Unit by Weight:	
Infantry	-2
up to 40 tons	0
45 to 60 tons	+2
65 to 80 tons	+3
over 80 tons	+4
Heavy Rainfall/Snowfall*	-1
Deep Snow/Soft Sand*	+1
Mud	+2
Fog	+1
High Winds	+1 (+3 if jumping)
Per wheel/track Hit	+1
Per Turn Spent in Bog	+1
Bogged Vehicle Using Jumpjets -2**	
Towing Vehicle Weighs More Than Bogged Vehicle	-2
Hovercraft	-3

* In Heavy Conditions, Affted unit sinks to solid ground & has traction; in deep/soft conditons, Affected unit tries for traction on intervening substance.

** See Roo Scout, p 45 for amplification

HEAT

The dissipation of waste heat is also affected by the weather. Rain or snow increases the efficiency of heat sinks, while hot, dry conditions impair their function. Use this table in to modify the heat scale as affected by the weather.

HEAT SCALE MODIFIERS

Condition	Modifier
Heavy Rainfall/Snowfall	- 1/turn
Deep Snow*	- 2/turn
Below -30° C**	-1 per 10° or fraction below

* Only if 'Mech in the snowbank, per heatsink in leg only, add to weather mods as per water rules.

**Prohibited to Unarmored Infantry

NOTE: Rain, snow, and fog make it more difficult to start fires. Add +2 penalty to all fire-starting rolls under wet conditions.

COMBAT

Poor weather conditions can have a severe effect on combat as well as on movement. Fog, rain, snow, and

blowing dust make targeting the enemy difficult. High Winds will interfere with the trajectory of ballistic weapons such as autocannon shells or missiles. To simulate these effects, apply the Combat "to hit" modifiers as appropriate.

Weather Table

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See Also *Valley of the Four Winds*, BattleTechnology # 12 for specialized wind conditions.

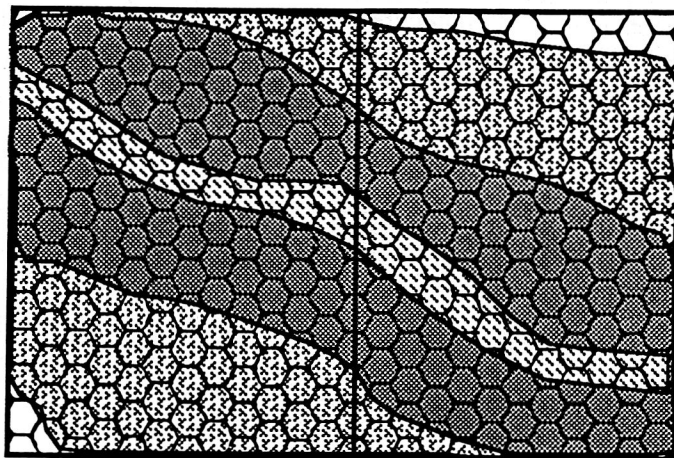
Die Roll	Result
2	Cyclone
3	High Winds/Sandstorm
4	High Winds
5	Moderate Winds
6	Moderate Winds
7	Light Winds / Clear
8	Moderate Winds
9	Moderate Winds
10	High Winds
11	High Winds / Sandstorm
12	Cyclone



 *Rough Terrain*

 *Mud*

 *River*



SITUATION: Elements of Benning's Heavy Armor engaged and broke the DCMS line at Sobal's Plantation. The Combine forces became scattered by the assault and the poor weather conditions. Periodically, the pursuers would catch up with their prey, and a firefight would ensue. This is a simulator program which recreates one of these engagements, using the Battletech combat system.

FORCES USED:

Defender: Elements of the 5th: Shadow Hawk-K (Replace the AC 5 and ammo with a PPC and 5 heat sinks) Wolverine, Rifleman, Panther

Attacker: Elements of Benning's Heavy Armor: Dervish, Griffon, Blackjack, Marauder, Commando

The defender sets up first, according to special rule 2. The attacker moves first.

VICTORY CONDITIONS: Destroy or drive off the enemy's 'Mechs.

MAP: Use a standard Battletech mapboard. All elevated ground is considered to be mud. On turn 12, the muddy areas increase by one hex in all directions.

SPECIAL RULES: 1. Bad weather rules are in effect. On turn 1, it is raining lightly. On turn 8, it begins to rain heavily, and continues to do so until the end of the game.

2. The defender sets up using hidden initial placement. Two of the defending 'Mechs may be concealed by the local terrain. Secretly record the starting locations and facings of these 'Mechs on scratch paper. The concealed 'Mechs remain hidden until they move, fire, or until an enemy 'Mech gets within 3 hexes of their position. At that time, a counter must be placed, and combat continues normally.

A Melee in the Mud

On November 12th, elements of the 22nd Avalon Hussars, supported by several mercenary units, made a combat drop into Telos IV. One of these mercenary units, Benning's Heavy Armor, was assigned to capture the trading center of Deiston. They dropped into a sparsely populated upland area north of the city and began a forced march to the Molaye River. Elements of the 5th Proserpina Hussars met Benning's Heavy Armor in an agricultural area between Deiston and the River. In a series of short engagements, the Combine forces were able to delay the Fed-Com advance by luring their heavy Battle-Mechs into the rice and phorail paddies, where they bogged down. The lines finally stabilized 3 km north of Deiston, when the invading forces halted their advance in favor of extricating their entrapped units from the mud.

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with us**

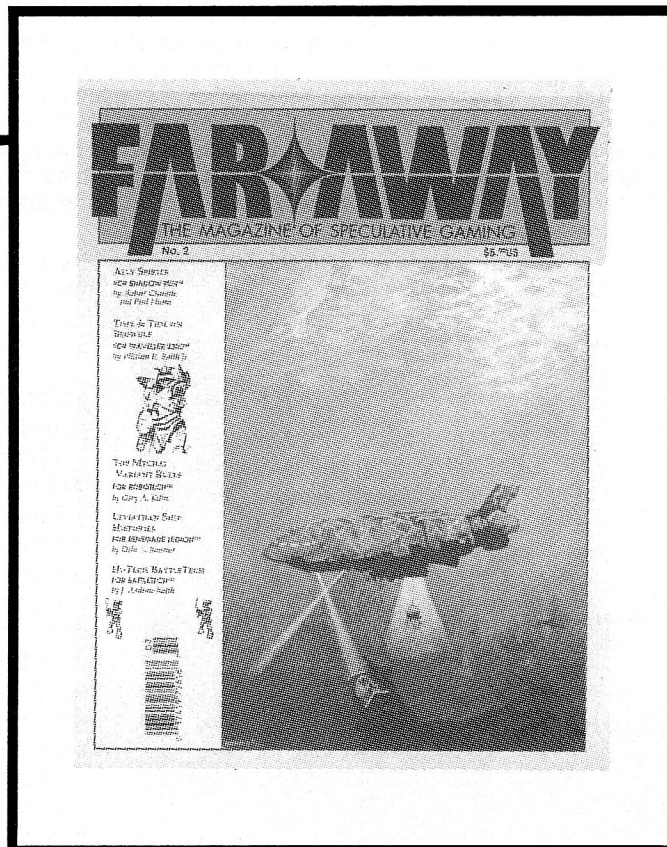
Far into

**...the realm of the
barely possible
...the future of
the human
& other races
...new worlds
of imagination**

&

Away from

**...Known Space
...Known limits
...Our humdrum
time & place...**



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A Lust for Lostech

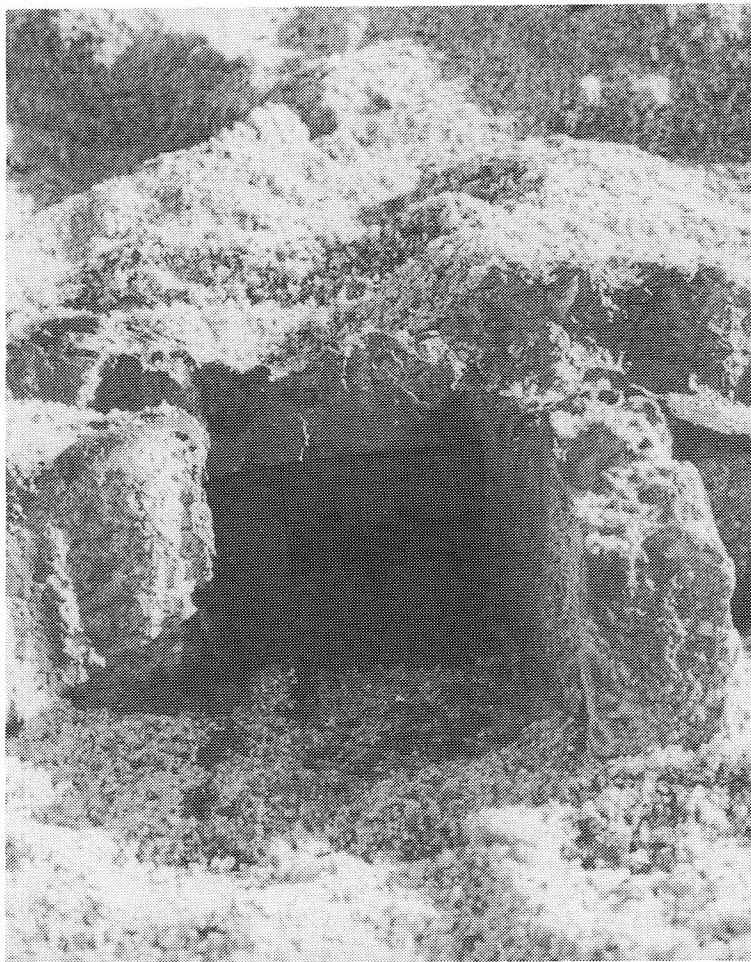
A Scenario for MechWarrior/BattleTech Part Two

Note To Gamemaster/Referee:

Part One of this scenario was published in BattleTechnology # 13. If you have been playing this as a MechWarrior Scenario, and have now come to this option because your players insist on dealing with ComStar in force, you can see that they will not succeed beyond a certain point. As part of a campaign, it is entirely possible for the Ellingsen Expedition to succeed in taking and even in holding the Castle Brian if they have accessed the memory core either by MechWarrior play or by ref-determined die rolls. They can then use the buzz bombs, allow their forces into the fortress and keep ComStar out, etc. (You may assume packaged iron rations in the Castle Brian, as well as repair facilities and such ammo reloads as seem appropriate to your campaign.)

What they can't do is leave. ComStar has an armed JumpShip, and much more deep space power than they do. Your JumpShips are already covered by ComStar weapons. The party will not be able to reach them, or go into Jump Space.

If you take this option, allow by die roll for the fact that ComStar did not know what the fortress held. The memory core duplicates what the Grey Death Legion has already found, plus specs for the buzz bombs, this issue, the Guardian and the Brian, from issue # 13. When ComStar knows this, they are much more likely to allow a copy of the core to be taken. If the defending forces give aggressive



Ellingsen Expedition

Leader, Pedro Ellingsen, Trader

Archaeology Team: Dr Shane Ullerson

6 Graduate Students

Historian/Linguistics: SubProfessor Mikial Dragnos

Senior Graduate Student Sara Cunningham

2 other graduate students

(Note: in the actual expedition, Prof Dragnos was prevented from coming; the leadership of this team was assumed by Sara Cunningham, who was commended by the University for doing well under appalling difficulties. Ms Cunningham is responsible for saving the memory core under fire.)

Technicians: Senior Tech Robert DeGraves

4 AsTechs

Security Forces:

Morgans Ghosts (Scout Platoon)

Commander: Lt Morgan Jaret

Total Personnel: 14

Davies' Rockers (Jump Infantry Company)

Commander: Capt Johan Davies

Total Personnel: 94

Corman's Dragons (BattleMech Company)

Commander: Capt Laren Corman

Total Personnel: 118 (excluding JumpShip Crew)

Overall Personnel: 243 people.

Monthly Costs:

Security Forces : 340,080 C-bills

Other Personnel: 21,000 C-bills

Overall Cost: 361,080 C-bills

Davies' Rockers

Commander: Johan Davies

Platoon A: Capt Johan Davies

- Squad 1: Sniper and Guncrew (7-man)
- Squad 2: Sniper and Guncrew (7-man)
- Squad 3: 5-man Veteran Support Squad, Packrat
- Squad 4: 5-man Green Support Squad, Packrat

Platoon B: Lt Merrill Crossen

- Squad 1: 2 SRM Launchers,
2 SMGs with Grenade Launchers, 2 SMGs
- Squad 2: 2 SRM Launchers, 3 SMGs,
2 Rifles with Grenade Launchers
- Squad 3: 2 SRM Launchers,
2 SMGs with Grenade Launchers, 1 SMG

Platoon C: Lt Suzanne Warshawski

- Squad 1: 2 Semi-portable Lasers, 4 Laser Rifles, 1 SMG
- Squad 2: 2 Semi-portable Lasers, 4 Laser Rifles, 1 SMG
- Squad 3: 2 Heavy Semi-portable Lasers, 4 Laser Rifles

Platoon D: Lt Ana Yamata y Medina

- Squad 1: 2 Semi-portable Lasers, 4 Laser Rifles, 1 SMG
- Squad 2: 2 Semi-portable Lasers, 4 Laser Rifles, 1 SMG
- Squad 3: 2 Heavy Semi-portable Lasers, 4 Laser Rifles

Total Personnel: 88

Salaries: 47,500 C-bills

Maintenance: 0 C-bills

Consumable Supplies: 7,000 C-bills

Overhead Costs (20%): 10,900 C-bills

Overall Costs (monthly): 65,400 C-bills

Davies' Rockers Equipment:

- 84 Personal Communicators
- 3 Long Range Personal Communicators
- 1 Basic Field Communicator Kit
- 63 Starlight Goggles
- 88 Basic Field Kits
- 88 Light Environment Suits
- 4 14-man tents
- 4 7-man tents
- 2 5-man tents
- 1 4-man tent
- 88 Personal med kits
- 22 personal equipment repair kits
- 88 Filter mask/respirators and extra filters
- 10 Rangefinder binoculars
- 88 daggers

Soldier Stats: Body 9, Dex 9, LRN 9, CHA 5

Brawling 3, Rifle 2, Gunnery/Artillery 1, Driver 2, Pistol 1, Leadership 1, Survival 3, Acrobatics 1, Running 2, Stealth 2, Hide in Cover 2, Bow/Blade 2

Morgan's Ghosts

Commander: Lt Morgan Jaret (Skimmer)

Squad A: (The Spirits)

- Veronica Hunter: Jet Pack/Boomerang
- Jack Jermain: Jet Pack/Boomerang

Squad B: (The Wraiths)

- Nicholas Miter: Packrat
- Lisa Koppara: Boomerang
(Pegasus Scout Hover Tank Pilot)
- Daniel Quartermain: Boomerang/Pegasus Gunner

Squad C: (The Banshees)

- Michael Demos: Striker Light Tank Pilot
- Sylvia Shaldane: Strike Light Tank Gunner
- Luke Hasturson: High Scout Drone Carrier

Squad D: (The Gremlins) Command Van

- Senior Technican: Jake Halloran
- AsTech: Kelly Saito (secondary Pegasus Pilot)
- AsTech: Victor Venning
- AsTech: David Wilson
(Secondary Pegasus Gunner)
- AsTech: Robert Meeks

Total Personnel: 14

Salaries: 12,500 C-bills

Maintenance: 0 C-bills

Consumable Supplies: 2,000 C-bills

Overhead Costs (20%): 2,900 C-bills

Overall Costs (monthly): 17,400 C-bills

Morgan's Ghosts, Equipment:

- 1 basic Field Communications Kit
- 13 Long Range Personal Communicators
- 14 Starlight Goggles
- 14 Basic Field Kits
- 14 Light Environment Suits
- 1 5-man tent
- 2 4-man tents
- 1 3-man tent
- 14 personal med kits
- 14 personal equipment repair kits
- 9 SMGs with Grenade Launchers and 6 extra clips
- 45 maxigrenades
- 5 Mydron autopistols, 2 extra clips each
- 9 needler pistols, 3 extra clips each
- 14 filter mask-respirators and replacement filters
- 14 range finder binoculars
- 14 daggers

Scout Stats: Body 9, LRN 10, DEX 9, CHA 5,

Either Diplomacy or Streetwise at level 1, Bow/Blade 2, Rogue 2, Survival 3, Brawling 2, Driver 3, Athletics 2, either Computers 3 or Pilot/Aerospace 3. Rogue and Athletics sub-skills may be distributed by Gamemaster or Player.

Corman's Dragons:

Commander

Capt Laren Corman *Battlemaster* Piloting 2 , Gunnery 2

Assault Lance:

Niko Fredricks	<i>Marauder</i>	Piloting 3 , Gunnery 2
Sarah Osseman	<i>Archer</i>	Piloting 4 , Gunnery 3
Laura Osseman	<i>Marauder</i>	Piloting 4 , Gunnery 3

Heavy Lance:

Lt Darren Wilks	<i>Grand Dragon</i>	Piloting 2 , Gunnery 2
Davin Halverson	<i>Shadow Hawk</i>	Piloting 1 , Gunnery 3
Zeke Connors	<i>Wolverine</i>	Piloting 3 , Gunnery 3
Robin Coronado	<i>Dervish</i>	Piloting 4 , Gunnery 4

Medium Lance:

Lt Geren Danners	<i>Dervish</i>	Piloting 3 , Gunnery 2
Michelle Lee	<i>Hatchetman</i>	Piloting 4 , Gunnery 4
Oshiro Kama	<i>Commando</i>	Piloting 4 , Gunnery 3
Jinjiro Kama	<i>FLE-4 Flea</i>	Piloting 3 , Gunnery 2

Air Lance:

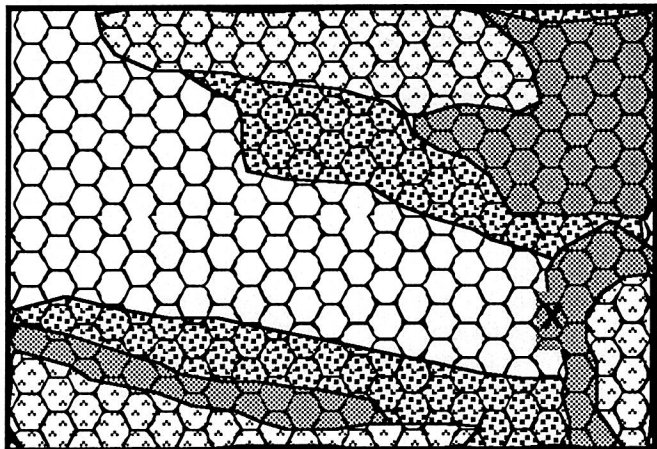
Thomas Razgaitis	<i>Sting Ray</i>	Piloting 3 , Gunnery 3
Kaye Cunningham	<i>Sting Ray</i>	Piloting 3 , Gunnery 3

Transport Group:

- 1 Union Class DropShip
- 1 Invader Class DropShip

Support Group:

- 16 Elite Support Squads
- 1 Veteran Support Squads
- 1 Regular Support Squad



Level 5 Cliff



Level 3 Cliff



Level 1 Slope

Canyon Map

Total Personnel: 118

Salaries: 197,400 C-bills

Maintenance: 0 C-bills

Consumable Supplies: 17,000 C-bills

Overhead Costs (20%): 142,880C-bills

Overall Costs (monthly): 257,280 C-bills

Aerospace Pilot Stats: Body 9, DEX 9, LRN 9, CHA 6

Pilot Aerospace 4, Gunner/Aerospace 3, JumpShip Pilot/Nav 1, Engineer 2, Computer 2, Mechanical Repair 1, Tactics 2, Leadership 2

MechWarrior Stats: Body 9, DEX 9, LRN 9, CHA 6

Pilot/Mech 3, Gunnery/Mech 2, Technician 2, Pistol 1, Leadership 1, Survival 2, Acrobatics 2, Running 1, Hide in Cover 2, Bow/Blade 1

Castle Brian Expedition Explorers:

In camp, classifying finds, etc

Pedro Ellingsen, Leader

Dr Shane Ullerson Archaeologist

SubProf Mikial Dragnos, Historian

Switching each day as Interior Team Leader:

Either Jarrod Haromond,

Archaeology Senior Grad Student

or Sara Cunningham,

Senior Linguistics Grad Student

and

Lucas Davidson, Technician

Veronica Hunter, Scout

(Or one of the two team leaders plus your player characters)

Team Equipment, Interior Team, Castle Brian

1 Tool Kit

1 Cutting Kit

1 Electronics Kit

4 Light Environment Suits and Filter Mask/respirators

1 Codebreaker

1 Level 4 Lockbreaker

1 Scanalyzer

1 I/R Scanner

4 Personal Communicators

4 Personal Medkits

4 Daggers

1 SMG, 4 Clips, 5 Grenades

Attacking Force

Advance Scout/Tech

Body 8, DEX 8, LRN 10, CHA 5, Technician 4, Computer 2, Rogue 3, Engineering 2, Mechanical 3, Rifle 3, Bow/Blade 2, Streetwise 2, Pilot 'Mech 2, Gunnery 'Mech 2, Athletics 5

Illyrian Company

Platoon A

Squad 1: Striker Light Tank
Squad 2: Pegasus Scout Hover Tank
Squad 3: Hunter Light Support Tank
Squad 4: Vedette Medium Tank

Platoon B, Maxim Hover Transport

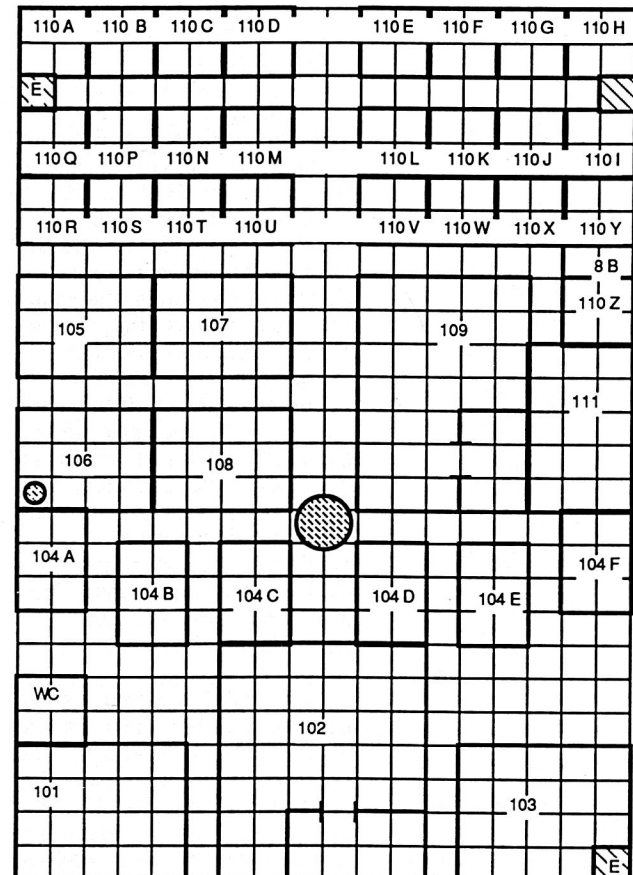
Squad 1: Lasers
Squad 2: Lasers
Squad 3: Lasers
Squad 4: Lasers

Platoon C:

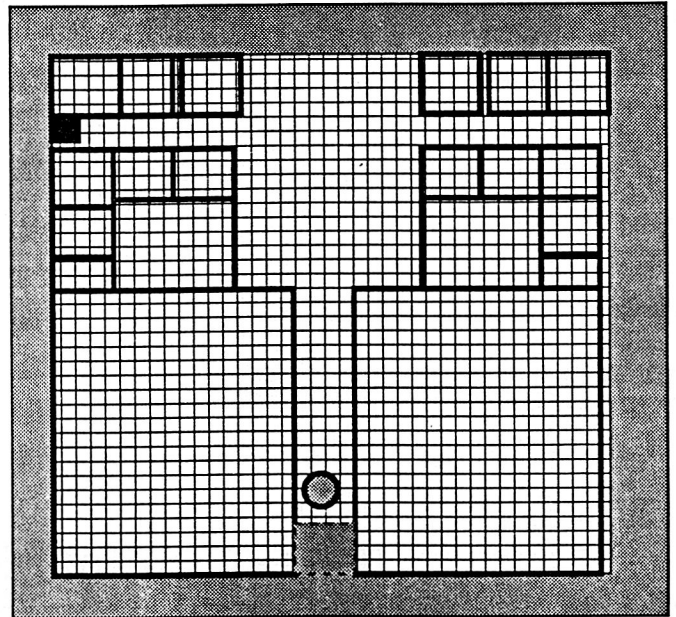
Squad 1: Laser, Ferret Light Scout VTOL
Squad 2: Laser, Ferret Light Scout VTOL
Squad 3: Laser, Ferret Light Scout VTOL
Squad 4: Laser, Ferret Light Scout VTOL

Assault Lance

Lt Bryce Mac Dowell, Veteran *Awesome* (s)



Level # 1, 2, or 3 (for room keys, see issue # 13)



Ground Level (for room keys, see issue # 13)

Comstar Explorer Corps Team

2 leaders Body 7, DEX 9, LRN 10, CHA 6
Communications Technology 4, Engineering 3m Mechanical 2, Pilot/Navigation 3, Survival 3, Computer 4, First Aid 2, Tech 4, Diplomacy 2
and 8 ROM Agents Body 10, DEX 8, LRN 8, CHA 6
Communications Technology 3, Engineering 1, Mechanical 1, Rogue 3, Survival 2, Bow/Blade 3, Athletics 2, Computers 2, Pistol 3, Driver 1

Wilson's Hussars

Command Lance

Capt David Wilson, Veteran *Marauder* Piloting 2, Gunnery 1
Keth Sukarno, Veteran

Phoenix Hawk (s) Piloting 1, Gunnery 3

Michael Durant, Regular *Griffin* (s) Piloting 3, Gunnery 4

Joan Macklin, Veteran *Blackjack* (s) Piloting 3, Gunnery 3

Andrew Blaine, Veteran *Warhammer* Piloting 2, Gunnery 4

Gerald Walker, Regular *Hunchback* Piloting 3, Gunnery 2

Charles Vincent, Regular *Rifleman* Piloting 3, Gunnery 4

Fire Lance

Lt Arthur Blankenship, Regular *Archer* Piloting 3, Gunnery 4

Susan Hayes, Regular *Enforcer* (s) Piloting 3, Gunnery 3

Anton Jones, Regular *Jenner* Piloting 3, Gunnery 4

Richard Garvey, Regular *Wasp* Piloting 2, Gunnery 4

Recon Lance

Lt Paula Stilson, Veteran *Ostroc* Piloting 2, Gunnery 3

Jan Leflar, Regular *Wasp* (s) Piloting 5, Gunnery 5

Dai Chin, Regular *Stinger* Piloting 3, Gunnery 4

Kim Yaro, Regular *Locust* (s) Piloting 3, Gunnery 3

ComStar Transport

Starlord Class JumpShip

- Reiver
- Reiver
- Chippewa
- Chippewa

Avenger Class DropShip

Union Class DropShip

Mammoth Class DropShip

- Corsair
- Corsair
- Shilone
- Shilone

Fortress Class DropShip

Vengeance Class DropShip

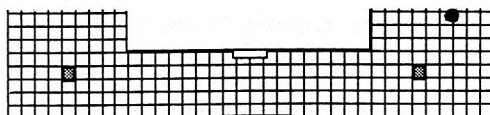
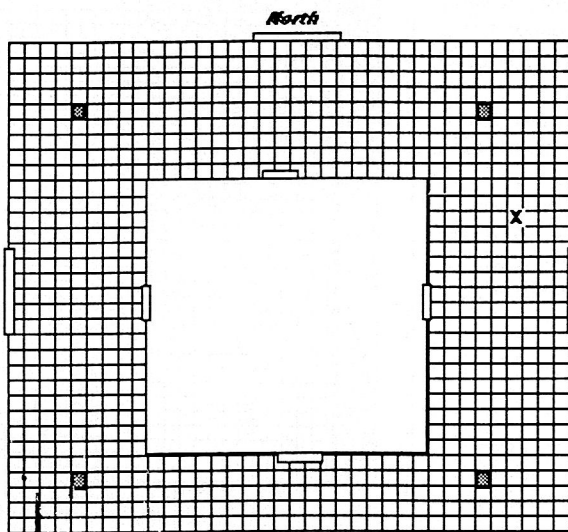
- Slayer
- Slayer
- Stuka
- Stuka
- Transgressor
- Transgressor

Vengeance Class DropShip

- Transit
- Transit
- Sting Ray
- Sting Ray
- Lucifer
- Lucifer

Level 5

Building in center is a 10-story apartment complex, heavy walls



Level Five

- = elevator
- = Entrance

- |||| = tunnel

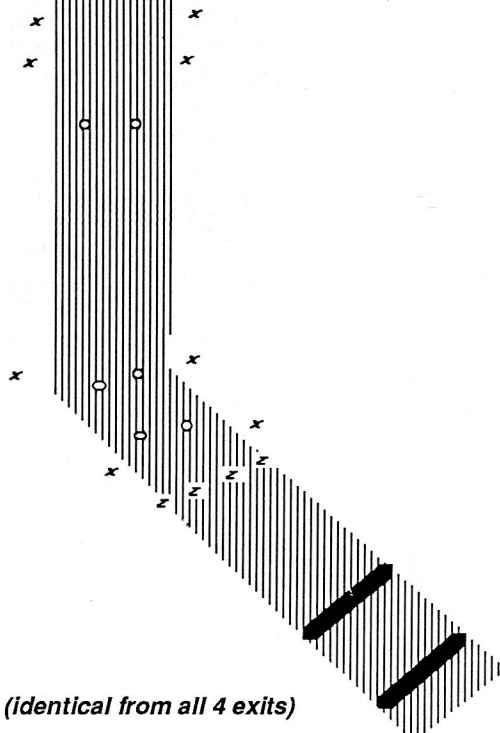
- x...x = gas tight door

- 0 = ceiling port

- zzz = buzz bomb ports

- = ferro fibrous hardened door

- 1 sq = 10 sq meters



Tunnel Defenses out of Level 5 (identical from all 4 exits)

tunnel continues distance as in text

Castle Brian Defenses

If the exploring party has gone through security systems in the commandant's office or quarters, security, head Tech's computers, or weapons control, or gotten into either of the computer centers on the sixth floor, (Or If ref otherwise determines) these defenses may be used.

Ground Floor Defenses:

There are 4 of each type of buzz bomb at the ground floor in the cliffside ports (z) pointing down the long box canyon up which much of the ComStar force must come if the players have shut the security doors in the tunnels.

Tunnel Defenses:

Treat Entrance and Gas Tight Doors Like Hardened Walls.

In each of the tunnel ports (see (z) on tunnel diagram) there are two buzz bombs of the referee's choice loaded.

Gas Tight Doors: When these are closed between pairs of x..x, no gas may leak through. For every round of exposure to gas, make a Hull Integrity Roll as per the Vacuum Section, page 59 of the BattleTech Compendium. "Mechs or vehicles will take damage for 4 rounds when gas is released unless they retreat behind closed doors. After that, the gas reacts with tunnel air and becomes inert. At the tunnel curve, if 'Mechs are trapped between both sets of closed doors, each gas load will do damage for 7 rounds due to concentration within the area.

Ceiling Ports: control the emission of Anti-Mech gas. Figure two loads from each port.

Buzz Bombs: See next page.

Note: Level 4 is where the Star League force began its intended destruction of the Fortress. It was a garage level for vehicles. The entrances are completely blocked by rubble, both to inside and outside forces. The Fortress computer shows its current condition as destroyed.

Time Line for ComStar

If the expedition has remained undetected until the time given, ComStar Forces will be in the locations given

(Before Start, Monster engine half finished, Internals repaired)

Day 1

ComStar Lands at 0600

ComStar Camps 310 km from Castle

Monster armor repaired

Day 2

0600 ComStar resumes trek

1800: Monster sensors fixed, engine work completed, ComStar 220 km from Castle

Day 3

0600: ComStar resumes trek

1800: Monster heat sinks & life support finished ComStar 160 km from Castle

Day 4

0600: ComStar resumes trek

1800: Monster legs connected, gyro tests completed, ComStar 100 km from Castle

Day 5

0600 ComStar resumes trek

1400-2400: Monster 3 weapons connected, SRM loaded ComStar 40 km from Castle Expedition JumpShips detected

Day 6

1000: LRM loaded, ComStar ROM team arrives at outpost

1000-1200: Monster partially tested, at 12:00 ROM team makes contact with the Scout at his camp. Expedition JumpShips taken, kept in com silence

1200-2400: ROM Team searches, may run into expedition

Day 7

0600-1400: ROM TEAM searches outside, finds camp at 1400

"Buzz Bombs"

1 Ton VTOL	A	B	C	D	Tonnage
Tonnage:					1
Engine Rating	10	15	20	25	
Cruise:	6	6	7	7	
Flank:	9	10	10	11	

1 Ton Hovercraft A	B	C	D	Tonnage
Tonnage:				1
Engine Rating	10	15	20	25
Cruise:	5	5	6	6
Flank:	7	8	9	10

2 Ton VTOL	E	F	G	H	Tonnage
Tonnage:					2
Engine Rating	30	35	40	45	
Cruise:	4	4	4	5	
Flank:	6	6	7	7	

2 Ton Hovercraft	E	F	G	H	Tonnage
Tonnage:					2
Engine Rating	30	35	40	45	
Cruise:	3	4	4	5	
Flank:	5	6	6	7	

Buzz Bombs: The small Star League variant weapons shown here are meant to be launched in a situation where they can build up to a high speed to impact with great force upon a 'Mech. The VTOLs and hovercraft are remotely guided by the battle computers of the Fortress Brian. They were not activated when the explorers arrived.

For all buzz bombs:

To launch a buzz bomb: Use the computer's piloting roll. (To generate this, roll 1 D6. On a 1-2, computer's skill is 6; on a 3-4, skill is 7; on a 5-6, skill is 8.)

To hit with a buzz bomb, use the ramming rules. If buzz bomb misses, it is destroyed. Damage is 1 pt per ton of weapon per 2 hexes travelled (total travel not travel per turn) before impact. Use of an ECM pod breaks the connection between the buzz bomb and the controlling computer. At the point where the buzz bomb enters the effective range of an ECM device, it receives no further commands. It will continue forward at its current speed and heading until it leaves the ECM field or hits something.

Any Hit stops the weapon; it falls to the ground in the hex of impact.

Any 1 Critical Hit destroys the weapon.

VTOLS	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Cruise:	648 kph	702 kph	756 kph	810 kph	432 kph	453.6 kph	486 kph	518.4 kph
Flank:	972 kph	1058.4 kph	1134 kph	1220.4 kph	648 kph	691.2 kph	734.4 kph	777.6 kph

The Spider Meets the Ax

*Black Widows vs
Eridani Light Horse*

by Major Z. Hans Schmidt
Staff Simulations Officer, NAIS

Introduction: This scenario is an NAIS tactical combat training simulation for MechWarriors and/or AeroSpace Fighter pilots. Its general purpose is to improve a warrior's skill in tactical combat situations, such as those that may be encountered after graduation and upon entering service with an active combat unit. Some of these combat simulations are historical reenactments (and will be described as such), but many others describe purely hypothetical confrontations. Some may even involve lances or companies from famous House or mercenary units. Most, however, will be strict simulations containing typical formations that might be found anywhere in the Successor States or even in the Periphery.

This particular scenario is intended for two or more players. (Seven players would be the ideal number, each controlling one Lance.) For optimum training benefits, this scenario should be played twice, with players exchanging sides.

Background: In 3023, elements of the Eridani Light Horse (a renowned mercenary force under contract to House Davion) were ordered to defend the world Hoff against a Kurita attack. Wolf s Dragoons (an equally famous mercenary force under contract to House Kurita) landed and inflicted heavy losses against the Light Horse, but were eventually driven off by Davion reinforcements. It is not known whether the two opposing companies described in this scenario ever met face to face on Hoff, but it is entirely possible that such a confrontation might have taken place if it, in fact, did not. In this hypothetical, but entirely feasible, simulation, Kerensky's Independent Company (the "Black Widows") of Wolf s Dragoons are engaged in combat against the 4th Company ("Pinter s Axmen"), 5th Striker Battalion, 21st Striker Regiment, of the Eridani Light Horse. Note the relatively heavier Mechs of the Dragoons are offset by the presence of an Air Lance with the Light Horse.

Game Set-Up: This scenario uses Expert BattleTech and AeroTech rules and any two BattleTech or CityTech maps of the players choice (attacking players select the upper map, defending players select the lower). Maps should be placed end to end, so that the xx01 hexrow of the upper (north) map is at the opposite end of the xx17 hexrow of the lower (south) map. Any terrain features shown on the maps should be treated as in effect, except for Pavement hexes which should be treated as Elevation 0 Clear terrain. All combat units are considered to be in perfect working order. The Defender sets up first and moves second.

Defender: 4th Company ("Pinter 's Axmen"), 5th Striker Battalion, 21st Striker Regiment, Eridani Light Horse
Command Lance:

Cpt Gregory Pinter 's Dervish (Piloting 3, Gunnery 3)
mW Heo Fronst's Phoenix Hawk (Piloting 2, Gunnery 4)
mW Troy Epting's Enforcer (Piloting 4, Gunnery 5)
mW C. J. Blackling's Valkyrie (Piloting 4, Gunnery 5)

Strike Lance:

Lt Kennet Hendershott's Hunchback (Piloting 3, Gunnery 3)
mW Max Luzzi's Dervish (Piloting 5, Gunnery 6)
mW Gene Moran's Wasp (Piloting 4, Gunnery 4)
mW Roger Abundis Shadow Hawk (Piloting 2, Gunnery 4)

Recon Lance:

Lt Annie Colter's Phoenix Hawk (Piloting 0, Gunnery 0)
mW Robert Firkus' Stinger (Piloting 2, Gunnery 5)
mW Victory Embler's Stinger (Piloting 5, Gunnery 5)
mW Franklin Brechler's Locust (Piloting 5, Gunnery 5)

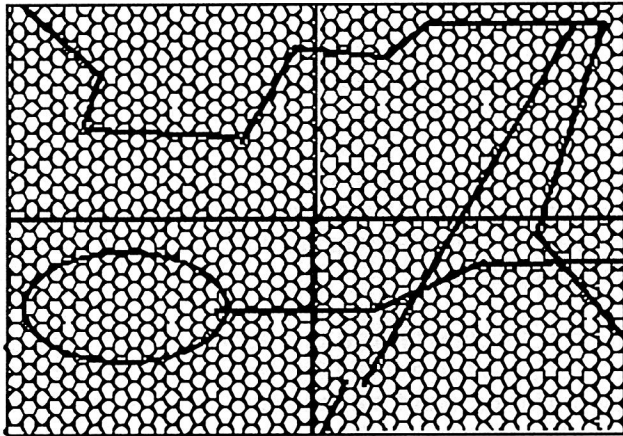
Air Lance

Lt Donna Councilor's Sparrowhawk (Piloting 5, Gunnery 5)
Gary Chreyson's Sparrowhawk (Piloting 3, Gunnery 4)

Deployment:

The Defender may deploy his BattleMechs anywhere in the bottom twelve hexrows (xx06 through xx17, inclusive) of the south map. All Mechs of a particular Lance must be within six hexes of

Theoretical Situation



Original Student Simulator Printout, Scale is BattleTech

each other, and all Mechs must be deployed at the start. Units of the Air Lance will enter the game on a later turn, as described in Special Rules.

Attacker: Kerensky's Independent Company (the "Black Widows"), Wolf's Draoons
Command Lance:

Cpt Natasha Kerensky's Warhammer (Piloting 4, Gunnery 3)
mW Colin Maclaren's Marauder (Piloting 4, Gunnery 3)
mW Lynn Sheridan's Crusader (Piloting 5, Gunnery 4)
mW John Hayes' Griffin (Piloting 4, Gunnery 3)

Fire Lance: Lt Takiro Ikeda's Archer (Piloting 4, Gunnery 3)
mW Miklos Delius' Archer (Piloting 4, Gunnery 4)
mW Nikolai Koniev's Wasp (Piloting 4, Gunnery 3)
mW Alex Ward's Stinger (Piloting 5, Gunnery 4)

Recon Lance: Lt John Clavell's Rifleman (Piloting 4, Gunnery 3)
mW Piet Nichols' Phoenix Hawk (Piloting 5, Gunnery 4)
mW Simon Fraser's Stinger (Piloting 4, Gunnery 3)
mW Mohammad Jahan's Stinger (Piloting 5, Gunnery 3)

Deployment: The Attacker may deploy some or all of his units in the top hexrow (xx01) of the north map with 0 MP required to enter the map (i.e., all Mechs may expend their full movement allowance during the first turn after entering the map). It is not required that every Attacker Mech be deployed during the first turn, but every Mech of a particular Lance must enter during the same turn, and all Mechs must enter from along this hexrow whenever they enter the game.

Special Rules: Either or both Sparrowhawks of the Light Horse Air Lance may enter the game equipped with bombs, if the Defender wishes. However, doing so will delay their entry into the scenario, depending upon each fighter's loaded thrust rating after taking its

bombload into account. During the movement phase of the appropriate turn, one or both aircraft may enter either map and conduct combat normally, as per AeroTech rules. The fighters are not required to enter together, nor during the first turn they are eligible to do so. Likewise, once entering, they are free to exit and even re-enter the map, as often as desired. (They may not be re-armed with additional bombs).

Thrust Rating	Fighter May Enter:
10.0 (no bombs)	Turn 2
6.8 through 9.8	Turn 4
5.0 through 6.6	Turn 5
4.0 through 4.8	Turn 6
3.4 through 3.8	Turn 7
3.0 through 3.2	Turn 8
2.6 through 2.8	Turn 9
1.0 through 2.4	Turn 10

Withdrawal: Once they have entered, BattleMechs of either side may withdraw off their respective edge of the map at any time. If they do so, however, they may not re-enter during the scenario. BattleMechs may not withdraw in any other manner. (This rule does not apply to the AeroSpace Fighters.)

Victory Conditions: This scenario has no time limitations and is to the death (or until one side is routed). The last side to have a functional BattleMech (i.e., capable of movement) on the map wins. Note that AeroSpace Fighters do not count toward this victory condition.

BattleTechnology's apologies to Major Schmidt for the error in transmission last issue that caused two of his training scenarios to be scrambled together. Here is the correct text of "The Spider Meets the Ax".

February 29, 3050

Battle For Alamut

Background: In February of 3050, a group of unknown BattleMechs struck at the stronghold of the lord known simply as The Old Man of the Mountain. He and his followers are a private and autonomous semi-religious group of soldiers who do not serve any of the Major Houses. The battle started just outside of the mountain stronghold when elements of the attacker's recon forces met recon forces of the defender in a situation which was unexpected to both. The stronghold guardians fought so valiantly that they were slain to the last man, woman, and child. A vid recording of the battle had been remoted to a local station toward the last minutes of the slaughter, as a voice from a dying female warrior warned that whoever these attackers are, they are armed with hitherto unknown weapons, disciplined, and extremely dangerous fighters.

Game Set-up: Place 4 BattleTech boards together running lengthwise. The long edge is east to west, and the short edge is north to south. At the far end of the eastern board place a single CityTech board. On the city board there are: 5 light buildings, 3 medium buildings, 2 heavy buildings, and 1 hardened building. This represents the small village which supports the stronghold and from which the stronghold draws young students for their various apprenticeship programs. At the far west end of the map is a giant wall/gate house which covers that entire end of the board. The north/south sides of the maps are level 7 cliffs which are impossible to climb.

Defender Set-up: The defender sets up first anywhere on the CityTech board.

Active in the first scenario:

Recon Lance:

Panther, good condition, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4
Valkyrie, good condition, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3
Jenner, excellent cdn, Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 3
Stinger LAM, good cdn, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

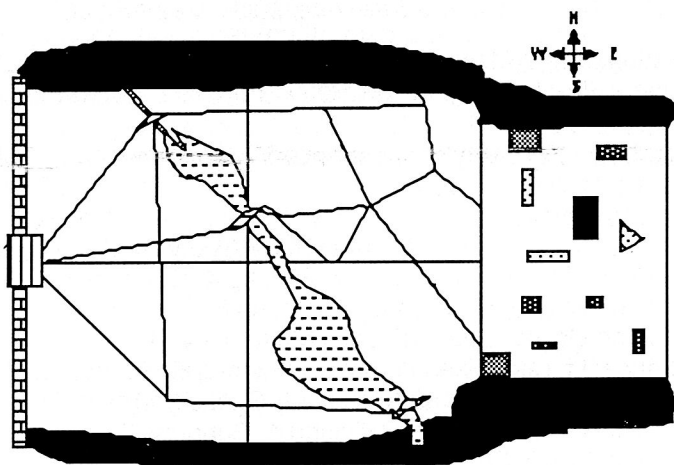
Patrol Lance:

2 Saracen medium hover tanks,
Driver: 4, Gunnery: 3
2 Pegasus scout tanks: Driver: 3, Gunnery: 4

1 Laser Jump Infantry Platoon

Attacker Set-up:

The attackers set up second on the eastern edge of the CityTech board. Reinforcements come every 4 turns as follows: five of these mystery 'Mechs every 8 turns until the fortress forces have been destroyed. No prisoners will be taken.



Medium Buildings
Light Buildings
Heavy Buildings
Hardened Building
Hardened Wall
— = 1 km

Attacker Typical Lance:

a mixture of types of these unknown 'Mechs
Tonnage: 40 Tons
Walking mp: 8
Run mp: 12
Jump mp: 8
Heat Sinks: 10 (20)

Armor Factor: 134

Head: 3 9
CT: 12 16/7
LT/RT: 10 13/7
LA/RA: 6 12
LL/RL: 10 19

Continued next page

Draconis Drift Periphery Region

Attacker Typical Lance continued

Weapons and Ammo: for each 'Mech, one of these *packages* of weapons / ammo

Alternate Configuration A

SRM 6	LA	1	1.5
Ammo (SRM) 15	LA	1	1
CASE	LA	0	0
Artemis IV FCS LA	1	1	
ER Medium Laser	RA	1	1
ER Medium Laser	RT	1	1
ER Medium Laser	RT	1	1
ER Medium Laser	LT	1	1
ER Medium Laser	LT	1	1

Alternate Configuration B

Sm Pulse Laser	LT	1	1
ER PPC	LA	2	6
Sm Pulse Laser	RA	1	1
Flamer	RT	1	0.5

Alternate Configuration C

ER Med Laser	LA	1	1
ER MedLaser	LA	1	1
Beagle Probe	LA	1	1
Machine Gun	LT	1	0.25
Machine Gun	LT	1	0.25
Ammo (MG) 200	LT	2	2
CASE	LT	0	0
Machine Gun	RT	1	0.25
Machine Gun	RT	1	0.25
Machine Gun	RT	1	0.25
Ammo (MG) 200	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0
Flamer	CT	1	0.5
Flamer	RA	1	0.5
Flamer	RA	1	0.5

Alternate Configuration D

Streak SRM 6	LA	2	3
Ammo (Streak) 15	LA	1	1
CASE	LA	0	0
ER Med Laser	RA	1	1
ER Med Laser	RA	1	1
LRM 5	RT	1	1
Ammo (LRM) 24	RT	1	1
CASE	RT	0	0
ER Sm Laser	LT	1	0.5

The Small Print: Those with access to ComStar's TOP SECRET Technical Readout: 3050 will recognize these 'Mechs as variations of the Dragonfly Ornimech. You are reminded of your oaths if you do achieve this recognition.

Goals: The defender must destroy each wave as they come upon the stronghold. They will not allow the enemy to have access to the stronghold. The attacker is wanting to eliminate the defender as quickly as possible with the fewest number of waves.

Victory Conditions: Attacker must state at beginning of the game how many turns it will take him to eliminate the defender.

Defender Major Victory: Any one attacker wave completely destroyed before the next wave comes in.

Defender Minor Victory: Even one of defender forces remains after turn # 16.

Attacker Minor Victory: Destroys defenders within allocated number of turns.

Attacker Major Victory: Destroys defenders before second wave comes in at turn 8.

Extended Scenario: If the players wish this battle to extend beyond the lance-to-lance scenario, the stronghold defenders have an additional 5 30-ton 'Mechs, 7 50-ton 'Mechs, 5 65-ton 'Mechs, 5 70-ton 'Mechs and 6 80-ton 'Mechs, of the defender's choice (no Star League items, though double heat sinks are allowed. These 'Mechs may not exit the stronghold until turn 5. They may then bring out one lance every two turns. In this version of the scenario, let the attacker have a new wave (of 5) every five turns. Once again, attacker must stipulate the maximum number of 'Mechs he will need to destroy the other forces totally. Victory conditions now go to a victory point system.

Extended Scenario Victory Conditions: Attacker gets 1 VP per ten ton of 'Mechs destroyed. Add up tonnage of Attacker 'Mechs used in the scenario (ie, if you commit 800 tons, but you destroy the defender with 400 tons, only count those 400 tons). Subtract 1 VP for each 20 tons of 'Mechs used by the attacker to acheive objective.

Attacker is a Small-Unit Strategic Genius:

Attacker VP= 155 or better

Attacker Major Victory: Attacker VP= 136-154

Attacker Minor Victory: Attacker VP= 126-135

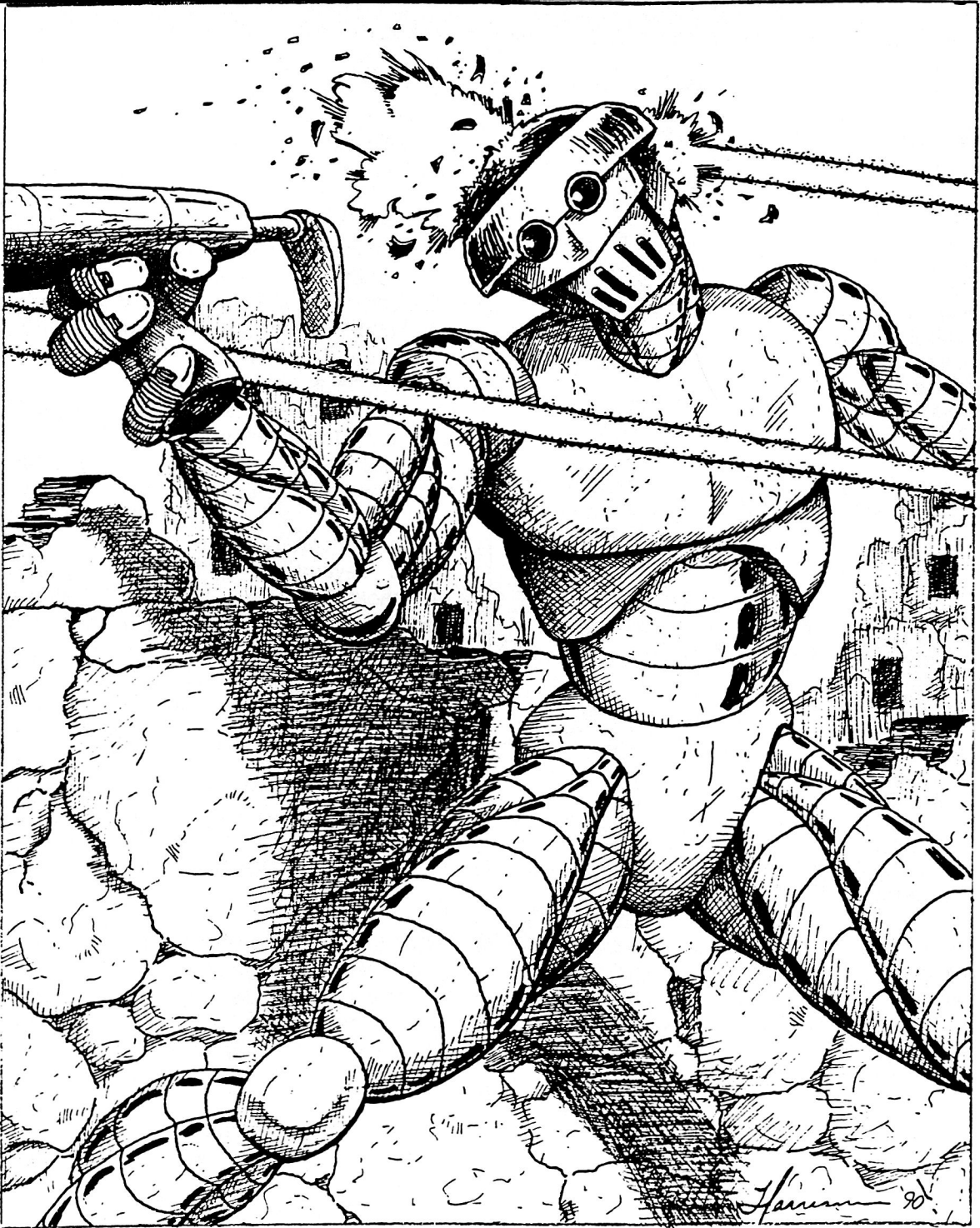
Draw: Attacker VP=116-125

Defender Minor Victory: Attacker VP = 96-115

Defender Major Victory: Attacker VP = 86-95

Defender is Kerensky's equal: Attacker VP = 85 or less

More Than Warriors



3050's BEST-SELLING NOVEL *LETHAL HERITAGE*, IS A CONTROVERSIAL LOOK AT MODERN POLITICS AND WARFARE. A SCENE FROM THE BOOK HAS INSPIRED ARTIST CLARENCE HARRISON, JR. THE ILLUSTRATION IS FROM CHAPTER 3, THE LIVE-FIRE COURSE SCENE WHICH TAKES PLACE ON THE WOLF'S DRAGOONS' PLANET OF OUTPOST. *LETHAL HERITAGE* IS WRITTEN BY MICHAEL A STACKPOLE, PUBLISHED BY FASA.

Technical Readout

RO-2A Roo Scout

Background: Limitation on terrain is the design flaw common to the hover vehicle. The Star League solved the problem with the Kanga. The Roo Scout is designed along similar lines, but as the name implies, it is meant for scout units. First designed by the NAIS to be used as a guerilla combat vehicle, it proved too expensive once the jump jets were added to be produced by most home planets. At the same time, the Recon Department of the Field Performance Analysis Division of the Federated Commonwealth Armed Forces was asking for possible design ideas for a new recon vehicle. And so the Roo entered service as a recon vehicle.

Technical Capabilities: The Roo Scout is reasonable fast and has some good armament and solid armor systems. Overall it is well designed. The Gallant Jump System is on a 60° ball and pintle mount, designed so that the scout vehicle can jump in any direction and land safely. This is the same design as used in most BattleMechs. (It is also useful in getting out of bogdowns. Treat as -2 to piloting skill roll as per optional rules, page 30 of this issue.) The hoverskirt aids in the landing by acting as a cushion, which allows for near-instant response by both gunner and pilot.

The armor is a honeycomb style which also acts as internal support. It leaves more open space on the interior to provide for easier living conditions for the three man crew. The crew consists of a pilot, a gunner, and a sensor systems operator who also controls the rear machine gun. The sensor systems operator may take over either the gunner's or the pilot's position if necessary.

The armaments have been well thought out and placed for maximum effect. The Tri-medium laser mount on the front is fascinating because it uses the primary laser to guide the pulse lasers mounted one on either side of the turret. The rear is protected by a standard machine gun which can be removed if necessary for any extravehicular excursions that are thought to be dangerous enough to warrant the extra fire power.

Overall, the Roo Scout is designed with the careful scout in mind. Its long range firepower may be considered poor, but it will make a good recon and ambush vehicle in the wars to come. Preliminary trials all indicated this vehicle will be unmatched in city fighting.

Mass: 20 Tons
 Movement Type: Hover/Jump
 Power Plant: GM-75 fusion
 Cruising Speed: 86.4 kph
 Maximum Speed: 129.6 kph
 Jump Jets: Gallant Jump System
 Jump Capacity: 180 meters
 Armor: Star Slab-1
 Armament: 1 Mitchell Machine Gun
 2 Power Punch Medium Pulse Lasers
 1 Stryke Medium Laser
 Manufacturer: NAIS / Avalon Arms

Type:	Tonnage	
RO-2A Roo Scout		20.0
Internal Structure:		2.0
Engine: GM 75		3.0
Cruise:	8	
Flank:	12	
Jump:	6	
Heat Sinks :	10	0.0
Control Equipment:		1.0
Lift Equipment:		2.0
Armor Factor:	48	3.0
Location:	Armor	
	Value	
Front:	16	
Left:	10	
Right:	10	
Rear:	12	
Turret:	0	

Weapons and Ammo:	Location	Critical	Tons
Medium Pulse Laser	F	1	2.0
Medium Pulse Laser	F	1	2.0
Medium Laser	F	1	1.0
Machine Gun	R	1	0.5
Ammo MG (100)	body	1	0.5
Jump Jets	LT	3	1.5
Jump Jets	RT	3	1.5



Hiring Hall

The Stalking Rhinos

Unit History

The unit known as the Stalking Rhinos was established on the Steiner world of Galatea on August 11, 3025. Five former members of Carson's Renegades and five former members of the five major Houses banded together to form a new mercenary unit. They reasoned that the mixture of mercenary and House military experience would give them the edge they needed on the battlefield. The most experienced combat officer, *Tai-i* Bobby Howell, formerly of the 2nd Proserpina Hussars, was elected as their commander. By pooling their resources and calling in a few favors, the unit was able to field a force of ten 'Mechs, two AeroSpace fighters, and one Union Class DropShip by the end of October 3025. The Draconis Combine offered the new unit a contract and the Rhinos set off for Kurita space in early November.

Assigned to the Periphery border of the Rasalhague District, the Rhinos found themselves pulling garrison duty on Thule and chasing pirates out in the Periphery. While not exactly glamorous, the tour gave the Rhinos time to build up their unit and gain combat experience. The Rhinos were successful in combat and proved to be a competent 'Mech unit with a growing reputation. During this period the Stalking Rhinos expanded to include two under-strength 'Mech companies, while their pirate-hunting expeditions netted them a second Union Class DropShip and an Invader Class JumpShip to go with it. Renamed the *Fredricksburg* and the *Long Shot* respectively, they provided the unit a much-needed independent transport capability. Despite strenuous efforts by House Kurita to claim them, the Stalking Rhinos were able to hold on to these hard-won war prizes. The unit's future looked bright.

Unfortunately the Draconis Combine began using their Company Store tactics on the Stalking Rhinos to force them to remain in the Combine. The Rhinos resorted to consider desperate measures to escape their mounting debt. At the end of their contract the unit let go all noncombat personnel and sold all nonessential equipment to raise money to cover the debt. This money, along with some funds obtained through dubious sources, enabled the Rhinos to pay off the Kuritans at the end of their contract in May 3028. The Rhinos immediately jumped the border and signed with House Davion. They vowed never to work for House Kurita again.

The Stalking Rhinos soon found themselves caught up in the chaos of the Fourth Succession War. Initially too weak and disorganized by the flight from the Draconis Combine to be used as a frontline unit, the Rhinos were assigned

garrison duty inside the Federated Suns while they rested and rearmed. By the time Hanse Davion launched his Sixth Wave against the Capellan Confederation, the Stalking Rhinos were ready for action. Assigned to the Capellan Operations Command as an ad-hoc raiding force, the Rhinos were able to put their Periphery

anti-piracy experience to good use in conducting a series of diversionary raids through the unconquered portion of the Sarna Commonality.

It was during the Fourth Succession War that the Stalking Rhinos gained one of their greatest prizes. Jumping into an uncharted system, the Rhinos encountered a damaged Liao JumpShip. The Invader Class JumpShip had sustained meteor damage shortly after its arrival and was unable to maneuver or fight. Attached to the JumpShip's docking collars were two Mule Class DropShips and an Intruder Class DropShip. The Rhinos deployed their AeroSpace fighters for an attack run on the JumpShip and demanded its surrender. Seeing no other option the Liao crew complied and the Rhino's infantry boarded and secured the vessel.

A short period of bargaining and pointed persuasion convinced the crew that their future as mercenaries was brighter than as members of the Capellan military. A prize crew was brought onboard to operate the ship and the Liao crew was dispersed between the two JumpShips for security reasons. Working feverishly, Rhino Techs repaired the vessel using parts cannibalized from the *Long shot*. Before jumping out of the Rhinos repainted the Liao JumpShip with the unit's colors and insignia, renamed it the *Peregrine* and falsified the logs to show the vessel was purchased approximately six months ago in the Taurian Concordat. They then transferred half of their 'Mechs and combat support personnel to the *Peregrine* completing the illusion that the JumpShip really did belong to the Rhinos.

Since the war, the Rhinos have served for a variety of employers. In 3031 their contract with House Davion expired and the unit accepted an offer from House Steiner. Posted to garrison duty in the Trelshire Theater, the Rhinos spent the next three years rebuilding their strength lost in the Fourth Succession War. The unit kept in fighting trim by conducting punitive raids against the Bandit Kingdoms. A growing reputation enabled the unit to recruit enough personnel to field two full companies of 'Mechs with DropShip and JumpShip lift capability.

The Steiner contract expired in 3034 and the Rhinos accepted a contract from the newly formed Free Rasalhague Republic. Immediately the Rhinos found their combat skills challenged by the fierce combat of the Ronin Wars. Unlike most mercenary units, the Stalking Rhinos were more than happy to wade into battle against the outlawed Kurita units. In fact the unit was eager to pay back the Draconis Combine for its poor hospitality of nearly a

The Stalking Rhinos

decade ago. Major Hebert and the rest of the former Steiner MechWarriors took great pride in putting new kill markers on their 'Mechs and 'Dragon hunting' became a popular pastime. Major Hebert's ferocity towards Kurita forces in the field and his disdain for Kurita prisoners shocked even the most die-hard Rasalhagian patriot. After some suspicious deaths in the heat of battle, Colonel Howell was forced to reprimand Major Hebert and pull him out of combat. He was reassigned to support duties for the remainder of the Ronin Wars.

The Rhinos' battlefield behavior endeared themselves to the Rasalhaugians, who, based on previous experience, had an extremely poor opinion of mercenary troops. While still suspicious of mercenary troops in general, the Rasalhague government was willing to work with the Rhinos and treated them more hospitably than other mercenary units. The remainder of the contract passed uneventfully.

In 3037, with the Rasalhague contract about to expire, the Rhinos were approached by agents of the Federated Commonwealth. Angered by the anti-mercenary tirades of Tor Miraborg and his cronies, the Rhinos jumped at the chance to serve again with their old employers. A contract was signed in May 3037. By the end of the year the unit was on duty along the Free Worlds League border. Most of this period passed without incident, as House Marik was too preoccupied with internal problems to mount effective raids into Steiner space. The Rhinos took the advantage of the lull in fighting to conduct intensive training with its infantry and AeroSpace assets. By the end of the contract had finely honed their combined arms tactics.

By the time 3040 rolled around the Rhinos had decided to up stakes and try out a new boss. Impressed by the new military competence of House Marik, the Rhinos negotiated a contract with the Free Worlds League in early March. The Free Worlds League assigned the Rhinos to assist in the conquest of the Duchy of Andurien, a mission the Rhinos accomplished handily. Their battlefield success against units of the Defenders of Andurien raised the Rhino's stock considerably with House Marik. Following the recapture of the Duchy, the Rhinos were posted to the Periphery border as part of a force keeping an eye on the Magistracy of Canopus.

By the end of the Marik contract the Rhinos' ranks had swelled, enabling the unit to field three full strength 'Mech companies, supported by six AeroSpace fighters and a company of Jump infantry. The Rhinos also acquired an old, but serviceable Overlord Class DropShip. Renamed the *Alamo*, the DropShip became the unit's command center.

House Marik was satisfied with the Rhino's performance both on and off the battlefield. As an incentive to remain in the Free Worlds League, they offered to extend the unit's contract for an additional three years with a hefty pay raise and land grants to sweeten the deal. Knowing a good thing

when they saw one, the Rhinos quickly agreed to the extension. The Rhinos were given land on the border world of Scarborough as a base. For the next three years the Rhinos remained in garrison, keeping an eye on what was left of the Capellan Confederation.

It was during this second three year contract that the Stalking Rhinos recruited a fourth 'Mech company. Combat experience had taught the Rhinos the value of light 'Mech forces, and the unit badly needed additional light 'Mechs to balance out its force structure. Also a balanced 'Mech force would enhance the unit's chances at the negotiating table.

Rhino agents went to Galatea to look for a light 'Mech unit that would fit the bill. There they encountered a newly formed outfit calling themselves the Celestial Knights. The Knights had the light 'Mechs the Rhinos were looking for and their records seemed in order. The Knights were quickly brought into the Stalking Rhinos as Delta Company. The addition of a fourth company required a reorganization of the Rhino's command structure. Alpha and Gamma companies were organized as the First Battalion, Stalking Rhinos; while Beta and Delta companies were organized as the Second Battalion, Stalking Rhinos. The entire unit was then set up as a short regiment of four companies. Newly recruited fighter pilots brought the Rhinos' fighter strength up to twelve AeroSpace fighters.

Problems with Delta Company began as soon as the unit was deployed in combat. The company's MechWarriors refused to adopt the Rhinos' methods, preferring their own. On more than one occasion the other Rhino companies were left without support as Delta Company left on its own to pursue objectives they considered more important. Reprimands and counseling sessions only increased the bad feelings between the "Deltoids," as they were now known, and the rest of the Rhinos. It was rapidly becoming apparent that Delta Company was not fitting in and the bad feelings and political infighting were threatening to tear the Rhinos apart.

The Rhino command structure decided upon the financially painful option of buying out Delta Company's contract. Once that was done, the unit was sent packing. Since that time, the Rhinos carefully screen every new recruit before he is accepted into the unit.

Recent Campaign History

Since the disastrous experience with Delta Company, the Rhinos have been very choosy about accepting new personnel into their ranks. The unit has gone so far as to institute a six month trial period for new recruits where the individual's performance can be compared to their previous combat record. If they measure up they are allowed to sign up for the full three year contract, otherwise they are released to seek other employment.

Even though Delta Company's actions tarnished the reputation of the Stalking Rhinos, the Free Worlds League

nevertheless offered the unit another three year contract extension in 3047. The terms were even better than their previous offer and included a clause which allowed the unit to purchase new Marik 'Mechs containing recently acquired Star League technology. The offer was better than any other at the time, so the Rhinos accepted. The unit remained on Scarborough and continued to serve as the planetary garrison, while conducting occasional raids into Liao space to keep the Capellans on their toes and to keep the Rhinos' combat experience level high. In addition to these duties, House Marik has used the Rhinos for other, unspecified missions. In the process the Rhinos have been able to acquire several 'Mechs and AeroSpace fighters from a number of sources.

Strength

The Stalking Rhinos currently muster three full-strength BattleMech companies, plus one Battalion Command Lance, for a total of forty one 'Mechs. Combat support is provided by twelve Aerospace fighters and a company of infantry. The infantry is a multi-role unit and is trained in space boarding actions, VTOL and jump operations, as well as standard hover and anti-'Mech infantry tactics. In an age contemptuous of ground-pounders, the Rhino infantry often provide the margin of victory. The infantry are grouped with additional combat support assets to form a Special Operations Group (SOG). Operating out of the Intruder Class DropShip *Gatecrasher*, the SOG performs standard combat missions, but their forte is reconnaissance and covert operations. The Rhinos often use the SOG for deep penetration raids and intelligence gathering.

Unlike many mercenary units, the Rhinos provide their own transportation. DropShip assets include one Overlord, two Unions, one Intruder, and two converted Mules, while two Invader class JumpShips provide interstellar transport capabilities. The Stalking Rhinos combat history has taught them the value of owning your own transportation and the unit's assets are well cared for.

Current Situation

The Stalking Rhinos are undergoing rest and refit after a series of raids into the Capellan Confederation. While the unit suffered some damage, it accomplished its mission and even managed to capture a Liao Raven. This 'Mech, with its extensive electronics suite is a rare prize. Per the agreement with House Marik, the Rhinos have been replacing their damaged and destroyed 'Mechs with new 'Mechs rolling off Free World League assembly lines. This new addition of recovered Star League technology will definitely enhance the Rhinos' combat capabilities.

Assessment

The Stalking Rhinos are a tight-knit professional mercenary unit. They can be relied upon to fulfil the contract and

even go a bit beyond if the situation warrants. The Rhinos are known for their fondness for close, no-holds barred combat. While this increases combat losses and damage, it also enhances the unit's reputation. Overall unit morale is high and the unit is currently financially stable. Assuming the Stalking Rhinos encounter no major disasters, its continued success and growth as a mercenary unit is assured.

The unit is organized along democratic lines and periodic elections are held for unit positions. Although popularity is a factor, battle and leadership skills are far more important to the unit's members and only proven leaders have been elected to officer the unit. This competition for position also ensures that incompetent officers do not remain in positions of authority.

The Stalking Rhinos are notorious for their forays into red light districts. In fact, it has been said that one of the reasons the unit stays on front-line duty so long is to save on property damage lawsuits and bail costs. The unit is also known for its macabre sense of humor. An example of this can be seen in the fact that the unit's DropShips are named after famous military defeats. In the words of one unit member: "Bad luck is better than no luck at all, besides one side's overwhelming defeat is the other side's overwhelming victory."

Restrictions

The Stalking Rhinos are open to all combat personnel with combat experience. Records will be checked to verify experience but the unit is not picky as to the origin of prospective employees. However, due to the problems the unit had with the recently departed Delta Company, record checks are more stringent than ever. New personnel are taken in under a six month trial period before the Rhinos will allow them to sign on for a full three year hitch. This allows the unit to validate a person's present performance against his past record.

Another restriction concerns employers. The unit will not accept contract offers from the Draconis Combine and the Capellan Confederation. The unit vows never to be caught in a Kurita Company Store squeeze again. As for the Capellans, they might want their "liberated" JumpShip back. In any case the unit's senior personnel considers neither realm to be trustworthy employers. In regards to House Kurita, this attitude may change depending on what effect Theodore Kurita's reforms have on the Kurita military and society in general.

STALKING RHINOS (As of May 3050)

BATTALION COMMAND LANCE

Lieutenant Colonel Bobby Howell	STK-3F STALKER
Major Michael Hebert	ONI-M ORION*
Captain Bradley Arnold	ARC-4M ARCHER*
Sergeant Robert Fletcher	AW5-8Q AWESOME

ALPHA COMPANY

Command Lance

Captain Eddie Stewart

WHM-7M WARHAMMER*

Lieutenant W. Lane Douglas III
 MechWarrior Mike Formby
 MechWarrior Mike Chauvin
Assault Lance
 Lieutenant Remy Shirley
 Sergeant Matthew Freyou
 BATTLEMASTER*
 MechWarrior Robert Adams
 MechWarrior Brandt Ulmer
 BATTLEMASTER*
Fire Lance
 Lieutenant Kyle Powell
 Sergeant Richard Hudson
 MechWarrior Terry Elam
 MechWarrior John Driggers

BNC-35 BANSHEE-S
 TDR-5S THUNDERBOLT
 BLR-3M BATTLEMASTER*
 AW5-8Q AWESOME
 BLR-3M
 A57-D ATLAS
 BLR-3M
 CPLT-CI CATAPULT
 CRD-5M CRUSADER*
 CPLT-CI CATAPULT
 PHX-ID PHOENIX HAWK-D

BETA COMPANY

Command Lance
 Captain David Shorey
 Lieutenant David Perry
 MechWarrior Scott Mowery
 MechWarrior Malcolm Huval
Attack Lance
 Lieutenant John Mason
 Sergeant Keith Martin
 MechWarrior Gregg Crooks
 MechWarrior Albert Solano
Recon Lance
 Lieutenant Jean-Paul Champagne
 Sergeant Chris Cormier
 MechWarrior David Phillips II
 MechWarrior Kyle Nearhood

MAD-3D MARAUDER-D
 HCT-55 HATCHETMAN*
 OTL-5M OSTSOL*
 VTR-9K VICTOR*
 GLT-5M GUILLOTINE *
 GHR-SH GRASSHOPPER
 WVR-6M WOLVERINE-M
 CRD-SM CRUSADER-M*
 GRF-3M GRIFFIN*
 RFL-SM RIFLEMAN*
 WVR-6M WOLVERINE-M*
 JR7-D JENNER

GAMMA COMPANY

Command Lance
 Captain Warren McCann
 Lieutenant Richard Ripberger
 MechWarrior Sergio Guzman
 MechWarrior Andrew Lueck
Assault Lance
 Lieutenant Timothy Clark
 Sergeant R. J. Champagne
 MechWarrior Matt Alleman
 MechWarrior Mike Andrepont
Recon Lance
 Lieutenant Eddie Leon Moss Jr.
 Sergeant Chris Landry
 MechWarrior David Heatherly
 MechWarrior Greg Hayes
 MechWarrior Clay James

OTL-SM OSTSOL-M*
 SHD-SM SHADOW HAWK
 SHD-SM SHADOW HAWK
 SHD-SM SHADOW HAWK
 AW5-8Q AWESOME
 GHR-SH GRASSHOPPER
 BLR-3M BATTLEMASTER*
 ENF-4R ENFORCER
 ASN-21 ASSASSIN
 FS9-H FIRESTARTER
 SDR-SV SPIDER
 RVN-3L RAVEN*
 LCT-3M LOCUST*

SPECIAL OPERATIONS GROUP

Commanded by Major Fred Huval
Doucet's Infantry Company
 Captain Quentin Doucet
 Alpha Jump Infantry Platoon (Laser)
 Beta Jump Infantry Platoon (Machine Gun)

Gamma Jump Infantry Platoon (Flamer)
Hawkins' Armor Platoon 3 Maxim Heavy Hover Transports
Smith's Scout Platoon 4 Pegasus Scout Hover tanks
Perez's Air Lance 2 Cheetah AeroSpace Fighters
 GATECRASHER Intruder Class DropShip

AEROSPACE FIGHTER BATTALION

Commanded by Major Arthur Alford
1st AeroSpace Company
 Command Air Lance
 Major Arthur Alford STUKA
 Lynne Richardson STUKA
Callaghan's Air Lance
 Lieutenant Deacon Callaghan CHIPPEWA
 Francois Charboneau CHIPPEWA
Taylor's Air Lance
 Lieutenant Jessica Taylor SHILONE
 Richard Stewart SHILONE

2nd AeroSpace Company

Command Air Lance
 Captain Roxanne Santiago CORSAIR
 Anton Devillier CORSAIR
 Lieutenant David Reynolds TRANSGRESSOR

SOG DETACHMENT

Perez's Air Lance
 Lieutenant Michael Perez CHEETAH

Transportation Division

Commanded by Captain Ian Clarke
 LONG SHOT Invader Class JumpShip
 Commanded by Captain Ian Clarke
 PEREGRINE Invader Class JumpShip
 Commanded by Christine Sorenson
 ALAMO Overlord Class DropShip
 Commanded by Captain Katherine Lewis
Carries Alpha Company, the Battalion Command Lance, and the 1st AeroSpace Fighter Company
 CHANCELLORSVILLE Union Class DropShip
 Commanded by Captain Caroline McAllister
Carries Beta Company and the 2nd AeroSpace Company
 Command Air Lance
 FREDRICKSBURG Union Class DropShip
 Commanded by Captain James Coulter
Carries Gamma Company and Reynolds' Air Lance
 DIEN BIEN PHU Mule Class DropShip
 Commanded by Captain Marie Kelly
 TANNENBURG Mule Class DropShip
 Commanded by Captain Albert Jordan
These two DropShips carry unit supplies and support personnel
 GATECRASHER Mule Class DropShip
 Commanded by Captain Geoffrey Rollins
Attached to the Special Operations Group
Carries the Special Operations Group and Perez's Air Lance

* Indicates 'Mechs from the 3050 Technical Readout

Technical Readout

SunZhang Academy Chooses "Most Perfect Assault 'Mech"

WHEREVER MECHWARRIORS GET TOGETHER, SOONER OR LATER, THE TALK TURNS TO THE MOST PERFECT VEHICLE, THE BATTLEMECH THAT PERFECTS THE ART OF THE PILOT/GUNNER WITHIN. CADET MECHWARRIORS ARE NO EXCEPTION: AS THEY FERVIDLY PLOT THEIR FUTURE CAREERS, THE MAIN FOCUS OF MOST DAYDREAMS IS THE 'MECH THAT EACH WILL LIVE WITH MORE INTIMATELY THAN MANY MARRIAGES.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO SWEAR BY ALMOST ANY 'MECH YOU CAN NAME (EVEN THE OSTCOUT AND THE CHARGER HAVE THEIR FANS!). BUT WE HERE AT BATTLETECHNOLOGY THOUGHT WE'D FIND OUT WHAT 'MECHS THE NEW GENERATION FAVORS.

THIS ISSUE WE POLLED HOUSE KURITA'S ELITE MECHWARRIOR OFFICER SCHOOL, THE SUN ZHANG ACADEMY GRADUATING CLASS OF 3050. IT IS POIGNANT TO REALIZE THAT MANY OF THESE YOUNGSTERS WILL SEE ACTION IN THE NEW BORDER WARS SHORTLY AFTER THIS ISSUE IS PUBLISHED.

FOR SUNZHANG, WE CHOSE THE CATEGORY OF ASSAULT 'MECHS, THE HEAVIEST OF THE HEAVY. THE POLL CAME OUT A TIE. FRANKLY, WE HAD NEVER HEARD OF EITHER 'MECH! WHEN OUR PUBLISHER ARVID THORKILSEN CHECKED HIS DATABANKS, HE FOUND RECORDS OF THE EXISTENCE

OF BOTH 'MECHS. HE FOUND NO TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS; WE HAD TO REQUEST THESE FROM THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES.

BATTLETECHNOLOGY THANKS TAI-SA MIHAIOVIC KANAKA, COMMANDER OF THE ACADEMY, TO THE GRADUATING CLASS, AND IT'S CADET GUNSHO ELISE MIRIKITANI FOR THEIR AID IN TAKING THIS SURVEY.

In 2765 Lord Richard Cameron granted Renault-Prime Industries, the manufacturer of the highly successful heavy 'Mech, the Flashman, to begin testing on their newly designed assault 'Mech called the Omega. Shortly after Renault-Prime had built their first prototype Omega, Stefan Amaris succeeded in his conquest of the Terran Hegemony. Amaris then ordered the Omega project moved to Terra so that his scientists could monitor its testing. After the Reunification War was over, no trace of the Omega could be found. It is believed that when General Kerensky's forces liberated Terra they took the prototype Omega, which left with them in the Exodus.

137A-Omega

Mass: 100 Tons

Chassis: OMA/HT X

Power Plant: Vlar 300

Cruising Speed: 32.4 kph

Maximum Speed: 54.0 kph

Jump Jets: Pitban LFT-100

Jump Capacity: 90 meters

Armor: Kemplar X9000

Armament:

4 Selitex Radionic Large Lasers

12 Ichiba 3000 Medium Lasers

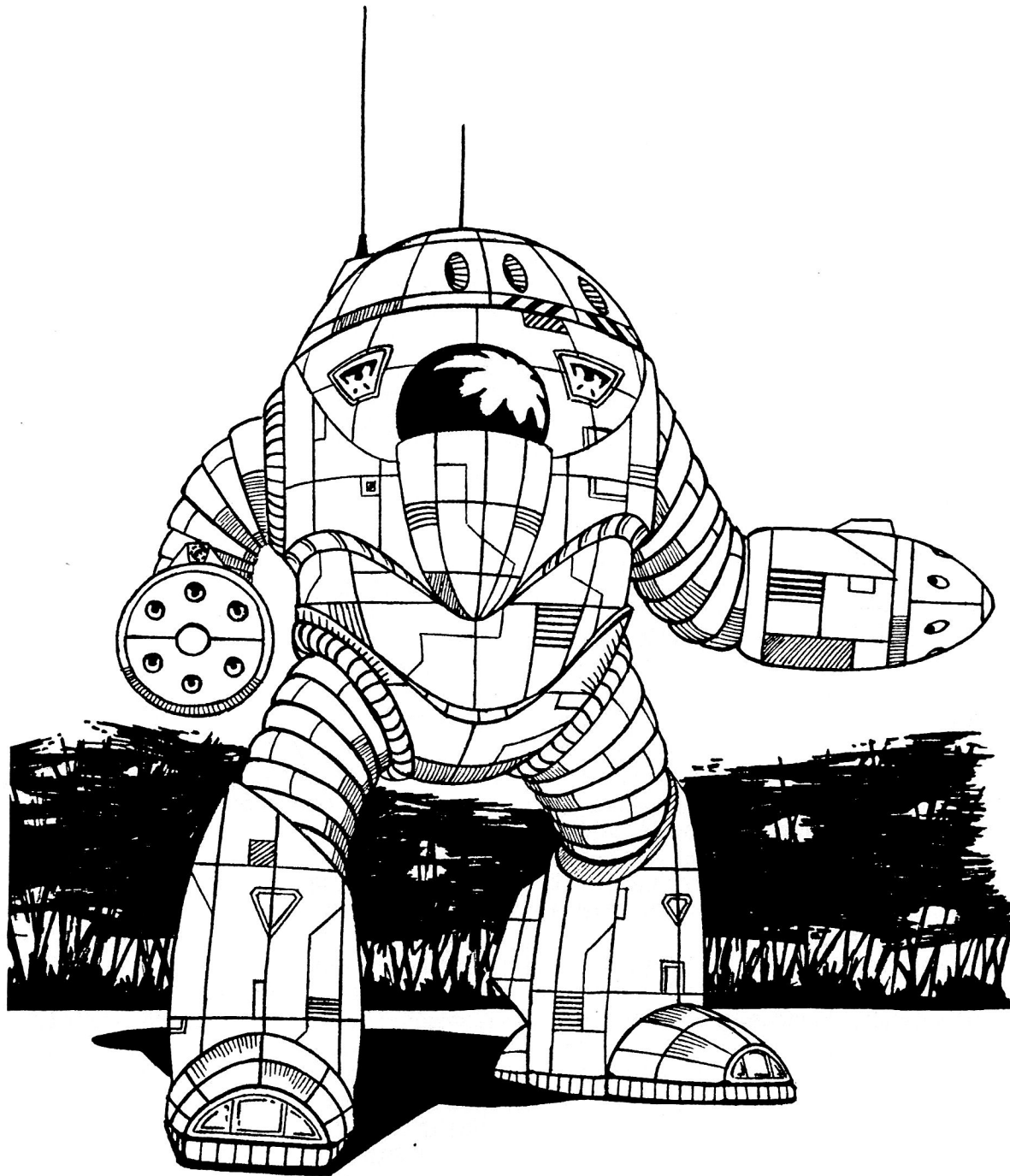
Manufacturer: Renault-Prime Industries

Communications System: Duoteck 200XT

Targeting/Tracking System: Faust/Shinji AT/TS

Type:		Tonnage
137-A Omega		100.0
Internal Structure:		10.0
Engine: Vlar 300		19.0
Walking MPs:	3	
Running MPs:	5	
Jumping MPs:	3	
Heat Sinks:	18 (36)	8.0
Gyro:		3.0
Cockpit:		3.0
Armor Factor:	304	19.0
Location:	Internal Structure:	Armor Value
Head	3	9
Center Torso:	31	47/14
Rt/Lt Torso:	21	32/10
Rt/Lt Arm:	17	34
Rt/Lt Leg:	21	41
Weapons and Ammo:		
	Location	Critical Tons
2 Large Lasers	RT	4 10.0
2 Large Lasers	LT	4 10.0
6 MEDIUM LASERS	RA	6 6.0
6 MEDIUM LASERS	LA	6 6.0
LRM 10	LA	2 5.0
Jump Jets	RL	2 3.0
Jump Jets	LL	2 3.0

The 137-A Omega, A Prototype



Technical Readout

SunZhang Academy Chooses #2

"Most Perfect Assault 'Mech"

Overview:

Late in the Star League era, Rebel Industrial Technologies began experimenting with mounting artillery pieces on a BattleMech chassis. The Huntress is the most successful of those experiments.

The Huntress was originally intended to be a lighter and more mobile 'Mech, but the size and weight of the Thumpers forced designers to use a 100 ton chassis. While not fast, the Huntress is far less restricted in terrain than other mobile artillery pieces. The Huntress can bring fire support virtually anywhere.

The Huntress was never produced in great numbers, but as it was built from highly reliable components, many of the 'Mechs still survive today. Approximately 30 to 40 functional 'Mechs are scattered about the Inner Sphere, most in the possession of Houses Steiner and Kurita.

Capabilities:

Two Thumper artillery pieces are the main weaponry of the Huntress, giving the 'Mech fair fire support capabilities. A large ammunition supply ensures that the Huntress can deliver a sustained artillery barrage. The Thumpers also make the Huntress an excellent anti-VTOL platform. It was, however, necessary to weaken the 'Mech's torsos slightly (removal of three internal structure boxes) in order to mount such big guns. While this has reduced the overall strength of the Huntress, there has been no noticeable effect on the 'Mech's performance.

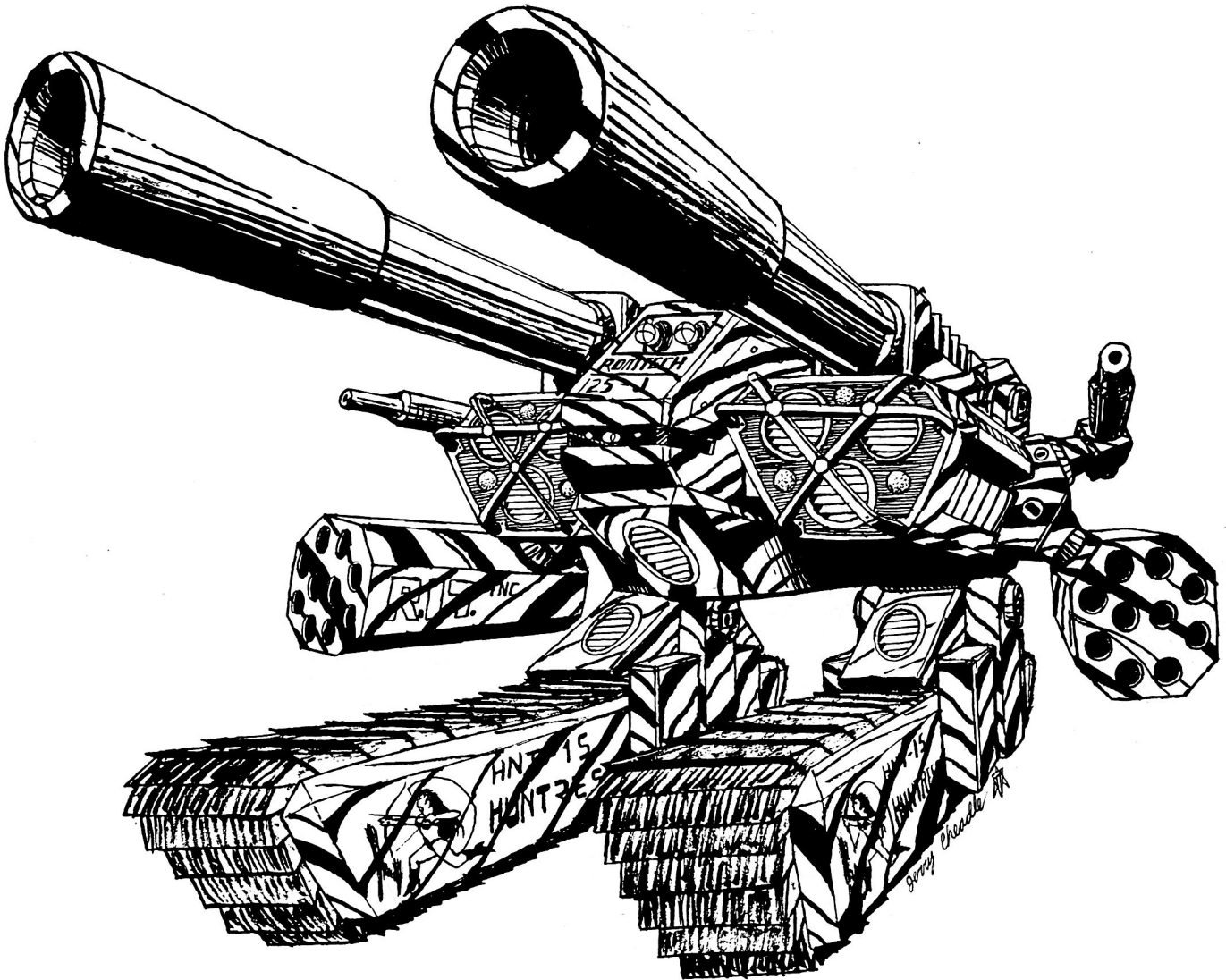
Other weaponry includes two Delta Dart LRM 10-racks and two Martell Medium Lasers. This makes the Huntress better armed and better able to defend itself than any other mobile artillery platform. It is, however, somewhat undergunned for an assault 'Mech and best kept back from heavy fighting.

HNT-1S Huntress

Mass: 100 Tons
 Chassis: Reb L1
 Power Plant: Vlar 300
 Cruising Speed: 32.4 kph
 Maximum Speed: 54.0 kph
 Jump Jets: None
 Jump Capacity: None
 Armor: StarSlab
 Armament: 2 Thumper Artillery Pieces
 2 Delta Dart LRM 10-Racks
 2 Martell Medium Lasers
 Manufacturer: Rebel Industrial Technologies Inc
 Communications System: ROMTECH 100
 Targeting/Tracking System: ROMTECH 125 J

Type:	Tonnage		
HNT-1S Huntress	100.0		
Internal Structure:	10.0		
Engine: Vlar 300	19.0		
Walking MPs:	3		
Running MPs:	5		
Jumping MPs:	0		
Heat Sinks :	14	4.0	
Gyro:		3.0	
Cockpit:		3.0	
Armor Factor:	240	15.0	
Location:	Internal	Armor	
Structure:		Value	
Head	3	9	
Center Torso:	31	40/15	
Rt/Lt Torso:	18	33/10	
Rt/Lt Arm:	17	20	
Rt/Lt Leg:	21	25	
Weapons and Ammo:			
	Location	Critical	Tons
Thumper	RT	15	15.0
Thumper	LT	15	15.0
Ammo (Thumper) 40	CT	2	2.0
LRM 10	RA	2	5.0
LRM 10	LA	2	5.0
Ammo (LRM) 12	RA	1	1.0
Ammo (LRM) 12	LA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	RA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0

HNT-1S Huntress



Battle History:

When the Star League Defense Forces invaded the Rim Worlds Republic world of Crellacor in late 2767, they easily defeated all the planetary defenders except for one regiment holed up in Fortress Green. Fortress Green was an attacker's night mare, invisible from the air, in the center of dense jungle impassable to all but 'Mechs and infantry, and with fortifications so impressive that the base was nearly impregnable. A token force would have been able to hold it indefinitely.

This posed a serious problem for General Kerensky. He did not want to waste time in lengthy seige, nor did he want to leave an entire 'Mech regiment behind. The General also adamantly refused to resort to nuclear weapons to clear out the base. His solution to the dilemma was to bring a Huntress battalion to Crellacor.

It took nearly a week for the 'Mechs to crash their way through the jungle until they were in firing range. The battalion then unleashed a tremendous artillery barrage on Fortress Green. More than 1400 shells rained down on the base, destroying the outer defenses. The Star League forces poured through the breaches and quickly subdued the stunned Rim Worlders. Although it played a pivotal role in the battle, the Huntress battalion itself never came within sight of the enemy.

Lost In Transmission

ComStar Explains Error

For anyone who was curious but was afraid or unable to ask (ever tried to write a letter to the editor while avoiding an angry Battlemaster?)—this is for you.

Yes.

Ever since 3040 an alarming number of errors and misprints have cropped up in our magazine and our weekly news bulletins. Long have we agonized over how drastic errors such as these could be occurring. We explored every conceivable angle and even replaced our major computer systems on a number of worlds. This did little if any thing to alleviate the problem. We were intrigued and soon pleased to receive a personal Vid disk apology from Primus Myndo Waterly just after publication of issue

#13, year-end 3049.

Well it seems that the prolonged use of Particle Projection Cannons in and around the vicinity of Hyper-Pulse generators causes occasional glitches in messages sent via the Com-Star system. Now only since 3029 have PPC's been used with any

regularity near Hyper-Pulse generators. This is of course due to Com-Star's own Com-Guard regiments that now faithfully guard their stations throughout the Known Spheres. As our main editorial office is located on Terra we have had the most problems with this technical glitch because the Com-Guard's biggest concentration of forces are stationed here. They promise that precautions have now been taken to prevent this in the future, but they cannot say how long the effects may persist. We at Battle Technology promise renewed diligence to make sure these errors are kept to a minimum.

Primus Waterly also wishes to use our magazine to covey Com-Stars apologies to any one else who has so been affected. In addition if verification can be presented that a message you sent in the past decade was grossly in error, Com-Star will provide 110% reimbursement.

Marcus Killigrew, Staff Writer, BattleTechnology

SEFR

Item	Rating Additions
Anti-Missile System	Add .5 per ton of ammo
Artemis IV System	Add .2 to all missile WFR
Beagle Active Probe	Add .5
Built-in Hatchet/Club	Add 1/2 DFR
CASE	Add .5 per CASE system
Ferro-Fibrous Armor	Multiply armor tonnage by .12, Add
Guardian ECM Suite	Add .5
MASC	Add 1/2 Mechs Walking MP
NARC Missile Beacon	Add .4 to all missile WFR
Swarm LRM Rounds	Add .2 to missile WFR
Thunder LRM Rounds	Add .1 to missile WFR

Above table was omitted from the Star CEF article in issue # 13.

Wrong Address Corrected Play by Mail BattleTech Fans Relieved

Perhaps the strangest, certainly the most unfortunate of the errors in transmission was the advertisement in BattleTechnology # 13 for Future Simulations' new play by mail BattleTech. This eagerly-awaited game was delayed in several sectors of the Inner Sphere by an incorrect old address appearing on the advertisement. Hundreds of gamers who prefer the independence of play-by-mail were disappointed. BattleTechnology wishes to apologize to these gamers personally as well as to Future Simulations. We should have checked the transmissions more carefully. We refer our readers to page 14 for the correct address.

If you want
y o u r
c o n v e n t i o n
listed in our calendar, please send a notice at least three months in advance. Address it :
Conventions ,
BattleTechnology,
PO Box 23651,
Oakland, CA
94623.

Tournaments and Conventions Noted

DunDraCon XIV FEBRUARY 16-19, 1990. Oakland Airport Clarion, Oakland, California. Over 120 different fantasy, modern, and science fiction games, seminars, wargames, dealers room, and more. Preregistration \$25.00, \$30.00 at the door. For information, send a SASE to DunDraCon, 386 Alcatraz Avenue, Oakland, CA 94618. **BattleTechnology, Far & Away Attending.**

ORCCON 14 February 15-18, 1991. L.A. Airport Hilton Hotel, 5711 West Century Blvd. NOTE: To regulars, notice this is a CHANGE of hotel. This is the ORIGINS hotel. Board games, role-playing, miniatures, dealer room, open gaming. For information, write Jeff Albanese, P.O. Box 8399, Long Beach, CA 90808. **Pacific Rim Publishing Company Table here.**

GENGHIS CON XI FEBRUARY 16-18, 1990. Ramada Hotel, Westminster, Colorado. Wargaming, role-playing, auction, more. Preregistration \$15.00 until JANUARY 31, 1990 and \$20.00 after that. For information, send SASE to Denver Gamers Association, PO Box 11369, Denver, CO 80211 OR TELEPHONE 303-433-3849.

Readers' Page

AND THE WINNER IS...

New England BattleTech Regional Championships

Team: MEDD TEAM
Michael Descoteaux & Eric Demond of
of Claremont, N.H. Newport, N.H.

Single:
Steve Farber of
Spotswood, N.J.

Mid-Atlantic Regional BattleTech Competition

Single:
Best Record: Carrion Zephyrs (4-0)
Most Points: Black Watch (3594)
Most Kills: Whirling Dervishes (2)

Team:
Most Points: Brian Kolner (14,577)
Most Kills: Brian Kolner (8)
Fewest Points: Carla Wammack

Sponsored by BattleTechnology at Pacificon '90:

First Place Winner: Harold C Coppock
Second Place Winner: David Broussard

BattleTechnology plans to attend: Dundracon '91, Arcatacon '91, Pacificon '91, AnimeCon '91, Baycon '91, TimeCon '91, and others to be announced. If you want us at your convention, write to us. We attend or send a representative when possible. Look for BattleTechnology or Pacific Rim Publishing Company on your convention program.

BattleTechnology Regrets:

The author's name was left off of the *Mortars in BattleTech* article in BattleTechnology # 13. We belatedly credit Terry Mancour with this informative and useful

The corrected stats for
BattleTechnology # 12:

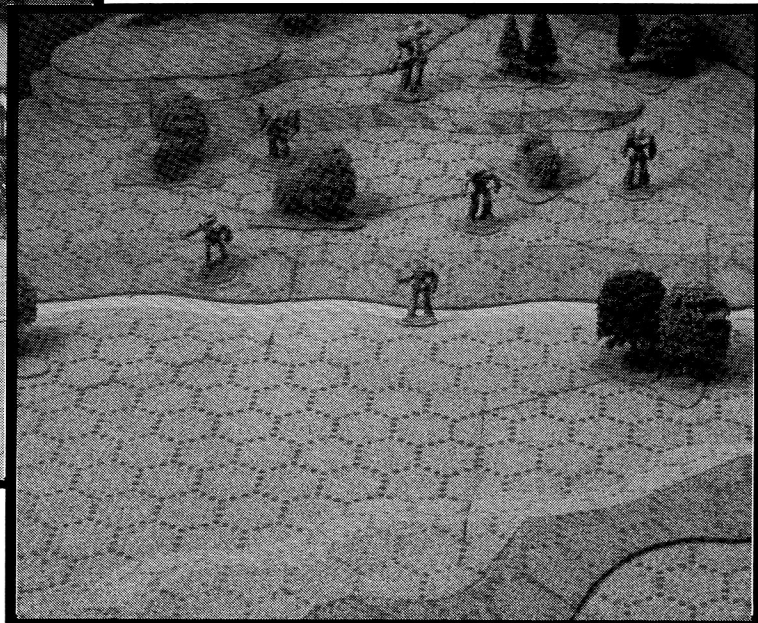
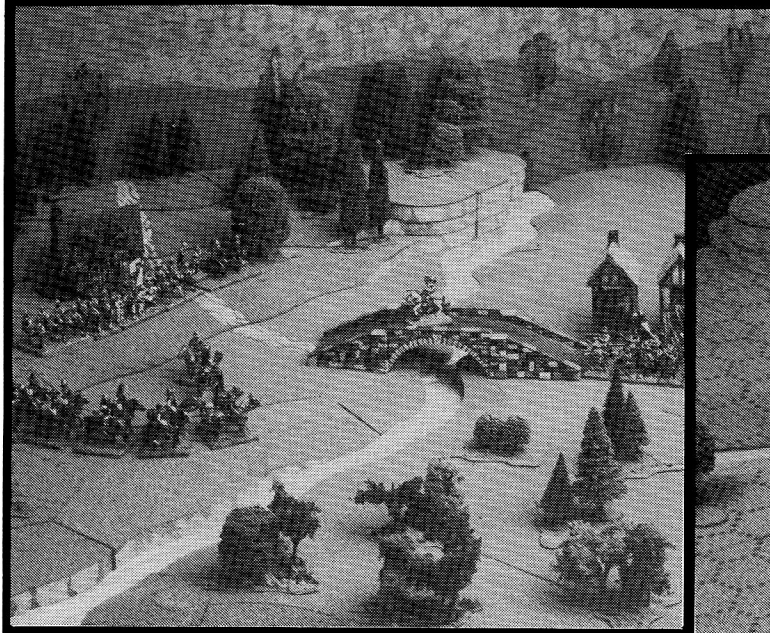
Osprey Armor Stats

Head	9
Center Torso	30
RT/LT Torso	20
Rear CT	6
Rear RT/LT Torso	6
RT Arm	17
LT Arm	18
RT/LT Leg	25

Mech Force Standings

MechWarrior Name	MechForce Chapter	MechForce Ranking
Colonel Gunther Harold Bellows	4	4397
Colonel Sheila Marie Bellows	4	4362
Colonel Edward Markle	4	4182
Leutnant-Colonel Michael D Martin	5	3433
Leftenant-Colonel Gavin McClements	2	2622
Leutnant-Colonel Ronald C Kehir	8	1995
Leutnant-Colonel Kristopher Miller	12	1972
Leutnant-Colonel Steve Farber		2282
Leutnant-Colonel John G Froehlich	22	2247
Chu-sa Jon Freedland	15	2225
Leftenant-Colonel Michael Blouin		2027
Major Brian L Neldner	42	1930
Major Westly Patrick	8	1919
Kommandant Justin Thomas Claypool	7	1901
Major Bobby Howell	10	1898
Sho-sa Wiliam C Gushue		1869
Major William "Mad Dwarf" Munter		1867
Major Tony Lawrence	4	1850
Sho-sa Mark Chittenden	21	1842
Sho-sa Bryan Hudak	49	1767
Kommandant François Trudelle	18	1737
Sho-sa John Gladden	8	1735
Kommandant Greg Sherwood	69	1715
Captain JJ McNeil III	6	1697
Hauptmann Cassiopea Korbus	4	1670
Hauptmann Warren B Dettmann	25	1652
Tai-i Tim Hutchison		1611
Hauptmann Dean Bedford	49	1608
Leftenant Ed Savoir	6	1599
First Leutnant Eric Martel		1573
Chu-i Stephen R Watts	37	1570
Leftenant Brian Lee Kendall	5	1567
Chu-i Don Gilmore	12	1559
First Leutnant Douglas M Smith	24	1553
First Leutnant Scott A Kreiser	13	1547
First Leutnant David M Arrowood	4	1535
First Leutnant Harold Medicus	4	1517
Lieutenant David Heatherly	10	1516
First Leutnant Timothy D Van Westrienen	36	1507
Lieutenant Douglas Vansuch	4	1501
Sergeant Major Scott Nelson		1010
Staff Sergeant Tony Andrews	48	1496
Sergeant Major David Sweeton	22	1492
Sergeant Major Alex Sehnder	7	1483
Sergeant Major David Eames	46	1479
Leutnant Robert A Gross Jr	13	1478
Sergeant Major Daniel Clark		1463
Sergeant Major Brad Arnold	10	1462
Sergeant Major François Gousse	18	1460
Lieutenant Mark Walters	48	1456
Leutnant James Kehir	8	1448
Sergeant Major David Sweeton	22	1456
Leutnant Robert Bost		1434
Leutnant Jerry A Estal	7	1401
Sergeant Major Shaun K Winstanley	44	1399
Brevet-Commander Mike Palmer	29	1398
Sergeant Major Ken Tom	39	1396
Sergeant Major Rhonda Gilmore	12	1393
Sergeant Major Louis Carrion	27	1389
Staff Sergeant Chuck Burhanna	24	1375
Staff Sergeant Joel Velasco	59	1371
Sergeant Major Robert F Hendricks Jr	2	1368
Sergeant Major Robert Zickgraf	8	1359

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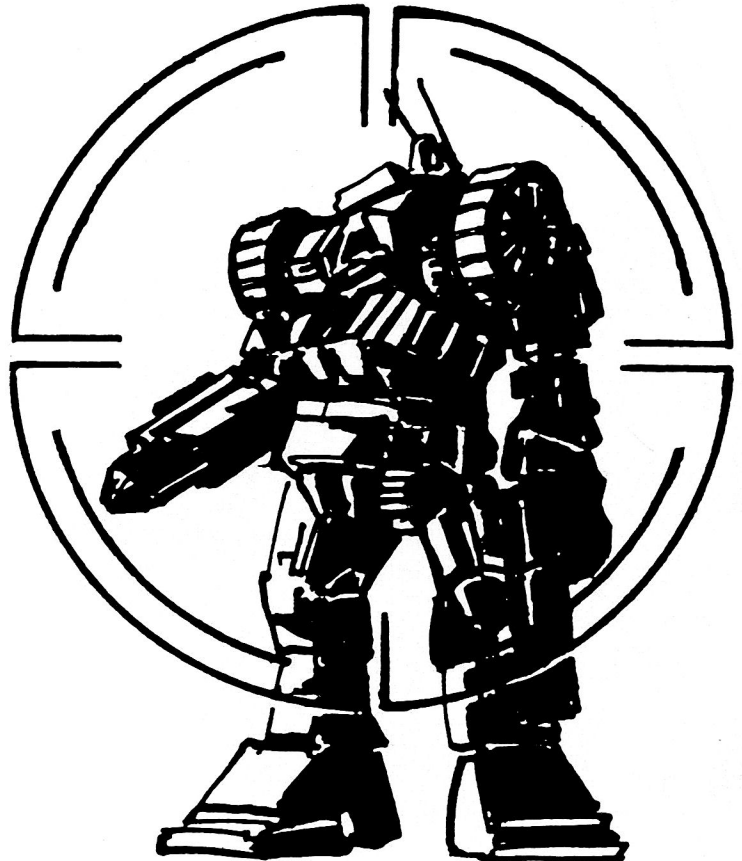
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