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BattleTechnology



The Lost Issues

BattleTechnology

The Lost Issues

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About the Cover:
BattleTechnology takes this opportunity to thank Sgt Laura Martinez, formerly of Scout Lance, 3rd Co, Mirsham's Battalion, for the information and personal mementos that gave us our inside coverage of Galtor's own 3039 War.
Although Galtor III saw her unit destroyed, Sgt Martinez has made a new career for herself in the Magistracy of Canopus, where she is a member of the Magistrix' personal defense force. Her husband, former Mirsham's pilot Julian Warlock is Head Trainer-in-Residence for the Magestrix' Aerospace Forces. This picture of Sgt Martinez was taken just before Mirsham's Battalion left for Galtor III.

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Opening Shots

Throughout our years of publication, there have been times when people didn't love us. Does that surprise you? In service to our readers, the male and female warriors of the Known Sphere, BattleTechnology has poked its printed nose into many of the places where rulers, despots, and commanding officers (no, they are *not* all the same thing!) would rather we hadn't sniffed out. And when we've found a stink, we haven't been reluctant to say so!

Our editors and our journalists have not always died in bed. I have personally played Fay Wray to the King Kong of a BattleMaster which was plunging its fist into the windows of the Halas Military Science Library on Oriente as I ran up and down a set of spiral iron stairs trying to get someone to open the doors to the stacks.

The small facts that it was nighttime, the library was closed, and I had no permit for the classified stacks made the incident all the more embarrassing.

But you know, you meet the most interesting people in holding cells! This fellow (uh uh, we don't publish the names of our sources!) who had read our reprints of Dragnos' articles on the assassination of Janos Marik gave me the tip that led to the story on page 26 concerning the Xanthe III PPC facility.

But I digress,

This compendium of lost issues concerns the time between the Fourth Succession War and the present time. If enough interest exists in the early years, maybe we could be talked into doing a similar volume from that time. Everyone's coverage of the 3039 War was so censored that a vast interest in it is still manifest. We told the story of one of the two fronts in this volume, using much of the material which had been refused print by military censors at the time.

In case you think that censorship is a thing of the past, the Federated Commonwealth deported a team of our reporters (including myself) from Sudeten, confiscating Marcus Killegrew's Dual Cockpit article in the process. This happened in August of 3050, not decades ago, folks! It seemed that an example using the planet Twycross was mentioned in the article. The Commonwealth had its own reasons for not wanting the Clans' attention drawn to Twycross at that precise moment. There is a happy ending here; the Federated Commonwealth is allowing us to print the article in our regular issue, BattleTechnology #17. We received a pleasant letter to that effect from Minister of Information Justin Allard just last Tuesday.

Granted, freedom of the press needs to be tempered with a little responsibility; you can't reveal the plans of a state which is just about to invade another state. Aside from that, most special-interest censorship we've been subject to was meant to protect the dignity of less-than-deserving individuals, not the security of a House or state. We could tell you stories about Cherenkov, for example, or Allesandro Steiner...But we won't.

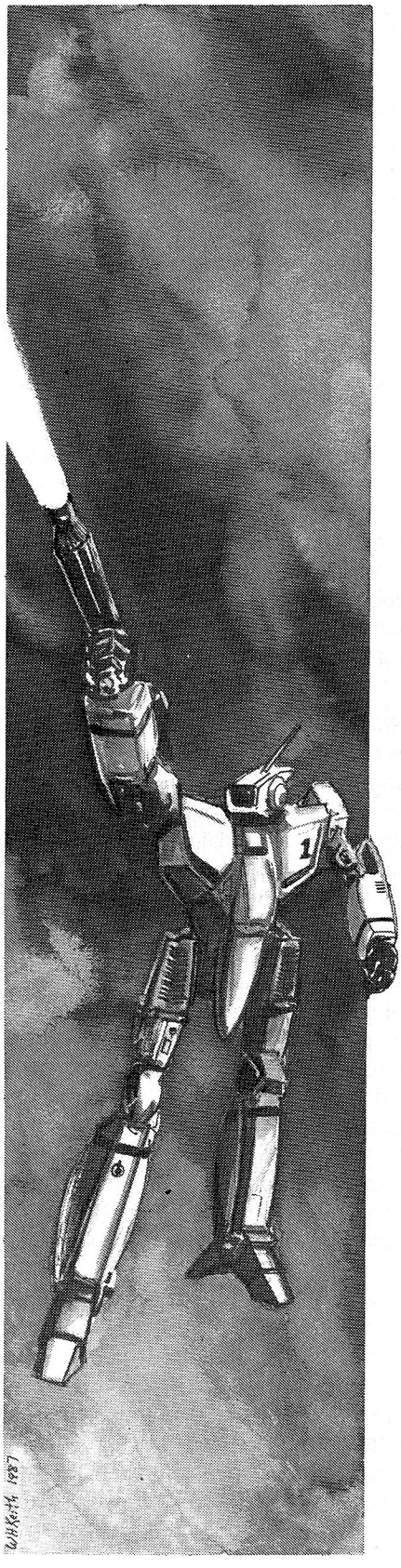
Not this time, anyway.

As far as the form this takes, we know our readers are conservative in at least one way; you like to have your tech all together next to your scenarios, etc. We've interspersed the scenarios in with the factual war articles this time in order to show graphically what some of our brothers and sisters had to face. Reflective ice! Thermal springs! It's been twenty-odd years since I put on a neurohelmet, but these prospects still give me nightmares!

The center of this booklet is the real surprise. Remember how we mentioned a lost warehouse which had copies of the original issue, 0101, that was published before the invention of the BattleMech or the discovery of the Kearny-Fuchida Drive? We've found that warehouse, with copies of the original issue. In each and every copy of BattleTechnology: The Lost Issues you'll find a copy of the first printing of the original BattleTechnology 0101. How's that for Lost Issues? We hope you'll enjoy it as much as we all did.

In the meantime, best [non-censored] wishes to all our [not likely to be refused publication] much-appreciated readers.

— Hilary Ayer
Tharkhad, May 3051



Now It's Over, What Happened?

The 3039 War As We Tried ToTell It

The Galedon-Benjamin Thrust

Much of BattleTechnology's *coverage of the 3039 War between the Federated Commonwealth and The Draconis Combine was hampered by censorship. For this volume of Lost Issues, we are telling the story we were not permitted to tell then. It is impossible to cover all four fronts in one issue; the Lyran and Dieron fronts must wait for a future volume. This is the story of the Benjamin and Galedon fronts, the offensive that was fought out and failed.*

BattleTechnology, June 3039 (no censorship)

Before the offensive began, the Federated Commonwealth's policy of exchanging unit assignments was less apparent than on any other front... The Benjamin District has no political or historic connections with the Blackjack Operations Area, while the Galedon District borders the Periphery on two sides and is entirely removed from the Lyran Separatist fronts which were the excuse for the troop shuffle. The Skye Separatists had attempted a coup less than four years before. It was vital that the Ryan Steiner-Selwin Kelswa group not be aware of exact troop strength or movements. Most of the Skye March would have died before they gave information to Kurita informants; they even liked Hanse Davion better — which is something like saying that you would rather die of cyanide poisoning than strychnine. Several of the more radical of the separatist groups were funded by Kuritan intelligence services; almost all had been infiltrated. What the Hanse-Off or the Harvest Memorial Groups know this morning, the ISF knows by noon.

The Fox has a habit of making a disadvantage into an advantage. Despite the massive insults he continued to receive, he used the fact of that coup to excuse four years of moving troops around to 'get a less biased garrison grouping' in the Skye March along the Rasalhague and Kurita borders. He used the 'security risk' explanation to keep any but the most loyal officers in the Ryde Operations Area border from knowing where and what the Federated Commonwealth had to strike with. The First Kell Hounds sat out the war on Summer as a deterrent to rebellion. The 11th Federated Commonwealth RCT performed a similar role on Skye.

The 3rd and 36th Lyran Guard regimental combat teams were to be involved in the struggle for the Galedon District, along with the 3rd Donegal Guards *[ed. note: the 3rd Donegal had not then been organized into an RCT]*, the recently-organized 2nd Federated Commonwealth RCT. Three regimental combat teams of the Crucis Lancers and the 8th Regiment of the Fighting Urukhai completed the available invasion forces.

Lt General Ardan Sortek's April 15 strikes began with Huan and Capra, strikes in force spearheaded by the 5th Crucis (Remagen Lancers) Lancers RCTs on Huan and the 6th Crucis Lancers RCT on Capra. The Fifth Crucis Lancers still keep the unique tradition of going without a BattleMech Regiment, relying on four armored regiments, two aerospace, and four infantry. Huan was defended by the 32nd Galedon Regulars. Capra's garrison of the 31st Galedon Regulars had been reinforced by the 2nd Training Battalion of the first graduating class of the recently re-opened An Ting Military Academy. The fight for these planets lasted just over a month.

On the Benjamin Front, Duke James Sandoval's first wave targeted Klathandu IV, Fellanin II, and Sadalbari. Klathandu's garrison was the green 21st Benjamin Regulars. Facing them was the 10th Federated Commonwealth RCT. The planet was subdued in three weeks, two weeks of which were taken up by squabbles within the RCT's command structure. Fellanin II was garrisoned by the Ryuken-go, one of the units formed from the mixed units created under Wolf's Dragoons and Minobu Tetsuhara, melded with Yakuza and Legion of Vega troops. These units are extremely flexible and tenacious. Against them was set the 17th Donegal Guards RCT. The planet fell in five weeks. Sadalbari, defended by its planetary militia, was easily taken by the 12th Deneb Light Cavalry, which had the advantage of mobility and artillery assets. All three of these frontline units were relieved by mercenary garrisons. The 17th Donegal RCT went on to attack the 22nd Benjamin and the 2nd Arkab on New Mendham in May, while the 12th Deneb made mincemeat of the militia garrison on Matar.

The second part of the attack began in the Galedon District late in May; feints on Elidere IV, Thestria, and Delacruz, while the main effort leapfrogged Capra and Huan, replacing frontline with garrison troops to beef up the invasion of the key world of An Ting. Sortek's flagship coordinated this attack. Incredibly, they found the world defended only by the 1st and 3rd An Ting Academy Training Battalions. The student MechWarriors made good use of terrain; the 4th Company of the 3rd lasted 3 weeks in the Chuang-Tzu Mountains. But the outcome of the contest was never in doubt; informal reports compared the campaign to steaming the wrinkles out of a Class-A uniform.

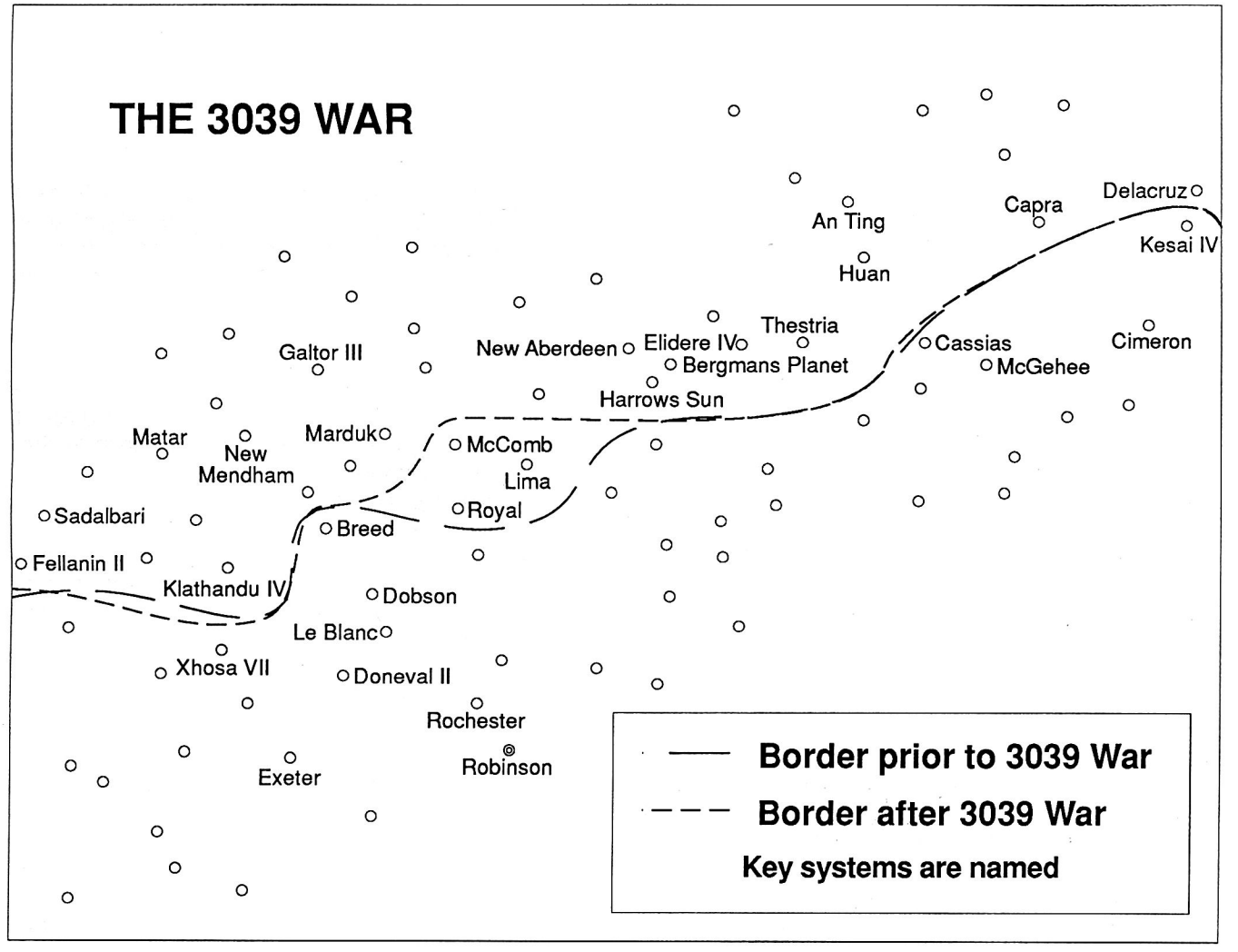
On the Benjamin Front, fighting continued on Fellanin II and Klathandu IV, while troops were leapfrogged through the Sadalbari system to attack Matar and New Mendham. Meanwhile, 3rd (Achernar Lancers) Crucis Lancers RCT jumped from Breed to the Marduk System, engaging the 6th Benjamin Regulars, the 2nd Proserpina Hussars, and a testing ground's worth of artillery and tank units that weren't supposed to be there. Both sides have avoided damage to the Norse BattleMech Factory. Fighting there continues as of this writing.

In no case was the planetary garrison reinforced after the first attacks!

The expected Kurita counterattack has not materialized. Planet after planet falls, and system after system. Federated Commonwealth forces have made deep inroads into the District. An Ting is a pivotal JumpOff site which could launch new troops in several directions. What is Theodore Kurita waiting for?

BattleTechnology Weekly News, June 17, 3039

During the first months of the new Federated Commonwealth's attack on the Draconis Combine, the



Galtor III

Zhonghua Renmin Galtor Guo

Solar System
Spectral Class F (Transit Time 9-12 days)
Galtor is third of six planets. It has two small moons, Terra and Froma.

Jump Point: Zenith

ComStar Facilities: Class B

People:
Population: 30,395,000.
Population Density: 2.7 per square kilometer
New Derry: 2,000,000
New Wuhan City: 1,800,000
Changlee: 750,000

Capitol: New Derry

Government Type: Feudal Monarchy, overseen by Military Governor Cho-sa Allen Fredericks.

Religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, Star Nihilistic, Roman Catholic, One Book

Topography: The habitable portion of the planet contains 13,328,380 square kilometers divided into three continents. Only the most hospitable continent of Eire is inhabited. It has a spine of vast mountains and broad fertile plain cut by numerous rivers. Hibernia is mountainous: its Western coast is cut by jagged rocky fjords. Eventual expansion is planned into the eastern-central flood plains. Kerouaille is mostly desert, except for the tropical jungles shared by all three continents at the equator.

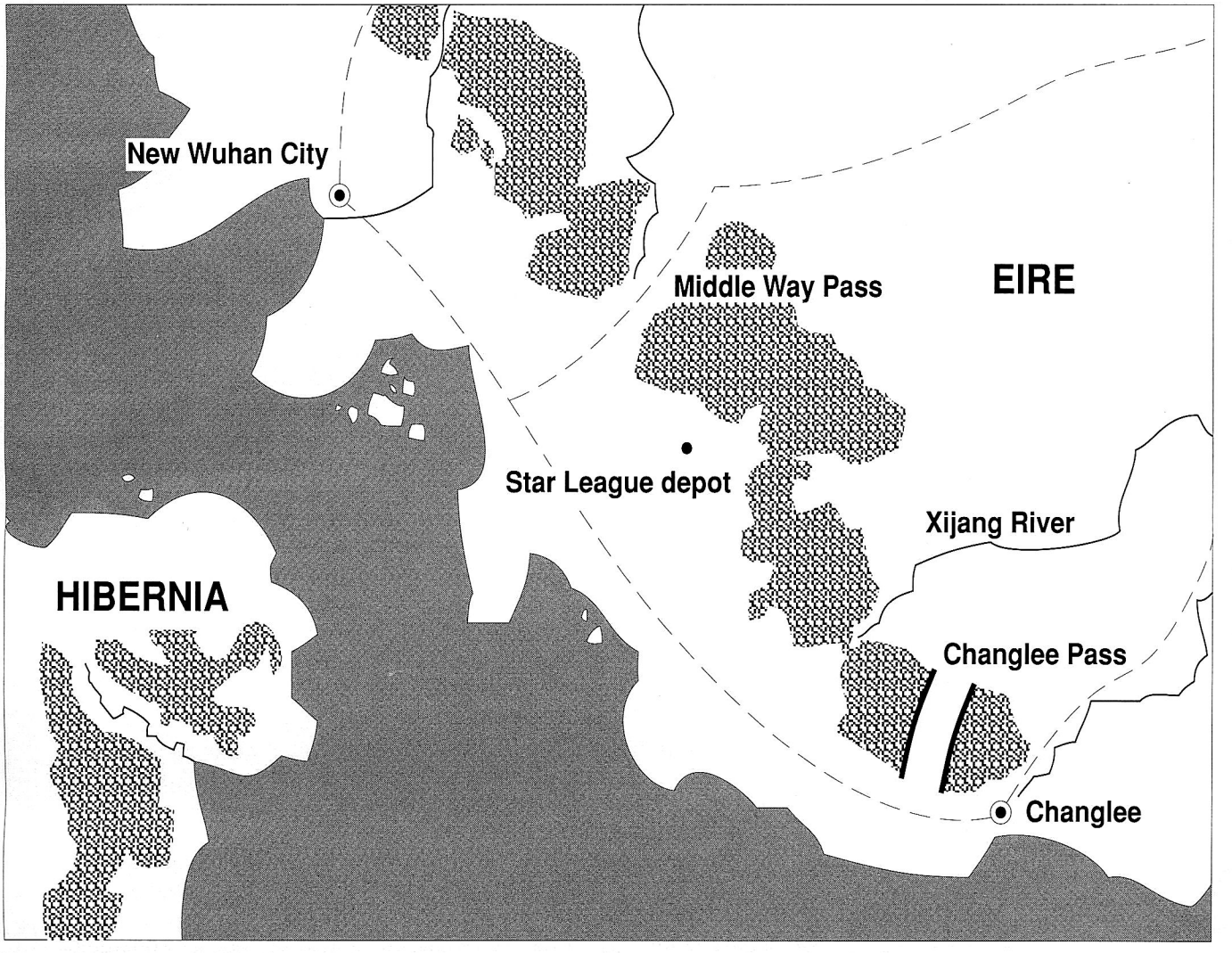
Transport:
Monorail and Magnetic Rail: 20,000,000 net ton-km
Motor Vehicles:
6,000,000 passenger cars
3,000,000 freight ton-km
Civil Aviation:
400,000,000,000 passenger-km
22,000,000,000 freight ton-km

Benjamin sector was the key to Hanse Davion's attempt to gain the formerly-Davion Galtor Thumb region, rich in ores and industry. Galtor III had been preparing its revolt for a decade.

Galtor III was the focus of the Federated Suns' campaign of 3022. It was retaken by the Draconis Combine in the Fourth Succession War. A contingency plan was activated that surfaced in late May of 3039. A rebel fleet of ocean naval ships had been built up by an ingenious strategem. The cities of New Wuhan City and Changlee had always had small hovercraft fishing fleets; the rebels had infiltrated these fleets. Davion money had bought new craft and equipment; the fleets seemed to prosper until 3033. Then 'pirate' fleets began to prey on the hoverships. Almost a fifth of the fleet was lost in that first year. The 'fishing fleet' was given permission to arm. A series of escalating battles covered the next five years, during which very few of the lost ships were found, wrecked or whole. Law enforcement forces combed the island chains that lay offshore from New Wuhan to Changlee; finding nothing, they assumed a skill at hiding, perhaps a Star League cache or a Castle Brian base. In actuality, the mountain fjords of the uninhabited continent of Hibernia housed the 'dead' ships. A sizable fleet had been built up by the time the underground rose in May of 3039 to support the invasion of their planet. The 1st Amphigean Light Assault Group was based on Galtor III. For three weeks, the rebels conducted a war of misdirection, making their few 'Mechs seem to be everywhere by ferrying them up & down the coastline in the supposed 'pirate ships' while conducting raids via hovercraft which were supposed to have been destroyed. The sea assaults were the one thing the 1st Amphigean was not looking for. They had to reallocate their resources away from the cities and the mountain passes which control the road system of the only inhabited continent, Eire, out to the seacoasts. This redeployment was just about finished when the 10th Federated Commonwealth RCT arrived in system on June 13, 3039. It seems that the people of Galtor III will soon be free again, back with the Federated Commonwealth as they have long wished.

McComb revolted in April 3039; Royal, and Lima in the first weeks of May. Selected mercenary units had been covertly landed to aid the planned rebellions. Further reinforcements may not be required on these planets. Rebel forces are sizable enough so that if the Federated Commonwealth merely keeps the Draconis Combine from reinforcing the respective garrisons, these planets will fall.

In a coordinated effort with the MIIO and the Benjamin Thrust, rebellions were being incited on three Galedon Sector planets. Harrow's Sun and Bergman's Planet rebelled in the first weeks of May 3039. New Aberdeen followed suit at the end of May. These rebellions tied up two valuable regiments: the Ryuken-yon on Harrow's Sun and the 21st Galedon on Bergman's Planet, as well as Reserve and Militia Forces on New Aberdeen which would no doubt have been useful to the Dragon elsewhere.



Hanse Davion's strategy was to attack deep into Kurita space, unlike previous invasions which had sought to take and hold a long strip of border planets to ensure a line of retreat. Two deep but narrow invasion paths were driven into the Benjamin and Galedon Districts. Mercenary units played two roles in this campaign, as advance recon and scout forces, and as relief garrisons. As soon as frontline troops had taken a planet, mercs were brought in as garrison and pacification forces, while the 'Leapfrog' policy carried the House units, in the same ships with their resupplies, to a new front. The planets of An Ting and Galtor III were vital to his offensive. An Ting was the linchpin to the edgeward front of the offensive. Galtor III was the sore spot in the Davion conscience as well as the other major JumpOff point for the sector. The second phase of the attack would have joined these two thrusts around the crescent of planets which surround the Galtor Thumb. This second phase was to have begun July 12, 3039. By a grim coincidence, this was the day Theodore Kurita had selected to begin his counterstrike.

BattleTechnology Weekly News, July 14, 3039 (censored in the Draconis Combine and the Federated Commonwealth)

Elidere IV, Thestria, and Delacruz, the 'feints' of the Federated Commonwealth's May campaign, are each presenting separate difficulties to Lt General Sortek. ...

Elidere IV had the 3rd Donegal Guards and the Fighting Urukhai 8th Strike Regiment against what was expected to be the 34th and 30th Galedon Regulars. The 30th had been moved a month before the invasion. The 34th defended this agricultural planet for a gallant five weeks before the remainder retreated offplanet. Despite a weak Davion defense of this planet during the Fourth Succession War (the

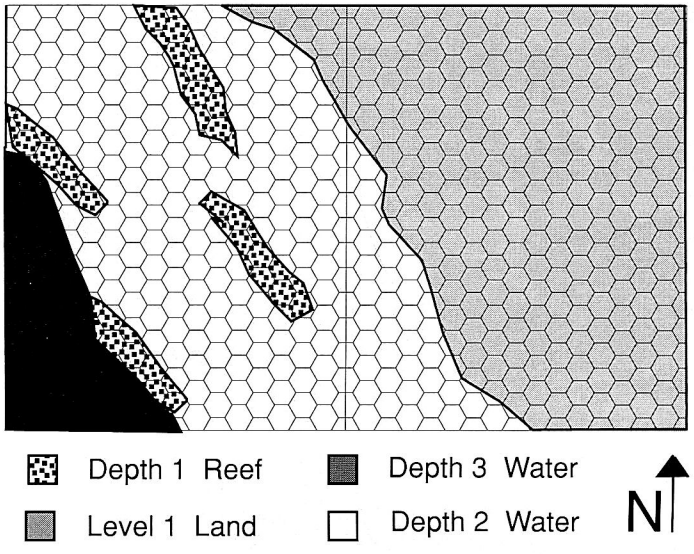
(continued on page 8)

Fun At The Beach

Battle Recording, Recon Lance, 3rd Company, Pollux's Battalion 1st Amphigeans

(Ed Note: The Amphigeans developed from a corporate security force to a corporation-run mercenary unit. All MechWarriors are strictly hired hands; none owns his own 'Mech. Pay and benefits are excellent, and for veterans of five years or more, stock option plans are available. Esprit de Corps is replaced by a respect for the credit balance. The company store policy of House Kurita had begun to have deleterious effects on the unit's morale. But its reversal under the leadership of Kanrei Theodore Kurita, and recent new contractual promises, had made the unit prideful and battleready once again.)

Brown Two: Brown Leader, Brown Leader, Come in.
Brown Leader: Fold my hand, Murphy. Brown Leader here.
Brown Two: Recon... I mean Blue Lance has caught us some fishies, Sarge. Down by the reefs in Sector Two
Brown Leader: Brown Three and Four, rendezvous at the cliff designated on your maps as Cliff Two Alpha, that is 2-Alpha.
Unidentified Voice #1: You get the line, I'll get the pole, honey!
Unidentified Voice # 2: It's your turn to clean the fish: I did it last time!
Unidentified Voice # 1: As long as I get to see you eat your catch, Fatso!



Overview:

When Galtor rebelled in 3039, New Wuhan City and Changlee were taken from the sea. The weak point of the rebel campaign was the capital, New Derry. It is located on the other side of the continent of Eire from the rebel bases. It is accessible from the sea, but it is the most heavily populated of the cities, the best defended, and the furthest from the rebel supply line. New Derry was never taken. The rebels' strength was the number and speed of their craft, and their determination. The 1st Amphigean's strength was ... well, strength. The events of this scenario take place as the rebels, reinforced by the 1st Federated Commonwealth RCT (and that's quite a reinforcement), began their drive across the mountain passes to control the two passes with the intent of attacking New Derry simultaneously from sea and land. This particular thrust was successful; the rebels did take Wuhan Pass. This particular unit did not reach that action.

Elements of the Fire Lance, 2nd Company, Mirsham's Battalion, part of the 1st Federated Commonwealth RCT, were to rendezvous with a rebel hover lance to conduct a raid on a guard position. Unluckily for them, a recon patrol from the Recon Lance, 3rd Company, Pollux's Battalion detected the hover lance and called in support from the Pursuit Lance. Elements of both lances arrived at the rendezvous before the Federated Commonwealth BattleMechs.

Game Set-up

Defender hovercraft enter from anywhere on the western border. Historically, the attacker 'Mechs entered along the beach from the south; for this scenario, they may enter from anywhere on the land

Comfort Cove, Galtor III
July 25, 3039; 23:40 pm GDT

hexes of the southern border. Defender BattleMechs enter from the three hexes of the northeast corner. On turn #2, Defender rolls 2D6. His chances of entering each turn are:

Turn	Roll to Enter
2	10-12
3	8 and above
4	6 and above
5	4 and above
6	automatic

Defender:

Entering Turn 1
Black and White (Rebel) Hoverships
3 Pegasus Hover Scout Vehicles
1 Scimitar Hover Tank
(all of these were once converted to either 'fishing fleet' or 'pirate' purposes, then reconverted in a rebel shipyard, their weapons and military sensors reconnected, etc)
All are piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3

Entering Turn 3
Fire Lance Elements, Mirsham's Battalion:
Mack Bradley *Rifleman:* Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3
Evelyn Ramagupta *Thunderbolt:* Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2
Jack Cisneros *Crusader:* Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 2

Attacker:
Elements of Pursuit Lance, 3rd Co, (2nd) Pollux's Btn, 1st Amphigean Light Assault Group
Wolverine
Vulcan
Trebuchet
All are Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

Elements of Recon Lance, 3rd Co, (2nd) Pollux's Btn, 1st Amphigean Light Assault Group
Firestarter
Jenner
Both are Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

Objectives:
Defending elements want to enter the board, have one element from each unit approach within 8 hexes of one another, and the have two forces retreat in the same direction. This part of the countryside has many rebel hidey-holes.
Attackers want to prevent this linkup, and, of course, to destroy as many of the rebels as possible.

Victory Conditions:
Attacker Decisive:
All of either defending force destroyed, OR all but one of each defending force destroyed.
Attacker Marginal:
At least half of each defending force destroyed, defending forces forced to retreat in different directions.
Defender Marginal:
Half or fewer of each defending force destroyed, defending forces retreat in same direction.
Defender Decisive: Three or fewer of defending force destroyed, forces retreat in same direction.

Bar Story, 3042: Jack Cisneros, Crusader pilot, Fire Lance, 2nd Company, Mirsham's Battalion

That was the beginning of the end for Mirsham's Battalion, just that one night action. Them Kuritans was dug in; the overland campaign was what you'd call hard fighting. Every klick of territory we took was paid for in blood. The rebels just didn't have the fighting strength on land, and we were too far from our supply lines. July and August were okay, but in September they started telling us to conserve ammo. By October only our energy weapons could be fired. And what shows up best on long range sensors but energy discharge?

I'm one of two guys from the Battalion that survived the campaign. Two guys! Mirsham bought it when Command Company was overrun near New Derry Highlands.

Our paymaster bought it during the retreat. All the company funding information was stored somewhere in electronic form; the bank on Exeter claimed the info had been wiped clean during a raid.

So you could call me a disadvantaged veteran. Thanks, I will have another. As I was sayin' the Galtor campaign was long and bloody...

planet had been a personal fief of Duke Michael Hasek-Davion, who had done little to garrison or supply it), planetary sentiment toward liberation by the Federated Commonwealth seems enthusiastic. The 3rd Donegal Guards were seconded to Huan to aid in suppression of insurgency.

On Thestria the invading 36th Lyran Guard faced the defending 1st Proserpina Hussars. The conflict is in its third month with no decisive end in sight.

Delacruz is the most simply explained. The invasion force is the 2nd Federated Commonwealth RCT [one striker regiment, one assault regiment, two aerospace, four infantry, and a regiment of armor]. The planetary militia, two battalions of active reserves under the leadership of the 8th Sword of Light [two medium and two assault battalions] was giving a determined resistance, but was slowly being overwhelmed by weight of numbers. Reports are coming in of veteran-to-elite level troops with regimental markings which were not known to exist in the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery appearing suddenly to supplement the planetary forces. A usually reliable source claims the sighting of an EXT-4D Exterminator, a 65-ton BattleMech thought to have perished with the Star League. If the sighting is correct, the 'Mech is specialized for electronic countermeasures. If there are more of such 'Mechs, the counter attack may be bloody, sophisticated, and not at all in the Federated Commonwealth's favor.

Theodore Kurita's July 12th counterstrike focused on advancing through the hard-pressed Benjamin District to take the fighting back to the Davion side of the border. For the first month and a half, the Galedon District received only a lift to morale. Bergman's Planet was at last relieved on September 12. The 36th Lyran Guard suffered 50% casualties before abandoning the planet to the 4th An Ting Legion and the 1st Proserpina Hussars. New Aberdeen was eventually retaken by the additional strength of a 'ghost regiment' whose exact composition is still unknown. It is thought to have been the 2nd Ghost.

Luckily for the rest of the Inner Sphere, Theodore Kurita's forces did not include more than a handful of Star League designs. What the Ghost Regiments did possess were the same 'Mechs as the Inner Sphere knew — but theirs were in mint condition, all original equipment intact, including the rarest targeting/tracking systems and battle computers. Most of his frontline assault units had been repaired to Star League milspec. At the time, nobody knew where Kuritan forces had acquired these 'Mechs. It is now generally accepted that they were supplied by ComStar.

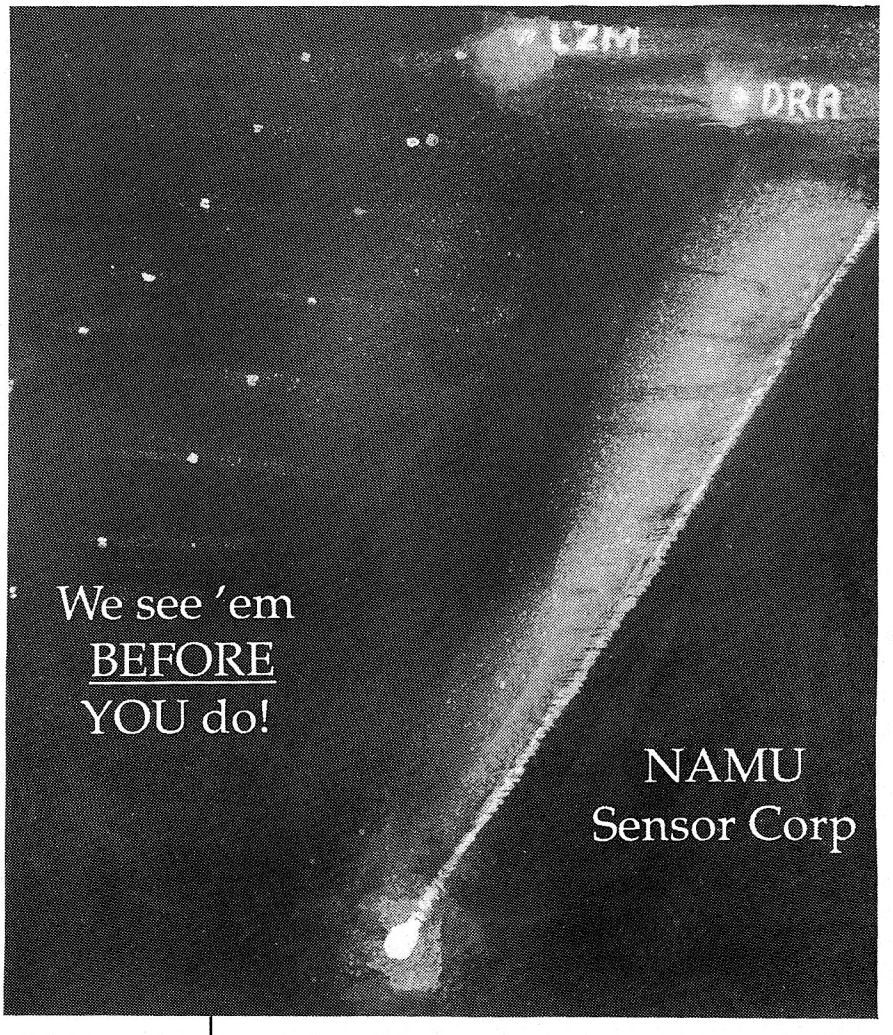
In hindsight, Theodore Kurita's twofold strategy becomes apparent. Let the initial conquests be easy; to make the invaders overconfident. Let FedCom forces in so far that their supply lines are overextended, and his best assault troops a long way from the border. And then, his strike! Not at the Davion invaders, but at the Davion planets they had left behind their own borders, lightly defended. Bypassing his own struggling troops, he drove deep into the Robinson Operations Area. His offensive did not slow until Exeter.

BattleTechnology Weekly News, August 5, 3039 (censored in the Federated Commonwealth and the Draconis Combine, sabotaged in the Outworlds Alliance)

Theodore Kurita's forces have dubbed the counterstrike 'Operation Lightning', so quick and so strong was its initial effect. Within two weeks, he attacked Klathandu IV, Breed, Xhosa VII, Exeter, Doneval II, Dobson, Le Blanc, and Rochester. Breed was attacked by the 21st and 30th Galedon Regulars; Xhosa VII by the 9th Ghost Regiment and the Ryuken-san. Dobson was attacked by the 2nd Sword of Light, and Le Blanc by the 3rd and 8th Ghost Regiments. According to the best information then available to Hanse Davion's MIIO, this should have used all the shipping available to the Draconis Combine Mustered Soldiery. So the invasions of Doneval by the Ryoken-yon, Rochester by the 4th and 2nd Ghost, and Exeter by the 8th Sword of Light and the 3rd Benjamin Regulars have come as a dreadful surprise. Fellanin II, Sadalbari, and Matar fell to counteroffensive troops which surprised and outnumbered the mercenary garrisons. Sadalbari and Matar were particularly unpleasant losses, as they were JumpOff points for the new Federated Commonwealth offensive; supply ships were captured on the launching pads. Reports confirm that Kurita has three times the number of JumpShips they were supposed to possess. In the Galedon District, the JumpShips of the Counterstrike waves bear the markings of merchant houses which our sources confirm as Yakuza fronts. The Kanrei has somehow won the Yakuza to his service! Kuritan forces with 'allied merchant shipping' have patched together a command circuit of incredible numbers, stretching from Luthien almost to Robinson, based on uninhabited systems! So that's what they were waiting for from April through July, for the invasion chain of ships to be in place!

On Klathandu IV, the Davion garrison force of Telos' Tigers was attacked by the 2nd Benjamin Regulars, on Breed the 21st and 30th Galedon attacked the newly formed 1st Chisholm's Raiders RCT. The aerospace wing of the 1st Chisholm was newly assigned; lack of training had most of them destroyed or grounded for repairs within a week. This left the planet without aerospace cover. It was a long, cruel, pounding the Raiders underwent. As of 3050, the unit is still understrength, with so many new recruits that the unit is rated 'green'. On Xhosa VII the Davion Light Guards RCT showed what an RCT which has had full training time together can do in the defense of a planet. Kurita had clear aerospace superiority, but the Light Guards

played attack and run in the air while making Kurita pay twice for every inch of ground. Dobson was defended by the 2nd Regiment of Chisholm's Raiders, numerically one for one with the 2nd Sword of Light (one light battalion, two heavy, and one assault.) The 2nd Sword has twice the usual amount of aerospace forces while the Raiders specialize in camouflage and concealment techniques. Once it came to ground battle, the Raiders' artillery superiority evened the odds. Le Blanc was defended by the Robinson DMM (Militia). The 3rd and 8th Ghost Regiments walked all over them, taking the planet in three weeks. It was not until the recall of the 1st Federated Commonwealth RCT in October that Le Blanc was recaptured. Doneval was defended by two mercenary regiments, Mercooli's Maulers (a veteran assault unit), and Carey's Cavaliers, a green unit which was considered promising, but in need of further training. They gave the Ryoken-yon a holding action for a month and a half, until relief in the form of the 10th Federated Commonwealth RCT, newly returned from the failed invasion, freed the planet of its attackers. Rochester's Militia Garrison had a stroke of luck. The 8th Crucis Lancers RCT was on its way to a new assignment; their ships were refueling in the Rochester system when the invading 4th Ghost Regiment arrived. Aerospace combat around the uninhabited second planet of the Rochester system convinced the 4th Ghost that reinforcements were a necessity. In three weeks' time the 2nd Ghost arrived insystem. The Ghost Regiments were heavy on Star League tech. Despite the Ghosts being up against an entire RCT, the battle for the system lasted a hard-fought two months. Kurita strategy called for an attack on Exeter, but the supply and transport lines were stretched to the limit. Two regiments, the 8th Sword of Light and the 3rd Benjamin Regulars, were all that could be delivered to attack. The 1st NAIS Training Cadre was overwhelmed. For two weeks, the planet seemed ready to fall. The 36th Lyran Guard returned as reinforcement, but it wasn't until the middle of November that the arriving 22nd Avalon Hussars RCT relieved the planet.



BattleTechnology Weekly News, August 23, 3039 (censored in the Draconis Combine, suffering 'misprints' and 'missed deliveries' in the Draconis March of the Federated Suns)

When the 32nd Galedon retreated from Huan, it left behind two companies of attached scouts specially trained in insurgency. Behind the orderly facade of a conquered planet resigned to its new masters, pre-organized reserve groups and newly-mobilized guerilla gangs seethed and planned.

On the first of August their campaign began.

Hardest to explain is the 'lucky accident' which took out the Command Guidance Systems of the 3rd Donegal Guards' Armor Control Center. During a scheduled overhaul which required a switchoff and restoration of the backup systems, one of the planet's freak electric storms hit at just the right location. The central computer system was Ground Zero for an electromagnetic pulse similar to that of

a thermonuclear explosion; in a short time the 3rd Donegal possessed only an expensive paperweight in place of their armor command computer.

On the second of August, the 32nd Galedon began their Counterstrike, joining with the 2nd Night Stalkers to spearhead the attack on Huan's industrial center of Shao Jen. By the twentieth of the month, Shao Jen, the capitol of Heavenly Snows, and the key river city of Hwei were in Kuritan hands. The 3rd Lyran is expected to retreat by early September.

Theodore Kurita also knows how to turn a weakness into a strength. He knew that several of his formerly-Davion planets would revolt in order to rejoin the Federated Commonwealth. So some of his best agents simulated rebellious sentiment on additional planets. Of all the planets which revolted in the Federated Commonwealth's favor, only Mc Comb, Royal, Lima, and Galtor III were certain to be pro-Commonwealth.

BattleTechnology Weekly News, September 30, 3039 (censored in the Draconis Combine)

Theodore Kurita's forces are advancing on four fronts at once. Not only do they have troops in regimental strength which were not known to be part of their forces, it is confirmed that they have 'Mechs in perfect, mint-new condition in numbers not available to any of the other Successor Houses. Unorthodox regiments like the Ryuken-san and Ryuken-roku are joining these unknown units as well as the 2nd and 8th Galedon Regulars to an attack path that seems to lead straight to the Davion Kentares and Raman PDZs and their rich pickings. Leaving much of the Federated Commonwealth troops behind them, confident that their allied troops will clear the pockets of resistance to their rear, these troops are heading for rich prizes like the Star League depot in the Kesai System, and the district administrative centers of Exeter, maybe to the district capitol of Robinson itself.

Fighting continues in the Marduk system.

The MIIO did enjoy some successes, notably this piece of disinformation which led Kuritan troops into a time-wasting detour which probably saved the Robinson PDZ.

October 10, 3039, BattleTechnology Magazine (censored by the Federated Commonwealth; never published in the Draconis Combine)

Theodore Kurita's troops in the Bryce PDZ of the Federated Suns have paused their drive through the sector to attack the Kesai and Cimaron systems. Cimaron was defended by the Davion Light Guards RCT, while Kesai IV's garrison was the entire 11th Avalon Hussars RCT. Against them were the Fifth Sword of Light and two of the ghost regiments [now thought to be the 2nd and Fifth Ghost. The 2nd is an Assault Regiment, used for attacks in strength, while the Fifth is a Striker Regiment, nearly as strong, but trained in maneuverability.]

Neither of these planets is a prime target in itself. Indeed, Cimaron was only included in the attack to give a secondary site for a possible re-invasion of Kesai, should one be necessary.

The two Ghost Regiments headed for Kesai. Only two regiments remained of the garrison, the Hussars themselves and the associated Corman's Armored Regiment. The rest of the RCT was spread across the district; they were not able to respond until the planetary fight was over. [The Federated Commonwealth learned from this battle; they will rarely separate the elements of an RCT again; this makes for some overstrength garrisons, but for some reason, the whole of an RCT can be mobilized faster than the sum of its parts.] Kesai IV holds a former Star League Depot, discovered during the last Kurita occupation (3019). The Kuritans had had less than six months to explore before they lost the system. Davion efforts had taken everything mobile off Kesai, but Allard's MIIO disinformation had convinced the Kuritans otherwise. The counterstrike was Kurita's last chance to capture supposed 'new finds' of mighty Star League defense technology. The fighting lasted a month as Kurita science teams combed the area of the depot for secret entrances which did not exist. The Science Task Force met each night in the old Loading Bay of the depot. As massive machinery too heavy to move loomed mockingly over them, day after day each had to report 'no success'. At last they reported to their Kanrei that they had been hoaxed. The invasion of the planet was called off.

Meanwhile the 5th Sword of Light picked off Cimaron in two weeks. The associated Sorenson's Sabers were involved in an unusual action (see scenario) during this time, making a quick raid on the new capitol in the southern continent for the contents of a Star League-era library. The planetary population was so hostile, and

One of the silliest sidelights in the '39 War was the Theodore-Is-Dead rumor. The sample given here is the clearest Galedon front example, but the rumor was a grass-roots favorite in the Dieron and Benjamin Districts as well. There are even examples in print from the capitol world of Luthien. What should have tipped us all off? The Official Censors ALLOWED THESE ARTICLES TO BE PUBLISHED WITHOUT A MURMUR. Almost as if they had been ordered to do so, eh?

see opposite page

Kanrei Dead!

Is our Kanrei, Theodore Kurita, really dead?

Reports from several sources combine to a deadly conclusion:

1) In last month's review of the troops on Kuzuu, the Kanrei's face was never shown. We saw several rear shots of a man who could have been the Kanrei, but

WE NEVER SAW HIS FACE.

2) The first letters of the paragraphs of the Kanrei's Readiness of the Armies speech of April 30, 3039, spell out "This is not so." Speculation increases that the speech itself was composed by a source loyal to the Kanrei who showed his loyalty by inserting this code into a speech he was

FORCED TO INVENT.

3) The 11th reunion of the 11th Legion of Vega, the regiment which the Kanrei commanded when he turned the tide of the Fourth Succession War, took place without him on April 11. The reunion took place on Vega days before it was invaded by Federated Commonwealth troops. On such an occasion, in such danger, how could the Kanrei have let his old battle comrades down,

UNLESS ILLNESS OR INJURY PREVENTED HIM FROM ATTENDING!

4) The Kanrei's wife has been shown in a recent photo (May 23, 3039, Luthien Times-Herald) in full mourning kimono. Granted, her brother died early this year during the defense of Altais, but such a picture, together with the weight of other evidence, brings us to an inescapable conclusion.

She is in mourning for the Kanrei!

5) Davionist troops have taken seven planets as of this writing, including Vega itself. Fighting continues on eleven more. Yet on planet after planet, troops under the Kanrei's command have acted only defensively. The Kanrei is an aggressive strategist! He would never permit our enemies such inroads into the Dragon's territory,

such offenses against our honor!

Our Kanrei is dead or severely injured!

YOU READ IT HERE IN THE INQUIRER!!!
NO OTHER NEWS SOURCE WOULD DARE
TO DRAW THIS BOLD CONCLUSION FROM THE EVIDENCE!

See page 15 for Cadet Corps Youth Saves Mother of Five from Garbage Monster!

the possible gain from keeping this planet so marginal, that the entire garrison was pulled off to join the Ghost Regiments as they moved to a pincher force that sought to surround Cassias and McGehee. The month's delay of these units has probably cost the Draconis Combine its chance to acquire the rich vanadium ores of Cassias.

The 3rd Crucis Lancers RCT has been forced to abandon Marduk, retreating offsystem on the 10th of this month.

Harrow's Sun continued its fight through October of 3039; Bergman's Planet through November, while New Aberdeen capitulated as soon as the Kurita counterstrike was a visible success, signing amnesty terms on September 2, 3039. Like Huan, Elidere was one of the 'plants'. The planet was loyal to House Kurita throughout. "Accidents" and "natural disasters" kept Federated Commonwealth forces returning to strengthen the planetary garrison.

BattleTechnology Weekly News, December 10, 3039, (censored in the Federated Commonwealth)

The question now is not whether the Draconis Combine will win this war, but how much the Combine will take from the Federated Commonwealth when it does.

Press Conference, Amilcar Yamaha, Press Secretary for Gunji no Kanrei Theodore Kurita, December 30, 3039

"The Draconis Combine did not provoke this war. The Draconis Combine did not begin this war. Now that the Draconis Combine has won this war, we can afford to be generous. McComb, Royal, and Lima are planets which feel themselves to be part of the Federated Suns. So be it. We will not force a conqueror's shackles on these planets, but let them decide their own destiny. We challenge Hanse Davion to be as generous with the planets he has unlawfully taken."

BattleTechnology reporter-at-large Maddelena Brandt brought up the question of Galtor III. At first it seemed that her question would be ignored, then Mr Yamaha replied, "Generosity does not include handing a sharp knife to a man who has demonstrated that he would like to cut your throat. Galtor is historically part of House Kurita. It is the median JumpPoint for too many worlds which would be too tempting to the greed of the Fox. Galtor III will be well treated, but it will remain part of the Combine."

An Ting

Solar System
Spectral Class F (Transit Time 9-12 days)
An TIn is second of four planets. It has one moon, H'o T'ai.

Jump Points: Zenith, Nadir

ComStar Facilities: Class A

People:
Population: 10,003,022.
Population Density: 1.7 per square kilometer

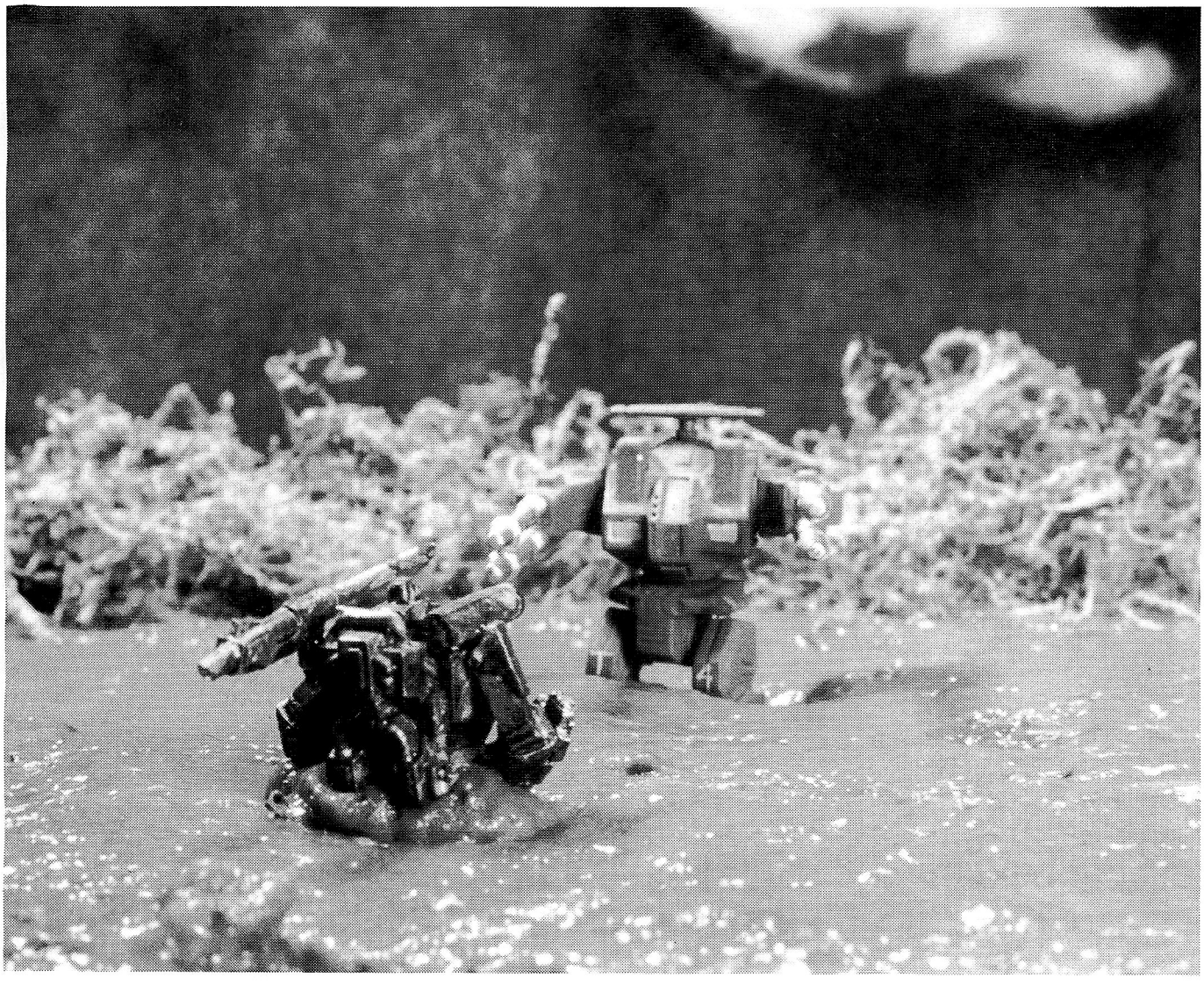
Capitol: Li Po

Government Type: Feudal Monarchy, overseen by Military Governor Cho-sa Martin Yamatara.

Religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, Roman Catholic.

Topography: The habitable portion of the planet contains 11,000,453 square kilometers divided into two continents. Both continents have small temperate zones near the poles. Most of this young planet is tectonically active. The northern hemisphere has a chain of volcanic islands. The southern continent features geysers and hot springs of all descriptions. Main power source is thermal action.

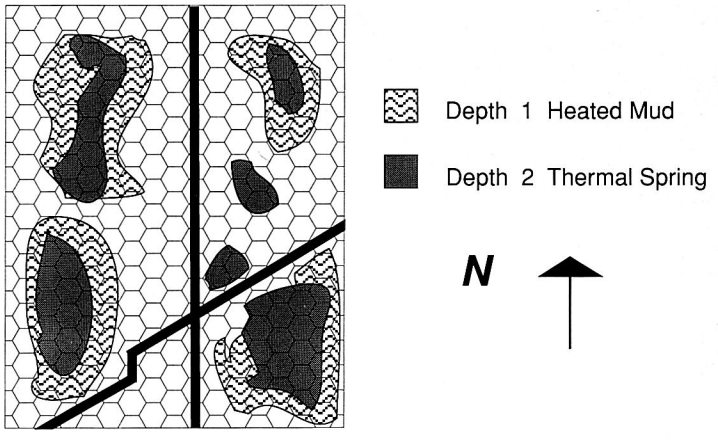
Transport:
Monorail and Magnetic Rail: 200,000 net ton-km
Motor Vehicles:
1,200,000 passenger cars
20,000,000 freight ton-km
Civil Aviation:
400,000,000 passenger-km
11,000,000,000 freight ton-km



Dedicated to those Brave Warriors
who died in the Heat and Mud of An Ting
...and to all who fought in the 3039 War

May 30, 3039

Hot Feet



Overview: In May of 3039, Altizio's Martyrs, an overstrength mercenary company, was part of the garrison on An Ting. The citizens of An Ting had given every sign of welcoming their Federated Commonwealth conquerors. A few small pockets of resistance remained, explained by the locals as overzealous remnants of the students who had formed the planetary garrison. In reality the guerilla raids were part of Theodore Kurita's plan to tie up his opponents' frontline troops. Eventually Lt General Sortek had to pull troops from the defense of Delacruz to reinforce An Ting. In late August, the planet was retaken by Kuritan troops. But back to the Martyrs. Much to their unhappiness, they were assigned to the New Yosemite area of thermal springs and geysers. They were to set beacons at triangulation points like crossroads and peaks so that navigation in the steamy fog become possible.

The Strike Lance of the 1st An Ting Training Brigade set up a base in this area. They had carried out raids for two months before a certain mercenary unit got the assignment to search the particular area where they had holed up. The Strike Lance sabotaged these beacons whenever they could. Eventually, they decided to prevent a beacon from being set. They chose to attack the Martyrs' Recon lance at the Steamboat Springs crossroads.

Logres Inlet, Galtor III

Special Rules: The thermal mud is simply too hot for comfort. For every turn a 'Mech spends standing or walking in mud, an additional 2 points of heat are generated. If a 'Mech falls and must lie in the mud, an additional 4 points are generated each turn.

The thermal pools are much hotter. If an unprotected human being were to fall into one, the flesh would boil off of their bones. A 'Mech which falls into one generates 2D6 plus 4 extra heat points per turn.

Because of the heat and steam, targets are not detectable until they are 12 hexes or less from each other.

Optional Special Rule: If the ref is really in a nasty mood, BattleTechnology points out that mud is slippery footing. Demand a piloting roll each time somebody runs or lands in the stuff.

Attacker: MechWarriors of the Striker Lance, 2nd Company, 1st An Ting Training Battalion.
Cadet MechWarrior Shepperton Gong *Whitworth*
Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3
Cadet MechWarrior Myrla Cardona *Dervish*
Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4
Cadet MechWarrior Thom Bainbridge *Clint*
Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4
Cadet MechWarrior Isamu Yamato *Hunchback*
Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4

Defender: Recon Lance, Altizio's Martyrs
Sgt Maurice Abrams *Spider* Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2
MechWarrior Alberta Findlay *Spider* Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3
MechWarrior Mario Jeng *Valkyrie* Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3
MechWarrior Anton Moriarty *Panther* Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

Set-Up: Defender enters from the North Edge of the Board. Attacker enters along the road at the Eastern Edge.

Victory Conditions: Destroy or be destroyed.

From the Debriefing Interview of Alberta Findlay, MechWarrior assigned to the Recon Lance of Altizio's Martyrs.

"I/R! What I/R? The steam from those pools automatically sends I/R meters into the red. It fogs visual just as bad! You can't see fifteen meters! In fact the only thing you can pick up on visual is the beam of laser weapons as they fire at you.

Mud, now. Mud that malfing planet had in spades. Especially around the thermal springs. Every time you tried to run across hot mud, you'd get a skid going that'd take you straight into one of those superheated springs. If you weren't lucky you'd go into heat shutdown and your lancemates'ud have to haul you out before you cooked. Lots of times they'd slide in too.

Then these student guerillas decided to hole up in the Steamboat Springs Area. Which was the lucky unit that made first contact with them? The Martyrs' Recon Lance, of course. And which was the luckiest MechWarrior of all, the one who ran into their strike lance? Mrs Findlay's little girl Al, that's who!"

Mondo Elegro, Cimaron

Sky Eyes

(From the debriefing transcript of Sorenson's Sabres, Fifth Sword of Light. Entry AS Pilot Elden Berardinelli)

The raid on Cimaron. It might have looked like a walk in the park to all you guys on the ground. But for the unappreciated few like me that had to dodge everything they could throw, it was tough! Good thing I'm as good as I am, ya' know, or I just might not be sitting here telling you all of this.

As usual, the company was burnin' through almost all resistance, until we got to their capital city of Mondo Elegro. The Captain sent me and Moretti up to scout out the defences. They were pretty standard; infantry and armor in hardened defence posts, a few light 'Mechs on the flanks. Nothing we couldn't handle. But there did seem to be other forces massing in the haze and smoke on the other side of the city. I banked in to see what I could see and got the surprise of my young life. A Lucifer type heavy figther shot up towards me from the ground. I had no blathering idea where it had come from. I dove away and tried to warn Moretti, but the Lucy was usin' some kind of jamming and I couldn't get through. Then I got my second shock. Lumberin' in over on Sorenson's exposed flank came a full lance of heavy 'Mechs! It was turnin' out to be a very interesting day.

So here comes most of the company marching right into a trap, I've got heavy 'Mechs to my right, and a Lucifer on my back, no sign of Moretti, and no way to communicate. What was there to do but attack? I mean, given a choice like that, no point in waiting to get scragged, is there? I figured if it was time, I might as well go out with a few of those bums, and if it wasn't, I could always find a place for another medal and commendation, right?

Sky Eyes

Situation: 1010 (CST) Cimaron, October 21st, 3039

During the Deep Penetration Raid on the Davion planet of Cimaron by Sorenson's Sabres of the 5th Sword of Light, elements of the 10th Lyran Guards conducted a counterattack on the raiders near the capital city of Mondo Elegro. Despite adequate airborne reconnaissance, Captain Sorenson was caught unprepared for the attack by heavy 'Mechs backed up with air support. He refused to withdraw, however, and plunged into the city limits, wreaking damage and destruction as he went. The entrapping units had not expected this. They began to run about the city trying to chase the Captain's 'Mechs down. Ably supported by his airborne units, Captain Sorenson was able to carry out his mission and escape the confines of Mondo Elegro in the confusion. The counterattacking force and city defenders were all to disorganized to mount any sizable pursuit force. After some additional casual pillaging, Sorenson's Sabres made it back to their waiting DropShip and left the planet, mission completed.

Set Up: Lay out two CityTech maps. Players may arrange building counters as desired on and around the paved area of the CityTech map, but no more than five hardened structures are allowed.

Prepare the record sheets for all 'Mechs and Aerospace fighters engaged in the scenario.

October 21, 3039

Defender:

Defending Mondo Elegro are elements of the Shrieking Reaper Company of the 10th Lyran Guard Regiment.

Assault Lance:

Battlemaster
Awesome (damaged:2 extra heat points per turn)
Thunderbolt (large laser damaged, misfires on a roll of 9+ with 2D6)
Lucifer ASF

Recon Lance:

Griffin
(CT carries only 12 frontal armor points, none in back)
Wasp (Jump Jets out)
Locust

Mondo Elegro Militia

150 tons of Hover Armor
100 tons of Mechanized Infantry

The Shrieking Reapers set up anywhere east of Mondo Elegro out of sight of the advancing Sabres. Mondo Elegro Militia sets up in the hardened structures within the city limits. All defending pilots are Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4.

Attacker:

The attacker is the Command and Pursuit Lances of Sorenson's Sabres, minus Moretti's Phoenix Hawk LAM. He is off his recon station, engaging civilian targets of opportunity. Moretti will finally rejoin and fight in the engagement on the turn that an 11+ on 2D6 is rolled.

Command Lance:

Capt Daniel Sorenson, Marauder, Piloting:2, Gunnery:2
'Guts' Gutowski, Warhammer, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2
'Izzy' Soderstrom, Phoenix Hawk, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3
Elden Berardinelli, Samaurai Aerospace Fighter, Plioting: (Aerospace):2, Gunnery: 2

Pursuit Lance:

Lt Dana Utsonomiya, Archer-2K, Piloting: 3, Gunnery:2
Eleanor Rubach, Hermes-4K: Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2
Vernon Marrone, Wasp-1K, Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3

Arriving late:

Clay Moretti, Phoenix Hawk LAM, Piloting : 2, Gunnery: 2

Victory Conditions:

The attacker must destroy at least 10% of the structures in Mondo Elegro, while inflicting more losses to the defenders than he receives. Any other result is a minor victory for the defenders.

Hilary Ayer
Editor, BattleTechnology Magazine
Tharkhad City Office
Tharkhad, Federated Commonwealth
Dear Ms Ayer,

My father Thelos Auburn (ed note: Court Historian of the Lyran Commonwealth, author of many celebrated histories) passed away recently while visiting friends. He always thought well of *BattleTechnology* as "an information source that labels its opinions rather than pretending to be impartial." Among his papers and tapes are extensive notes for several of his books, including *History and the Present*, the *Encyclopedia Res Publica*, and *Katrina the Peacemaker*. Some of these notes and interviews still have relevance to present-day issues. Many of those which are not sealed for security reasons, or to avoid distress to persons yet living, are being donated to the Auburn Library here in the capital.

Since they may provide your magazine with the perspective which a news magazine frequently lacks, I have directed my secretaries to forward to you copies of several of these boxes of papers.

My husband and I look forward to seeing the results of these papers on the critical thinking of your staff.

Sincerely,
Misha Auburn Redburn,
Court Historian to the Federated Commonwealth
Countess of Tikonov
Kathil, August 3047

Piercing the Veil of History:

Katrina Steiner Speaks Once More

These papers included several interviews with Katrina Steiner after she resigned the Archonate in 3039. Several of these were set aside for an additional chapter to Katrina the Peacemaker *which is not to be published until 25 years have passed since her death. The Countess of Tikonov has agreed that we may publish a number of these fragments in order to "Expand upon the public's awareness of the intelligence and wit of that great lady." These conversations took place during December 3039, just before the Archon Emerita's death.*

BattleTechnology *thanks the Countess for this kind permission. We hope to bring you further exerpts from Thelos Auburn's private sidelights to history in future issues of* BattleTechnology.

The toughest fighter I ever faced? My cousin Frederick Steiner. We did a private match one time, his Zeus against my Warhammer. Neither of us was an Archon at the time; both of us thought we should be. Since people were involved that shouldn't be named, friends of Jeana — you know what I mean — let's just say that Frederick and I were not in the Inner Sphere at the time, but on a Circinus Federation planetoid. Herrgott, he was tough! He was a useless, vain, touchy sort of man off of the battlefield, but what a fighter! And what a leader for MechWarriors!

He mentioned once that Wellington's common soldiers categorized their officers as 'go-on's or 'come-on's. A 'go-on' stood behind his men and ordered them to advance. Frederick and I were both 'come-on's! We were out there in front yelling "Come on!" before the rear ranks had finished their last checklists.

I have sometimes regretted the trick I played on him on Dromini IV. I had to get him to treat the attack seriously. He probably had been a party to that assassination attempt where our friend was killed a week or so before, after all. This attack on Theodore Kurita's invasion force was meant to be his entrance-into-Valhalla, a suicide death raid, after all.

And in the midst of all that Wagnerian drama, 'Mech to 'Mech, and Honor Among Warriors, and little glasses of sherry for the conquered opponent, I sent in a Loki team to take out their invasion supplies. Our front of the Fourth Succession War was won by burning out those warehouses! But I have it on good authority that Theodore personally shot my cousin for not behaving honorably; he'd already been taken prisoner while my first regiment, the 10th Lyrans, fought their way back to their DropShips.

It's a paradox, Thelos. Napoleon was right — and wrong — when he said, "An army marches on its stomach." If they cannot feel pride in what they do, all the supplies in the Inner Sphere won't fuel your warriors to win.

Where was I when I disappeared in 3005? The official answer still has to be that nobody knows. Eventually some of it will come out; the journey around the OUTSIDE of the Lyran Commonwealth through the Periphery; the ties I made during that time. The night we guested Hendrik Grimm without knowing it; that story can't come out till we're all dead!

The assassins who left us on Poulsbo were surprised to run into us again on Anywhere, I can tell you. And this time, *we* had the drop on *them!*

It was during that year that I met Haakon Magnusson. The Alshain People's Movement which turned into the Tyr, and then into the Free Republic of Rasalhague, was years into the future. He was still a young student. He and I and my husband Arthur walked around the countryside for the best part of a day arguing about forms of government and when a citizenry is justified in rebelling against a government which does not represent them. Arthur's point of view was something close to anarchy; a government must ALWAYS be capable of being dissolved by its citizens. (A fine Archon's Consort he would have made, huh? What arguments we could have had!)

Then we got onto the Minnesota Tribe. Remember, they attacked several Rasalhague worlds back in 2825? Took a couple thousand people prisoner and then disappeared? Never heard from again?

It seems Magnusson's mother came from Trondheim, one of those worlds. They tell the story there that the Minnesota Tribe warriors didn't seem to be interested in conquest. Didn't even raid there much. It was as if they were interested in testing the warriors and fighting units on Trondheim. Lot of one-on-one challenges. Beat the whatever out of 'em and left them alive. Or congratulated them on a win. Then they left, not taking much in the way of loot. It's always bothered me a little. One of those mysteries you like to think about but you know will probably never be solved.

...it was practically a rite of passage for the Steiner family to raid Kurita holdings in a small unit action. I took part in such a raid when I was fifteen. Nothing glorious...a lance of untried MechWarriors against an experienced fourth-rate merc unit that was only doing its job guarding a parts factory. I got some armor stripped and a leg actuator damaged. That was the high point of the action.

Alessandro was said to have taken two or three such 'working vacations' even while he was Archon. The newsvids would cluck when they found out. If he had been captured... If any of us who were close to the Archonship had been captured, we could have been the reason for humiliating concessions as the price of our lives. If we'd been killed on such a harebrained expedition, the repercussions could have resparked the waning Third Succession War. But it never occured to any of us to stop. The newsvids rather admired my uncle; they simply found it inconvenient that he would be absent for so long at a time.

My sister [now Marshal of the Armies] Nondi Steiner kept up the hobby clear up to the beginning of the Fourth Succession War. Every year she would formally request to resign her position. But I never took it seriously as long as she kept sneaking out with her troops to participate in a raid.

We never raided our other border, over into House Marik. Maybe there was less of the feeling of a game there. The Free Worlds forces seemed like THE ENEMY, while with the Draconis Combine there was this sense...that you applauded each other's good shots. Not exactly a game, but not such a constant hatred.

I find it interesting, too, that by the time my daughter Melissa [the current Archon-Princess] was of age to go raiding, the custom had gone out of style. Ryan Steiner of the Tamar Pact was the last of the new generation to go off shooting at harmless strangers for fun.

Thelos Auburn: There's something about House Steiner which I'm often asked to explain...

KS: What's that?

TA: The attitude, which seems to start with your policies, of treating mercenaries like part of the house troops. For the term of their enlistment they get similar salvage and repair contracts, medical facilities, and civil rights as those of regulars in a House regiment. This attitude is the major change House Steiner has made to House Davion's policies in forming the Armed Forces of the Federated Commonwealth.

KS: It's more than that. Mercenaries are assured that they won't be used as disposables, as they are, say, in House Liao. Their lives are held, like our own troops' lives, to be a valuable resource, not to be expended unwisely or unnecessarily. Soldiers in the Commonwealth, including myself, may be called upon to risk their lives, but none are expected to throw them away.

TA: The other Houses treat mercs as you say, as disposables or worse. Kurita uses the company store policy; Takashi's problems with the Dragoons started when he tried to enlist them. Davion used to use them up and throw them away. Marik isolates them from the centers of power and worries about a coup. St Ives suspects anyone not born there. If the merc unit is good, the House tries to force them to sign as regulars. If they're poor units, they are used to bait ambushes, etc. Assignments with poor life expectancy and no reason for morale.

KS: I have to give the House Troops their status; veteran and elite house troops get better bonuses than mercs do. But otherwise — they risk their lives for us, even if it's on a temporary basis. We don't try to force good troops to stay loyal to us — but we sure do give them reasons to. That and our Tech repair facilities give us the cream of the crop.

But you know, Thelos, I didn't reason this all out for myself. Morgan Kell and Arthur and I used to argue about how a merc company should be organized, how a state should treat it for their mutual benefit, how one hand washes the other. Every scrubby little merc serving out a contract in a border garrison owes its guaranteed payment clause to the founder of the Kell Hounds!

KS: Thelos, I think I've achieved a philosophical outlook toward my own failings. A ruler has to learn how to 'get over it and get on with it.' For example, when Ryan Steiner manages to push my buttons yet again I try to remember that I don't *have* to get mad just because he's a maddening young twirp...My son-in-law and I know where we disagree on state policy. I have attempted to influence him only once since I abdicated. My daughter (Auburn notes here: KS has a special smile when she mentions the Archon) is as stubborn as her mother. When I talked to them it was as a couple who were joint rulers, using the most formal of court language. I knew I'd never get anywhere with them if there was the slightest hint of 'mother spank'.

TA: How did you try to change Hanse Davion's mind?

KS: You saw the course of this war! Theodore Kurita held fire while our troops made significant inroads into his father's territory. He planned his counterattack to be hard and sudden and to seem...overwhelming even invincible. He had regiments that our intelligence hadn't seen and 'Mechs that nobody had seen since the Star League. BUT HE THREW THEM AT US ALL AT ONCE!

It reminded me of my days as a MechWarrior. You know, a 'Mech which has lost most of its armor has nothing to lose by firing everything it has at once. It may not survive to strike again, and there's always the chance its opponent is in as bad shape.

(Her breathing gets rough here; the Archon Emerita had already caught the bad cold which was to turn into pneumonia and kill her the following month. It is also clear that her emotion is strong.)

And if this *verdamt* cold hadn't made me so ill, I'd have had the energy to *convince* them! I sent them a formal memo when I wanted to go there and knock their heads together, theirs and Sortek's!

Thelos, if you survive me long enough to research this war, I'll bet you C-bills to candy bars that Theodore was as low on supplies as Hanse was by the beginning of this month!

It's no secret that I didn't want this war. But once we were in it, we should have won it! We'd succeeded at the start by being bold. This wasn't the time for caution!

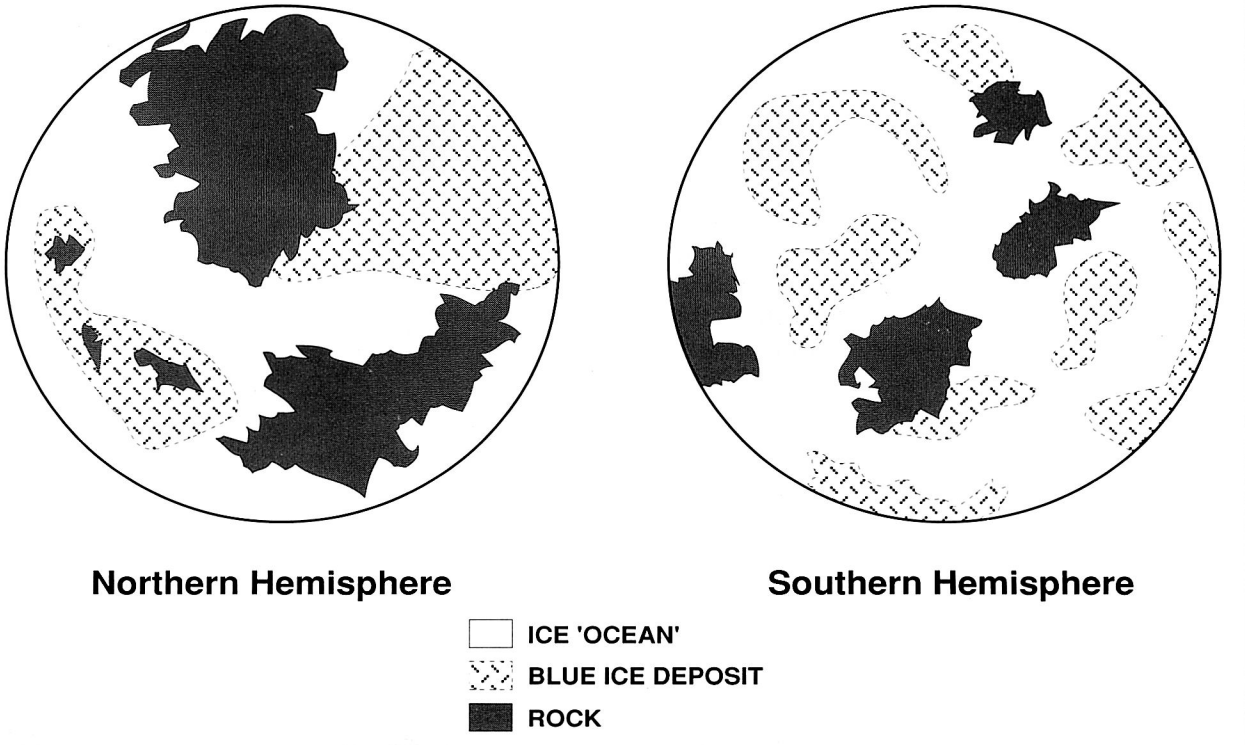
But I wasn't there. Melissa had her hands full keeping Ryan and Kelswa down — how many K-bills went into stirring up trouble in the Tamar Pact and Skye, I'd like to know? Hanse hadn't had enough sleep since July. I had a hunch so strong I could taste it, but they were too tired to try again.

Sometimes you have to play your hunches! Morgan Kell would have told them. If Nondi's fainthearted old goats'd had a top rate mercenary around to stiffen their backbones after she was taken out of the picture....

(She stops suddenly, catches her breath, gives Auburn a smile to reassure him.)

I am *certainly* too old to play 'what-if', Thelos. If I spot you a rook, how's about a game of chess?"

Cold Misery



Xanthe III

World Name: Xanthe III
Star Type: G2V
Position in System: 3
Days to Jump Point: 5
Recharging System: Zenith
Form of Government: Company Owned Planet, Magna Metals
Political Leader: Subdirector Matthew Sternberg
ComStar Facility Class: C
ComStar Representative: Precentor Caitlin Ross
Population: 5,800
Percentage and Level of Native Life: 15%, Plant
Moons: 3: Phrosne, Cynthia, Procne

Xanthe III has several times been colonized as a mining world. The first attempt, by Atlan Ltd, in 2752, mined for ice to sell to water poor worlds such as Lopez. The discovery of the naturally occurring 'blue ice' (water with cobalt or cupric salts in suspended solution) which comprises close to one third of the planet's surface ruined the water miners. Blue ice is poisonous. The second company, Freez Inc, intentionally mined blue ice for the ice vests which preceded coolant vests. Blue ice takes two to four times as long to freeze as pure water, but it takes correspondingly long to thaw; hence one pack can be

used longer. Cost of transport caused Freez Inc to fail. Magna Metals and its successor companies have had the longest tenure on Xanthe III. A small but viable manufacturing colony has succeeded there, basing its economy on the manufacture of semiconductors for various purposes.

Some concern has been expressed by environmentalists as to the unstable maintenance of oxygen in the planetary atmosphere when few offworld plants have been successfully introduced in any but a hydroponic setting. The colony is self sustaining by means of hydroponics and protein vats.

The small northern archipelago (island chain) contains the least stable terrain in the sea of ice that is the planet. Terrain within five km of the ice-rock interface is the most dangerous in the planet. Normal ice and blue ice are subject to the tidal pul of three moons. In a slow-motion version of oceanic waves, the substances turn and recirculate. Resulting dangers are frequent ice quakes, and a changing and treacherous terrain. Maps of a month before, far less a season before, are useless. Crevasses, sink holes, and caverns form and change. Under a coating of ice may lie needle sharp ice spines or interlinking crevasses a hundred kilometers in length. Fierce winds erode them, only to have the icequakes thrust up and break apart into new dangers.

An interesting feature of the buildings is their lustrous sapphire hues. The usual method of construction is to erect a temporary inflated structure, emplace water and power conduits along it, then spray with liquified blue ice. Once this has hardened on both sides of the structure, an extremely dense and durable structure is created, with a higher tensile strength than steel.

From BattleTechnology's January 3042 issue, article by Arthur O'Brien, staff specialist in contemporary history, winner of the Tomachevsky Award for Journalist Excellence.

From 3030 to 3040 House Marik, The Free Worlds League, was engaged in a civil war which left it doubly divided. The first division was caused by the rebellion and secession of the Duchy of Andurien in 3030. This major border region was to remain independent for a decade, aided by the Magistracy of Canopus.

At first the Andurien Rebellion strengthened the Marik family. Captain-General Janos Marik used the fact of the rebellion to strengthen a previously-shaky emphasis on the power of the executive branch of government. But with Janos' stroke, his family began to struggle to inheirit his power. In 3035 a bomb exploded at a staff meeting, killing Janos and his son Duggan and apparently killing the Heir Apparent, Janos' son Thomas. Nephew Duncan Marik assumed the Captain-Generalcy, blaming the Duchy of Andurien for the bomb. He declared war on Andurien and took the field against them. He ran the Free Worlds League's affairs with an iron hand, causing distrust and fear on the part of Parliament. When Thomas reappeared and was acclaimed as Captain-General, Duncan's only hope was to succeed brilliantly in the field. He took desperate chances to ensure that success.

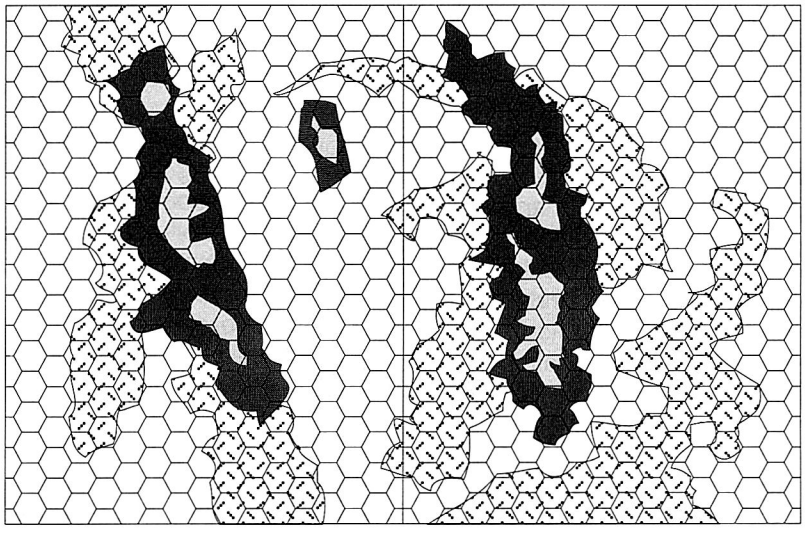
Duncan was a charismatic leader of warriors. He made an excellent company commander. He was a fair tactician, able to take advantage of a situation once he was in it. He had no grasp of strategy. He chose and used subordinates according to personal friendship. When League intelligence sources confirmed the Andurien stockpiles of PPCs on Xanthe III, he invaded this world, entending his supply lines dangerously to do so. When Duncan was killed in this attempt on February 4, 3037, it solved his personal problems, but it left the Free Worlds League's armed forces in a poor position.

For the next three years, Thomas Marik rebuilt his armies and conducted a series of campaigns against Andurien. In March of 3040 he took Xanthe III. The next month, he took Dame Catherine Humphries, the leader of the opposition.

An examination of the two leaders' campaigns on Xanthe III shows a fascinating contrast in their abilities to wage war. Thomas is a born strategist; he has had to learn tactics as an extrapolation of strategy. And he has had to learn to demonstrate personal qualities that will win men and women to risk their lives under his leadership.

Oddly enough, the two leaders found themselves facing the same lance, same time of year, with the same troops available. Both chose to personally set policy on a small lance to lance action. But how differently they approached the problem...

Cold Misery



Blue ice ■ Level 2 rock □ Level 4 rock

Special Conditions

Hidden deployment rules are used, or simply state that the defender may choose to write his 'Mechs' positions down before play begins. The 'Mechs will be invisible until they move or fire or until an Attacker 'Mech moves into the same hex. Attacker 'Mech is surprised for the first turn of such a move. He is not surprised when he sees movement or receives fire.

Blue wave-length lasers fire through the blue ice cover, doing a laser's normal to-hit and damage. Firing a standard laser through blue ice requires special modifiers (see chart end page of this section); other weapons do damage to blue ice as to a hardened wall. All non-laser weapons must first break through the blue ice before they can hit a target. You must keep track of these 'holed hexes' because they may now be fired, through, fallen through, or climbed through. When ice has taken full damage, it melts under the attacker, causing a fall into the crevasse. All crevasses in this scenario are level 2. A falling 'Mech takes damage as per Death From Above. A 'Mech must make a piloting roll to climb out of a crevasse. If it is climbing through unbroken blue ice, it must fire or punch its way through.

Defender

Defender, in both cases, a mixed lance of the 6th Andurien Defenders. This unit was at one time famous for unorthodox tactics. To simulate their special training in the conditions of Xanthe III, add +1 to all piloting rolls. When this unit was moved off Xanthe III, they effectively lost one point of piloting ability. As chosen by Defender, each laser must be specified as blue wave-length or regular. A mix is suggested.

Defender has planted seismic sensors in the rock to a depth of level 3. There is no way they will be surprised. Defender has used special gear to melt holes between crevasses and caverns; he is set up under the blue ice, in the snow, or in the rocks at his choice.

Pavel's Pass, Xanthe III

March 3037 and March 3040

Goliath, Veteran, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3
Warhammer, Regular, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4
Spider, Regular, Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4
Hatchetman, Elite, Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 3

Attacker

Your Choice of ONE lance from the Second Company, First Marik Militia

In the second scenario, you may replace 2 weapons per lance (NOT PER 'MECH) with more appropriate weaponry (consult the long range weapon range table). You still do not have blue-light lasers.

Recon Lance
Hermes II, Veteran, Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3
Ostscout, Veteran, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4
Javelin, Regular, Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 4
Javelin, Veteran, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 4

Medium Lance
Blackjack, Regular, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3
Centurion, Regular, Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 4
Trebuchet, Green, Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 4
Hunchback, Regular, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

Fire Lance
Wolverine, Veteran, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3
JagerMech, Veteran, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2
Archer, Regular, Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3
Archer, Veteran, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 2

Assault Lance
Awesome, Veteran, Piloting: 2, Gunnery: 3
Charger, Veteran, Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 3
Charger, Green, Piloting: 4, Gunnery: 5
Cyclops, Veteran, Piloting: 3, Gunnery: 3

Objectives:

Attacker wishes to hold any of the 3 level hilltops for ten uninterrupted rounds in order to plant a homing beacon. Defender wishes to prevent him. Attacker may also succeed by destroying or retreating all defenders while having one movement-capable 'Mech remaining.

Militarily Xanthe III presents fascinating considerations. It might have been created to serve as a tactician's training ground. Blue ice, for example, contains suspended cobalt and copper sulphate. It distorts MAD and gives false radar readings. Radar pointed straight down will read the shape of solid rock through ice, but a sheet of blue ice will read as solid to radar whether it is a kilometer thick or half a meter. Suggested tactics include hiding in crevasses under a .5 to 1 meter coating of blue ice. This ice is so strong that it takes 15 tons or more to break through such a layer. ... Blue wave length lasers such as have been developed for underwater work will be needed to form the regular tight laser-cutting pattern. A normal laser's beam will spread out, losing much of its range and special training is required for MechWarriors to successfully pilot over broken and slippery ice... ***from the report prepared for Dame Catherine Humphries by her staff***

Movement and Sensor Range Modifiers for Wind-Driven Snow

On Turn 1, Turn 6, and each 5th turn thereafter, roll 2D6

Roll	*Wind Velocity*	*Affected Systems*	*Modifier*
1-2	5-10 kph	Visual	+1
3-4	10-20 kph	Visual, I/R	+1
5-6	26-35 kph	Visual	+2
		I/R	+1
7-8	36-50 kph	Visual, I/R	+2
		Targeting/Tracking	+1
9-10	51-65 kph	Visual, I/R	+3
		Targeting/Tracking	+2
11	66-80 kph	Visual, I/R	+4
		Targeting/Tracking	+3
		*Movement without a piloting roll	1/2
12	80-110 kph	Visual, I/R	+6
		Targeting/Tracking	+4
		*Movement without a piloting roll	1/3

* Jump Piloting Roll is mandatory, otherwise impossible

Weapon Ranges, Normal Weapons through Blue Ice*

BattleMech and Vehicular Weapons:

Weapon Type	*Short*	*Medium*	*Long*
Small Laser	1	2	N/A
Medium Laser	1-2	3-4	5-6
Large Laser	1-3	4-6	7-9
Large Laser	1-3	4-6	7-9
ER Large Laser	1-3	4-7	8-10
Sm Pulse Laser	1	2	N/A
Med Pulse Laser	1	2	3
Lg Pulse Laser	1	2-3	4-5

Infantry Weapons:

Weapon	*BattleTroops Ranges*	*MechWarrior Ranges*
Laser Pistol	4/8	2/3/6
Laser Rifle	8/36	4/11/24
Semi Portable Laser	20-80	10/30/60
Semi Portable Heavy Laser	30/100	15/40/70

*Specially Modified Weapons use regular charts

The good news? If it hits, it does normal damage.
All non-laser weapons must first break through the blue ice before they can hit a target. You must keep track of these 'holed hexes' because they may now be fired through, fallen through, or climbed through.

Andurien Rebels Stockpiling PPCs

January 10, 3037, Lopez, Free Worlds League

BattleTechnology undercover reporters Antonio Ubriaco and Mariella Havlecek have been working in a PPC factory for the last eight months. They have photographs and recordings which prove that the Duchy of Andurien reopened the inactive Magna Metals Factory on Lopez as long ago as 3019. The Free Worlds League has only one weapons plant which manufactures PPCs at Campbelton. The Campbelton plant cannot keep up with the needs of the League; for a century now Marik 'Mechs have had to replace damaged PPCs with LRMs or heavy lasers.

Andurien has been stockpiling PPCs on Xanthe III. The extreme cold and storable cold sources of this world make it an excellent place for the manufacture of the semiconductors so necessary to PPC manufacture. The unstable conditions of much of the surface of Xanthe III make it difficult for offworlders to adapt to...or to search.

When You're Hot, You're Hot

A Tale of the Stalking Rhinos

as told by MechWarrior Michael Formby

There are a lot of people who wonder how a Marik merc unit like the Stalking Rhinos got their hands on a pristine Raven, seeing as how Madame Liao ain't especially fond of us. Well, Lieutenant Colonel Howell's finally declassified that little episode, so I figure regurgitating it to *BattleTechnology* is a good way to pick up a little extra spending money. You'll probably notice some rank shifts, since we were a regiment before this little escapade but we're only a battalion now. Nah, it's not what you're thinking at all — this was a successful mission. Just shut your maw and listen. Damn reporters.

Garrison duty here on Scarborough isn't exactly exciting, if you know what I mean, so most of the Rhinos look forward to our little "love raids" into Liao space.

Yeah, I know these raids are supposed to be secret, but when you see the command lance walking around with those smug little smiles on their faces, you know there's a briefing coming up. This time was no exception, but when I turned up for the briefing security was outside turning us away. There was already a crowd of Rhinos (maybe that should be a herd of Rhinos — get it?) milling around. Our briefings are always open to any Rhino (including the ground-pounders and fly boys) who wants to attend — except when Marik brass closes 'em. I figured this was one of those times.

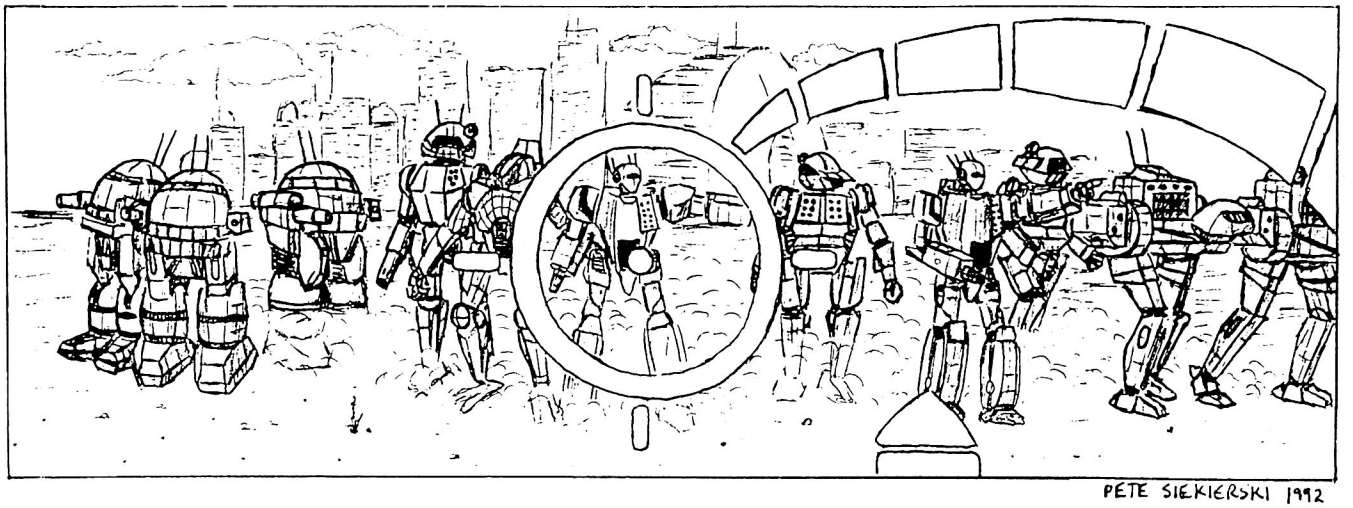
I didn't have much else on tap, so I figured I'd hang around for a while. I was pretty surprised when the doors opened up and disgorged our command lance and some Marik bigwigs after only about a half an hour. That meant that this wasn't the full briefing, just a wrap-up. The real negotiating must have been done via one of ComStar's HPGs. I saw Lts. Mason and Powell staring at Lieutenant Colonel Hebert real hard. I was kinda surprised that even lance commanders were being turned away, but those Marik boys are real picky. Suddenly Lieutenant Mason's face lit up with a wicked grin, and he leaned over to Lieutenant Powell and whispered something. I grinned too. His analyses are always correct, and he'd probably be real happy to share this one; so I ambled on over.

"Hey Lieutenant, I saw that grin. What's the deal?", I asked. His grin just widened. Then he said "Action, Formby, action. Maybe not for us, though." My grin changed to a frown. "Maybe not for us? Why not? What kind of raid?"

His expression grew real serious like, and he spoke a single word : "Nevermore". Damn, I hate it when he answers in riddles. What the hell does "Nevermore" mean?

About an hour later the PA came on; Colonel Howell himself announced a general meeting for 1900 hours that evening. Damn, a man can't even eat his dinner at the normal time without a staff meeting. Ah well, it's not like I had anyone special to eat it with. The Colonel looked pretty serious, but Lieutenant Colonel Hebert looked downright grim. Even Major Arnold looked pretty perturbed. I was real curious to know what was going on. I didn't have long to wait.

Lieutenant Colonel Hebert stood up glanced at the Colonel, who nodded. Lieutenant Colonel Hebert spoke up. "Men, there's a covert raid coming up, but it's not for all of us." The rising cheer was quickly turned into surprised muttering. "Pipe down, people. Only a long company will go, but we're going to tinker with our OB a little bit. Three of the four lances that are going have been notified. The rest will be notified within the hour. We leave at 0800 hours tomorrow. Mission objectives will be discussed en route. No questions



are permitted and the gag order is in place. Dismissed." That was the end of the briefing.

That was not the end of the muttering however. Tongues were wagging left and right. Orders that strict were few and far between for the Rhinos. All in all we're a pretty loose bunch. Hell, we even elect our officers. I figured the Marik boys were behind all this, and I didn't like the smell of it. I was shocked to see our security people carting off MechWarriors and fly boys for jawing about the mission. Damn, we're never that tight! What the Hell was going on? There was a tap on my shoulder, and I jerked about to see Major Fred Huval, captain of security. "C'mon Freddy, try and cart me off! I'll lay you flat!" He couldn't look me in the eye. "I'm real sorry, Formby. I really am, but orders are orders. Besides, I ain't here to haul you off. You've made the team. Report to LieutenantColonel Hebert tomorrow morning at 0600. He orders you to turn in by 2200 hours."

"Lieutenant Colonel Hebert's going?" I blurted out. Huval's head shot up and his gaze locked with mine. "One more slip like that MechWarrior, and I will haul you in. Someone else can take your place, savvy?"

"Sorry Fred," I mumbled, and turned away. I headed for my room.

My alarm buzzer sounded 0500 as soon as I closed my eyes. I shook the sleep out of my head, grabbed a quick shower and headed for Lieutenant Colonel Hebert's office. I wasn't surprised to see multiple silhouettes in the office. I knocked tentatively and went in. "MechWarrior Michael Formby reporting as ordered, sir." Lieutenant Colonel Hebert nodded and motioned to an empty seat between Lieutenant Mason and Lieutenant Powell. Lieutenant Colonel Hebert's quiet voice filled the room. "At ease, men. I'm sorry for the secrecy, but the Marik feels it's necessary. I can't give you too many details about the mission until we take off, but I can fill you in on who we're going with and how we're getting there. As you may have guessed, we're not taking *The Alamo*."

Not taking *The Alamo*? How could we take our 'Mechs without our DropShip? I had to shake my head to clear it, but I noticed that the others didn't even look surprised. What did they know that I didn't? Before I could open my trap Lieutenant Colonel Hebert continued. "We'll be using Delta Company's *Empire* for transport to the jump point and the *Baloo* for insystem transport." Once again I was too stunned to speak. That was happening a lot lately.

For those of you who aren't familiar with the Rhino's organization, let me give you a little bit of background. The Stalking Rhinos were a short regiment at the time, but we used to be just a long battalion consisting mostly of heavy and assault 'Mechs. After a real nasty planetary assault Colonel Howell and the powers that be figured we needed some light 'Mechs for reconnaissance and cannon fodder. We sent some reps to Galatea and they came back with Delta Company.

Delta company consists of three lances of light 'Mechs with a sprinkle of mediums thrown in for good measure. They'd been with us for about a year, and they hadn't worked out too well in my opinion. They didn't take orders well, and when you bawled 'em out they would rat to Colonel Howell and he'd make us sit in on those damn "counseling sessions" that supposedly promoted "brotherhood and esprit de corps". *Empire* was Delta Company's Merchant class

JumpShip, and *Baloo* is a ratty old Leopard class DropShip being held together by rust. A malfing aerodyne for pity's sake! Anyway, the bottom line is that Delta consists of a bunch of pooftahs in light 'Mechs.

This time even my new lancemates looked surprised. But once again Lieutenant Colonel Hebert forestalled all questions with a wave of his hand. "We're the only heavy lance participating. I will explain Delta Company's role en route. Please accompany me to the *Baloo*." We all nodded wordlessly and boarded a staff car bound for the space port.

Sure enough, there was the *Baloo*, looking even worse than the last time I saw her. I hadn't thought that was possible. "OK, men, you've got 30 minutes to do a pre-liftoff diagnostics on your 'Mech. When we're in flight to the *Empire* grab some breakfast, then report to the ready room for more briefing." I headed for the *Baloo*'s hold without looking back. There he was: the Horse With No Name. OK, OK, you're probably thinking "the Horse With No Name" is a dumb name for a 65-ton Thunderbolt. If you have to know, it was named by my first Sheila, who said she'd always wanted to "ride through the desert on a horse with no name." Nah, I never figured out what she meant by that, but I gave her the ride of her life. I guess the others were busy checking out their 'Mechs, too.

Lieutenant Colonel Hebert has a dull green new technology Orion named Godzilla, because it's big and green and steps on Kuritan cities. Lieutenant Colonel Hebert isn't too fond of House Kurita. Lieutenant Powell has a jet black Catapult named Night Stalker. He really hates how House Liao has changed the new Catapults into glorified artillery pieces, and swears he'll never change. We'll see. Lieutenant Mason has a purple, green, and gold Warhammer that he calls the Heart of Sin. Yes, I swear, purple, green and gold. You may think its funny, but you wouldn't laugh if you saw him piloting that thing. It's scary.

What? Now you want to know how we're getting new technology 'Mechs? Easy. Since the Rhinos have taken up residence in this little neck of the woods there hasn't been a single succeessful Liao raid. That's right, not a one. Yeah, we are real proud of that. In addition we've made a few of those "love raids" like I mentioned earlier, so we're pretty high in the Marik's favor for a merc unit. The bottom line is that Marik sells 'em to us. He makes a pretty hefty profit and keeps one of his better merc units well equipped and happy. When (not if) we get back, I've got a new technology Thunderbolt waiting and Lieutenant Mason's got a spankin' new Guillotine. Anyway, back to this mission.

When I was finished with my diagnostics (which the Horse passed perfectly), I gagged down some of those delicious powdered eggs and headed for the ready room. As usual, I was the last one there. Lieutenant Colonel Hebert began immediately. "Men, we're raiding Pella II for information. As you know, Pella II is a dry, barren, desert world originally useful only for its ore and mineral resources. Ceres Metals has a minor subsidiary there to oversee its operations. We're looking to raid the company computers for some formal specs on House Liao's new technology Raven 'Mech. Usually the Liao Warrior House Ijori garrisions Jasmine and Pella II, but Madame Chancellor is shuffling her troops about, so there's only a short battalion on planet now. The city we're interested in is defended by a single lance of light 'Mechs. We're hitting them now because they're stretched so thin. Delta Company will drop overtly about 1500 km away, thus drawing enemy attention. We will make a dead stick landing to minimize their chance of detecting us, make our grab, and get the hell out. Any preliminary questions?"

Lieutenant Mason spoke up first. "What about air support?" Lieutenant Colonel Hebert looked a little uncomfortable, but spoke confidently. "Since we're going to be landing undetected and unopposed we won't need any. All of their attention will be on Delta Company, so they've got all of their air support." I let out a low whistle. That was bad news — real bad news. Lieutenant Mason wasn't finished, though. "Has whoever is flying this rust bucket ever made a dead stick landing?" Now Lieutenant Colonel Hebert looked really uncomfortable. "Sorry, gentlemen, I argued for a powered landing, but it's just not to be. We're going to make an unpowered landing and that's that. Now, if there are no further questions, let's forget that lunacy and study this map." I sighed inwardly. Flying without air support on an unpowered Leopard to fight elite House Liao troops. A typical Rhino mission.

Eleven days later we reached the Pella II system and started burning some serious G's toward the planet. A mere five hourse later we were strapping ourselves into our 'Mechs for the landing. Fortunately, Liao air support was even less than we figured, and amazingly enough Delta's air support seemed to have everything under control. Hopefully that meant we didn't have to make an unpowered landing. The *Baloo* waited until the *Rat Trap*, Delta Company's Union class DropShip entered the atmosphere before plunging in herself. As soon as we were in I felt the *Baloo*'s engines cut off. My stomach sank. The ride got continually rockier, and I was convinced we were going to end as a fiery explosion, either from a Liao aerospace fighter or from hitting the ground at a terminal velocity (no pun intended).

It seemed we had been plummeting for an eternity when suddenly there was a sickening lurch as the *Baloo*'s wheels made contact. Just as suddenly we were airborne again. Then we hit, went up, hit again, went up again, and hit for the last time. We were actually rolling along the ground, and we weren't dead! After an eternity we screeched to a stop and the bay doors opened. We freed our 'Mechs from the restraining straps and headed for the door. Lieutenant

Colonel Hebert reiterated his final instructions. "We'll follow plan Alpha. Radio silence until we engage. Standard command frequency afterward. Lieutenant Mason is second in command and Lieutenant Powell is third. Let's go."

The *Baloo* had landed on a plateau at the crest of a large hill. We were about 120 meters above a featureless brown plain. Brown? That wasn't a plain, it was desert! Our techs had been tinkering with the heat sinks, but I doubted they could take this kind of punishment.

We began our descent in silence. We had just reached the bottom when we picked up some enemy radio chatter. Of course it was scrambled, but that wasn't what got our attention. There were at least six separate transmissions. Six transmissions! You don't have to know how to operate a ComStar HPG to figure out that one lance can't initiate six transmissions simultaneously. Great. Marik Intel had been wrong again. We all looked at Godzilla in silence. There was still time to abort the mission. Still, we had gone through a lot of trouble to get where we were, and I don't think any of us wanted to turn back. Finally Godzilla raised his arms and made a signal. Full speed ahead! We'd take those malfers yet!

We were about 360 meters away from the *Baloo* when enemy chatter picked up again. I cursed when I heard the excitement in that scrambled transmission. We'd been spotted. I prayed that the Ijori warriors had orders to defend the city and not fight in it. I could have sung for joy when I saw Liao 'Mechs come rolling out of their city. I guess if I'd spent years rebuilding a city that had been destroyed in the Fourth Succession War I wouldn't want to fight in it either.

Cripes! How may 'Mechs were in that city? I had expected to see six, but I got seven, nine, eleven, twelve, and finally fourteen. Fourteen 'Mechs!? Peachy. A long company of elite Liao 'Mechs. Still, things could have been worse. Four of the advancing 'Mechs were UrbanMechs. House Liao has more UrbanMechs than you can shake a stick at. Don't get me wrong, the concentrated firepower of a lance of UrbanMechs can get you just as dead as four Awesomes. It's just that mobility counts for a lot on today's battlefields.

We were slogging across the desert when my comm came to life. "Rhino 1 to all Rhinos. Advance and engage targets at medium range, then retrograde to keep the UrbanMechs at extreme range. When we've finished off the others we'll..." Suddenly my cockpit was filled with the harsh squeal of white noise. Damn! Somehow they were jamming our communications! Like most units we'd trained for "radio silence" missions, but sometimes training isn't enough. Godzilla made the signal for "continue" with his right arm. We slogged on until we were about 630 meters away from their lead elements.

The Night Stalker's arms suddenly loosed a swarm of 30 long range missiles. The missiles traced a perfect semicircle that began with the Night Stalker and ended in a Vindicator. The hapless Vindicator toppled under the impact of 21 of the 30 missiles. First blood for the Rhinos! Godzilla's right torso had disgorged 20 LRMs, and nine of them blasted armor from the center torso of a Jenner. I was trying to draw a bead on a Spider. My Delta Dart missle rack belched forth its deadly cargo. Damn, that malfer was fast. My missiles arced well over his head and burrowed into the ground. I noticed that the usual Rhino tactic of conentrating fire was difficult to implement without ramifications.

We'd take those malfers yet!

The Vindicator that Lieutenant Powell had hit struggled to its feet, raised its right arm and shot a brilliant violet beam toward Godzilla. It veered wide, but I cursed anyway. Normal PPC's don't reach as far as LRMs. These Liao bad boys had some new technology, too. I scanned the rest of the enemy company. The four UrbanMechs that were advancing on the Night Stalker hadn't shot, so there was no way of knowing if they had new tech or not. Three Valkyries and the aforementioned Vindicator were advancing on Godzilla. I would be real surprised if Hanse Davion had lost any new tech Valkyries to House Liao, so those were probably captured and therefore old tech. There were three Javelins headed for the Horse With No Name, and the Heart of Sin had attracted two Jenners and the Spider. There was just no way to predict the capabilities of the shorter ranged 'Mechs. New tech or not, they had us outgunned in close.

The Ijoris were advancing at top speed. At the rate their lead elements were closing we'd only enjoy our long range superiority for about another ten seconds. We'd better make it count. The Heart of Sin came to a dead stop, raised both arms and unleased his particle cannons. A lesser gunner wouldn't have hit a streaking Jenner at medium

range like that. The beleaguered Jenner felt the PPC's caress on its left arm and right leg. The left arm went spinning off at a tangent and the right leg stiffened noticeably. Yeah, I'd say he'd made his ten seconds count. The Night Stalker was having a field day with the still-advancing Vindicator. It had fired its PPC and a salvo of LRMs at the Night Stalker, but his aim was high. Lieutenant Powell's was not. Another eighteen missiles rocked the already damaged Liao 'Mech. At least one of them penetrated its right torso and found the LRM ammo. The Vindicator's CASE saved the Ijori pilot's life, but there was a gaping hole where most of the right torso used to be, and the PPC flopped uselessly.

Meanwhile, Godzilla was still concentrating fire on the damaged Jenner. The LRMs were well off the mark, but the LB 10-X shells were not. They slammed solidly into the Jenner's wounded center torso, easily blasting through what was left of the armor. It must have completely destroyed the gyro, because the Jenner didn't even twitch as it plummeted to the ground.

We'd destroyed two out of fourteen at medium range, but now they were on us. And their massed short range firepower and individual mobility were superior to ours. I'd never faced three to one odds before. That was my last thought before they were on us.

The next 30 seconds were the half minute of my life. The Javelins that were chasing me were old tech, but they continually fired salvo after salvo of SRM 6 racks. It was impossible to keep them all in front of me, and my back armor was taking a beating. I didn't know about the others, but I figured I wouldn't last another minute.

I revised that estimate downward when an SRM hit the Horse's knee and knocked me off stride. I couldn't quite regain my stride and fell heavily on my left arm. I could see one of the Javelins moving close. I managed to get the Horse up, but another Javelin took out the last of my right torso's rear armor. The one in front of me had served as a perfect lure, but he paid for it with his life. My Sunglow large laser found its center torso for the second time, and its fusion reactor went Nova. It's blast briefly outshone the sun, and it lit the desert for a painful fraction of a second. Thank God for polarized canopies. When I blinked away the spots dancing before my eyes. I noticed that the blast had turned the area of the Javelin's demise into a lake of glass. I'd have to avoid it - glass is slippery.

Now there were only two Javelins, but I still couldn't keep them in front of me. I managed to peg one with two out of three medium lasers, but I only damaged armor. The one behind me hit me with eight SRMs. One completely shredded what was left of my rear center torso armor, and one penetrated my vulnerable right torso. I could feel my LRM launcher cant forward. A telltale on my control panel informed me that my SRM launcher was also out of commission. I wouldn't have been able to notice any of this if it had hit the SRM ammo, but somehow I didn't feel thankful.

I'd be beyond help if I didn't get rid of one of these malfers real soon. If I could just hit the damaged one in the center torso I'd have it made. I wheeled about and fired the Sunglow and tried to ignore the waves of heat that flooded my cockpit. There! My shot had been a little high and I'd hit the head instead of the center torso. The result had been the same. The Javelin collapsed. Damn! Where was the other one?

The last Javelin was behind me, as usual. I felt the sting of his SRMs. One burst went wide, but three of the other rack struck home. One hit the Horse's mangled left arm and destroyed the shoulder actuator. The other two hit my right leg. Their impact staggered me a little, but I maintained the Horse's balance. Now the Javelin had other problem.

Lieutenant Colonel Hebert was literally ignoring the LRM salvos from the three Valkyries and had pulled up 90 meters behind the Javelin. It's pilot triggered his jump jets, but Godzilla had him in his sights. The LB 10-X barked once and the Javelin's left leg went skating across the glass.

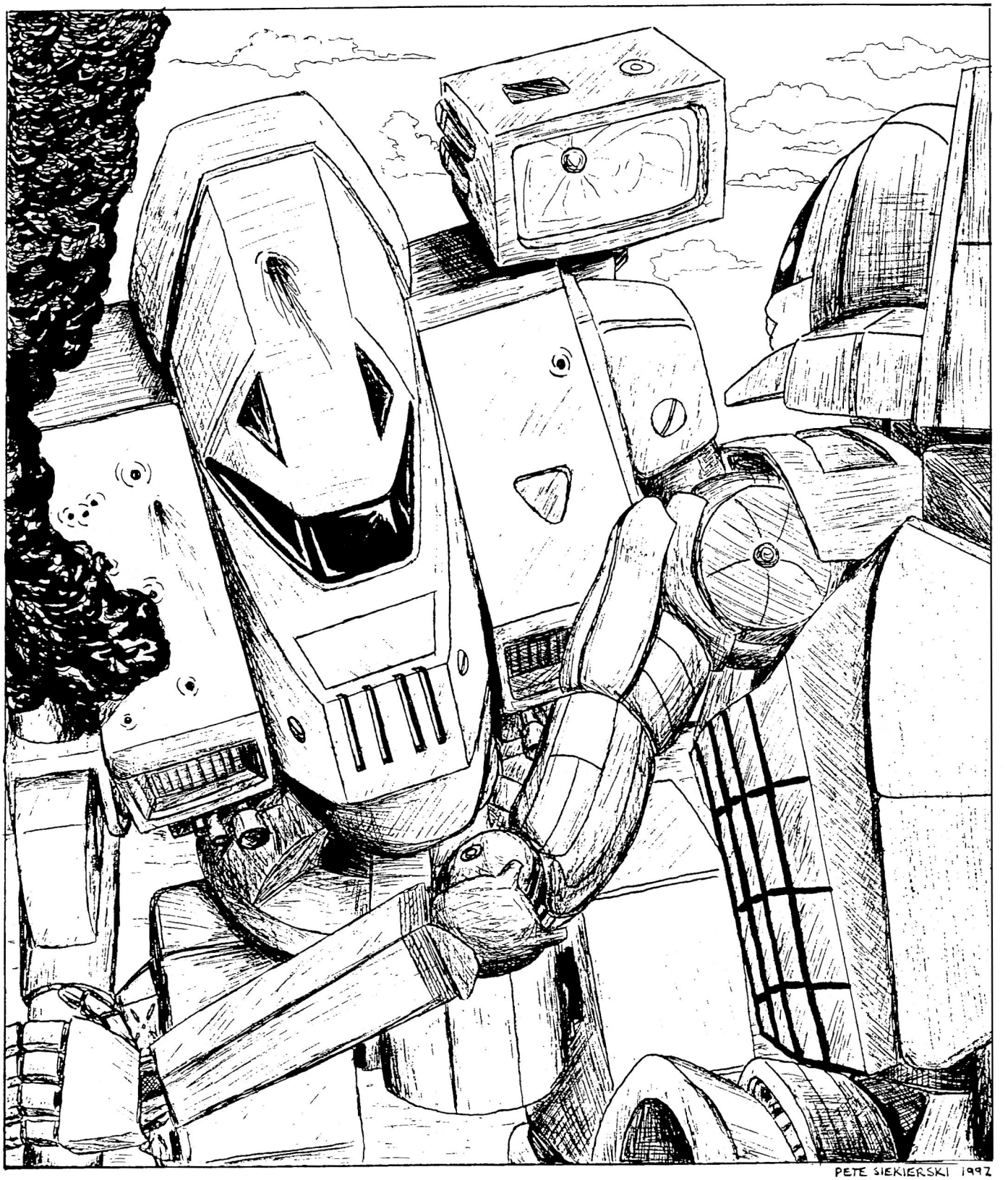
I raised my right arm in thanks and turned to scan the battlefield. The Night Stalker's left torso had taken a hit from one of the UrbanMechs, but he was dancing outside of their range and devastating them with LRM fire. Two of the UrbanMechs were still advancing, one was laying on the ground, and there was no sign of the fourth, except for a small puddle of glass.

Lieutenant Colonel Hebert had taken out the Vindicator and one of the Valkyries' LRM launchers, but the other two were in mint condition. Godzilla had taken several salvoes, but you can do that when you're dripping with armor.

The Heart of Sin looked bad. There was a Jenner laying at its feet, and there was yet another pool of glass that I supposed was the other Jenner, but the Spider was untouched. The Sin tried to turn, but it's left hip appeared to be locked and its right PPC dangled limply. As it turned I saw that its SRM 6 rack wasn't there and that its right torso armor had been breached. I immediately fired my Sunglow, and Lieutenant Colonel Hebert shot his LB 10-X, but both shots missed.

The Spider streaked in close for the kill. Normally Spiders won't get very close to a heavy 'Mech like a Warhammer, but this time the Ijori pilot had little to fear. The Heart of Sin couldn't kick with a damaged hip and one of its PPCs was destroyed. Its SRM 6 was gone, and the Warhammer was probably overheated. By coming in close the Spider could shoot both medium lasers and punch twice. If any one of those struck the right torso it would probably hit the SRM 6 ammo.

The Spider charged straight at the battered Warhammer. Suddenly, BOTH of the Sin's PPCs came up and fired! One went wide, but as I mentioned earlier, Lieutenant Mason is


PETE SIEKIERSKI 1992

a crack shot. One of the cobalt bolts struck the Spider squarely in the right torso. The shot penetrated and staggered the charging Spider. It retained its balance, and fired both medium lasers. One struck the relatively fresh left torso, and the other one traced a line of molten armor across the head. The Warhammer reeled backwards but managed to stay erect. The Spider was still in range for physical attacks, however.

Both punches connected. One hit the left arm and shattered most of its remaining armor. The other punch smashed into the already damaged head. I thought that was all for Lieutenant Mason. The head's armor hadn't been breached, but you don't have to destroy the head to damage a MechWarrior. I was literally flabbergasted to see the Heart of Sin's left leg snap forward in a perfectly executed kick! The Spider's left leg couldn't take that kind of punishment and collapsed. The Spider fell heavily on its back.

The Lieutenant had hornswoggled him twice. I realized that neither the PPC nor the leg had been damaged. Lieutenant Mason had realized he was in serious trouble and had played 'possum. The Spider tried to rise, but with only one leg he failed and fell back down. Lieutenant Mason's next kick devastated its center torso.

All that was left of the original fourteen Ijoris were two Valkyries and two UrbanMechs. They turned and fled back toward the city. The slow moving UrbanMechs didn't make it. LRMs from Godzilla and PPC fire from the Sin polished them off only meters away from the city's outskirts. I figured that the Night Stalker was out of LRM ammo.

Lieutenant Colonel Hebert took stock of our lance. The Horse With No Name and the Heart of Sin both sported several armor breaches and were missing weapons. The Night Stalker was almost untouched, simply because it engaged the UrbanMechs; but Godzilla's center torso armor was all but nonexistent. Godzilla made the advance signal. I guess the Lieutenant Colonel figured that Valkyries are severely handicapped in a city.

Lieutenant Mason and I waded into the city and eventually approached our objective from the North, while Lieutenant Powell and Lieutenant Colonel Hebert had swung around from the South.

I almost walked straight into the Sin's back when it pulled up suddenly at the mouth of a narrow alley. Not 120 meters in front of him were two Ravens! The Sin's PPCs shot up, and he keyed his PA system. "Attention Ijori MechWarriors. Your comrades fought well, but you have lost. Your best option is surrender." Both Ravens had turned and headed for the other end of the street when Lieutenant Powell suddenly jumped the Night Stalker to the other end of the alley. The Ravens pulled up, neatly caught between two heavy 'Mechs.

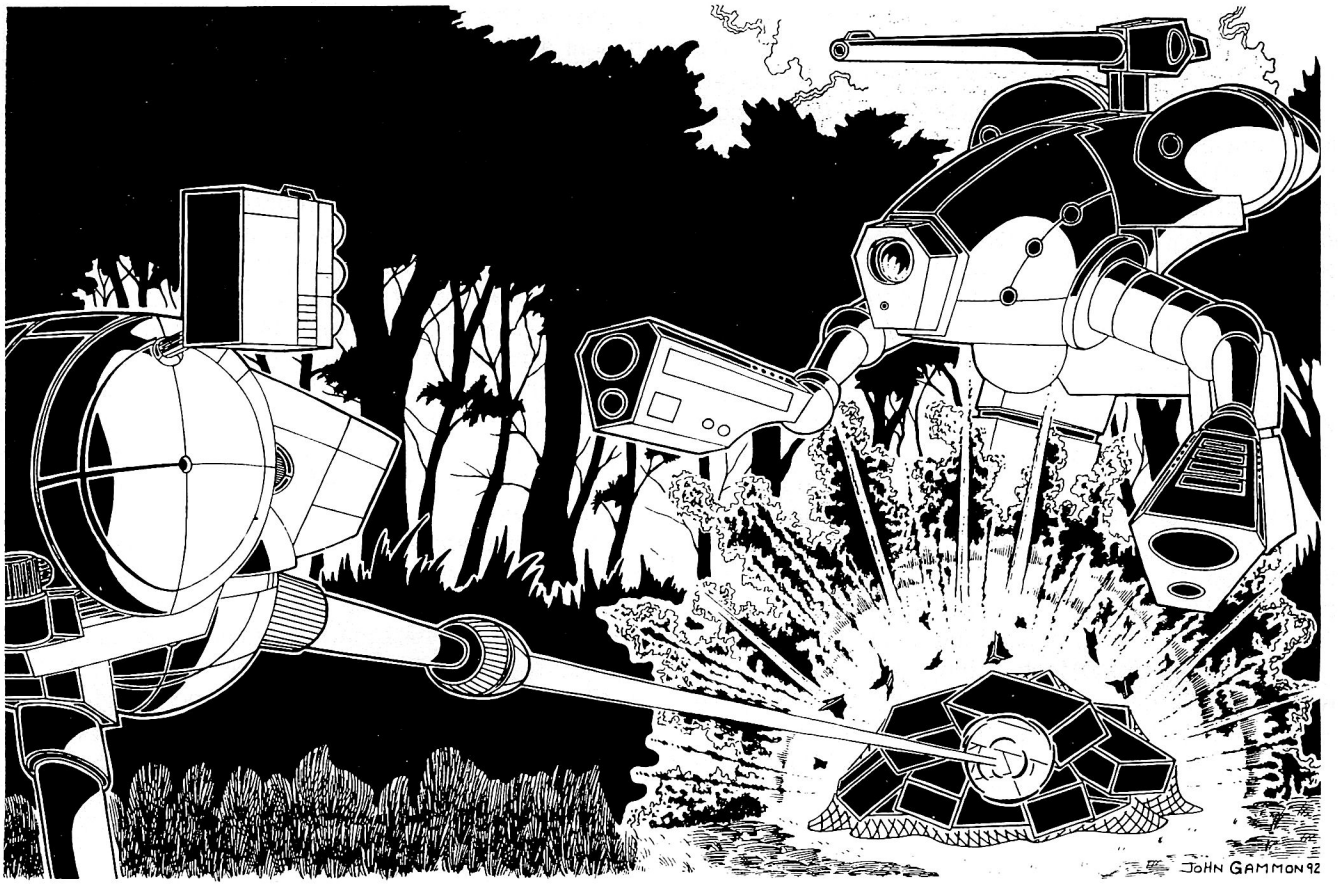
Lieutenant Mason spoke again. "If you surrender I swear that each of you will be released with your life and a 'Mech.

"You will live to serve the Chancellor again. If you insist on committing suicide then we will accomplish our task AND salvage your 'Mechs. The choice is yours, but make it quickly. The pilot of the Catapult behind you is not as patient as I am." Both Ravens turned and looked at the Night Stalker. Lieutenant Powell wiggled his LRM racks. I guess it was meant to be menacing, but it was so out of place it was comical. I burst out laughing and had trouble stopping. I'm glad my PA wasn't broadcasting.

I stopped laughing when I realized just how serious our situation was. The Night Stalker was out of ammo and had only its medium lasers. The Heart of Sin was missing his SRM 6. More importantly one hit on his exposed ammo bin and he was gone. I could take his place, but one hit on my exposed ammo bin and I was gone. After what seemed an eternity the cockpit hatch on one of the Ravens popped open and a man emerged with his arms upraised. The other Raven pilot followed suit an eternity later. We'd won! We came for information about the Raven, and now we had captured two!

We still had some problems, however. The immediate problem was how to get them back to the *Baloo*. With radio communications clear we called the *Baloo* for towing cables. We literally dragged the Ravens back to the Leopard. Sure it damaged some of their armor, but that was easily fixed. What were we supposed to do with the captured MechWarriors? Better yet, how do we fit six 'Mechs into a Leopard?

Lieutenant Mason solved both problems. He had promised each of them his life and a 'Mech. We left the Ijori warriors bound and gagged next to the Horse and the Sin. After all we hadn't promised them that they'd get THEIR 'Mechs back, just that they'd get a 'Mech. Of course we took our computer cores and stripped all the parts we could carry, but we did leave them with 'Mechs. Lieutenant Mason pointed out that he and I both had new tech 'Mechs waiting for us on Scarborough and our "sacrifice" was for the good of the unit, so we'd be reimbursed. In addition, House Marik would pay handsomely for a mint condition Raven. And the Rhinos could keep the other one. As an added bonus we'd become enormously popular among our fellow Rhinos. In a unit that elects its officers that's a huge asset. "Captain" Formby — I liked that sound of that.



The Last Confederate

excerpts from the Documentary Drama *Capellan Crisis*
by Major Piotr Filitov, CAF

The MIIO under Quintus Allard of the Federated Suns was a more overt operation than it has become under his son Justin. Quintus Allard, like his Kurita contemporary Subhash Indrahar of the ISF, perferred to be the quiet little grey man who gathered a spider and sat in a web of information pulling strings. You would not know he had picked you as a prey until you found yourself wrapped and at his mercy.

BattleTechnology printed a series of Fourth Succession War stories which selected one warrior's story as chosen by the armed forces information bureau of his House. This was House Liao's entry into the field.

The MIIO had a good source at *BattleTechnology* in 3038. Part 1 of this story seems like a good war yarn with just a little of the incredible-coincidence genre of soldier's tale thrown in. Part 2 carries the incredible coiincidence a step or two farther and makes Davion intelligence look...less than perfect, shall we say?

Our issue containing Part 1 was 'lost in MisJump.' The issue containing Part 2 was printed on Exeter. (We used to have a policy of strict rotation of printing plants so that we spent our money in turn with the craftsmen of each House. After the issue was seized on Exeter, a Davion planet near the Kurita border, we changed that policy. The change itself caused more problems: more of that later.

The following is a tale out of the pages of Inner Sphere history which has only recently been authorized for publication by Chancellor Liao herself. It is meant to demonstrate that, although popular opinion would have it that the Capellan Confederation experienced no victories in the Fourth Succession War, covert victories were indeed achieved which showed the strength and conviction of the Capellan Armed Forces. This story is dedicated to the men and women who gave their lives defending the Confederation from the marauding forces of Hanse Davion.

Dateline: Styk, Sarna Commonality, September 3028

Morning sunlight glinted through the green canopy overhead, casting eerie shadows across the quiescent hulks of the Capellan 'Mechs crouching on the forest floor. A Raven, lately constructed at the Tao Mechworks of Styk and equipped with ECM jamming gear, squatted at the head of the formation. It was the vanguard for a commando mission which would deal a serious blow to the Davion Heavy Guards RCT outpost that was our target. The elite strike lance of House Fujita's 2nd Battalion, Alpha Company, awaited the tight-beam scrambled message from our scout, perched in a carefully prepared position overlooking the ammunition dump.

I piloted a Locust, smallest of BattleMechs and an unpopular choice among most of the elite, yet perfect for the strike team operations which had become my area of specialization. I held the rank of Commander, a junior officer in the CAF, though in a company which demanded respect from any regular unit. I had dedicated myself to serving House Liao with distinction and had adapted well, I thought, to the guerilla tactics now being resorted to in defense of Styk.

Chief among the woes inflicted upon House Fujita in being forced from our defensive position in the industrial city of Tao was a critical lack of ammunition. Spare parts were less important as mortally wounded Capellan 'Mechs invariably hurled themselves upon the pursuing Federat hounds, with the intention of leaving nothing for them to salvage. Every Capellan hoped that these brave warriors were not captured and subjected to the hideous tortures inflicted on all of the Fox's prisoners of war.

Our objective was the liberation of enough supplies to keep the unit going for another month. We believed that Colonel Ridzik, after fighting off the siege of Tikonov, would find a way to rout the Davion hordes and win through with reinforcements. Little did I know that this would be the last day of the official defense of Styk by the forces of House Fujita, or that in a matter of hours the men and machines around me would be nothing but a memory.

The Raven reported that the scout's all-clear signal had been received. The strike lance rose and began moving through the thick forest, which had been House Fujita's home for a week of hit and run raids against the invader. Ever present was the fear that an infra-red satellite would get lucky and call the 'world' down on us. Our team of BattleMechs was a light one, a Stinger and a Wasp rounding out the lance, but we were trained to strike fast and disappear before the enemy could react. The Wasp pilot was Captain McCready of Alpha Company, one of the most innovative leaders I'd served under in the CAF.

The site which Captain McCready had chosen for today's raid sat a kilometer from the entrance to a forest highway whose course we now paralleled. The Federats had learned to fear the shaded groves of Dirbar Forest; that was still Capellan soil, and none who'd doubted this had yet emerged. But Davion's reliance on air-support gave them the confidence to place strategic ammunition dumps on our doorstep. A victory this morning would cause them to rethink this policy.

The team's 'Mechs burst from the forest coverage and accelerated toward the dump. The Locust, clocking 130 kph, easily out-distanced its fellows, turning to follow the road which was our only secure route to the dump. Vibrabombs were known to guard all such installations, set to destroy the legs of light 'Mechs. In the space of thirty seconds, my Locust was past the danger and ready to dispatch the infantry guarding the base.

Cases of ammunition are generally impervious to machine gun fire, such as that being spat by my twin arc-mounted Brownings. I easily dispatched the defenders who sought shelter among the cases. Several launched inferno and SRM rounds, but the Locust's dance of death gave them no easy target. The other 'Mechs arrived soon thereafter and dispatched the remaining troops, save for a squad

which fled on wheeled transport. We stood triumphant among a cache of ammunition which would last us a year, if we could only carry it all back to the forest. Unfortunately, the last of my fifty-caliber rounds had been spent acquiring it.

The 'handed' 'Mechs got to work securing cases of ammunition on the backs of the Raven and Locust. In ten minutes I was fully loaded and heading back to the forest. I was half a kilometer from the treeline when my sensors detected a pair of fighters low to the ground and vectoring toward the base. There must have been a patrol nearby when news of the attack reached the airfield about two hundred kilometers north of our position. I wished that I could turn back and provide covering fire with my chin-mounted Martell medium laser, but the mission's objective had priority over the team's survival.

The Sparrowhawk, a light fighter design exclusive to the AFFS, typically carried HE bomb loads for routine patrol duty. The air lance matched rate of descent and passed over the base heading southeast at Mach two, thereafter gaining altitude rapidly. In their wake was a cluster of bomblets which detonated a few meters above the ammunition that had been left exposed. The fireball which erupted blinded me momentarily, but when my eyes cleared I saw the Wasp rising on its jump jets and firing on the accelerating fighters. One took a laser hit on its port stabilizer and began a roll which ended with its crashing into the forest canopy.

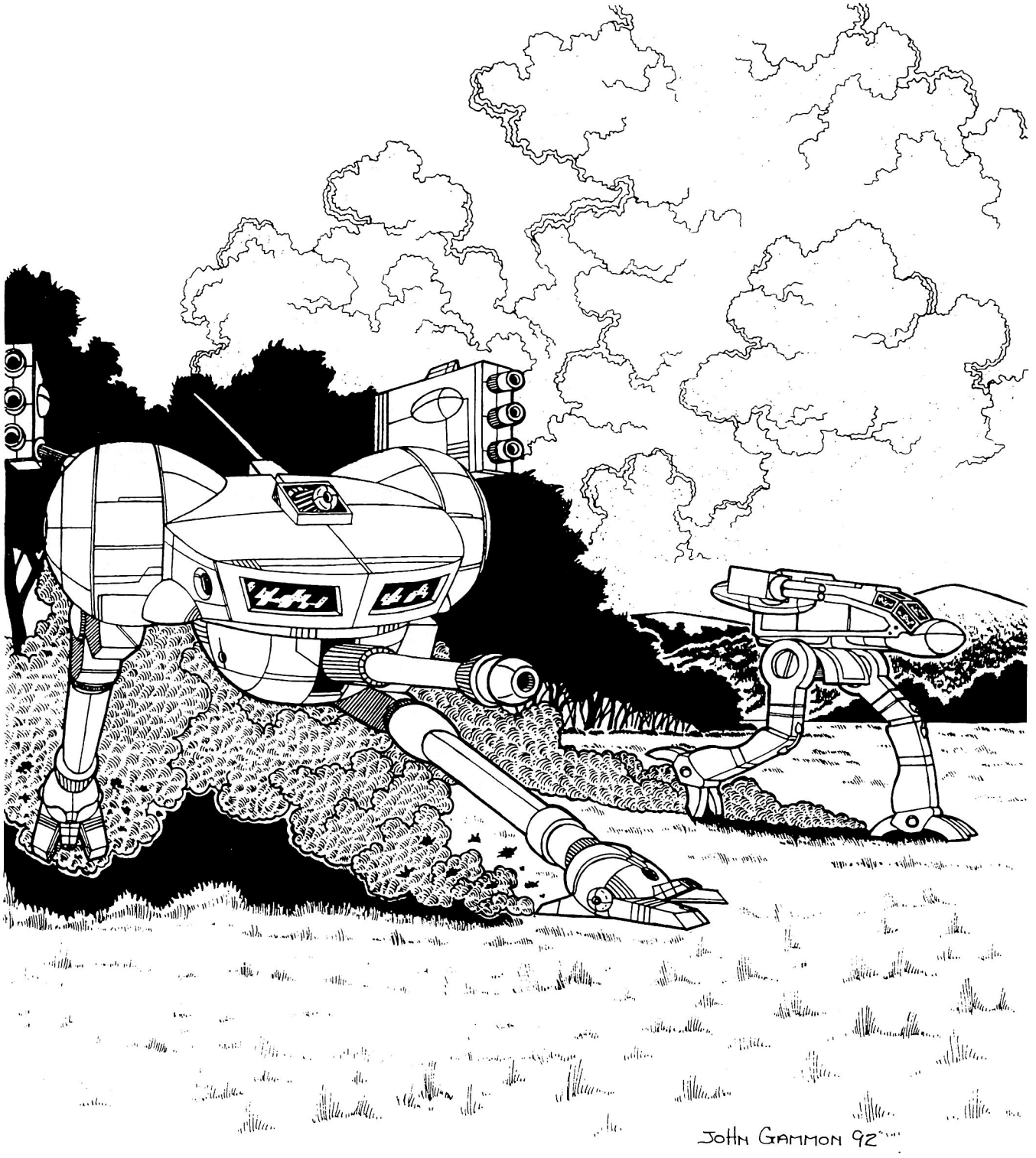
The security of the forest loomed closer now, and with a determined effort I reached it within the space of a few heart beats. I now turned to watch the bizarre drama which unfolded over the demolished installation. The remaining Sparrowhawk was returning to strafe from the northeast, but was still many kilometers away. The Wasp and Stinger had been able to leap over the danger of the minefield, after the seismic force of the explosion eliminated a number of Vibrabombs. They now headed into the forest about two kilometers west of where I stood watch on the forest highway. But the Raven, designed without jump jets to provide more room for the ECM equipment, could not deviate from the roadway. As I watched, the pilot struggled heroically to deliver its cargo of ammuniton to the safety of the trees.

The Sparrowhawk oriented on the remaining target and accelerated. The Raven could do nothing but rotate its shoulder-mounted laser toward the fighter and rush onward. Fire erupted from the forest from the Wasp and Stinger, but the rapid descent of the fighter caused the shots to go wide. When the fighter was a scant three hundred meters away from the Raven, both the 'Mech and the Sparrowhawk fired paired lasers. The fighter was scored upon twice in the fuselage and dipped randomly, colliding with the ground and detonating a score of mines. But the Raven, carrying a few tons of high explosive on its back, was hit in the ammunition cases and lit up like a Roman Candle. Falling 'Mech fragments rocketed in all directions, some igniting the fringes of the forest and forcing the Locust to retreat from the carnage.

I was under strict radio silence until I arrived at the prearranged meeting place, some twenty kilometers south. I tried to console myself, imagining the reception that my cargo would receive among the warriors of House Fujita. The rest of the battalion had conducted independent raids this morning in an attempt to overwhelm Davion's defenses. The dense undergrowth was a severe impediment to my beast of burden, which barely managed a speed of 40 kph until I was far enough from any known outpost to relax. It was a lonely march, but I didn't became anxious until I neared the rendezvous.

I noted a heat signature in the trees about a hundred meters ahead. Thinking it to be the machines of my comrades, I opened a communication channel and awaited the response. All that I received was static. Now on guard, I moved forward to get a better look. Standing amidst a copse of shattered and smoldering trees was a lance of Davion Heavy Guards. The infra-red image I'd seen was that of a Marauder, which was now turning to bring its twin PPCs to bear on me. Visions of a gutted and burning Raven filled my thoughts as I hastily released the heavy chain binding the ammunition cases to my Locust's torso, sending them clattering to the forest floor. I backpedalled as the Marauder's PPC loosed a bolt of super-charged particles, striking my fin-like right arm and vaporizing it. The Locust reeled drunkenly, scored on twice by accompanying shots from the Marauder's medium lasers, and crashed backwards through a dozen saplings. Before the Locust finally collapsed, I saw the Marauder following my path slowly, as if suffering under the heat burden created by its sudden discharge of weaponry. My luck then took a turn for the better, for the crab-like 75 ton 'Mech did not seem to notice the pile of ammunition lying heaped at its feet in its determination to finish me. Righting the Locust, I aimed and fired a laser blast at the densest collection of crates.

The forest erupted in flames, engulfing the staggering Marauder. Their fire clung tenaciously as the monster collapsed into a stand of burning trees. The remaining crates had detonated, shearing the legs from the Marauder and touching off the autocannon ammunition stored in its torso. I spent no time celebrating my unexpected victory for I saw another Marauder approaching through the screen of smoke and fire. I turned the Locust's head west and moved off at a right angle, like I'd learned in basic 'Mech training. I was soon up to 40 kph again and making a hasty retreat, relieved that unassisted infra-red couldn't penetrate the dense foliage beyond a hundred meters.


JOHN GAMMON 92

While most of my mind now concentrated on escaping the horrible fate planned for me, a part of it tried to piece together what had happened. It was now obvious why the ammunition dump had been so lightly defended; the Davion commander had sent the Heavy Guards to flush House Fujita out of Dirbar Forest, into the waiting arms of what were probably the 20th Avalon Hussars. It was not an especially clever plan, especially for the Fox's personal guard, but the Federated Suns had more than enough men and machines stationed on Styk to make it work. I realized the decision that our 2nd Battalion's commander now faced; I headed for the Capellan base in the heart of Dirbar.

House Fujita had secreted an Overlord-class DropShip in the forest and maintained it there ever since Operation Galahad resumed in 3028. Our escape plan involved an unannounced departure from the planet with all of House Fujita's remaining 'Mechs aboard. The DropShip would rendezvous with a Capellan JumpShip hidden at a pirate Jump Point. This assumed that a DropShip without fighter escort could escape the pursuit of the heavy Davion aerospace complement scouring the continent for a trace of our 'Mechs.

I tried repeatedly to establish contact with Captain McCready, who I trusted had also escaped from the Heavy Guard's ambush. The only basis I had for that belief was the heat signature I'd originally detected. In retrospect, it was too large to be Capellan. My commander would not have been as foolish as I; he would not have blundered into such an obvious ambush.

My confidence was justified when the crackle of static erupted into a coherent message on House Fujita's command channel: "Alert...Notice to all Capellans in area...The Fox is in Dirbar and resistance is heavy...All units rendezvous for 'Fujita's Gambit', repeat 'Fujita's Gambit'...ten minutes...Alert..."

Ten minutes to Fujita's Gambit, the code word for the immediate evacuation of Styk. Checking my position, I realized that I wouldn't reach the launch site in time. I tried to get someone to acknowledge my situation, but the radio cut out as I crashed through a denser section of woods. With jump jets I would have made it with minutes to spare, but pigs don't have wings and Locusts don't fly. I knew that once the Fujita's Gambit order had gone out, the situation was too desperate to wait for stragglers like myself.

The DropShip rose on six pillars of fire, pushing it upward relentlessly, irretrievably. No enemy fighters marred the azure sky with their twisted contrail, and I was grateful that the first part of my comrades' journey home would be a safe one. My Locust stood watching from the edge of the crater formed by the colossal interplanetary drive. The *Empress Ting* faded as it rose and finally entered the upper atmosphere.

It was nearly a decade following the end of the Fourth Succesion War before the dedicated investigators of our Maskirova concluded their investigation of the sabotage which caused the Overlord-Class DropShip *Empress Ting* to explode in the upper atmosphere of the planet Styk. That a single MIIO agent was responsible for the deaths of some eighty Capellans, the loss of nearly a battalion of BattleMechs, an irreplaceable artifact of forgotten technology and hundreds of acres of burned forest seems incredible to me. I watched the nuclear fireball split into two thundering masses dropping closer with each passing second, finally impacting in the forest three kilometers from where my Locust stood. At the time, I could attribute it to nothing less than an act of the childhood God I had rejected. My eyes went dark and I ran blindly from a scene of ultimate horror.

Dateline: Styk, Sarna Commonality, October 3028

The Davion Heavy Guards RCT and the 20th Avalon Hussars RCT departed Styk a week after the confirmed destruction of Warrior House Fujita's 2nd Battalion, leaving elements of the Hussars behind to garrison the planet. The Heavy Guards had departed Dirbar forest immediately, the object of their pursuit having conveniently disposed of itself. I established a small camp and carefully camouflaged the Locust so that no chance fly-bys would make the Federats suspect that their cowardly plot had been anything but a complete success. To conserve my dwindling provisions, I took to hunting in the forest with my sidearm. The limited success I enjoyed while tracking native game through he forest did more to feed my hatred than my body, but I was determined to endure.

The day I saw the myriad numbers of DropShips departing overhead, I had a curious encounter with a Davion MechWarrior which renewed my faith in destiny. I heard a sound which sent me climbing the nearest tree and scanning the forest with my infra-red binoculars. I spotted the 'Mech, moving slowly through the forest and favoring its left leg. It was a Wolverine, a 55-tonner, bearing the fox insignia of the Heavy Guards. The significance of the 'Mech's insignia didn't occur to me at the time, since I hadn't had a hint of frontline news for two weeks. Trying to remain undetected, I saw the machine grind to a halt a couple hundred meters from where my own 'Mech lay hidden. The hatch popped open and the pilot descended on a chain ladder.

On reaching the ground, the pilot unslung a hunting rifle and moved off into the underbrush. Drawing my own weapon, which was down to two cartridges, I approached the cooling machine from opposite the direction which he had taken. I would ambush him when he returned from hunting, hoping

that I would not have to wait all night. I crouched in the bushes near the 'Mech's feet and composed myself for a long wait.

Three hours later, my enemy had failed to return. I headed back to camp to retrieve the last of my emergency rations. If I had to wait all night, I reasoned, then I would have to risk missing him in order to get some food. Halfway there, I heard the sound of running feet. Before I could react I saw the enemy warrior emerge on the path ahead, rifle in hand. I dove to the ground and rolled to my left before taking aim and firing at the approaching figure. The shot missed, but caused the warrior to stop short and dive for cover. He then returned fire with his rifle and began zig-zagging back toward my encampment. I fired my last shot, but too late. He'd disappeared too quickly.

I realized that he'd discovered the Locust and would soon be sealed safely inside its cockpit. Following his cue, I dashed back to the Wolverine and scrambled up the ladder, hauling the heavy chain up behind me.

Everyone knows that BattleMech theft is no easy trick and that getting inside the cockpit is usually only the first challenge to be overcome. Mercenaries, whose livelihood depends on preventing exactly what I was attempting to do, typically rig some sort of booby trap to dispose of thieves. House 'Mechs, fortunately, are well-enough protected in their bays to preclude the use of such devices. 'Mechs such as the Wolverine could be piloted immediately, or as soon as the fusion engine was up to operating temperature. Activation of the BattleMech's weaponry always requires the use of a password, and I had no time to guess the name of my enemy's most recent love interest. With no time to lose, I enabled the engine start and listened to the machine powering-up beneath me. Knowing that I could easily lose the pursuit before it began, I shouldered my way into the neurohelmet and switched on the power focus.

A quick listen at the current radio setting showed that the former owner must have been out of communication with his unit when he stopped to hunt. I guessed that he was probably lost and endeavoring to return to his unit. The damage readout showed the left hip was frozen and most of the armor missing from that limb. Apparently, my dead comrades had given an excellent fight before they departed. If the rest of this Wolverine's lance had survived, they wouldn't have left him to find his own way.

It took minutes for the engine to warm up enough to move the ponderous vehicle. It was slow going handling a limping 'Mech, the damaged hip cutting its speed in half, but eventually I reached the campsite. I was relieved to find the Locust where I'd left it. As I approached, however, I was startled to see it rise on its spindly legs and begin to back away from me with halting steps. My enemy had also been busy, it seemed. Fearing that his skill would soon improve and that he would elude me in the forest, I lurched forward and laid a giant hand on the 'Mech's bird-like body.

The Locust crouched and dived to the right, leaving me clutching his broken radio antenna before the Wolverine stumbled and plowed through a stand of trees, falling to its knees. The Locust never slowed, but ran north toward where I knew the edge of the forest lay. Righting the medium 'Mech, I oriented the Wolverine northward and fired the jump jets. Curiously, the first thing I noticed upon seeing the open sky for the first time in a week was that a rainstorm was threatening on the horizon.

The Locust showed well on infra-red, only a kilometer to the north. As I accelerated toward him, he moved away with more confidence and skill than he'd shown before, obviously no amateur. I took care when landing, making sure not to damage the leg, or myself, any further, and jumped again as soon as the appropriate readout showed green.

The pursuit continued in this manner for nearly an hour, with neither of us managing to gain an advantage over the other. I could be sure he would not be sending any calls for help, for I still gripped his antenna in my battle-fist. The Wolverine was a handful to manage, not having been serviced by a competent Tech for at least a week, but the Locust was in even worse shape. It occurred to me that we would soon be leaving the forest, and my enemy would surely out-distance me when he no longer had to dodge trees. I devised a desperate plan which would ensure that at least one Davion MechWarrior would die to avenge House Fujita.

Tuning the communications link on to the setting used by my opponent, I sent out a call to any 'friendlies' in the area. Immediately a voice responded and demanded to know my identity. I had already prepared a convenient answer; I identified myself as Leftenant Baker of the Davion Heavy Guards RCT and recited a serial number found among the warrior's personal effects which I'd found stashed in a cockpit compartment. The voice, which I could tell now was female, was convinced when I explained that I was in close pursuit of a Capellan 'Mech which had somehow survived the DropShip explosion. The voice now identified itself as Leftenant Mariel Tacoma of the 20th Avalon Hussars, whose lance was now on its way to assist me. I felt relieved, for the Locust had just reached the edge of the forest.

The Locust shot out of the trees and tripled its velocity, running across a battle-torn field toward a distant city. A moment later, a lance of medium BattleMechs emerged from behind the buildings on the city's outskirts, orienting toward the approaching 'Capellan'. For his part, the Locust pilot must have thought himself the object of a timely rescue. He did not think to alter course but sped toward them will all haste. The lead Davion Phoenix Hawk took aim and fired on the Locust's thinly-armored head, a lucky shot

Talk About Lost Issues, Folks? Following is a SPECIAL INSERT! BattleTechnology 0101! Our original issue, First printing rare collector's edition BOUND INTO THIS BOOK! NOT a reprint!

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which all but destroyed the cockpit. Simultaneous fire from two Shadow Hawks and a Clint burned through the torso armor, and the exploding engine destroyed all remaining traces of the warrior I had pursued through the forest.

When I caught up to the scene of my opponent's demise, I complimented the Leftenant on her marksmanship. She expressed disappointment at having no living pilot to return for questioning. Somewhat offhandedly, she commented on my mysterious appearance in light of the fact that the Heavy Guards had left Styk the previous week. We were both willing to drop the subject when I expressed my extreme fatigue and my desire to rejoin my unit. Leftenant Tacoma insisted that I follow her lance into the city to allow the Techs of the 20th Avalon Hussars to repair the Wolverine. The Clint had already begun preparations to tow the Locust back to the city. Wary of appearing suspicious by refusing such a generous offer, I limped after the Leftenant's Phoenix Hawk. The two Shadow Hawks marched to either side of me.

End of Part One:
Part Two of this incredible but true story appeared two months later to our original readers. For you, now, it begins in the next column.

Dateline: Styk, Sarna Commonality, October, 3028

Tao City is an industrial marvel, a tribute to the work ethic ingrained in the proud citizens of the Capellan Confederation. Though Charon was the official capital of the planet Styk, the seat of politicians and other useless personnel who nevertheless served the Chancellor, Tao City had been built around the Tao MechWorks, the third largest manufacturing center in the Confederation. No match for the annual output of Earthwerks' Tikonov facilities, Tao MechWorks and its affiliated industries still accounted for twenty percent of the Confederation's industrial output and employed over five percent of the world's population. Thanks to the Fourth Succession War, all was now in the grip of the Federated Suns and its accursed ruler, Hanse Davion.

The Sword and Sun banner of House Davion flew from every flagstaff and rode on every BattleMech on garrison duty in Tao City, mute testimony to the treachery that had succeeded in eliminating the righteous defenders of Styk. The 2nd Battalion of House Fujita, one of the best of Chancellor Liao's Warrior Houses, had died in a cataclysmic DropShip explosion as the result of sabotage. Now the Fox had left two BattleMech battalions and an assortment of support units to pacify, that is, terrorize loyal citizens of the Confederation.

I wore the uniform of a Federated Suns Lieutenant, but the Emerald Triangle of House Liao remained emblazoned upon my heart. I had been picked up by a Suns patrol while piloting the Wolverine of a Heavy Guards warrior, who had accidentally assumed my true identity as a Commander in the ranks of House Fujita and whose resulting demise had come at the hands of Federat warriors. The Davion Heavy Guards RCT were currently training, incommunicado, on New Aragon, to what end I could not discover without appearing even more suspicious to the eyes I believed watched my every step. Of course, my new 'comrades' in the 20th Avalon Hussars, who were responsible for the pacification of Styk, were doing all they could to secure transport for me to rejoin the Heavy Guards, and I suspect they were also endeavoring to confirm my identity. Predictably, the early stages of the Fourth Succession War were nothing if not chaotic, and I had reason to suspect it would be easy to remain "Leftenant Baker" of the Heavy Guards for at least another month. By the end of that period, I hoped to be very far from Styk.

Under-staffed as most rear-area defense units are, the Hussars were more than a little grateful to have the services of another MechWarrior and his machine, even if the loan was only temporary. I was granted command of a security lance by virtue of my stolen leftenant's epaulette's and having asserted many years of field experience. The

(continued after Special Insert)

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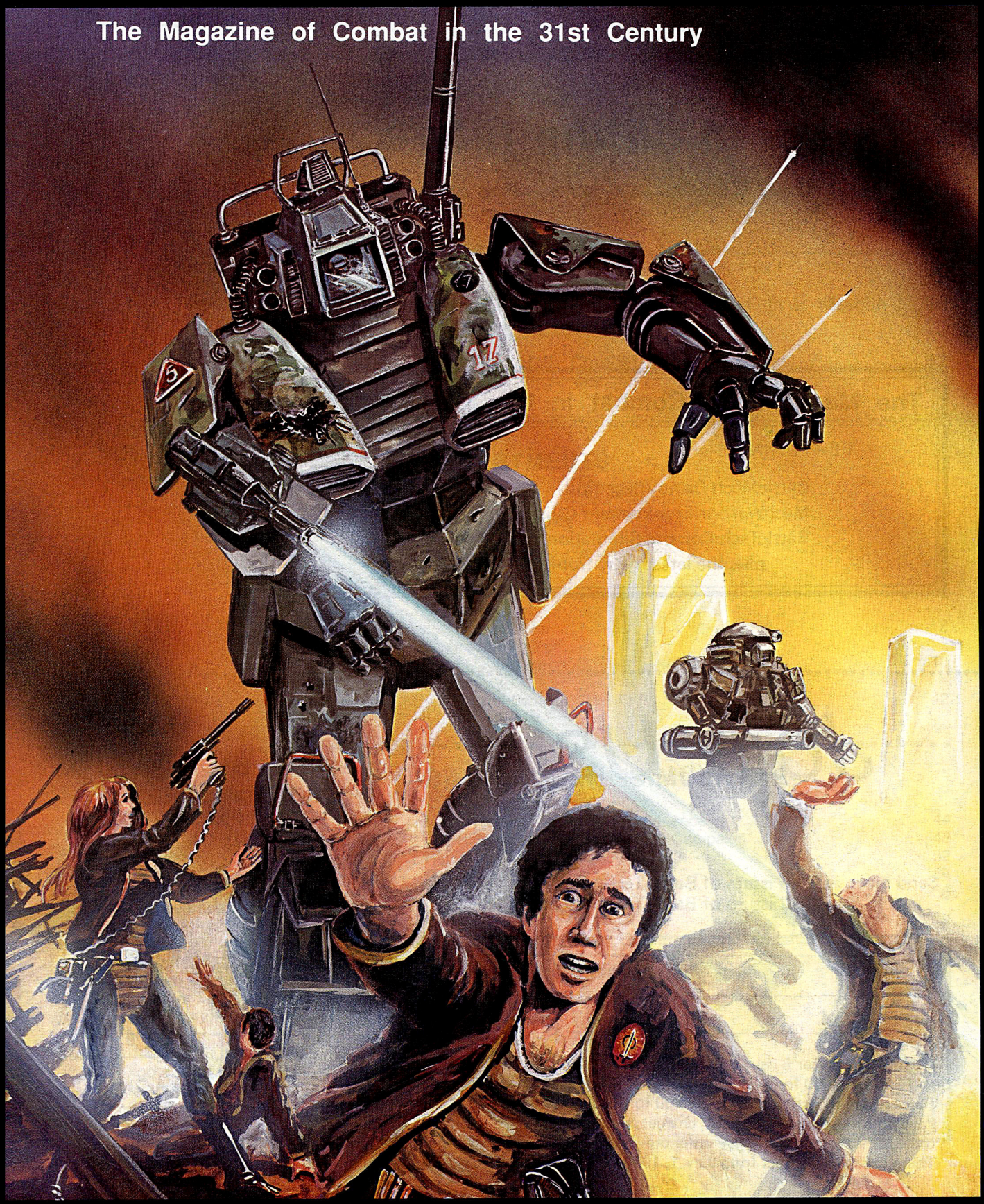

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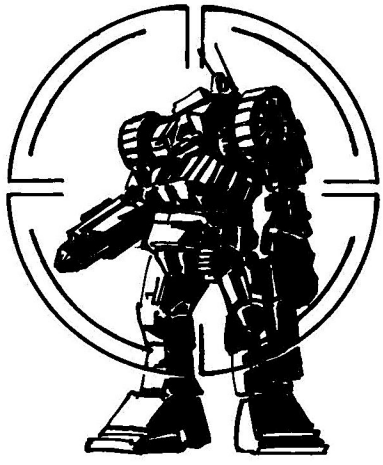

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About the Cover:

A lightning strike by the 2nd Kearny Highlanders spearheaded a snap raid by Liao forces onto the Davion world of Corella early in July, culminating in the Battle of Kilgour. Critics of Prince Hanse Davion's policies contend that the war games and maneuvers recently launched are wasteful of precious war materials and risk triggering confrontations such as Kilgour. See page 16 of this issue, "What Is Hanse Up To?"

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OPENING SHOTS

Welcome to BattleTechnology Magazine.

It has been said of the 31st Century that human life is cheap, while the combat machines they pilot are not.

Certainly this is true in military terms. In the brutal, blood and steel accounting system of modern combat, regimental commanders would gladly sacrifice a battalion of infantry in order to bring down a single BattleMech. Those ponderous machines which have been termed Kings of the Battlefield are virtually irreplaceable, priceless in any real sense of the word. One study suggests that new 'Mechs are being assembled in the various surviving industrial complexes of the Inner Sphere at a rate which only just barely surpasses their attrition rate in combat. The majority of 'Mechs encountered on the battlefield are centuries old, literally heirlooms which have been passed down from generation to generation within single families or, in many cases, within particular regimental companies.

And of course, the humans who take these machines into battle can *always* be replaced.

Or can they?

There are aspects of flesh and blood and spirit which can never be assumed by the purely mechanical frames of combat machines, however sophisticated. The brotherhood which binds fighting men and women together, the belonging, the training and experience, the esprit de corps which makes a company more than an armed mob—these are intangibles which go beyond the statistics of 'Mech tonnage and combat firepower. These comprise the *human element* of spirit and tradition and fighting will which make it possible for a David to triumph over a Goliath...or a pair of *Wasps* to take on a *Rifleman* and win.

Even today, the human element cannot be lightly dismissed.

When such qualities cease to make any difference in the balance of life—or death—then Man as a species will be ready for the scrap heap, replaced by the machines which were previously his servants.

It is this human element which makes a magazine such as BattleTechnology possible. Any magazine designed for MechWarriors which dealt solely in the statistics of 'Mech against 'Mech would have all the flavor and color of a technical manual. It is the human element—with all its fear and hope, striving and failure and success—which adds the fire.

In this and future issues of BattleTechnology, MechWarriors and other interested parties will find what we hope is a balanced range of columns and feature articles. Subjects will include anything of interest to warriors, techs, and mercenaries, from the politics of the Great Houses, to new 'Mech designs, from tactical reviews of historical battles to useful modifications to 'Mechs or equipment, from columns dealing with potential mercenary employers to detailed descriptions of worlds across the explored Galaxy.

But in this endeavor, we must rely on the human element. BattleTechnology maintains its principal editorial offices on the small world of Exeter, within the boundaries of the Federated Suns, and satellite offices within the territory of each of the other Houses. We rely on the human element—the men and women who serve as techs, as mercenary soldiers, as MechWarriors across the realm of Human space—to provide us with the material you see in these pages.

Combat experiences. Tactical evaluations of battles or campaigns which you have experienced. BattleMech designs or revisions or modifications which you have used, or had used against you. Songs, poems, or art which speak of the human element in a universe of death and blood and machines—and of life and hope in such a universe.

BattleTechnology hopes to present all of these and more. But we need your help and participation.

We need the human element.

BattleTechnology is, after all, *your* story...

William H. Keith Jr.

- 3027 -

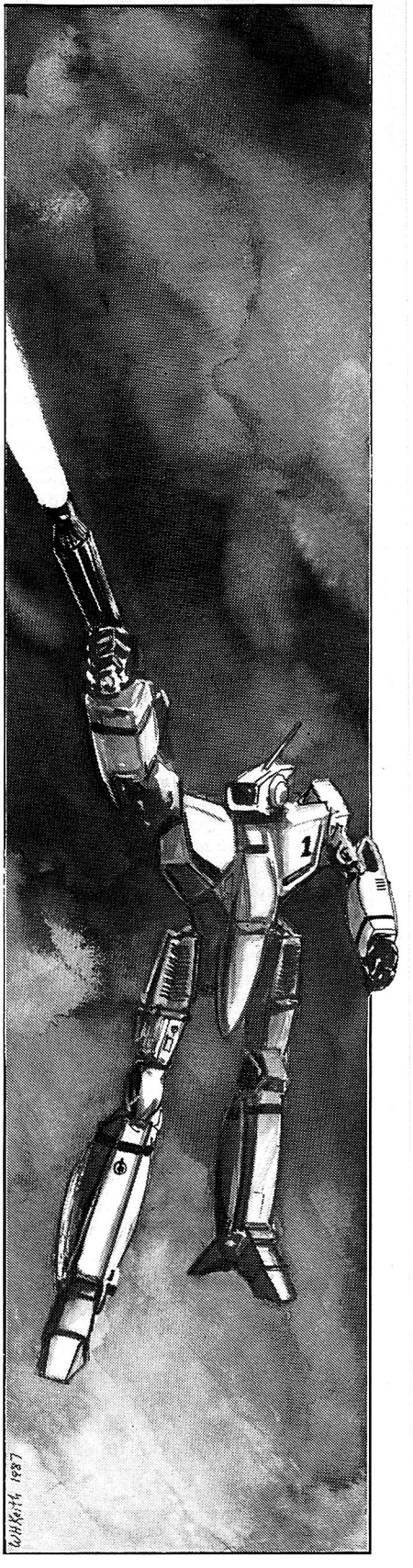
STANDARD TIMES AND DATES

Unless otherwise noted, all times given in this issue are Terran Synchronised Time (abbreviated TST). TST relates the time on any world to a traditional 24-hour clock set to the rising and setting of the local sun or suns. TST's variable "hours" may be as much as ten minutes shorter or longer than a standard, or "metric" hour, depending on the world's actual rotation.

The 24-hour clock divides the local day into 24 equal periods, with 1200 hours corresponding to local noon. Thus, 0900 hours is mid-morning, while 1500 hours is mid-afternoon.

All dates use the universal Terran standard calendar (abbreviated TC), which divides Earth's year into 12 months or 365.25 days, as measured by standardized metric time rather than the variable TST. TC dates are related to the current date, at 0° longitude (Greenwich), on Terra, and will have nothing to do with the seasons or local dates of worlds other than Earth.

This premier issue of BattleTechnology is dated August, 3027.



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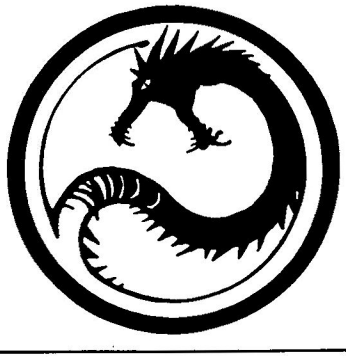

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Leopold Ransom: Duke of Alcyone

Reader surveys indicate that fully 32.6% of BattleTechnology's readers are mercenary warriors, either as members of established mercenary combat units serving one or another of the great houses, or as freelance warriors-for-hire in such diverse services as bounty hunters and personal body guards for important government or corporate officials.

As a special service to its mercenary leaders then, BattleTechnology introduces this column designed to apprise the magazine's readers of mercenary employment opportunities throughout the Inner Sphere and beyond. Each column in future issues will feature a particular potential employer, ranging from the Great Houses of the Successor States themselves to wealthy or powerful individuals, corporations, or institutes which periodically require soldiers-for-hire.

A three-letter coding system has been developed to rate each employer reviewed in this column. Each letter, ranging from A (very good) to Z (very bad) provides insight into possible advantages or disadvantages associated with hiring out to the employer in question. Note that the same code is presented in the companion BattleTechnology column, World Book.

The areas rated through this code are:

NEED: How frequently does the employer require mercenaries? Code values of A through G indicate a nearly continual need for mercenary forces of various types. Values of U through Z suggest that mercenary openings are relatively rare.

PAY: How well does the employer pay? Code values of A through G indicate above-average pay scales. Values of U through Z indicate poor pay, or a history of noncompliance with mercenary contracts.

CONDITIONS: What are the usual conditions under which mercenaries work? Values of A through G generally indicate relatively good conditions—access to recreational or R&R facilities, service on an Earthlike world, or "soft tickets" such as ceremonial guard duty or providing escort for noble functionaries at court. Values of U through Z suggest generally bad or unpleasant conditions, such as service at an isolated outpost far from recreational facilities, guard duty at a remote prison or forced labor facility, or a hitch on a world with an unusually hostile environment.

Numerous factors are taken into account in calculating each code value. Naturally, contract openings, pay, and conditions under the same employer may vary tremendously depending on circumstances or changes unreported to BattleTechnology since the basic research was done. These code values are intended as guidelines in the presentation of a readers' service only. BattleTechnology assumes no responsibility, written or implied, for damages, costs, or casualties incurred through service to mercenary employers screened in this column..

Alsun II, "Alcyone"
Rating Code: B/J/M

SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The world listed as "Alcyone" on most Federated Suns star charts is not the same as the classical Alcyone, brightest star of the cluster of young, hot, blue white stars known as the Pleiades. The Alcyone of the Pleiades is, of course—given that cluster's extremely young age—planetless, though it is under close observation from research stations circling other stars of the cluster, Electra, Meia, and Merope.

The *world* Alcyone lies at two thirds' the distance of the Pleiades Cluster from Sol, close to the Davion systems of Redfield, Daniels, and Stein's Folly and near the Liao border. The system was discovered by Captain Alfred Daniels of the Terran Survey Ship *Seeker* in 2214. The single habitable world was named by Daniels after his daughter, Alcyone Daniels. The fact that the system appears to lie along a straight line running from Sol to the Pleiades on two-dimensional star charts is probably coincidence. Alcyone's star is a main sequence K0 sun invisible from Sol. It is listed on navigational ephemerides as NSC E 4-008, 332, and is called Alsun or "Al's Sun" by the natives. Alcyone is formally designated as Alsun II.

Alcyone is rated as an Earthlike world. Possessed of a terrestrial ecosystem and a standard oxygen-nitrogen atmosphere, it supports a population of several hundred million. The world has been repeatedly raided by Liao warfleets during the past several centuries and suffered heavily during the genocidal campaigns of the First and Second Successor State Wars. Numerous of Alsun II's cities have been destroyed and never rebuilt, or they remain inhabited but show extensive signs of heavy war damage. Alcyone is marginally self-sufficient in both agriculture and industry. The planet's principal resource is the Hobson-Redeye Factory complex outside of Alcyone's capital of Gratura. The Hobson-Redeye plant manufactures core assemblies for medium and heavy lasers which are in demand throughout the Inner Sphere. Numerous recent Liao raids have been staged for the express purpose of securing stocks of laser core units for Liao manufacturing, or in order to destroy the plant in an effort to hamper House Davion's military effort.

Leopold Ransom: Duke of Alcyone

Alsun II is ruled by Duke Leopold of Alcyone, eleventh of his line in a peerage created in 2807 by Paul Davion. Almost a century later, Alcyone fell to the growing strength of House Liao, though there were whispered hints of treason by the then Duke of Alcyone, Fenris Ransom. Liao Planetary governors ruled Alcyone through the line of Alcyone Dukes, maintaining the line in order to maintain their legitimacy. Only recently, military reversals against House Liao at Redfield and Stein's Folly have resulted in House Davion's securing a firm foothold in this system.

Duke Leopold is not popular with the people he rules. Though he publicly supported Hanse Davion and led the call for reunification with the Federated Suns after Redfield, it is widely rumored that the move was designed to save his own skin, that he is, in fact, still in the pay of Liao agents and secretly working against the interests of the ever-popular Prince Hanse Davion. Davion himself has never acknowledged these rumors, though he has certainly heard them. Publicly, at least, Leopold is Davion's faithful servant, and Davion has confirmed him as the designated ruler of Alsun II. Leopold is also a close supporter and confidant of Prince Davion's brother-in-Law, Michael Hasek-Davion, Duke of New Syrtis.

If the general population of Alcyone expected to receive a new ruler with the passing of their Liao overlords, they were disappointed. Public unrest and discontent have

been swelling in recent months, and Duke Leopold has three times declared a planetary state of emergency and employed household troops to crush local insurrections.

MERCENARY TICKETS

Because of the widespread public unrest, Duke Leopold has been unwilling to employ native Alcyonian militia forces for duties such as personal or palace security, or for crowd and riot control. In one of the recent declared emergencies, local militia forces joined rioters in the streets and were put down only when Leopold's own House Guard, the notorious Alcyone House Reds, fired into the crowd, killing thirty and wounding well over two hundred.

With his military and paramilitary resources severely limited, Duke Leopold has recently issued a call for mercenaries to extend the strength and scope of his personal forces. Mercenary duties reported by



BattleTechnology correspondents include escorts of military and government convoys; security details for factories (including the Hobson-Redeye complex), dams, bridges, power stations, or BattleMech repair facilities; and highly prestigious duties as ceremonial guards at the Ducal Palace at Gratura. On July 2nd, 3027 (TC) a 20-man mercenary security force opened fire on a rioting crowd outside the Plaza Concordiat two kilometers from the Ducal Plaza, killing three and wounding seven. The mercenaries were immediately overrun by armed rioters. After a sharp fight in which two more civilians and one mercenary were killed, the security detail was rescued by a detachment of Alcyone Reds and managed to retire to the Palace in good order.

TICKET DETAILS

Though details vary depending on the individual mercenary ticket, the following information describes typical service standards in previous mercenary contracts signed with Duke Leopold of Alcyone.

MISSIONS:

RETAINER
TERRITORIAL CAMPAIGN (riot duty, crowd control)
STATIC DEFENSE (including garrison duty, training cadres, and providing security)

LENGTH OF SERVICE

6 to 9 months

REMUNERATION

Infantry, Armor, Artillery:
Veteran, Elite: Cb 12,000 - 15,000 per squad per week
Regular: Cb 7,000 - 10,000 per squad per week
Green: Cb 2,000 - 5,000 per squad per week

MechWarriors, AeroSpace Pilots:
Veteran, Elite: Cb 1,500 per warrior per week
Regular: Cb 700 per warrior per week
Green: Cb 500 per warrior per week

GUARANTEES

ComStar Intermediary: An agreed-upon sum (generally equal to one third of the entire agreed-upon sum for the mercenary unit for a six-month period, less a 5% fee for ComStar's services) is placed in an escrow account at the ComStar offices in Gratura, Alcyone. Contractual noncompliance by either side is grounds for release of funds to the aggrieved party, after adjudication by a neutral ComStar precentor.

COMMAND RIGHTS

Command will be designated as a House Command, with the unit placed directly under the orders of Baron General Fitzhugh Ransom of the Duke's personal staff. Where possible, the mercenary force will operate independently of local planetary forces but will be responsible to the planetary Staff Command.

Under some circumstances, Duke Leopold retains the right to introduce an integrated command structure, with local planetary troops augmenting or replacing various of the mercenary forces.

TRANSPORT

The mercenary unit is generally expected to provide its own transport to Alcyone. In exceptional cases, the Alcyone Government may arrange for transport at Alcyone's expense.

ASSESSMENT

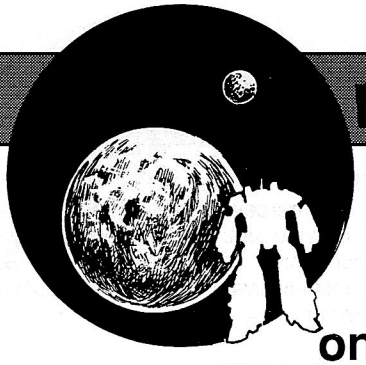
Though well-rated in need and average to above-average in pay and conditions, mercenaries considering applying for a merc ticket on Alcyone are strongly urged to consider the deteriorating political situation. Indeed, Alcyone's code rating of "M" in the Conditions category is as low as it is principally because of the volatile political situation on the planet. Analysts have predicted that Alcyone's government cannot remain in power without instituting still further draconian measures against the population. Intervention by either Davion or Liao in order to "restore order" is a distinct possibility. Also possible is full-blown armed revolution or all-out civil war. Whether successful or not, any such rising would have as principal targets any offworlder mercenaries in the pay of the hated Duke Leopold.

Further, revolutionary governments tend to show an almost uniform failure to honor mercenary contracts and agreements signed with former governments. The overthrow of Duke Leopold by a popular rising could strand Leopold's mercenaries on a hostile world, leaving them at the mercy of a bloodthirsty mob. Even direct intervention on behalf of the government by Hanse Davion's forces, or those of the Duke of New Syrtis, would likely come too late to help offworlder mercs marooned on Alcyone.

BattleTechnology's recommendation is that mercenary MechWarriors and infantry alike avoid Alcyone. There are other tickets available which pay as well or better—and without the risk of becoming involved in a bloody and bitter civil war.

BattleTechnology
Mercenary Employer Assessment

Alsun II: Alcyone
CODE: B/J/M
ASSESSMENT: Negative
Fair pay; high risk



Worldbook

BRIMSTONE: Fiery Hell on the Kurita Frontier

by J. Andrew Keith

STELLAR DATA

Catalog # NSC D 6-507-438 A/B (binary)

Star: Orpheus (A)
Type: F5V
Mass: 1.30 Sol
Luminosity: 2.70 Sol
Radius: 1.24 Sol
Estimated Time Remaining on Main Sequence: .9 begayear

Star: Eurydice (B)
Type: F7V
Mass: 1.24 Sol
Luminosity: 2.07 Sol
Radius: 1.19 Sol
Estimated Time Remaining on Main Sequence: .9 begayear

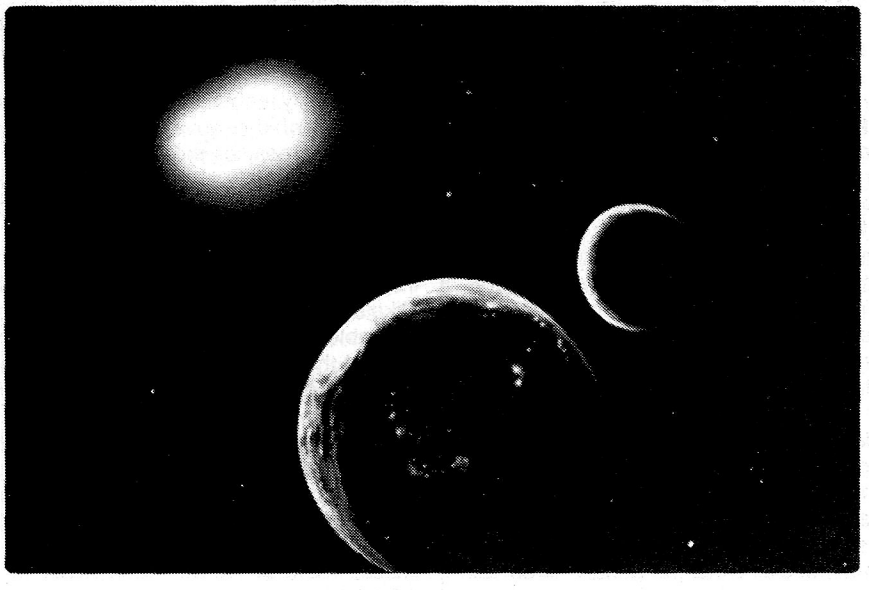
SYSTEM DATA

Binary System Type: Close Double
Planetary System: 9 major bodies, 1 asteroid belt

PLANETARY DATA

Planet V: Weisau
Common Name: Brimstone

Mean Orbital Radius: 2.74 AU
Orbital Eccentricity: .0120
Periastron Orbital Distance: 2.7126 AU
Apastron Orbital Distance: 2.7674 AU
Period: 8.099 standard years (2,958.1 standard days)
Mass: .5 Earth
Equatorial Diameter: 8322.0 km
Mean Planetary Density: 9.9 g/cm³ (1.8 Earth)
Mean Surface Gravity: 1.1750
Escape Velocity: 12.9 kps
Rotational Period: None; tidal lock with satellite. Day/night cycle due to mutual orbit with satellite is 55.1 hours.
Axial Inclination: 1°22'14.8"
Atmosphere: Marginal Earth Type
Composition: N_2-83%; O_2-11.3%; H_2O(mean)-0.6%; sulfur and sulfur compounds-2.3%
Hydrographics: 14% of the surface covered by liquid H_2O/H_2SO_4 tainted by other sulfur compounds
Temperature Range (Port Erebus): +10°C. (winter, night) through +66°C. (summer, day). Equatorial temperatures can exceed 125°C.



GENERAL PLANETARY INFORMATION

SATELLITES: 1 (Common name: Fire)

Mean Orbital Radius: 162,298.5 km (39 Brimstone radii); **Eccentricity:** .0204: **Period:** 55.1 hours; **Mass:** .4 Earth; **Equatorial Diameter:** 12,756 km; **Mean Density:** 2.2 g/cm³; **Mean Surface Gravity:** .4 G; **Escape Velocity:** 4.39 kps; **Rotational Period:** None (tidal lock with primary), but day/night cycle alternates by period of 55.1 hours; **Axial Inclination:** 3°18'34.7"; **Atmosphere:** Inhospitable; *Surface Pressure:* .17 atm; *Composition:* various inert gases; **Hydrographic Data:** no liquid hydrosphere on planet.

PLANETOGRAPHY:

Radius: 4161.5 km; **Circumference:** 26,147.508 km; **Total Surface Area:** 217,625,000 sq km; **Land Surface Area:** 187,157,000 sq km; **Inhabited Surface Area:** 1,871,570 sq km.

Surface Topography: *Ocean/Sea/Lake* 14%; *Valley/Rift/Basin* 12%; *Rising Ground* 11%; *Lowlands* 16%; *Steppe/Plain* 21%; *Low Hills* 8%; *High Hills* 6%; *Low Mountains* 7%; *High Mountains* 5%.

PEOPLE:

Population: 12,675,693; **Population Density:** .14 person per sq km; **Urbanization:** 25%; **Ethnic Groups:** Central European (59%), North American (21%), Black (all) (14%); Others (6%); **Languages:** League Anglic (100%); **Religions:** Church of Blake (62%), Protestant Christian Sects (10%); Neo-Buddhist (10%); Universal Catholic Church (10%). **Capitol and Largest City:** Port Erebus; **Other Major Cities: None.**

GOVERNMENT:

Allegiance: Associate World of the Draconis Combine; *Government:* Aristocratic Fief; *Head of State:* Duke Heinrich von Altdorf; *Head of Government:* Freda Massenberg, Ducal Steward for Brimstone; *Local Administrative Districts:* 5.

ECONOMY:

Natural Resources: Ores, Radioactives; *Processed/Manufactured Goods:* None; *Arable Land:* .01%; **Labor Force:** *Agricultural* (.005%), *Industrial* (18.75%), *Resource Extraction* (74.99%), *Service:* (6.25%).

FINANCE:

Currency: Altmark (1 altmark = Cb 0.592); *Per Capita Income:* Cb 80; *Gross Domestic Product:* Cb 1.014 billion; **Imports:** Natural Agricultural, Petrochemicals, Armaments, Heavy Manufactured Goods, Light Manufactured Goods; *Principal Sources:* Schirmeck (23%), Senorbi (16%), Valentina (12%), Waldheim (10%), Kaznejov (7%), Budingen (5%), Delacruz (5%); **Exports:** Mineral Ores, Radioactives; *Principal Markets:* Delacruz (23%), Valentina (16%), Waldheim (13%), Altdorf (10%), Schirmeck (5%), Goubellat (3%), Kaznejov (2%).

TRANSPORTATION:

Chief Ports: Port Erebus; **Off-Planet Facilities:** *Orbital:* none; *Deep Space:* none; *Enclaves:* none; **Merchant Fleet:** *JumpShips:* 0; *Freighters:* 0; *Shuttles:* 2; **System Jump Point:** *Distance:* 19.20 AU; *Travel Time (typical):* 284 hours (11.8 std. days).

HEALTH:

Life Expectancy at Birth: 54 years; **Birth Rate:** (3024) 5%; **Mortality Rate:** (3024) 7%; **Population Growth Rate:** decreasing at 2% per year.

EDUCATION:

Literacy: 12%; **Technicians/100 population:** 4; **Universities:** 3.

ARMED FORCES:

Defense Spending: 30% of GDP; **Military Manpower Potential:** 3,897,774 (35%); **AeroSpace Forces:** *Orbital Facilities:* 0, *Deep Space Facilities:* 0, *JumpShips:* 0, *DropShips:* 3, *AeroSpace Fighters:* 6, *Escorts:* 0, *Monitors:* 0, *Cruisers:* 0; **Battalions:** *Infantry:* 3, *Armor:* 0, *Air:* 0, *Mech:* 0; **Warrior Training Facilities:** none; **Hiring Data:** J/N/T.

THE PLANET

The binary star system of Orpheus/Eurydice lies in the cis-Alpheratz region of the Draconis Combine, less than 30 light years from the Federated Suns border. It is a part of the six-planet fiefdom of Duke Heinrich von Altdorf and is important chiefly for the great mineral wealth of Brimstone, the only world even marginally habitable by Man.

Geology: Brimstone is rated at Class XIII on the Eriksson Scale, indicating extremely active geological conditions. Vulcanism and severe seismic stresses result from the massive tidal influence exerted by the planet's satellite (more a twin world than a moon). Tectonic instability has produced a wide variety in surface features, dominated by rugged mountains and high, relatively flat upland plains. The major areas of volcanic activity and mountain-building are centered at the world's equator, where the tidal effect is strongest, but no part of Brimstone is completely free of quakes, volcanic eruptions, sulfurous gas clouds, or lava flows.

Ecology: Native life forms are scant and totally incompatible with Terrestrial types. All species discovered to date are non-motile chemosynthetic types which flourish in the regions of greatest volcanic activity. They extract a variety of chemicals from the soil and metabolize gaseous sulfur dioxide (SO_2), releasing pure oxygen as a by-product. The harsh conditions have limited the feasibility of introducing off-world flora or fauna, except in climate-controlled hydroponics domes in the area around the human settlement. Persons planning to visit the planet should note the marginal qualities of the atmosphere, which is heavily tainted by sulfur compounds. Though breathable, the air is noxious—breathing masks are not essential but are certainly important to comfort and good health—and may occasionally be contaminated with dilute gaseous sulfuric acid. This can have a highly corrosive effect on equipment and people exposed for prolonged periods of time to clouds of this acid steam. Persons bringing 'Mechs or other fusion-powered vehicles to the planet should take precautions against the extreme heat, which complicates ordinary heat buildups out of all recognition.

History: Weisau was discovered by the Fourth Interstellar Survey in 2235 but was never exploited due to the retreat of Terran colonial interests a few years later. In 2640 the Draconis Combine, interested in tapping the recently re-discovered resource potential of the planet, threw it open to settlement. Roughly 100,000 settlers, most of them miners of European and North American extraction from the Kurita frontiers worlds of Misery and Barlow's Folly, were established in that year at the north polar region that later became known as Port Erebus. The first 60 years of the colony's history were marked by hardship and suffering, and for a time it seemed likely that it would fail entirely. It was during this period that the popular local name "Brimstone" came into common use. Fortunes began to pick up around 2700, and thereafter the colony enjoyed a lengthy period of slow but steady growth.

The misfortunes of the war touched Brimstone during the Second Succession conflict; a Davion invasion force occupied Port Erebus as part of a general offensive in the area. In the Second Battle of Port Erebus in 2858, the Davion forces were dislodged, but Federated Suns General Ferdinand Rico's scorched-planet tactics in the withdrawal period resulted in the loss of 65% of the colony's hydroponics domes. The years of famine and plague that followed were brought under control through massive Combine relief efforts, but it was over 125 years before population figures rose to pre-invasion levels. Almost immediately, in 3015, fighting erupted again in the area with similar results; Brimstone today remains in Kurita hands but suffers from severe limitations in available food supplies and medical facilities. The current population is at its lowest ebb since *before* the Second Succession War.

GENERAL NOTES:

Brimstone is most notable for its high density (still a puzzle to Combine scientists, particularly in comparison to the light silicate composition of the planet's companion world, Fire) and for its high degree of seismic activity. In combination these two factors make the planet a miner's treasure trove, with large deposits of heavy metals, ores, and radioactives exposed regularly by tectonic action on and beneath the surface. However, the planet is only marginally habitable at best, and colonization remains limited to the area of Port Erebus and outlying mining camps in the north polar region.

Ruled in the name of Duke von Altdorf by a steward appointed from his personal household, Brimstone is treated by the Duchy as something approaching a personal minerals storehouse. Since 3015 and the Third Battle of Port Erebus, regular Kurita forces have been stationed on Brimstone to supplement the three battalions of regular infantry and small AeroSpace defense wing that is the total locally-maintained military force. Because it lies in the region between the Davion/Kurita frontier just to rimward of the Outworlds Alliance, Brimstone has a strategic value in the ongoing Succession Wars that outweighs its purely economic worth.

The Commandant of the Combine garrison on Brimstone is known to be seeking mercenary troops to supplement the forces under his command. However, note should be taken of the fact that the local defense budget is low, and conditions on the planet even in the absence of combat are so dangerous as to make this a poor choice as a potential place of employment. Recent rumors suggest that Davion forces may be shifting on the offensive in this area of space again soon, which suggests the probability of fresh operations around Port Erebus in the near future.

ABOUT WORLDBOOK

Worldbook is a BattleTechnology feature drawn from the computer files of The Navigator's Guide to the Inner Sphere, the 32-volume compendium of explored worlds published by ComStar Press Interstellar, Terra. Brimstone was first printed in Volume 8, The Cis-Alpheratz Sector, and is used here by permission of the publisher.





BattleTac

Battle of Kilgour

July 5th - 6th, 3027 (TC), Corella (Corella II)

BattleTechnology recognizes the fact that many of its readers are either MechWarriors themselves or are keenly interested in the the topic of BattleMech strategy and tactics. As a special service to these readers, the editorial staff at BattleTechnology is pleased to offer this continuing series of in-depth examinations of battlefield tactics as applied in various battles, both through history and during modern-day BattleMech campaigns.

The first battle to be examined in this series is the Battle of Kilgour, the culmination of a recent Liao raid into Davion space which is still unresolved. Due to the time lag necessary for information to cross the gulf between stars, news of Kilgour was received at BattleTechnology's editorial offices on Exeter only three days before this issue went to press. We are still awaiting the final word on the outcome of the campaign.

Battle of Kilgour
July 5th - 6th, 3027 (TC), Corella (Corella II)

BACKGROUND

Corella is a K1 star currently lying within the borders of the Federated Suns but formerly belonging to House Liao. Its second planet, also called Corella, is primarily an agricultural world. It shows the usual mix of terrain features common to terrestrial planets throughout the Inner Sphere, with somewhat smaller oceans and markedly larger deserts than are known to Earth. The steppes of Corella's vast, southern continent are, for all intents and purposes, a single vast prairie of mutated wheat of Terran stock, imported during the early Exodus Period of stellar exploration and colonization some seven hundred years ago.

Besides being a significant source of food production, Corella occupies an important position in the network of starlanes through the region. For this reason, it assumed a special importance during the commencement of Operation: Galahad, the round of maneuvers and wargames scheduled to begin on August 22, 3027. Elements of Davion's fleets moving into position for Galahad's maneuvers at Hadnall and Mentasta were deployed through the Corella system.

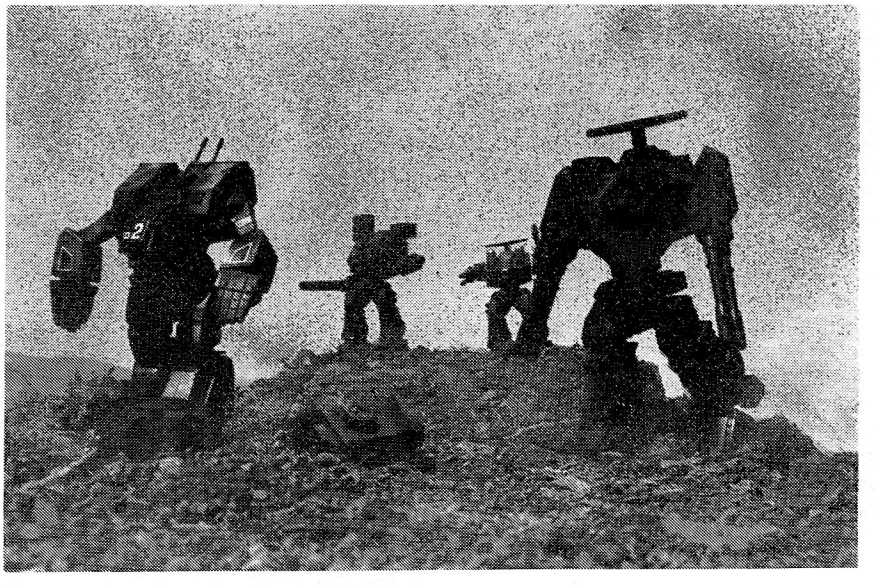
Wargames and practice maneuvers are not a new phenomenon in this region (see: What Is Hanse Up To? on page16). For months, Liao's agents had been aware of the increased military traffic in the area, and it was assumed by the Liao Staff Command that these maneuvers were similar to those held at this time last year. There is always the chance, however, that practice maneuvers are in fact a cover for full-fledged mobilization and the precursor to an all-out attack. Late in June, Maximilian Liao decided to stage an intelligence raid on Corella, with the purpose of determining the true nature of Davion's maneuvers.

Timed by a meticulous analysis of undercover agents' reports from various systems throughout the Capellan March, Liao's strike arrived at Corella between major passages of JumpShip convoys. Both JumpPoints were empty, and the only defending forces on the planet were the local militia and the Scotian Highlanders, a single, understrength regiment of mercenaries in the pay of House Davion. Advance elements of Liao Special Forces grounded at the Corellan spaceport, seizing that facility, as well as the Highlanders' grounded DropShips. Two battalions of Liao BattleMechs then set down at the spaceport and deployed to face the local forces. The Liao commander's goal was to secure MechWarrior prisoners for interrogation. The defender's goal was to blunt the Liao attack and recapture the spaceport if possible.

By a coincidence of history and tradition, the principal forces on both sides of the engagement were Highlanders, each claiming descent from Scots colonists from Old Earth. Liao's forces were the Second and Third Battalions of the 2nd Kearny Highlanders, a regiment organized as part of the well-known Northwind Highlanders in Liao's service. The Kearnys are a veteran unit, blooded in numerous engagements along the Capellan Confederation's frontiers. The Scotians, originally raised on Caledonia, have a long and distinguished history of service first to Steiner and later to Davion. With Scots pride as well as military necessity on the line, the engagement was certain to be a bloody one.

Prelude to Battle

Kilgour is an unremarkable village located in the foothills of the Aphalsia Mountains south of Port Corella. Its single distinguishing characteristic is its position at the hub of a road nexus joining Port Corella and other coastal communities with the cities



Black Douglas Forward: Command Lance,Company C, 1st Battalion, Scotian Highlanders, advances to the front at Kilgour

and grain depots in the steppelands south of the mountains.

Kilgour became a battlefield when reconnaissance elements of the 2nd Kearny Highlanders clashed with the rear guard of the Scotian Highlanders north of town. Each side thought that they had encountered a small detachment of the opposing force; both sides responded to the initial skirmish by rushing large numbers of troops and BattleMechs towards Kilgour in an attempt to trap what was perceived as an isolated enemy unit. For Major Martell Longheart of the Kearny's Second Battalion, this was a golden opportunity to capture prisoners and gain the intelligence Liao had demanded. For Colonel Ramsay Graham of the Scotians, this was an opportunity to defeat a superior force in detail. Like so many other battles throughout history, Kilgour was a bloody accident.

OPPOSING STRATEGIES

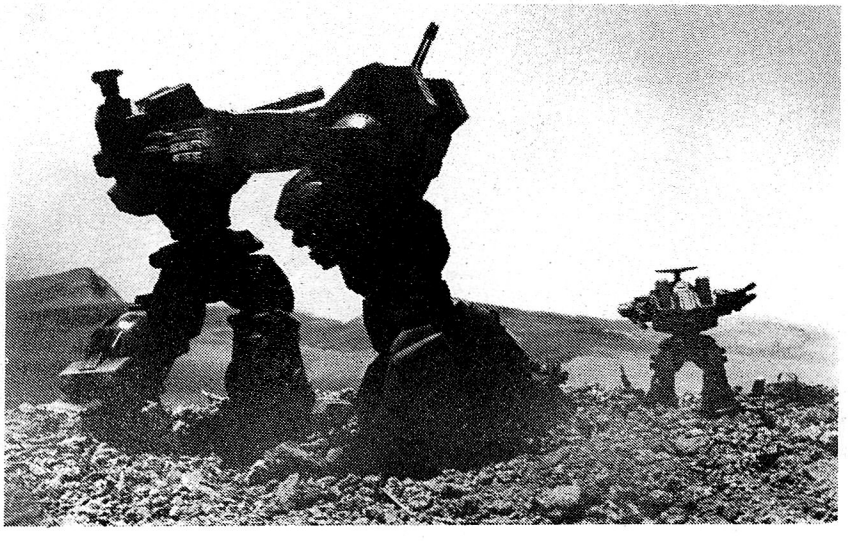
The encounter of July 5th was a complex and lightning-swift series of clash and counter clash which began north of town and carried through the streets of Kilgour itself until much of the town was reduced to rubble. By the time Major Longheart arrived on the field late in the afternoon of July 5th, the Scotian Highlanders had managed to form a strong defensive position along a chain of ridges—Sumner's Ridge, Venable's Ridge, Greirson's Hill, Gray Top—south of Kilgore's ruins. Judging his own forces to be superior to those of the enemy, Longheart ordered a general advance against the Scotian positions.

Colonel Graham was well aware of his own inferior numbers in the contest. Having expected to find a light recon company in Kilgour when he deployed the main body of his army, he found instead almost two full battalions, and himself heavily outclassed both in numbers and in total 'Mech tonnage.

Weighing his chances, he saw essentially two possible plans open to him. The safest course would be to hold his position on the heights south of town, trusting in his advantage of position and defense to tell in the attack he was certain would come. Most







Right (top to bottom): MECH-TO-MECH: Lt. Heather Fife's *Archer*, Command Lance, Company C, (Black Douglas) takes a Kearny *Rifleman* from the flank on Bloody Field.

of his advisors recommended this course of action.

The second course was far riskier but carried with it the possibility not only of holding against superior numbers, but of *decisively* defeating Longheart's force. By allowing his center to abandon its carefully prepared position along Sumner's Ridge and retreat in apparent disorder, he hoped to tempt the 2nd Kearny Highlanders into a general advance against his center. His flanks, secretly strengthened by units redeployed from his center and camouflaged in the woods north and south of Sumner's Ridge, would hold their positions. The Davion line would be allowed to bend back until it assumed a huge horseshoe shape anchored on the wooded hilltops flanking Sumner's Ridge. When the Liao forces were fully committed in the pocket between Graham's flanks, a signal from Graham, two red rockets, would order the flanking units to fall on Longheart's 'Mechs from the sides and rear. This plan, based somewhat on the tactics used successfully by Hannibal at the ancient Battle of Cannae during Earth's prespaceflight era, could give Graham the edge he needed, allowing him to concentrate his firepower against a tightly-packed and relatively slow-moving enemy to best effect.

After careful consideration, Graham elected to ignore his staff's advice, and prepared to adopt the more mobile—and dangerous—defense.

The Battle of Kilgour, Second Day, July 6th, 3027

The Kearny's Third Battalion opened the second day's action at 0530 (TST) with a general advance against the Scotian's central positions along Sumner's Ridge. According to plan, the Scotians held their position for nearly two hours and forty minutes under a fierce bombardment, then began a slow and deliberate withdrawal back down the reverse slope of the ridge. By 1015 hours, the Scotian Highlanders had fallen back nearly a kilometer to an area labelled "Bloody Field" in Graham's field report. Longheart's battalion, meanwhile, had occupied Sumner's Ridge and was in a position from which they could sweep the far slope of the ridge with heavy fire.

This was the critical point in Graham's battle plan. If Longheart remained where he was, he would retain an unassailable position—the same position, in fact, which Graham had only recently held himself! With Longheart positioned squarely between Graham's flanks but unwilling to advance into the trap, Graham would have no choice but to break off the engagement, a move which was certain to result in serious losses to his flanks and to his already badly mauled center.

Graham was counting, however, on Longheart scenting victory in the wind and ordering an all-out attack.

At 1145 hours, Longheart completed minor repairs to several of his heavy 'Mechs, redeployed his infantry forward, and ordered the Third Battalion to advance. The Second Battalion he held in reserve; he knew Davion forces of unknown strength were still holding the heights north and south of Sumner's Ridge and wanted a reserve which could deal with these units, if necessary. Graham's center, however, beckoned him on down the east slope of the ridge. With numerous 'Mechs already badly damaged, with Graham's lance formation in visible disarray, the possibility of crushing Graham's force once and for all proved irresistible. One final blow would fragment the Davion mercenaries, leaving them helpless.

The engagement in Bloody Field was a furious, seesaw affair. Graham's forces surprised Longheart's MechWarriors with the savage determination of their defense. The cluster of buildings which marked the Sumner Farm changed hands seven times in less than two hours; it was burned to the ground during the exchange. Graham, hoping to draw Longheart's reserve battalion into the fray, stubbornly refused to give the signal which would unleash his flank assault.

At 1400 hours, as the battle in the Bloody Field continued, Liao infantry platoons scouting the hills north of Sumner's Ridge encountered hidden Davion 'Mechs, and a sharp firefight ensued. Two Graham infantry platoons supported by armed skimmers broke the Liao attack, but it was feared that the nature of the waiting trap had been discovered.

The location of numerous BattleMechs in the woods north of Sumner's Ridge was reported to Major Longheart, but the Liao commander did not act on the information. Perhaps he thought the reports exaggerated. Perhaps he feared a Davion ruse. It is possible that the threat of additional fresh forces on the Davion flank made him withhold his reserves at a critical moment, rather than throw them into the battle. It is impossible at this point to guess whether the Second Battalion's arrival on the field would have allowed Graham to victoriously close his trap on the entire Liao force—or so overwhelmed the Davion defenders that Graham's line would have been fragmented and the survivors hunted down piecemeal.

As the battle continued, Graham's center came perilously close to breaking. Numerous lances were down to a single 'Mech apiece and were absorbed into other lances, and at least three companies had dissolved completely, all of their 'Mechs destroyed, crippled and abandoned, or hopelessly lost in the murky field of battle. At one point, with the Davion line giving way, A Company of the Scotian's First Battalion, Randall's Raiders, hurled themselves against an attacking column of least twice their own tonnage in 'Mechs. Their valiant charge momentarily swept the field of Liao machines but left the Raiders with only four badly damaged 'Mechs still in action. Dozens of 'Mechs on both sides were forced to



HOLDING THE LINE: Capt. Kendric Fraser fires at Marshall Corrigan's *Rifleman* on Bloody Field.

withdraw temporarily as their heat built to dangerous levels. Several 'Mechs were forced to shut down as their power systems overloaded, freezing them helplessly in place.

At last, Graham could wait no longer. B Company of Macarron's 'Mechs, half its BattleMechs out of the fight, was falling towards the rear, and the entire Davion center wavered, close to collapse. Graham gave the order which fired two red rockets.

Both flank elements had been waiting for the signal, fearful that something had gone wrong, wondering whether to join their comrades or continue to obey orders. Screening forces were thrown south along Sumner's Ridge to keep an eye on the enemy Second Battalion, while the body of the Davion reserves streamed into the Third Battalion's rear and flanks in a full-tilt charge.

The culmination of Graham's plan was a success, though not the total victory for which he had hoped. The 2nd Kearny Highlanders were already as badly bloodied as the Graham center, and the appearance on the field of large numbers of fresh and undamaged 'Mechs was enough to turn the tide of battle with unexpected suddenness. As Graham had planned, the Liao 'Mechs were badly positioned, so tightly grouped that many of their number were unable to fire for fear of hitting their own comrades. After another five minutes of raw and furious carnage, the Kearny's Third Battalion broke, its survivors streaming west up the slope of Sumner Ridge. Graham forces occupying the ridge stepped aside and let them pass, too heavily outnumbered to more than slow the Kearny Highlanders' passing. The Second Battalion advanced in a general demonstration against the Davion line, but the retreat of the Third Battalion seemed to have unnerved the entire Liao force. Once the last of the Third Battalion's survivors were back across Sumner's Ridge, the Liao force pulled back to the relative security of its former positions. The battle ended at 1730 hours, with both armies occupying roughly the same positions as they had twelve hours before.

AFTERMATH

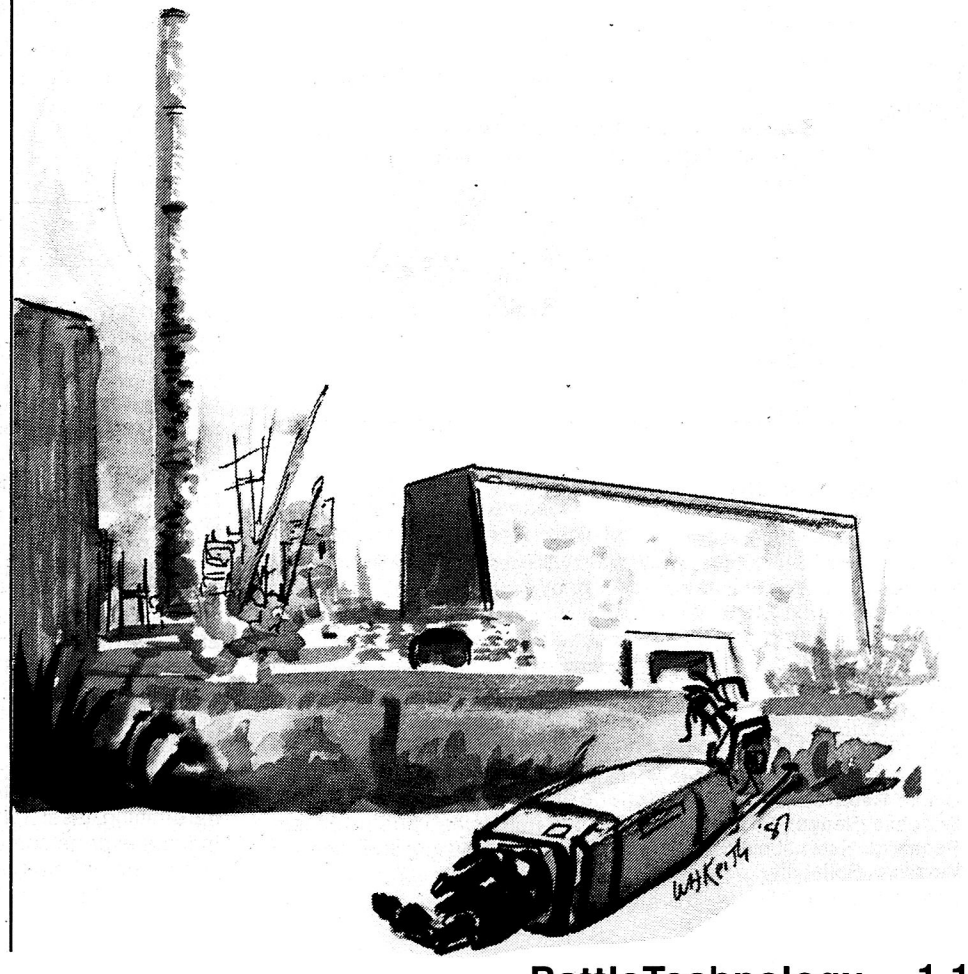
Major Longheart still outnumbered his Davion opponent by a considerable margin, especially considering the fact that Graham's forces had been roughly handled in the back-and-forth slugfest in Bloody Field. Numerous critics have been quick to point out that another hard shove by the Kearny Highlanders on July 7 would have broken the back of the Davion line and ended resistance on the planet immediately.

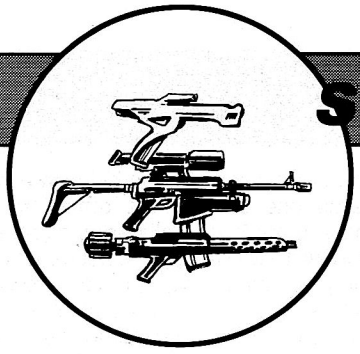
But Longheart could not know what reserves Graham might have, or how badly damaged his partial regiment might be. Besides, he had captured numerous prisoners during the previous, bloody two days and so had technically fulfilled the letter of his operational orders. On July 7, the two armies remained in place, watching one another warily. During the night, Longheart gave the order to withdraw, and the Kearny Highlanders began wending their way north towards Port Corella.

It is yet too early to assess the final effect the Battle of Kilgour will have on the Corellan Campaign. As of the last reports available in Exeter—dated July 29th—the 2nd Kearny Highlanders continued to occupy a static defense perimeter around Port Corella, while Graham's Scotian Highlanders continued to threaten the port and block Liao movements towards the continental interior. Reinforcements on either side would be certain to tip the balance heavily towards one side or the other, but the command staffs on both sides seem content to wait and watch, at least for now.

Clearly, Kilgour was a major victory for Corella's Davion defenders. The Liao forces on Corella abandoned the field of battle and, more, abandoned the initiative, withdrawing to fixed positions under what amounts to a state of siege.

More importantly from a tactical point of view, however, Kilgour is a clear demonstration of the age-old axiom that no plan survives contact with the enemy, that even the most daring, best laid or most foolproof plan will not unfold in the manner envisioned by its creators. Even with the art of warfare honed by centuries of continuous bloodshed into a study with all the keen precision of any science, modern combat remains a discipline more subject to chance than to design.



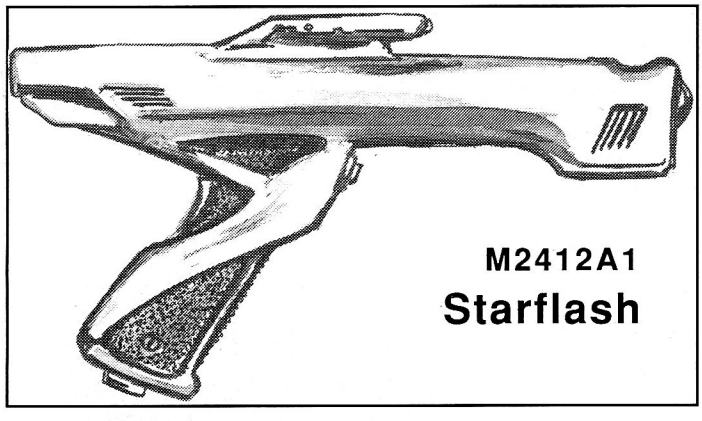


Laser Pistols

by the BattleTechnology Staff

BattleTechnology opens its series column on popular military and paramilitary weaponry with an examination of some of the most popular laser pistols currently on the market. Though restricted in power and range compared to other weapons, laser pistols have been eagerly sought as personal sidearms since their introduction on the battlefield over eight centuries ago. Today, especially, hand laser weaponry remains the badge of success and deadly, high-tech prowess for veteran mercenary troopers and regular infantry alike. Laser weapons have been referred to as the cutting edge of weapons technology.

Our listing makes use of the New Avalon Edition of the Galactic Consumer's Report, volume 27, number 5, for determinations of reliability and for testing reports. BattleTechnology cannot assume responsibility for the technical accuracy or safety of the weapons described in this column.



Optronics M2412A1 "Starflash"

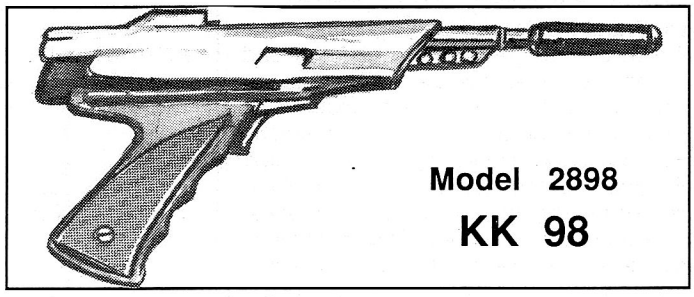
Weapon Type: Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: General Optronics, and by license on over 250 worlds throughout the Inner Sphere.
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight (w/o power pack): 1.2 kg
(power pack): 1.5 kg
Length (w/o power pack): 23 cm
Power: Optronics T5J Starflash Dual-Power Cell
Power Output: .5 megajoule
Pulse: .01 second
Power Pack Life: 100 pulses at standard output
Cyclic Rate: 60 pulse/minute
Effective Range: 60 meters
Recharge Rate: about 20 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 96%
Base Cost: Cb 850

Notes: One of the oldest laser pistol designs still in production, the Starflash has a long and venerable history which predates the Star League itself. Though underpowered and bulky by the standards of League-period technology, it has acquired a justly-deserved reputation for ruggedness and reliability which has been maintained for over six centuries. Originally manufactured on Terra, the weapon is still produced in limited quantities by arms manufacturers on at least 250 worlds across the Inner Sphere.

Power is supplied from a light-weight, rechargeable belt pack connected to the pistol by a one-meter cable. The original design included a holster built into the power pack, but later production models and personal modifications to older weapons generally dispensed with the combination in favor of lighter, more easily-replaced power units and less expensive thigh holsters.

The relatively low power output results in a high cyclic rate of 60 ppm at .5 megajoule/.01 second pulse. The power output setting is not adjustable. The powerpack may be disconnected and a standard 20-shot grip magazine pack used instead.

The reliability and easy maintenance of these weapons has resulted in their being adopted as standard sidearms for the armies or militias of over 40 worlds, but they are encountered as individual personal weapons in the hands of MechWarriors and mercenaries nearly everywhere.



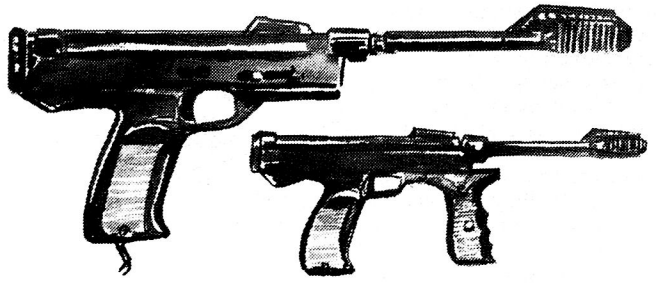
Kogyo-Khorsakov Model 2898, "KK 98"

Weapon Type: Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Kogyo Industries
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight (w/o power pack): .8kg
(power pack): 1.2kg
Length (w/o power pack): 17 cm
Power: RV 90 Power Cell
Power Output: .8 megajoule
Pulse: .01 second
Maximum Setting: 1.2 megajoule/.1 second
Power Pack Life: 80 pulses at standard output
10 pulses at maximum output
Cyclic Rate: 40 pulse/minute at standard output
10 pulse/minute at maximum output
Effective Range: 75 meters
Recharge Rate: about 25 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 99% at standard output
81% at maximum output
Base Cost: Cb 550

Notes: The KK 98 has won a deserved reputation as a rugged and hard-hitting laser hand gun. Produced in quantity at the Kogyo Industries arms complex on Luthien, and by license on numerous worlds throughout the Draconis Combine, this weapon and various copies can be encountered on worlds throughout human space.

An adjustable power setting allows the user to vary power and pulse length, though the weapon's service life and performance drop sharply at high settings. Its principal advantage is its practically legendary "idiot-proof" electronics which require virtually no maintenance. Independent testers have reported the weapon continues to function flawlessly with minimum care even after being immersed in mud or operated under mildly corrosive atmospheric conditions or at sub-zero temperatures.

Exact figures are not available, but a very large number of KK 98s have been produced since they were first introduced in 2898. It is frequently encountered in the hands of MechWarriors and techs on countless worlds throughout Kurita space and beyond.



Mark XXI Nova Laser Pistol/Carbine

Magna Mark XXI "Nova"

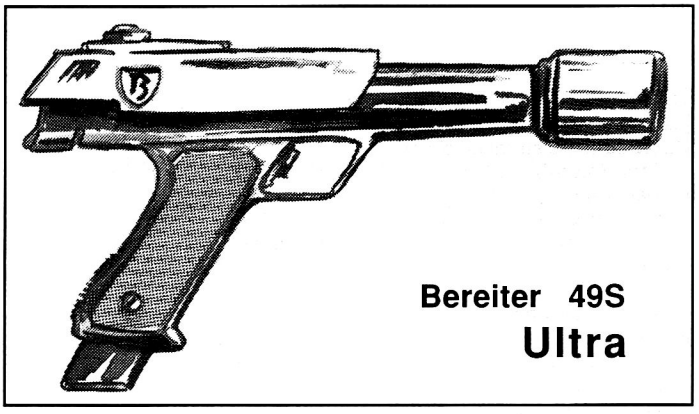
Weapon Type: Laser Pistol/carbine
Manufacturer: Magna Industries
Operation: High-intensity beam laser pistol
Weight (w/o power pack): 1.35 kg
(power pack): 2.2kg
Length (w/o stock): 40.5 cm
(w/ stock): 66 cm
Power: Magna R5J Starbeam transpower cell
Power Output: 1 megajoule pulse
.3 megajoule at continuous beam
Pulse: Variable phase .01 second to continuous beam
Power Pack Life: 400 pulses at minimum pulse
2 minutes at continuous beam
Effective Range: 100 meters
w/stock and grip: 250 meters
Cyclic Rate: 90 pulse/minute
Recharge Rate: about 30 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 95%
Base Cost: Cb 1200

Notes: The Mark XXI Nova is a superb, heavy-duty beam laser with a variable phase pulse control that allows pulsed operation. The power pack is compact, if heavy, and is worn on the belt in a pouch designed with quick-release straps to secure the weapon to the hip.

A notable feature is the design which allows a forehand grip and a lightweight, duraplast stock to be quickly snapped into place, converting the Nova into a lightweight laser carbine. Accuracy is somewhat greater in controlled fire using stock and foregrip. Telescopic or lowlight sights can be mounted as well.

The design is somewhat complex and requires careful maintenance for best reliability. The weapon's primary disadvantages are its great length and weight, which make it somewhat clumsy for a handgun. Though lighter than standard laser carbines, it does not have the length and accuracy of longer weapons. The beam function is useful for cutting through metal doors, however, and if held on target, can pierce even heavy personal armor.

Numerous models of the original 28th century production run are still in service. Rarely encountered as a standard military weapon, the Nova is favored by mercenaries and paramilitary forces who favor its weight and the psychological impact of its appearance. "Nobody," as the old merc saying goes, "argues with a Mark Twenty-one up his nose!"



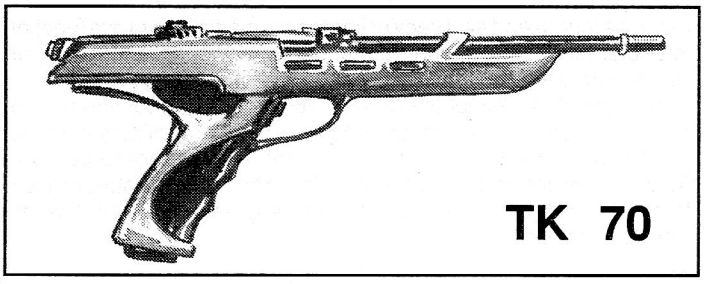
Bereiter 49S Ultra

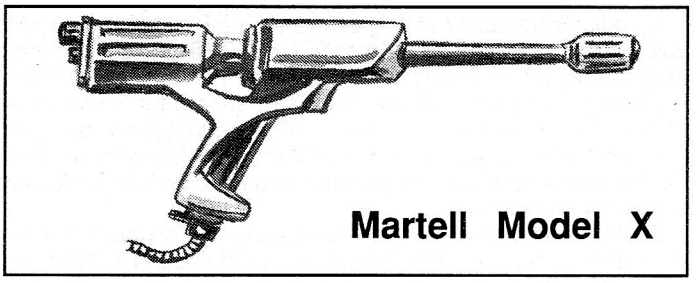
Bereiter 49S "Ultra"

Weapon Type: Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Bereiter Arms
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight: 1.9kg
Length: 24 cm
Power: VV "Mega-V" grip magazine power unit
Power Output: .6 megajoule
Pulse: .2 second
Power Pack Life: 70 pulses
Cyclic Rate: 40 pulse/minute
Effective Range: 50 meters
Recharge Rate: about 15 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 85%
Base Cost: Cb 180

Notes: This standard laser pistol from Bereiter Arms is a low-cost hand energy weapon mass-produced for the mercenary, security force, and private buyer's market. The internal grip power pack frees the weapon from cumbersome belt or shoulder packs and power leads, making it a compact and easily-handled weapon. The .6 megajoule output is respectable for a power pack of such small size. Unfortunately, the energy curve builds slowly and the power output is spread into an unusually long, .2-second pulse, with the result that the weapon is almost useless against armored or ablative or rapidly-moving targets. Lack of standardization among various Bereiter licensees results in many weapons of extremely poor quality or reliability.

Specific problems include barrel failure or chamber feed meltdown during rapid cycling due to an inefficient air-cooled capacitor matrix and occasionally shoddy microcircuit chips which can result in a "coldsqueeze," a failure to energize which can result in chamber meltdown and destruction of the weapon. Armor-piercing ability is mediocre. Testers have also noted that the weapon's lens alignment is easily jarred by falls or rough usage. Frequent maintenance is mandatory to keep the weapon in serviceable condition.





TK 70

Weapon Type: Military Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Thorvald & Koch
Operation: Pulse laser pistol
Weight (pistol): .88kg
(backpack): 2.5 kg
Length (w/o power pack): 21 cm
Power: Sunbeam-electric 12000 shoulder pack
Power Output: 1 megajoule
Pulse: .01 second
Maximum Setting: 1.4 megajoule/.03 second
Power Pack Life: 300 pulses at standard output
100 pulses at maximum output
Cyclic Rate: 60 pulse/minute
Effective Range: 120 meters
Recharge Rate: about 30 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 97% at standard setting
90% at full output
Base Cost: Cb 700

Notes: The TK 70 is a military-quality, heavy-duty megajoule laser pistol powered from a lightweight shoulder pack. The weapon has been known since the 28th Century for reliability and dependability under virtually any environmental conditions.

It has an adjustable power output vernier which allows ranging shots at nil setting, to full-powered blasts of almost one and a half million joules in .03-second pulses. Armor-piercing and target damage is good at standard settings, superb at maximum output.

Still under production at the TK arms plants on Tharkad, New Avalon, and Skye, the TK laser pistol is encountered throughout much of human-explored space. Its high cost puts it out of reach for all but standard military or wealthy paramilitary or mercenary forces. Its ruggedness has resulted in numerous weapons being passed on from generation to generation of warriors, however, and old, low-serial number models are frequently found in the hands of mercenary warriors everywhere.

Martell Laser Pistol, Model X

Weapon Type: Military Laser Pistol
Manufacturer: Martell Industries
Operation: Beam laser pistol
Weight (pistol): 1 kg
(power pack): 1.5 kg
Length (w/o power pack): 25 cm
Power: Diverse Electronics Power Pack
Power Output: 1 megajoule
Beam: Variable: .2 to 5 seconds
Maximum Setting: .2 megajoule/.1 second
Power Pack Life: 100 seconds standard output
10 seconds at maximum output
Effective Range: 100 meters
Recharge Rate: about 30 hours, depending on source reliability
Weapon Reliability: 95% at standard setting
90% at full output
Base Cost: Cb 750

Notes: The Martell laser pistol fires a beam of coherent light. While the power/time ratio is considerably lower than that of a pulse laser, the beam can be set and held for up to 5 seconds, making this weapon useful for cutting through armor or heavy barriers. The power pack allows up to twenty five-second beamings. An optional, in-grip power magazine allows a total of ten seconds of beaming—between two and fifty shots, depending on the burst length setting.

The weapon's chief drawback is the need to hold the beam steady on target long enough to cut through thick armor, and it is virtually useless against BattleMechs or armored vehicles. It is unsurpassed, however, in close combat with lightly armored foes or as a cutting torch in emergency situations. The weapon has been widespread throughout the Inner Sphere since it was first manufactured in 2880. It is a durable and reliable weapon favored by many mercenary warriors as a personal sidearm.

Future issues of BattleTechnology will report on other weapons classes common in the Galaxy, including submachine guns, laser rifles, personal anti-Mech weapons, and blades. Readers are encouraged to suggest topics for future columns, and to contribute reports of their own describing weapons of note or interest to the modern warrior.

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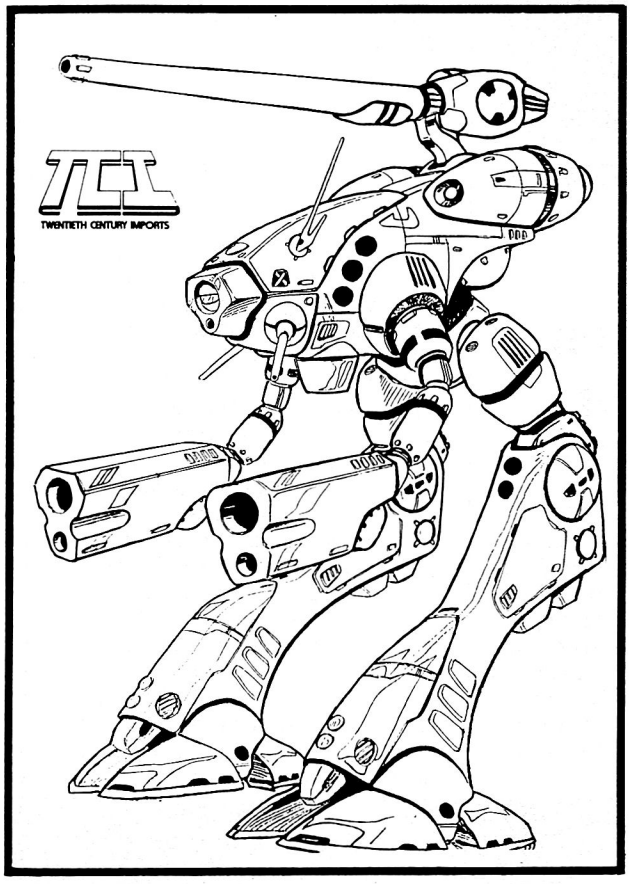

In the 31st century, warfare is ruled by metal giants of gleaming death. BattleMechs, the mightiest war machines ever built, stride across the battlefield, armed with autocannons, machine guns, missiles, and energy weapons. Vaguely humanoid in shape, the 'Mechs weigh anywhere from 20 to over 100 tons, and can crush any unarmored foe without a thought.

In any game, visual excitement is an important factor. This is especially true for FASA's best-selling BattleTech game. TCI's kits formed the original basis for the game, and add the essential element of 3D excitement.

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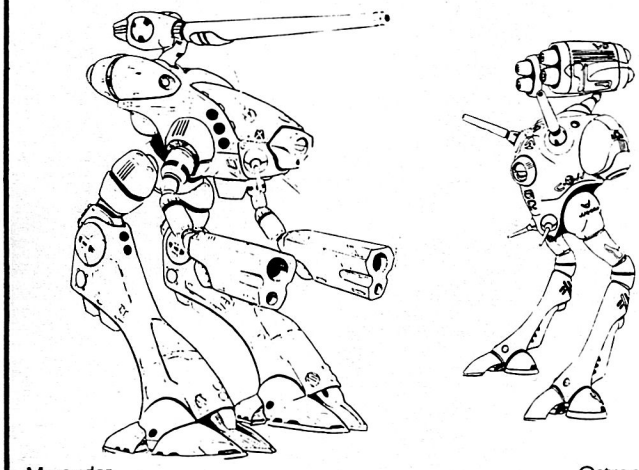

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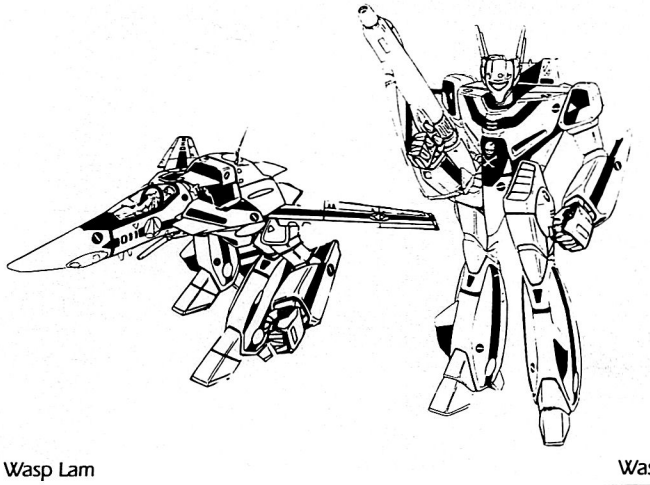

Wasp Lam Wasp

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What Is Hanse Up To?

Maneuvers and Wargames Bring the Successor States Closer to All-Out War

by BattleTechnology Special Correspondent Wallis Hasek

All military leaves are cancelled. MechWarriors, armored troops, line infantry, techs and astechs, ship's crew and specialists, all are ordered to report aboard their ships without delay.

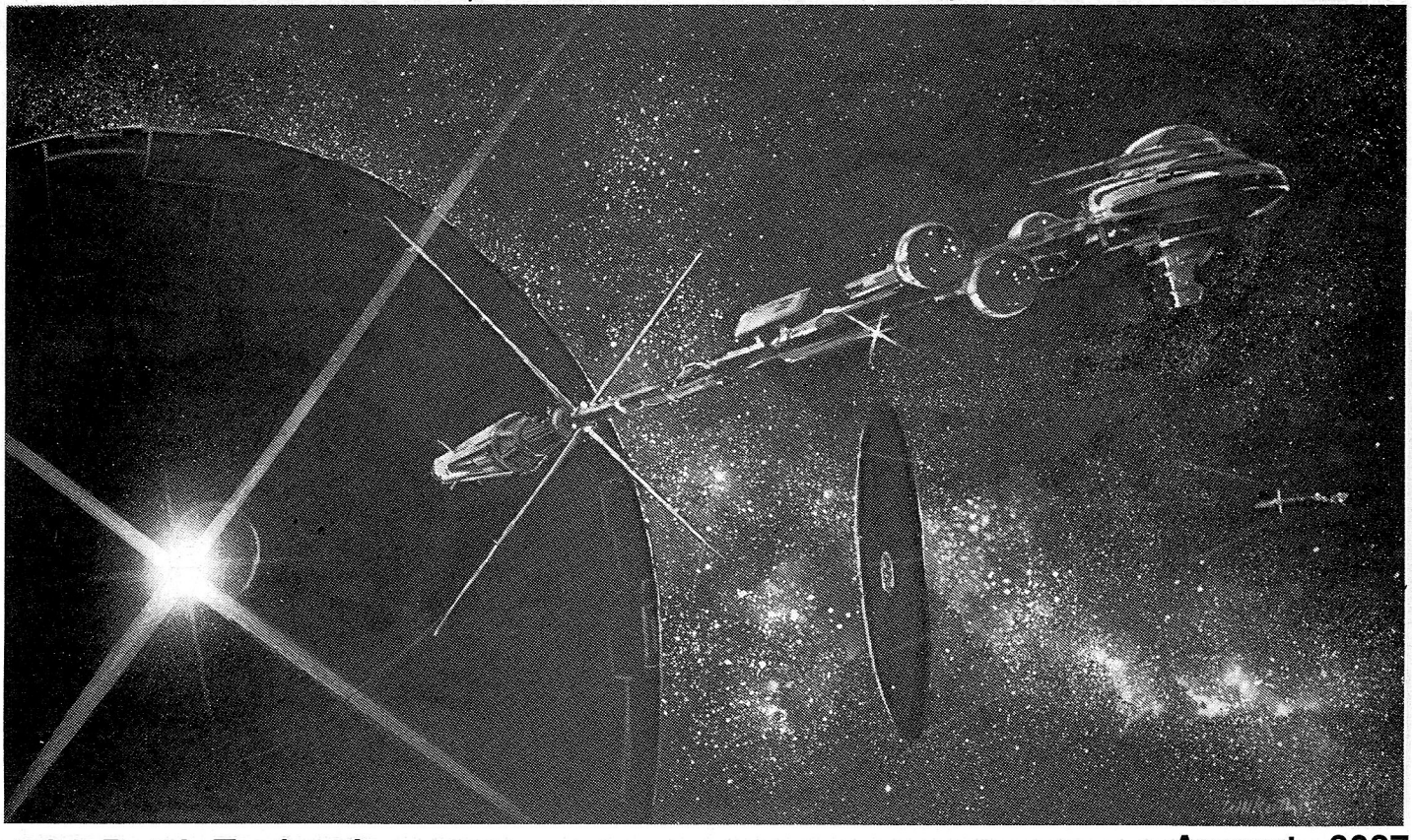
Far off in space, JumpShips appear at an alien sun's JumpPoint, blanketing nearby space with ECM jamming. DropShips cast off from their two-kilometer long carriers, fusion pulse plasma drives and old-fashioned chemical rockets burn in brilliant, miniature suns which accelerate the DropShips towards the distant planet. Aerospace fighters range ahead, seeking the enemy, as reconnaissance satellite pods arrow into trajectories which will loop them around the target planet days in advance of the approaching armada. On the planet's surface, aboard orbital space stations, and on advance defense outposts on the planet's moons, hard-eyed men and women bend over their scanners, noting the approach of Davion Expeditionary Force Twelve-Alpha.

Passage from JumpPoint to target world takes four days, typical travel time within the planetary system of a K-class star such as Fallon.

There is plenty of time for Fallon II's defenders to prepare a warm reception.

This is not a scenario for hypothetical all-out war, but fact. This week, practice invasions are being carried out at Fallon II, at McGehee, at Groveld III, and at dozens of other worlds within the Federated Suns, along the borders of both the Draconis Combine and the Capellan Confederation. This year's games have created something of a stir throughout the Confederation. August of last year, 3026, was witness to the grandest set of wargames and practice maneuvers yet unleashed on the Inner Sphere...until this August (TC) when Prince Hanse Davion announced Operation: Galahad, the wargames of 3027.

"We, the free peoples of the Federated Suns, are beset on every side by the forces of Darkness, forces which would tear us down and subject us to the blackest form of tyrrany," Prince Davion announced earlier this week. His speech was holovised live



from the Summer Palace at Stirling, on the world of Argyle, and was made available to the news media of worlds across the Human Sphere as a delayed broadcast via the ComStar HPG net.

"If we are to stand against this darkness which is hammering at the very walls of our society," Davion continued, "if we are to preserve our way of life, our way of thought, our very being against this dark menace, if, indeed, we are ever to win our true destiny as the rebirth of the glory of the Star League of old, then we must be ever watchful, ever ready. Freedom, my friends, has a price, and that price is eternal vigilence!"

The text of Prince Davion's speech ran to thirty-seven minutes, but it basically concentrated on one point: the continued need for military preparedness to counter the threat posed by Houses Kurita and Liao along the marches of the Federated Suns.

The maneuvers comprising Operation Galahad were well under way even before the prince made his announcement. Some maneuvers have been underway since last month. Many observers believe the recent incursion by a Liao task force into Davion space last month was an attempt to gather intelligence, an attempt prompted by the preliminary maneuvers of Operation Galahad.

At his field headquarters at Port Borea on Klathandu IV, General Wesley Fairfax of the Federated Suns Supreme Command Staff said, "These maneuvers are necessary. We have to know that all of our people know their places in a DropShip transit. We have to know that our people can debark

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OPPOSITE: JumpShip FSS *Exeter* and a sister ship recharge their drives at the nadir JumpPoint of New Avalon. JumpShips such as these represent a vital technological resource—and an irreplaceable one. Do needless military exercises such as Operation Galahad threaten this vital link in the framework of modern civilization?

RIGHT: BattleMechs may be the kings of the modern battlefield, but training operations such as Operation Galahad could squander precious resources needed elsewhere.

OPERATION GALAHAD: THE WASTE OF ALMOST-WAR

by Minority Leader Naomi Gavin Rollings, New Avalon

It is a categorical fact that we in the Federated Suns are at war, have been at war, in fact, for over a century and a half. The necessity for conducting military training maneuvers—wargames—when our armed forces have been stretched to the limit defending our frontiers for so long a time escapes me utterly.

What makes this so-called Operation Galahad even more preposterous is the realization that, for the past two decades at least, the vast, interstellar struggle for ascendency known as the Third Successor State War has been bogged down in a hopeless deadlock, with none of the five combatants able to acheive significant military advantage over the others. After one hundred sixty years of bloodshed, after so many, many years of watching the very fabric of our culture unravel in the scorching waste of war, perhaps the one *good* thing that can be said for the current situation is that the combatants are rapidly becoming too exhausted to continue the struggle! With resources stretched to the limit, with seemingly endless casualty lists, with those very keystones of the modern battlefield, the BattleMechs, vanishing faster than our ravaged industry can possibly replace them, we are faced with a new and daunting prospect...that of peace, true and lasting peace, in our time!

And what does Hanse Davion hope to achieve with his bellicose saber-rattling, these games and threats and childish gestures set in the guise of training exercises? What he hopes to gain, and what he actually gains may be two entirely different things. Whatever Davion expected to win through his Operation Galahad, what he has achieved in fact is a staggering expenditure in both war materiel and in treasury outlays—the taxpayer's C-Bills, in fact. More, he has stirred up military activity in response in both the Kurita and the Liao camps, making new raids and reprisals more likely, where before mutual exhaustion had rendered them less likely.

Perhaps worst of all, he has made accidental collision between the hostile forces along both marches more than likely—inevitable, in fact. If a century and a half of warfare has taught us anything, it is that a raid by one side will provoke a raid by the other, tit-for-tat, in an ongoing spiral of raids and counter-raids which seems to have no ending short of genocide.

If Hanse Davion hopes to end the fighting between the sundered Houses of the old Star League, it seems to me he has two possible alternatives. He could mount an all-out, crushing invasion of the Federated Suns' old enemies, destroy their fleets and armies, sack Luthien and Sian and depose theirs leaders. Kurita and Liao are unlikely to cooperate in such a scenario of all-out warfare, and Davion would be well-advised to conserve our dwindling military strength for the attempt and not squander it in useless, wasteful gestures such as Operation Galahad.

Alternatively, he could seek peace. House Kurita and House Liao both are as exhausted by centuries of nearly continuous warfare as are we. Perhaps an offer of peace, a formal request for truce and negotiations towards a peaceful resolution of the differences between us would be received with relief rather than suspicion. But the key to such an offer would be a willingness to back down from confrontation, a willingness to demonstrate our own willingness to give peace a chance.

In neither scenario is there room for the wasteful almost-war of Operation Galahad.

quickly or make a combat drop into a heavily-defended target drop zone. If they don't know before Operation Galahad, they damn well will after. Better they learn it in a training run, though, than in the face of enemy fire."

Critics of Davion's wargame maneuvers were quick to point out that, technically, the Federated Suns are already at war with both Liao and Kurita, and that special training maneuvers are scarcely necessary—or rational—in the current situation. Minority Leader Naomi Gavin Rollings, in an interview at the Capitol on New Avalon immediately after the broadcast of the Prince's message there, said, "Aren't we at war already? Two months ago, a Kurita battalion raided Dobson. Twelve hundred soldiers and civilians, five BattleMechs, and a ball bearing factory were lost. Last month there was that Liao raid on Corella, and the big battle that followed (see: BattleTac, in this issue of BattleTechnology). If our soldiers aren't being trained by the out-and-out warfare that's going on all around us, all the time, then they sure aren't going to learn any better play acting at the taxpayer's expense!"

Dr. Vladimir Kandinsky, head professor of Applied History at the New Avalon Institute of Science, agreed. "The Third Successor State War began in 2866. That same war has continued now for one hundred sixty years. There have been intervals of relative calm brought on by the mutual exhaustion of the participants, but for all intents and purposes, the war goes on now, year after year. Prince Davion's wargames are not likely to change that."

"Aren't we at war already?"

BattleTechnology has discovered that Dr. Kandinsky was dismissed from his position as head of the Applied History Department at NAIS shortly after his interviw with the holonews media. There has been intense speculation that Kandinsky lost the prestigious post at the Federated Suns' principal military academy because of his failure to support the official government position. Dr. Kandinsky has not been available for comment.

The principal criticism levied at this year's wargames is the monumental cost. The expense of gathering a single BattleMech regiment, of embarking it aboard DropShips and transporting it to regimental JumpShips, of then transporting that regiment tens or even hundreds of light years across the marches can run into tens of millions of

C-Bills. The total cost in food, fuel, and time is expected to reach Cb 250,000,000.

This does not count extra, unanticipated expenses. "Mistakes are bound to happen," Regis Rutherfeld, of the Citizen's Watch on Government (C-WOG) said outside his home in Stirling, Argyle. "BattleMechs will be damaged—not may be damaged, *will* be damaged—in accidents loading them aboard ship, in accidents during planet drop training, in accidents out in some Blake-forsaken swamp where the regiment is holding maneuvers. And worse than that, these maneuvers are certain to provoke Luthien and Sian, not frighten them. The increase in raids and armed clashes along both borders during the past month are certainly the result of all the extra military traffic going in and out...and because the Kuritists and Liaos are curious about what's going on."

Indeed, curiosity appears to be the motive behind last month's raid by Liao forces on the Davion planet of Corella. Harder to explain is the reported raid by Davion forces on Hell, fifth planet of the star Scheat. Davion space and 'Mech forces reportedly on maneuvers made the jump from the Davion base at Klanthandu IV to the Scheat system and made a combat drop on the

"Us Techs can't keep working magic forever, you know."
Kathi Leander, on Klathandu IV. Techs throughout the human sphere are finding it harder and harder to come up with the spare parts necessary to keep military units at a reasonable level of combat efficiency. Do maneuvers such as Galahad hasten the onset of a new round of Dark Ages?



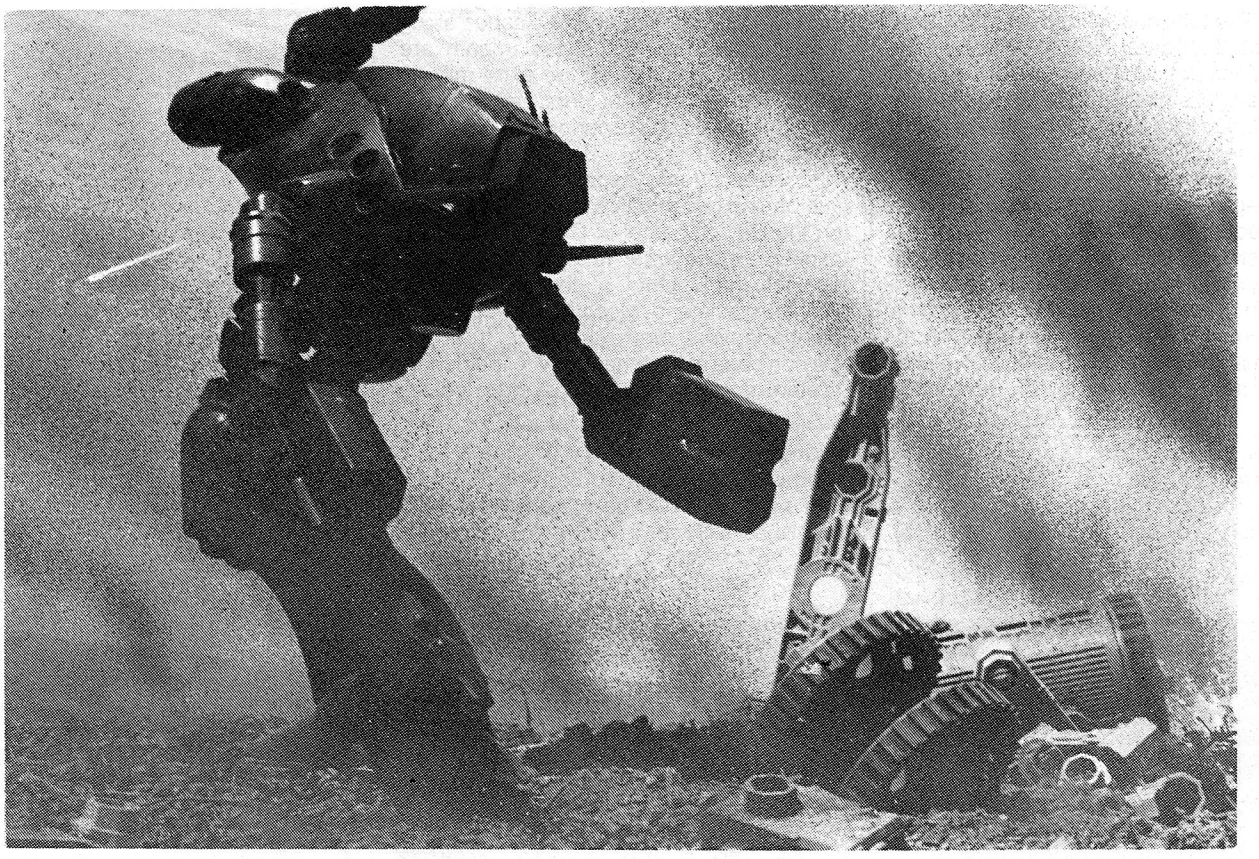
OPERATION GALAHAD: THE PRICE OF VIGILENCE

General J. Wesley Fairfax III, Davion Command Staff, Klathandu IV

Critics of Prince Davion's Operation: Galahad tend to focus on one fact, that we of the Federated Suns are already at war, that we have been at war for centuries, in fact. Technically, this is true, since the conflict known as the Third Successor State War has never formally ended. It must be pointed out, however, that the combat readiness of the Federated Suns space and BattleTech forces cannot be counted on unless it is verified and supported through frequent training exercises such as Galahad.

There is a further, deeper necessity to military maneuvers such as Galahad. Never forget that our enemies, the military planners and staffs at Luthian and Sian, are watching these maneuvers very carefully indeed. I can think of no better way to demonstrate our willingness to confront them in open conflict, our readiness to defend and preserve that liberty which we hold dear, than to demonstrate our combat readiness on a regular basis. There is good reason to believe that the relative peace which has ensued across both frontiers during this past year is in fact the result of both the Combine and the Confederation taking note of the highly successful test deployments and maneuvers of our forces last August and deciding that a major invasion had a low probability for success. If the enemy knows that an invasion is going to be costly because the defender is well-trained and well-prepared, then he probably will never invade in the first place.

And that, rather than the training, is the true value of these maneuvers. The Prince's critics contend that maneuvers are expensive, but their cost is miniscule compared to the cost in men, worlds, resources, and irreplaceable industry and war machines should Kurita and Liao launch a full-scale invasion.



Wargames: Are they as wasteful as the real thing?

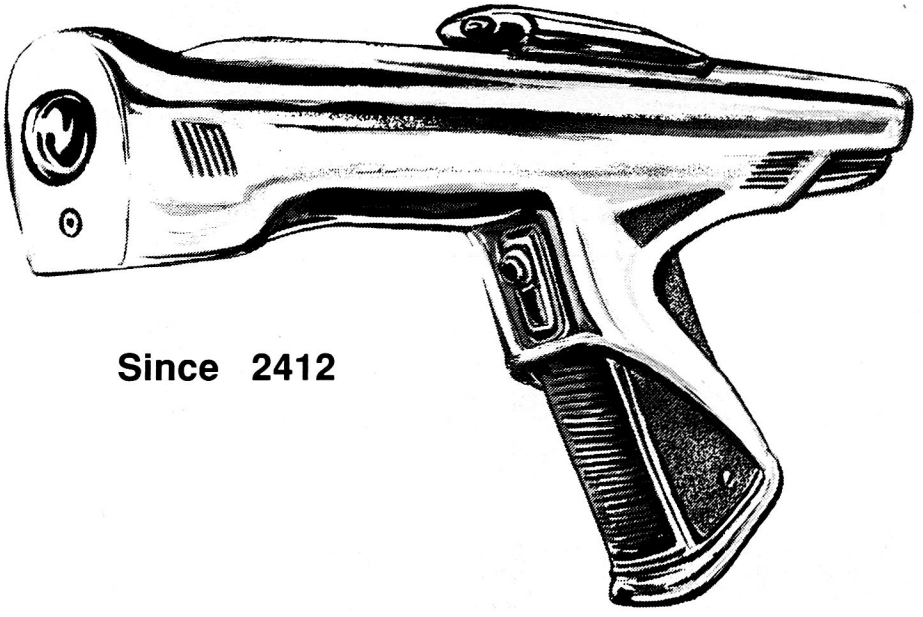
Kurita military and industrial facilities at that world's south pole. Numerous observers in the capital at New Avalon commented that Prince Davion's lengthy invective against Kurita hostility seemed somewhat lacking in substance and conviction when viewed against the background of such useless and costly raids as this. Members of the Davion Staff Command refused to comment, saying only that the operation was still going on, and that they would not jeopardize its success.

A similar raid was carried out by Davion forces in August of 3026, as part of last year's round of so-called "training maneuvers." (see: Descent Into Hell, in this issue of BattleTechnology) A battalion-sized element was dropped, at extraordinary risk, cost, and loss of material, onto the southern hemisphere of this otherwise unremarkable planet. Factories were destroyed, a starport severely damaged, and elements of the 4th Proserpina Hussars were mauled in a campaign lasting nearly two weeks. The total cost for last year's raid: an estimated 800 million C-Bills. Experts believe the cost for this year's raid on Scheat may be significantly higher. It is expected that the Combine's defenses on Scheat V have been strengthened since last year's raid, and combat there will be fiercer and more protracted. Losses among the invading forces could be extremely high—and costly.

The normal losses to accidents and breakdowns, and the exorbitant costs of conducting sham campaigns as extensive as Operation Galahad, may outweigh any losses to equipment from outright battle. Kathi Leander, senior Tech to Lieutenant James Gannon of the First Crucis Lancers, said frankly, "And just where the hell are we supposed to go for spare parts? Every time some admiral has us assemble and board, there's loss and breakage. Every time a JumpShip furls sail and hauls ass, there's a chance that sucker ain't comin' home. Us Techs can't keep working magic forever, you know." It is a well-known fact that JumpShips represent an irreplaceable technological resource. Once the last JumpShip is lost, whether through combat or accident or simple inability to maintain operation, then the Interstellar Age will come to an end, and Mankind will again be planetbound—possibly forever.

Meanwhile, the blind maneuverings of interstellar fleets along hostile borders have excited comment by both Liao and Kurita observers. In a statement released by the Draco Combine's Ministry of Information at Luthien last week, an unidentified Combine spokesperson said, "Davion's posturings and saber-rattlings are meaningless, the sour noises of a spoiled child. He means only to provoke the Combine's forces into an attack. Should that attack fall, New Avalon's renegade princeling would never recover from the blow." In a statement made on Sian last week, Colonel Pavel Ridzik, the Strategic Military Director of the Capellan Armed Services, said, "Davion's threats and warmongering are of absolutely no account. If the House of Davion wishes to escalate the hostilities already existing between our states, he will find in House Liao a more than willing, a more than able opponent."

STARFLASH



Since 2412

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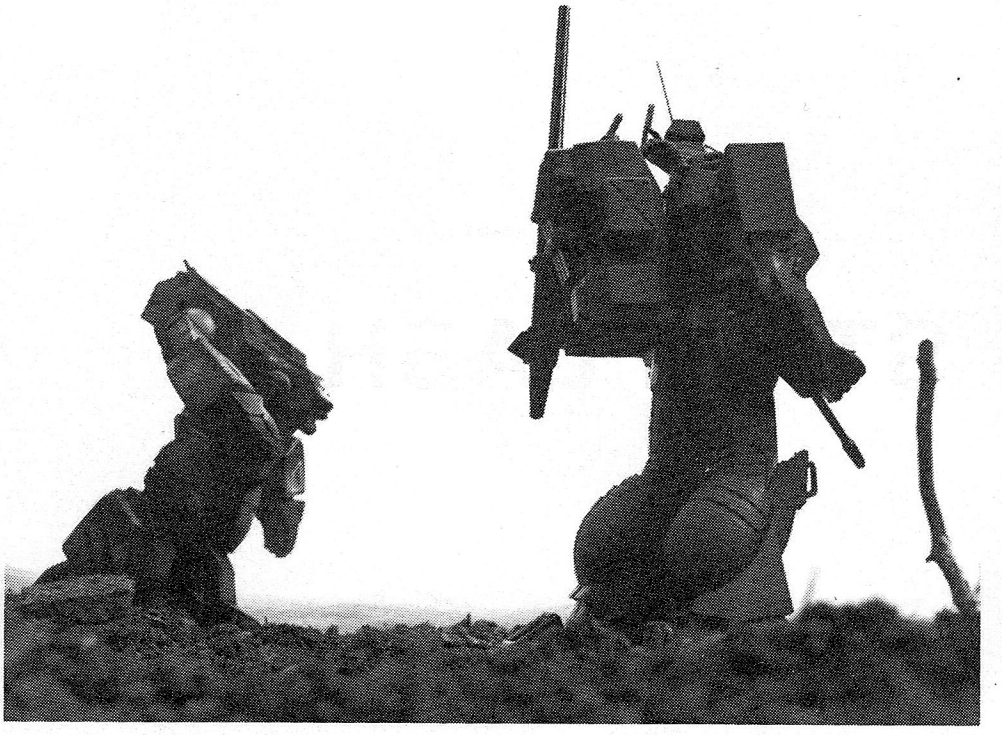


MechWarriors: more than ordinary training

MECHWARRIOR:

Mind and Machine

by Keith Douglas, MechWarrior
and Colonel Kuan Li-Po (Ret.)

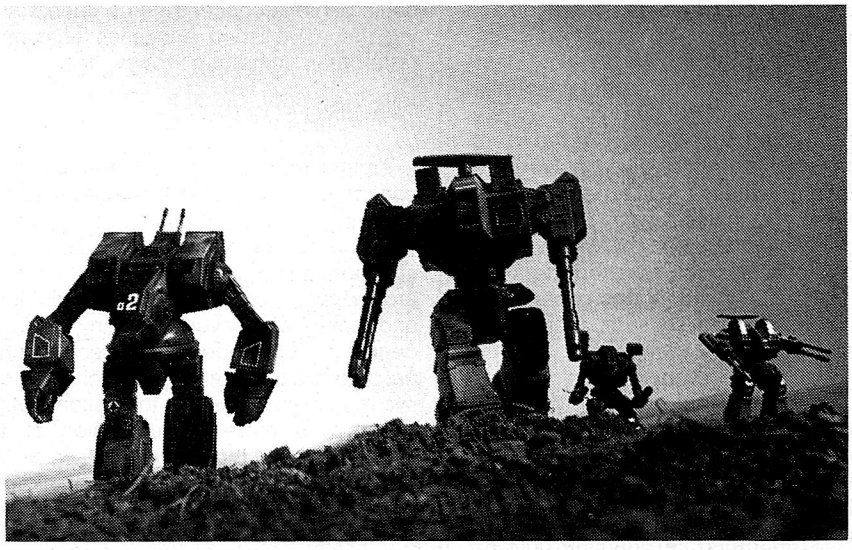
Since the invention of the BattleMech nearly six hundred years ago, there have been countless experiments directed at finding an "ideal" method of training MechWarriors for combat. On poor worlds where there are no real training facilities and even practice with a 'Mech must be limited to conserve scanty supplies and avoid costly damage, training may be ignored entirely; Warlords and Bandit Kings often choose their recruits by a simple press-gang approach, shove them into a 'Mech cockpit, and expect them to fight or die. Generally they do both. At the other end of the scale are the elaborate training facilities available to the Great Houses, exemplified by Hanse Davion's bold concept of the New Avalon

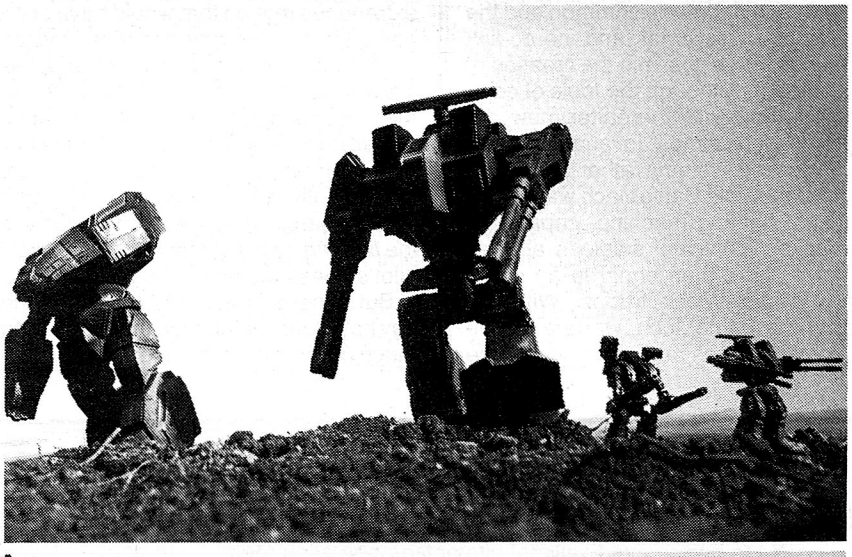
Institute of Science. Here a prospective MechWarrior receives years of intensive training in simulators and real 'Mechs; only the best soldiers—the ones "in tune"—graduate to become officers granted command of House-owned 'Mechs. In between these two extremes are any number of alternatives, each of them aimed at solving the basic problem of finding and training men and women who can take a 'Mech into combat, survive, and, along the way, overcome the opposition.

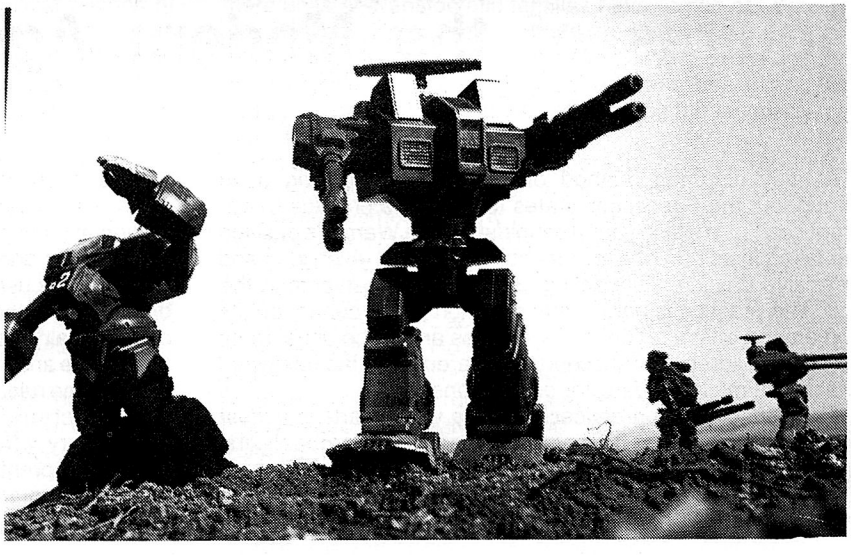
There are some schools of thought that maintain that the BattleMech is no different from any other weapon of war, that any soldier can learn to handle one effectively. But most MechWarriors feel otherwise. They know that they require more than just ordinary training to get the most out of their 'Mechs, and that the winner in any clash on the field of battle will always be the Warrior who does just that—melding man and machine into a single fighting unit that can out-think, out-maneuver, and out-fight an opponent.

BattleTechnology sought out Colonel Kuan Li-Po (Ret.), formerly an instructor at the NAIS and still a private consultant on MechWarrior training, for his views on what it takes to link mind and machine on the modern battlefield. What follows was based on our correspondent's discussions with the Colonel.

Today's MechWarriors are the heirs of six hundred years of experience in the Art of War; this is one of the longest periods in Mankind's history in which innovations in hardware have not forced a complete rethinking of strategic and tactical principles. Probably the only comparable period of stability is the era of Terra's Roman Empire, and even there several notable reforms were required to keep pace with the shifting nature of the Empire's enemies. From the invention of gunpowder in the Middle Ages, militechnics, and hence strategic and tactical thought, began changing at an ever-increasing rate. By the 20th Century this change was so rapid that the lessons of one war couldn't even be applied to the battlefields of the next, and the training of soldiers could be rendered obsolete over a matter of months because of new breakthroughs that made the old style of combat completely useless.







RIGHT: A BattleMech lance deploys, a 31st Century melding of mind and machine.

After the Second Russian Revolution and the Western Alliance's defeat of the Soviets in the early 21st Century, the pace of military development slowed to more reasonable levels. Although "the search for global peace" trumpeted as the goal of the Western Alliance was not really achieved, the post-Superpower era was a time of small-scale wars and limited military research, so there was little change in the way war was waged. Once Mankind reached the stars, the Alliance Colonial Marines became policemen rather than soldiers, their duties focused on security, riot control, and the occasional peace-keeping mission when some local power wanted to use violence to achieve an end. For over two hundred years warfare remained static.

The last major innovations in war as we know it came about between 2300 and 2500 A.D., when the dawning of the "Age of War" made interstellar conflicts common and the development of myomar and neuro-link technologies made possible the creation of the BattleMech. Although the tools of combat improved steadily thereafter, new developments were almost invariably refinements of existing systems rather than major breakthroughs. The BattleMech was and is the ultimate fighting machine, capable of translating an individual soldier's abilities into a force more than equal to an entire company of pre-'Mech troops. With the coming of the BattleMech, warfare had finally "come of age" and military science could begin to concentrate on understanding the established principles of combat rather than searching for new ones.

TRAINING FOR BATTLE

Almost from the start, there has been controversy over the mystique that surrounds the MechWarrior and his trade. WorkMechs for mining, agriculture, construction, and other heavy labor have been around even longer than the BattleMech, and these have never taken any particular degree of skill to operate. Indeed, the original principle that made the 'Mech so attractive in *all* of its forms was the notion that the 'Mech was more an extension of the operator's body than it was a machine that had to be driven. Thanks to neurolinkages, the motions of the machine were largely instinctual; controls were needed to avoid extraneous motion that would have accompanied purely thought-controlled systems, but the actual operating controls of a 'Mech were (and still are) simpler to understand than those in a family air car. Almost anyone can sit down in a 'Mech cockpit, tune in to a neurohelmet, and handle the machine competently after a minimum of training. The onboard computers even handle a lot of the training by being available to answer the pilot's questions on the spot.

But experts in the field of battletechnology have long maintained that it takes more, much more, to turn the average soldier into a true MechWarrior. And they are right.

The essentially unskilled operator can make a 'Mech move, even fight, in rough mimicry of his own capabilities. Against ordinary troops unsupported by better-prepared MechWarriors, that soldier will still be a force to be reckoned with. But it takes skill and practice to make the BattleMech respond efficiently to the operator's desires, especially in combat. The kind of training a MechWarrior goes through is not so much in how to *operate* his 'Mech, but rather in how to work *with* it. The more intensive the preparations, the more effective the ultimate union of man and machine.

Any program of MechWarrior training will have to focus on three important areas. Physical training toughens the body, improves the reflexes, and enables the Warrior to hone his personal fighting skills—and, in turn, the instinctual talents that will emerge when he handles his machine in battle. Operational training teaches him to understand and use his 'Mech, and includes the basics of Tech skills as well as the piloting and gunnery practice needed for controlling the BattleMech under almost any conditions. Finally, and perhaps most important, there is mental training; conditioning that helps the Warrior become a part of his 'Mech and focus all of his other abilities on the single task of fighting...and *winning*.

APPRENTICES AT ARMS
Squires of the Modern Age

A fairly common method of MechWarrior training used throughout the Successor States today is the practice of apprenticeship, in which young candidates for a Warrior's position are taken in as part of a military household and given long and extensive training while acting as laborers or servants to the unit. The practice is particularly common in mercenary outfits and among aristocratic Warrior families and is the usual route by which children may succeed their parents in a family-owned 'Mech that might go back for generations.

The concept of apprenticeship in the warlike arts is almost certainly as old as the history of War itself, but it probably first achieved a degree of legitimacy in the days of Terra's Roman Empire. Once the Imperial legions became tied to specific frontier provinces, it was common practice for villages to spring up near a legionary camp and for the children of the village—many of them born to soldiers and their local wives—to join the Legion at an early age and grow up as part of the unit with all of its traditions and legacies. It is likely that this practice was the source of the use of squires by Medieval knights (who were the direct heirs of the legionary heritage once the Roman units became cavalry, rather than infantry, formations) after the fall of the Empire and the rise of feudal Europe. As professional armies became the rule, the concept of apprentice soldiers began to die out; the last true holdouts in the practice were in the navies of the 19th Century, where midshipmen went to sea at an early age and became apprentice officers mastering their craft while actually serving in combat. The Napoleonic concept of professional armies, and especially the Prussian reserve system which

PHYSICAL TRAINING

The ideal MechWarrior should be in excellent physical shape, with reflexes and coordination in peak condition at all times. Because the neurohelmet draws upon the pilot's brain for the feedback that maintains balance and coordinates actions and reactions, the machine's responses will mirror the operator's. A slow or clumsy pilot will be hard-pressed to keep his 'Mech upright, much less fight. The physical training given to prospective MechWarriors is very often in the form of some martial arts discipline, stressing speed, timing, and coordination over sheer strength or power. MechWarriors who have gone through this sort of training are easily spotted by their grace and agility; they tend to move quickly but with an economy of effort that comes from being trained to use exactly the right amount of force on an opponent—never more than they actually need.

This kind of training makes the typical MechWarrior as lethal in hand-to-hand fighting as he is controlling a 'Mech, though of course on a much different scale. One reason why Dispossessed MechWarriors make such good scouts is this martial education. Nor is it wise to tackle a MechWarrior in a barroom brawl. Their training makes them tough opponents...and they are almost invariably taught to kill quickly, silently, efficiently, and above all *instinctively.*

MechWarrior training given at the NAIS and other combat academies goes on to address a variety of other related areas. The use of a number of different personal weapons is often a part of these curricula, as is extensive training and practice in the areas of survival, evasion, and escape. These programs prepare the Warrior in case he or she is ever forced to abandon a 'Mech and function behind enemy lines. With highly skilled Warriors in nearly as short a supply as the machines themselves, most House and Mercenary units are as much concerned with getting pilots back in one piece as they are with salvaging damaged equipment, and courses like these are an important part of this concern.

OPERATIONAL TRAINING

We have already noted the overall ease of driving most 'Mechs. Nonetheless, it is important for the MechWarrior to become thoroughly familiar with the operation of these machines. To be an effective MechWarrior, the pilot must understand the BattleMech so thoroughly as to be able to run it entirely on instinct, leaving his mind free to concentrate on the needs of the battle. The soldier who has to think before he remembers which button to press or how many times he has operated the foot controls won't last long under fire.

Ideally, a Warrior should be able to strap into any 'Mech cockpit and handle it with equal skill. In fact, this isn't always the case; though most 'Mechs handle very much alike, some—notably four-legged vehicles like the *Goliath* and the *Scorpion*, armless 'Mechs along the lines of the *Locust,* the *Cicada,* or the *Jenner,* and specialty craft such as LAMs—are significantly different in the way controls are set up and in the feel of the machine in motion. This means that the Warrior must either practice on a number of different machines to become an all-around pilot, or concentrate on a more narrow program to become proficient in a few and merely adequate in the rest.

Piloting is only the most basic of 'Mech operating skills. The Warrior must become familiar with gunnery and be able to choose in an instant the best weapons system to handle a given situation. He needs to understand communications systems, the computer and its capabilities, detection and tracking mechanisms: paraphernalia vital to 'Mech operation on the battlefield. The ability to interpret sensory data from radar blips to thermal prints to output scans is another aspect of this training. A MechWarrior who expects to survive will learn not only how to operate these controls, but how to use them even in pitch darkness, one-handed, and *without* computer assistance. There are even some schools that teach students to handle a 'Mech without the aid of a neurohelmet. Though without the neurolinkage the BattleMech is clumsy, still it might just be able to get in the battle-winning shot even after neurolinks are gone and the machine/

demanded universal formal military training among a nation's citizenry, tended to put an end to the more elitist notions of apprenticeship.

It was the revival of feudalism in the era of the BattleMech that brought the system back into prominence. Because a 'Mech is a scant resource that may be passed as a legacy from one generation to the next within a Warrior family, training in the use of that 'Mech is often very much a family affair. In similar fashion, ongoing manpower shortages in mercenary units and local military forces (as opposed to the more formally constituted House armies) often make it expedient to take in the very young and put them through a long-term training program. These youthful students earn their keep by helping technicians, acting as servants to the unit's fighting men, and serving as messengers, porters, cooks, bottlewashers, and anything else they are needed for.

Apprenticeship programs vary in quality according to the resources available for training. A very poor program will simply teach basic military concepts, physical training, and some mental discipline, with infrequent practice in actual 'Mech operation. The presence of specialist tutors, simulators, and other instructional aids can make apprenticeship at least as worthwhile as any academy program. Some particularly good merc units and aristocratic families have turned out Warriors superior to anything the NAIS has produced. Grayson Death Carlyle, founder of the Gray Death Legion and one of the most notable young mercenary leaders on the scene today, was trained as an apprentice to his father using the resources of a fairly small but well-run unit.

The primary advantage to an apprentice training program is the length of time it generally runs. Candidates are taken in young, sometimes as early as 8 or 10 years old, and may not actually take over a 'Mech until they are in their twenties. With a decade of physical training, simulator experience, and exposure to the art of war, the candidate cannot help but be in superb physical, mental, and academic condition by the time he or she becomes a Warrior. However, apprenticeship is a very conservative form of training; it tends to perpetuate certain approaches to warfare from one generation to the next. It is also highly variable in quality from one place to another; it is often a matter of luck that determines whether ten years of fetching and carrying will pay off in exceptional training or lead to an academic dead end.



pilot combination has been completely severed.

Finally, many Warrior training courses provide at least a grounding in the technical side of battletechnology. An old saying, dating back at least to Kerensky's time, maintains that "only a fool or a dirtfoot depends on somebody else to keep the gear in shape." It is a saying that is still valid today—no matter how good your Techs may be, you should never be completely ignorant when it comes to making repairs or modifications in the machine you'll be depending on to keep you alive when the laser pulses start to fly.

MENTAL TRAINING

Of all the areas of a Warrior's training, it is mental discipline which is both most important and least understood outside professional MechWarrior circles. Attitudes among the uninitiated vary from scorn to ignorance to misplaced awe, and even MechWarriors disagree among themselves as to the extent and exact nature of mental training required to ply their trade. But most agree that *some* form of training is necessary before a Warrior can learn to get the most out of his BattleMech in action.

The most basic of mental disciplines is simple training aimed at helping the MechWarrior channel and control his thoughts. The neurohelmet picks up and processes a variety of impulses directly from the brain and sometimes becomes overloaded by extraneous material that it cannot interpret as a specific command. The operator must learn to think clearly and precisely when issuing mental orders, or risk the consequences of a feedback loop. Men have been known to die from the effects of an uncontrolled neurohelmet feedback loop that started with an inability to direct the flow of thoughts and commands to the 'Mech computer system.

It was the introduction of martial arts into the physical training of MechWarriors that led to the expansion of mental and philosophical instruction in the curricula of many major Warrior academies. Mental discipline—a whole way of looking at life and the universe—was and is inseparable from the fighting techniques of many of the martial arts, particularly those derived from the mystic Eastern cultures of Old Earth. The application of these methods to MechWarrior training was obvious almost from the start. They have been carried even further through subsequent refinements in outlook and teaching techniques. Even comparatively new martial arts schools, like the Quick-Kill taught at the NAIS and other

Federated Suns academies, place at least as much effort on preparation of the mind as they do on mastery of the body.

The aim of these areas of teaching is to help the MechWarrior fight more effectively by giving him total self-control. In the vast majority of these systems, the adept is able to suppress emotions like fear and hatred, control all of the voluntary and even some involuntary muscle functions, ignore the effects of extreme heat, cold, or pain, and allow his instinct, which generally cannot be mastered consciously, to flow freely in perfect interplay with the mind. Although few MechWarriors reach the status of true adept, all students trained under these methods are far superior to ordinary soldiers in almost every aspect of combat.

Mental control also brings together the other two aspects of training. The Warrior who can master his own mind can focus his physical responses more tightly and execute his operational training more efficiently than a 'Mech pilot who lacks this kind of self-discipline. And emotional control allows a Warrior to put aside anger or fear in a crisis and continue to function rationally when other soldiers would panic or give in to unreasoning hate. On the other hand, the MechWarrior adept can deliberately unleash the emotions and the chemical triggers that will turn an ordinary fighter into a modern-day berserker, although this often takes a terrible toll on the body after the moment has passed.

TECHNIQUES OF THE GREAT HOUSES

The quality and effectiveness of training techniques in the modern era vary widely. Even within the bounds of a given Successor State there may be vast differences in the way House units are taught, according to the availability of training facilities, manpower and supply needs, and unit traditions. Some general notes, however, can be applied in an overall survey of the military units of the five Great Houses.

House Liao: The Capellan Confederation probably has the least effective MechWarrior training programs. Pressed by manpower shortages and a strategic doctrine emphasizing a perimeter defense supported by a few elite mobile reserves, the bulk of the Capellan military is given only the bare minimum of training. A few core units, particularly the Red Lancers and elements of the Northwind Highlanders, do make use of fairly sophisticated MechWarrior training procedures. These units are often found employed as a strategic reserve, blunting threats to the Confederation after less efficient forces have bought time against an invader.

Regular units are generally trained according to the age-old precepts of military service—3-4 months of general instruction which concentrates almost entirely on basics, followed (sometimes) by specialty schools that may hone particular skills to a finer edge. Training of this kind is often drastically shortened when a unit needs reinforcements in tune quickly. A leavening of mercenaries looking for the comparatively stable life of House service are often enticed into joining these forces as well. Some individual MechWarriors will enter Liao service with much more sophisticated training—if they happen to come from old 'Mech families with a particularly strong belief in the benefits of long and intense instruction in the Arts of War.

Elite units have higher standards. There are five established military academies within the boundaries of Liao space, including the renowned Tikonov Military Institute. Given the Capellan Confederation's tightly-ordered and highly militaristic system, it was inevitable that standards of training among these five should be more or less the same. Most elite Liao MechWarriors are graduates of one of these academies, all of which stress accepted tactical doctrine at the expense of individual initiative in combat.

The Tikonov Institute remains a model of superb MechWarrior training. The curriculum at TMI includes training in the martial arts fields of ju-jitsu and karate (or at least modern equivalents of these ancient disciplines) together with an intensive course in "The Golden Way," a collection of 26th Century philosophical precepts originally established by the Institute's founder, Colonel Kenji Matsumoto.

House Marik: The Free Worlds League, like the Capellan Confederation, lacks a centralized military training system, but for different reasons. Although the League is strong in terms of size and scope, it is fragmented politically by a long-standing tradition of provincialism among its member-worlds. This means that the military, though controlled by House Marik through the office of Captain-General, varies in quality and in the techniques used in training its soldiery. Forces raised and maintained within the Duchy of Oriente receive the best training, but Duke Christopher's mistrust of education over experience has led to a curtailment of formal academic instruction even here. It is largely left to individual unit commanders to provide what they consider to be appropriate training to newcomers in their outfits. As in Liao space, there are a number of privately-owned military academies that provide various types of training to prospective MechWarriors (and others).

House Steiner: Within the Lyran Commonwealth there are several state-sponsored establishments for the training of MechWarriors. For the most part the official curriculum stresses the teaching of tactics and strategy to prospective officers, but they do include a study of the Neo-Zen philosophies of the late 28th Century, especially those which promise "the union of flesh and thought" through meditation and rigorous physical conditioning. The Commonwealth's military strength relies heavily on mercenary forces, however, and these units—along with local or militia troops which do not participate in the Lyran training program—are not given this sort of Warrior instruction. Moreover, roughly 80% of the graduates of these academies are officers; ordinary enlisted MechWarriors are given less sophisticated training that sticks more to the basics.

Since 3022, when Katrina Steiner completed her negotiations with the Federated Suns, a few picked Steiner MechWarriors have been eligible to enter competitions for placement in the New Avalon Institute of Science, which provides highly sophisticated training in the military arts. The NAIS program is described in detail with other Davion institutions.

"Only a fool or a dirtfoot depends on somebody else to keep the gear in shape."

House Kurita: Adhering to the Japanese traditions of House Kurita and other noble families, the military of the Draconis Combine receive, on the whole, some of the most effective Warrior training of any in the Successor States. A heavily modified version of the ancient Bushido code is central to the overall military training programs sponsored by the state; though not universal, such training is much more common here than in states such as the Capellan Confederation or the Free Worlds League.

The code of the Warrior in Kurita society urges excellence in the military sciences, but also a mastery of peaceful arts as well. Inner harmony is as important to the typical Kurita soldier as are accomplishments on the field of battle. Quite contrary to their common image as ruthless, bloodthirsty barbarians, Kurita soldiers are often encouraged to take up hobbies such as painting, calligraphy, or horticulture to put them "in touch with the inner self." A large percentage of Kurita MechWarriors do attend academies which inculcate the Bushido and Neo-Zen philosophies and provide training in any of several martial arts disciplines.

House Davion: Although the Federated Suns does not draw on the same Terro-Japanese heritage as the Draconis Combine, a martial tradition has long been fostered by the ruling Davion family which mirrors some features of the Kurita approach to military training while preserving many unique aspects of its own. State military academies are present on many of the major planets of the Federated Suns, each teaching the same basic Warrior's curriculum. Quick-Kill, a synthesis of karate, judo, aikido, and savate, is the central part of a Warrior's physical training; mental and philosophical disciplines form a part of the Quick-Kill course as well. Davion policy places heavy stress on actual operational instruction as well.

The most recent innovation in training in the Federated Suns was the foundation of the New Avalon Institute of Science (NAIS) in 3015. NAIS military training is an expanded form of the usual Davion academy courses, with the addition of extensive instruction in tactics, operations, strategy, and other leadership skills. Graduates of the NAIS are commissioned into the army of the Federated Suns; even failed NAIS students enter the ranks as NCOs. The Institute also has courses in non-military arts and sciences, and a combat curriculum for non-BattleMech officers as well. Since 3022, a few select students from the Lyran Commonwealth have also been permitted to attend the NAIS; these are given commissions in the armed forces of their native realm and honorary Federated Suns ranks as well.

PLANS, TRENDS, AND INNOVATIONS: THE FUTURE OF MECHWARRIOR TRAINING

The future of 'Mech warfare viewed on the basis of recent developments is uncertain. It seems that after several hundred years of deadlock the chance for a decisive victory by one or another of the Great Houses may finally be at hand. The seeds for such a victory are contained within many of the contemporary developments in the Art of War which could, given proper exploitation, snowball into another rush of innovation that might rival the changes of the 19th and 20th Centuries. If this should happen, changes in the training of MechWarriors would inevitably be required; indeed, it could be trends in training techniques that will trigger the other changes and revolutionize military science as a whole.

Among the developments some experts see as heralding change are many factors. The deterioration of technology and industry on many of the war-ravaged worlds of the Successor State frontiers could lead to a major challenge in the balance of power; victory would then go to the realm which has established the best pool of salvaged resources and the best training to exploit their superiority on the battlefield. On the other hand a continued decline could lead to a gradual devolution in modern theories of warfare and, eventually, to barbarism. This situation is one to be closely watched in the years ahead.

More immediate trends could have a decisive effect long before the worst comes to pass, however. Recently, a new crop of young officers has appeared on the galactic stage, and these leaders of a new age are showing a tendency to break away from the tradition methods of waging war. Tactics of maneuver and static defense are slowly giving way to the unleashing of a new philosophy of total annihilation on the battlefield. To draw a comparison with Terra's early history, the Successor States may be on the verge of seeing a Napoleon bursting on the scene to transform warfare from the stately dance of the old ways of warfare to the crushing blows of the new. Leaders like Natasha Kerensky and Grayson Death Carlyle have already begun to demonstrate what aggressive tactics can do on the battlefield; it may be that MechWarriors everywhere will soon have to relearn their craft entirely or perish under the weight of the new.

Other military theorists see a chance for revolution in the creation of the NAIS by House Davion. They, too, point to parallels in Earth's early history to suggest that the rise of a unified professional officer class could change the Successor States much as it did the Roman Empire, Renaissance Europe, or mid-19th Century America. When leadership on the field of battle becomes the prerogative of talent rather than the right of feudal privilege, the breakdown of old class barriers won't be far behind. Then the tactical innovators and the social reformers will alike be free to come forward, changing the face of modern society forever.

Even the experts cannot agree on a scenario for change, though most predict that it will come. But there are even some highly regarded pundits who reject the entire concept of future turnings in war and society. There is no sure way of predicting the truth; what 20th Century social historian would have advanced the notion of a centuries-long freeze in development? The only sure prognostication we can make is this: until change *does* arrive, 'Mechs and MechWarriors will continue to stand guard over our present civilization, and their training and prowess in battle will be the one certain gauge of victory or defeat.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Colonel Kuan Li-Po served as a MechWarrior in the Avalon Hussars for over thirty years, rising to the rank of Colonel and command of that unit in the year 3012. When the New Avalon Institute of Science was opened in 3015, Colonel Kuan was appointed one of the Institute's first instructors at the personal direction of Hanse Davion. In 3018, the Colonel served briefly as the Institute's Director of MechWarrior Training before retiring to private life at his estate on Chien in the Draconis March. The Colonel is the author of *Inner Fire,* a treatment of the use of mental control as a means of achieving physical perfection.

MechWarrior Keith Douglass was formerly a soldier of the New Syrtis Fusiliers. Now a *Griffin* pilot in Cockburn's Crusaders, a mercenary unit, Douglass is also a free-lance writer and part-time correspondent for BattleTechnology. He has two kill assists to his credit.

MASTERING THE INNER *FIRE*

The Mind as a Weapon



by Colonel Kuan Li-Po

The secrets of ultimate prowess in battle do not come from mastery of a machine but from a knowledge of the mind. We call ourselves MechWarriors, but the Warrior has always been and shall always be the heart and soul of the machine he guides in combat. If you would be victorious, learn to use the mind as the weapon it truly is.

Over thousands of generations, the human race has sought to place Mankind on a special level, elevated above the animal kingdom and separated from it by the powers of speech and reason. Many would have us believe that the mind is a weapon by virtue of its ability to outwit or out-think an opponent. Does this mean that Galileo, Einstein, and Fuchida were our greatest Warriors? No. The soldier cannot rely on the power of pure reason if he is to survive on the field of battle. Nor can he depend entirely upon technology. The smartest Warrior in Human Space, equipped with the most sophisticated computer known to man, may yet be overpowered by a stupid brute armed with a heavy stone as he ponders the variables of a thousand complex equations before unleashing his most devastating weaponry. Brains are of little value

to the Warrior if they are no longer contained within his broken skull.

We must reject the opinion that Man's mind differs from that of the animals, for in accepting such an idea we say that reason is always good and instinct always a sign of inferiority. But pure instinct, like pure reason, cannot be the proper road for the Warrior. Our instincts are one with our emotions, and when we feel pain or fear or hate, we lose control over our judgement and knowledge. The animal may fight ferociously when the odds are impossible, never realizing the value of postponing the battle, or it may run in fright because instinct tells it to flee even though reason might find the way to turn defeat into success. One man may outfight a dozen animals by the application of rational thought to the problems of combat.

Hate blinds the Warrior to Opportunities;
Anger is the Gateway to Impatience.
Impatience is the Pathway to Defeat;
Opportunity is the Stepping-Stone to Victory.

The mind of Man is a *coupling* of instinct and reason. Trained in discipline and control, that mind can make conscious use of the abilities which make the animal dangerous. Call upon your mind, your spirit, and nothing need be denied to you. Combine the instinctive reactions that will give you speed and strength with the detached reasoning which is your heritage as Man and you shall be more than either alone could make you. This is the purpose of training the mind; to teach you to use *all* of your mental inheritance at once rather than in parts or at the behest of unreasoned emotion.

Before you can master the Spirit, you must learn to master your own emotions. If you fear, or if you hate, you cloud your reason and lose your judgement. Remember this precept and your shall contain your emotion, pass through it, and emerge at the end with your mastery intact. In the Quick-Kill teachings used in the [New Avalon] Institute [of Science], the student learns to banish hatred through the repetition of litanies designed to cleanse the mind and bolster the spirit. The First Rejection of Hate is the simplest of these, saying:

> Hate blinds the Warrior to Opportunities;
> Anger is the Gateway to Impatience.
> Impatience is the Pathway to Defeat;
> Opportunity is the Stepping-Stone to Victory.

The student learns others as well, so that Rejection becomes a matter of finding the right trigger and using it to maintain control when emotion threatens to overpower the mind. With practice you can learn to place this control on the level of instinct itself, responding to any threat with its counter without even being consciously aware of the threat itself. This is the Freedom of Reason.

Second in the student's process of mastering the Inner Fire is the freeing of the instinct from the intellect. Once the Warrior can control emotional responses without thinking, he is ready to allow the animal within him to emerge and fight. With the banishment of harmful responses through inner balance, the animal instincts can be harnessed and made to perform at the command of the trained mind. This training links together the senses, the reactions, the agility and the coordination of the Warrior into a unified whole. He sees, understands, decides, moves and reacts with the fluid grace of the tiger making a spring. If the knowledge of his craft is as ingrained as his mental discipline, he draws on this as freely as on any of the others and so becomes the living embodiment of Death. Exercise the reactions and the senses, hone the body to the peak of physical performance, and feel the essence of the world around you to achieve the Freedom of Instinct.

With these the student can be a powerful Warrior, yet with these alone the Warrior shall never be a true Adept of the Inner Fire. If you choose to strive for further mastery, further control, you shall ultimately achieve even greater powers of mind and body. For the body is only the servant of the mind; and what the mind envisions, the body can be made to do. Only the limits of understanding and belief will stand in the way of the Adept's aspirations. Thus can the Adept conquer pain and stimulate self-healing, and thus can he learn not only to control the emotions but to trigger and channel them at will in the single-minded rage of the berserker. Though it may take decades of study, though some may find it impossible to train their minds to the levels of discipline that will achieve the mastery, still the powers are there for the taking. Seek them out it you desire the Freedom of Spirit, but learn to use them wisely if you set out to use them at all.

[Editor's Note: Colonel Kuan is a Master in the art of Quick-Kill, the philosophical precepts of which he has outlined above. Despite this, the Colonel acknowledges that the "Freedom of Spirit" is something he himself has not yet fully achieved, so it is plain that the chances of the average Warrior to learn these pseudo-mystic powers of mental control (if they exist at all) are virtually non-existent.]



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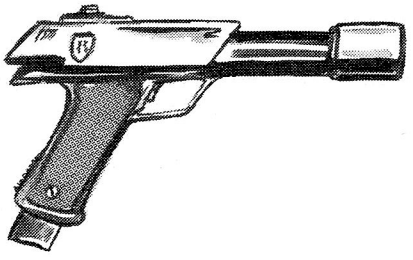

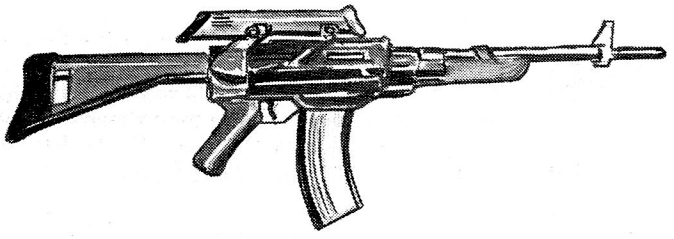

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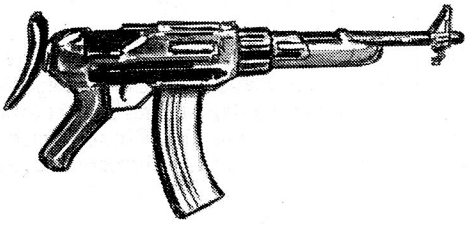

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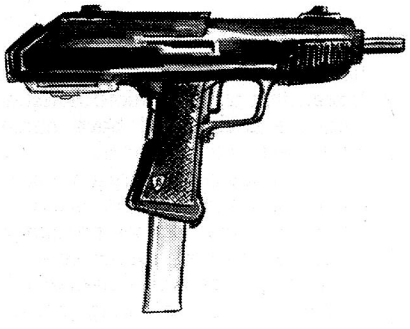

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Drop Into Hell

Combat Drop on Scheat V

by Captain Sinclair MacCray

Don't let them kid you. The worst part of a drop is always the waiting.

There you are, strapped immobile into the cockpit of your BattleMech. There's nothing to be seen through your vision ports but the blackness of the cocoon that envelopes your machine, no vid feed through your scanner screens because every lead save one was disconnected a small eternity ago.

That single remaining lead, a comline plugged into an external jack in the side of your 'Mech's head, is your only link with the universe outside, and you cling to that like the proverbial drowning man clings to a rope. Through that lead, a steady stream of chatter brings word of the situation outside from the DropShip's Tac Center, reports of altitude, vector, and bearing, of hostiles on intercept course and damage taken on the way in. But it's impersonal, that chatter, a recitation of facts and figures that have no emotional connection with you, as though the events they detailed were occurring a thousand light years away.

But when the DropShip bucks and kicks under the thunder of incoming missiles, that illusion is dispelled. You're helpless, blind, and nearly deaf, crammed into the breech of a giant cannon preparing to fire you into your target.

The roughest drop I ever experienced was carried out as part of Davion's push against Kurita along the cis-Klathandu Front in 3026. The powers-that-be of the House Davion Staff Command had decided that Scheat V was of some strategic importance. Hell, they were only supposed to be wargames, a small part of the mass insanity called Galahad '26, but there was fear that the Kuritists were mustering a major invasion force at Homam and Proserpina. Suddenly, the Davion Forward Operations Group needed a staging and resupply area for reserves and troop convoys, and Scheat, lying between Homam and Klathandu IV's Port Borea, was it.

The only problem was that Scheat V, the only habitable rock in the entire star system, was already occupied. Davion's IntelDiv had identified at least one full regiment of regulars, the crack Fourth Proserpina Hussars. We all knew the Kurita staff command could read a star map as well as we could. The Fourth had been brought in to counter just such a move as we were about to make.

They would be waiting for us, no question about it.

Our battle plan called for an initial strike by one battalion at selected targets across Scheat V's southern hemisphere. They would drop from space, seize key spaceports, airfields, and ground defense complexes, and hold them until the three regiments which made up the main body of the invasion force could be brought in to relieve them. The battalion nominated for this singular honor was the Second Battalion, Deneb Light Cavalry, and my own Company A, 2nd Battalion, Wiley's Wolverines, would lead the drop. At the time, I was slotted in the Wolverine's Fire Lance, number three spot, a position which was certain to give me a very close view indeed of the situation as it unfolded.

Maybe, I thought, a bit too close of a view.

Scheat is an M-class red giant, visible from old Earth as the star Beta Pegasi. Like many red giants, it is variable, but a maddeningly unpredictable one which can double its luminosity in the course of a week or two, but refuses to behave according to any set pattern.

You can imagine what the weather is like. Planet V is the only habitable world in the system, and I use the word "habitable" advisedly. The air is breathable, there's hardy native life of a sort, and humans live there...though why is more than I know. The locals, I understand, have named their world Hell.

Hell circles its primary just barely within what might charitably be called the star's habitable zone. By comparison with the other worlds in the system, the place is a paradise. There is air—tainted with sulfur and the sharp, acid tang of ozone, but breathable. The temperature exceeds 50° C. only at the equator. And there is water—small landlocked seas foul with dilute concentrations of sulfuric acid and sulfur compounds, but supporting an amazing tangle of plant and animal life forms.

And there are the cities.

The Seven Cities of Hell, as they've been called, date back to early Star League times when Scheat V—Hell—was an important source of heavy metals and transuranics for an advanced, starfaring technology. There

once were dozens of major cities on the planet, of course, but today all but seven are gone, wiped away. The glassy crater plains and fused rubble left by the unrestrained horrors of the First and Second Successor State Wars mar Hell's face like some hideous, cosmic blight. For centuries now, the surviving cities have lived a ragged and marginal existence, providing radioactives and grain for Kurita's empire and a strategic nexus in the trade network of the Proserpina Sector.

I knew all of this, of course, from our pre-mission briefings.

There was something else we knew from our briefings...and from our regimental history. The Deneb Light Cavalry had faced the Fourth Proserpina Hussars before, on neighboring Proserpina.

Our unit had taken a licking there at the Battle of Hanser's Ford in 2840, when two lances of Kurita *Stinger* LAMs had set down in our rear. The Fourth Hussars had been at Hanser's Ford, too. Hell, this raid would be like old home week. We were eager to come to grips with our old opponents.

But fire and steel have a way of trampling eagerness into the mud. Wiley's Wolverines would be the tip of the sword thrust designed to pin the Fourth Hussars in place while Davion's invasion forces deployed to surround them and grind them down. The strategists called our part in the plan ADEP, with us as the IST. That translated as "Advanced Deployment" of the "Initial Strike Team." With the odds we were facing, we developed different names for the situation. AWKDEP—Awkward Deployment—of "Idiot Slow Targets" was my favorite.

Still, things started off well. There had been scant resistance at the system's nadir Jump Point when our invasion fleet slipped out of JumpSpace and deployed its light sails. But as the nine DropShips of our battalion formed up and boosted for Hell, we knew the locals were planning a welcome for us in the thin, cold air above the planet itself.

It's in the near approach for deployment that DropShips are at their most vulnerable.

It's possible to feel vulnerable in a BattleMech, you know. Ask one of us who has been on a combat drop. Sealed into your 'Mech, immobile, swaddled in ablative cocoon, cut off from the outside except for your audio feed from the bridge...

"Shilones three at three-two-niner-low, approach vector theta." I concentrated on the words, trying to convert words and numbers to pictures in my mind. *"Range fifteen hundred and closing..."*

Shilones. SL-17s, big, heavily-armed and armored, and very, very mean. At moments like these, a warrior's only consolation is that he is only one of a number of targets. There were eight other DropShips out there on approach, along with *Condottiere,* our own ship. That many targets could make the defenders scatter their shots, could confuse ground-based target designators already hard-pressed by ECM and fear.

"Code Red! Missile launch! Shigs on intercept!"

Those would be Shigunga long-range missiles. *Shilones* carried twenty of those killers apiece and reloads for twelve more. How many had been launched?

"Alter course to zero-three-zero." That was Captain Delacroix's voice. I'd shipped with her aboard *Condottiere* on three previous missions, including the fiasco at Dohenac. The ice in her voice did wonders to cool thoughts and tempers raised to feverish levels by helpless inactivity. *"Pitch down five degrees. Weapons fire as you bear."*

The launch tubes of a *Union*-class DropShip are well-protected, but the hammer of the ship's heavy autocannon rang through her armor and into my padded hiding place like jackhammer blows of raw, thundering noise. Between bursts of auto-fire mayhem, I could feel the much more gentle *whoosh-chunk* of missiles being fired, and fresh loads being slammed into emptied tubes.

"Eleven Shigs, range four hundred!"

"Acknowledged! Evasive maneuvers, full acceleration and course change to zero-two-five, on my mark...three...two...one... MARK!"

The surge of acceleration ramming me down into the padding of my 'Mech's command seat coincided with a waterfall roar, a cascade of thunder that hammered at my brain. *Condottiere* staggered, and the heaviness of acceleration was replaced for one agonizing instant by abrupt free-fall.

"Damage control reports starboard autocannon destroyed. Light damage to sections five and seven!"

"Acknowledged! All stations stand by! Incoming missiles at three hundred! Evasive maneuvers at two...one...MARK!"

Again the hammer blows wracked my body but far worse this time. Again I felt as though I were plunging aimlessly into a suddenly yawning abyss, and it felt as though my entire 'Mech had shifted hard to one side. I could hear the faint yammer of an alarm tinning through my comline.

"Emergency! Emergency! Fire in the bay!"

Sweat was running freely down my face now, but my neurohelmet prevented me from wiping it away. "The bay" could only be *Condottiere's* BattleMech bay, the large, central area where the ship's twelve 'Mechs were encrypted in their entry pods, awaiting launch. One of the enemy missiles must have penetrated a weak point in *Condottiere's* armored hull and burst in among the readied 'Mechs.

"Damage control parties report fires under control," Captain Delacroix's voice continued after several eternities of waiting. *"'Mech bay area is now in vacuum, open to space. Major Wiley?"*

"Wiley here." I could hear the skipper's voice, his answer barely audible as the bridge mike picked it up off a console speaker. The "Major" was, in fact, a captain. Long, long tradition held that passengers aboard warships holding the rank of captain received an honorary, temporary, and strictly unofficial "promotion" to major as long as they were on board. There can be only one captain aboard a ship.

"You'll be dropping one 'Mech short. That last barrage sent three warheads right up Number Five launch tube and jammed the feeder mechanism."

"Is Coulter all right?"

"No information, Major. We've lost his comline."

"I copy. Dunbar, meet me on Command Three."

There was a click and a long silence as Wiley switched frequencies to consult with my lance leader.

Was Coulter alive? Jared Coulter was the number two man in my lance. His launch tube was opposite mine in the drop bay. Protected both by his *Warhammer* and by its cocoon when those missiles hit, he was probably okay.

Probably. That is a terrible word in combat.

A moment later, Lieutenant Dunbar's voice came across my comlink.

"Again the hammer blows wracked my body... Again I felt as though I were plunging aimlessly into a suddenly yawning abyss."

"MacCray? You heard?

"I was listening, Lieutenant."

"You're my number two, now. Deploy on my right, and keep close."

"Yes, Ma'am. On your right." Lieutenant Kathryn Dunbar had a reputation for moving fast and hitting hard in combat. She expected her Number Two to stick like plate sealant.

"Stand by," Captain Delacroix's voice interrupted. *"We've acquired the DZ on our screens, Major. Three minutes to drop."*

"Three minutes," Wiley replied, *"Understood."*

Three minutes can seem like three years. *Condottiere* was shrieking in at a flat angle through the thin, cold, near-vacuum almost one hundred kilometers above the surface of Hell. Somewhere out there in that almost-nothingness were a swarm of angry *Shilones* and God knew what else, closing on our little squadron of DropShips at the moment when they couldn't maneuver to avoid incoming fire.

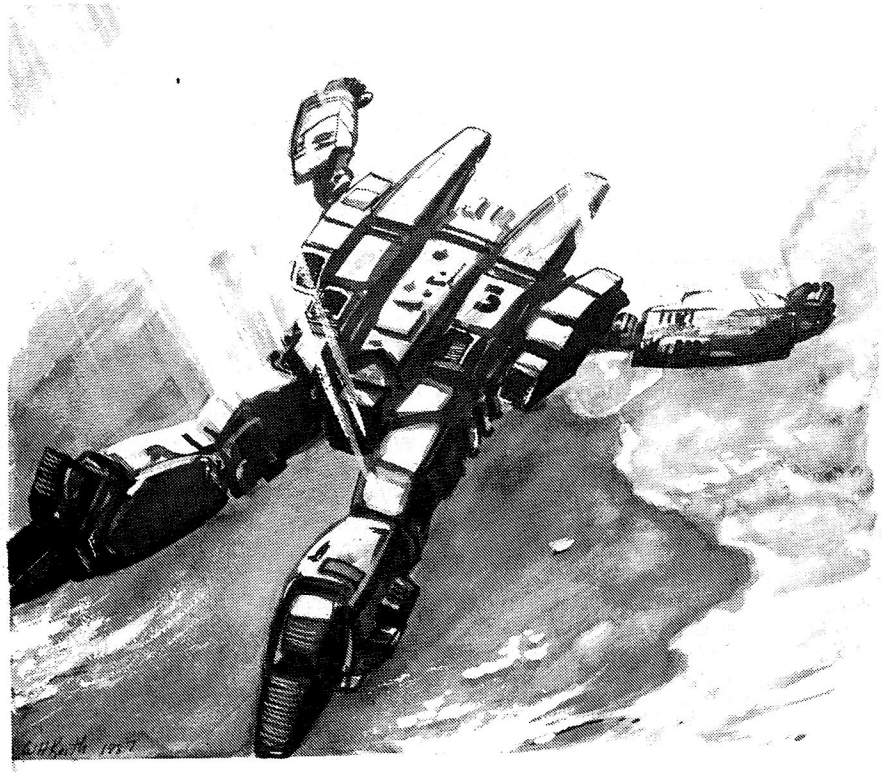
But at moments like that, you save your deepest worries for the captain of your DropShip. Did Captain Delacroix have the right target?

I'd studied maps and holoviews of Scheat V endlessly during the transit from Port Borea to our JumpPoint, along with the rest of the company. Most of the surface area is sand dunes, badlands, sulfur marshes, and mountains. There's a chain of seas across the south pole—deep-water saline lakes, actually—fed by rivers from the surrounding mountains, and it was there that the planet's major port and military facilities were located. There were farming communities scattered along the coastlines and big, sprawling industrial plants among the sulfide flats at the Deep Desert's edge.

There were no pathfinders on this landing, no local troops or guerrillas on our side to place transmitters to guide us in. Captain Delacroix was navigating to the launch point by picking out terrain features and comparing them with the readings coming off star sightings. *Condottiere's* ground-imaging radar would be serving as a second check, painting hard, reflective targets such as spaceport buildings and industrial plants as sharply brilliant tracings on the radar mapping screen on the bridge. If Scheat V had been shrouded by cloud cover, Captain Delacroix would have been depending on that radar as her *only* navigational tool.

But the enemy could have set up fake radar targets, could have masked targets in camouflage which swallowed radar waves whole, could have set up whole illusory cities to misguide an incoming strike. And there were all too many cases of planetary maps being wrong.

But where we landed was entirely in the Captain's hands.



"Thirty seconds to drop!" Her voice was still steady, still cold as glacial ice. *"Drop altitude will be ninety-five point two kilometers, speed one point one two kilometers per second. Deceleration time twenty-seven seconds. Your release vector will be zero-two-one, timed at point three second intervals."*

Seconds dwindled away. I fancied I could hear the keening shriek of thin atmosphere against the hull surfaces of *Condottiere*, now...though I knew that the sound existed only in my imagination.

Captain Delacroix's voice came into my earphones one last time. *"Ten seconds, people."* For the first time, I heard some emotion behind those words. I wondered if I would see her again, at pick-up. *"Five seconds! Good luck!"*

A giant's hand smashed me back against the yielding surface of my cockpit seat as *Condottiere* decelerated with brutal fury. For endless, agonizing moments, the weight of five grown men pressed down on me. Breathing became difficult, then painful, then impossible as the crushing pressure made each breath an agony. The pressure went on and on and on. A kind of shadow crept across my vision, making my cockpit instrumentation dim. The shadow grew darker as the blood drained from my head, and I wavered on the ragged edge of unconsciousness.

Twenty-seven seconds at six gravities can seem a lifetime.

Then the pressure was gone, wiped away by the emptiness of free fall.

Far, far off in the darkness, I heard a stuttering, thundering, rapid-fire thudthudthud as the DropShip's launch tubes began firing according to the program punched in by Captain Delacroix, and then a monolithic WHAM as my capsule rocketed out into the void.

The blood-tinged silence which followed was sheer bliss, almost restful if not for the knowledge that I was now hurtling through near-vacuum almost a hundred klicks above very hostile ground.

And falling.

The DropShip's forward speed had been a bit over one klick per second when Delacroix kicked us clear. Her firing pattern would have been aimed and timed in such a way that the firing of our capsules actually slowed our forward velocity, our "Launch Vector-V," to less than half a kilometer per second, though the exact figure could vary wildly depending on any maneuvers the Captain had been forced to execute during the final seconds of approach. That speed represented my movement relative to a stationary point on the planet's surface and

allowed for such factors as Hell's rotation on its axis and its movement around its sun. Half a kps was still a hefty speed—something like 1700 kilometers per hour. I would have to shed that speed on the way down if I didn't want to burn up—or wind up spread in a very fine film of dust across the face of a mountain.

And at the same time, my speed straight down was increasing at the rate of about one meter per second, every second.

The curious thing about a BattleMech combat drop is that, at first, you don't feel like you're moving. You still can't see outside your cocoon, and even if you could, the surface of the planet, spread out in a vast and hazy, cloud-swept curve beneath you, would appear unmoving. A DropPod's speed is slow enough for it to provide a tempting target to a planet's air and ground defenses, and for the first part of the capsule's fall, it can't shoot back or even maneuver. For that reason, the launch of each capsule includes a burst of chaff, a cloud of mylar-coated slivers which play hob with the enemy's tracking radar, transforming a tight cluster of ten or twelve 'Mech-sized blips into a sea of shimmering, staticky fuzz. A part of every MechWarrior's training is to spend time looking over the shoulders of tracking radar operators on the ground during a training drop, just so he'll have some idea of how hard it is to make sense of radar signals bouncing back off chaff one hundred klicks up.

At least, that's the idea. Me, I still feel stark naked when I start my fall out of the sky, and I suspect that every other MechWarrior who has ever gone through the same drill feels precisely the same way.

The earliest spacecraft re-entered Earth's atmosphere by riding down a trail of fire on a heat shield, a thick metal plate which boiled away, bit by bit, carrying the heat of re-entry safely clear of the pilot in his thin-skinned capsule. Later spacecraft used meticulously fitted and placed ceramic tiles to insulate the craft from the heat. BattleMech entry pods combine elements of both old systems. The pod is the blunt-ended ceramic-and-metal capsule which encases the 'Mech and its cocoon. The cocoon is spun foam metal and ceramic designed to insulate while it melts away in big, hot droplets. Both together provide a safe means for a BattleMech to enter a planetary atmosphere at high speed and survive the heat of friction. BattleMech drops at low altitudes can dispense with the pod, but cocoons are nearly always employed.

My link with the bridge of *Condottiere* was gone, now, and as yet I had no radio communication with the other 'Mechs in my company. Radio communication wouldn't have been any use as yet in any case. In moments, as my speed through the upper atmosphere increased, a glowing plume of ionization encased my pod, making radio transmission or reception impossible. The silent peace was replaced, distantly and subtly at first, by a faint murmur of air boiling past the pod's surface. Within seconds the murmur had grown to a faint shriek, then to a keening whine, and finally to a buffeting roar which filled the cockpit of my 'Mech with a thundering banshee howl.

I shut out the noise, concentrating instead on the LED display on my instrument console which indicated computed altitude.

Computed altitude. DropPods don't have external sensors. If they did, the entry friction would burn them away, and in any case entry rigs are expensive enough without adding a lot of high-tech and disposable gadgetry to them. So there were no laser pulse rangers, no microwave scanners, no radar which could show my actual altitude above the ground. What I *did* have were certain basic data: my altitude at release and the strength of Scheat V's gravitational field, plus one of Man's most basic and vital tools—mathematics.

The planet's 1.01 G gravity was increasing my planetward speed by 992 centimeters per second per second. That meant that one second after drop I was falling almost a meter a second, after five seconds I was moving five meters per second, after one minute I was moving 60 meters per second...

At that rate, if Hell had been an airless moon, I'd have smacked into the surface seven and a quarter minutes after drop with a speed of over 15,000 kilometers per hour.

But Hell has an atmosphere. At some point I would enter air thick enough to offer resistance to my plummeting 85-plus tons of 'Mech and entry gear and my speed would stop climbing. That point is called terminal velocity, a term I have always felt was a singularly unhappy choice of words.

The calculations had all been worked out long before, during our DropShip passage from the JumpPoint to Scheat V. With all factors taken into account, it would take me about twelve minutes to fall 95 kilometers.

I settled back to wait. Not all of that time would be spent wrapped helpless in my cocoon. The time was coming when I would be able to become an active participant in what was happening around me.

"Did Captain Delacroix have the right target?"

After three minutes, the turbulence caused by my passage through increasingly dense atmosphere began building, beginning as a gentle rattle which built quickly into a hammering, bone-jarring assault on mind and body. At terminal velocity now, my pod cleaved through violently protesting air towards the planet's surface, arrowing ahead of a billowing plume of steam shocked from the cold air in my wake. The thunder inside my 'Mech increased, piling decibel upon decibel, the roar threatening to shake and batter my *Crusader* into pieces long before it reached the surface. Despite the layers of insulation, the interior temperature was climbing now. The 'Mech's reactor and power systems are running, producing megacalories of waste heat. Worse, a 'Mech's heat sinks cannot function inside a cocoon, since there is no place for the heat to go.

And it wasn't entirely my imagination which noted that the near-solar temperatures of the outer surface of that thin metal pod around me seemed to be working their way in through layers of insulation towards the tiny haven of relative comfort at the heart of the plunging meteor.

I tried not to think about heat.

Seven minutes to go.

The DropPod split open in five equal sections, as timed explosions severed links and opened the capsule like a blossoming, flame-wreathed flower. The petals separated, tumbling in their own fiery trajectories, adding—I most sincerely hoped—to the worries of any Draco observers on the surface. The chaff discharged during our launch would have dispersed by now, left somewhere far overhead. The pod sections

would provide some additional targets for enemy ground and aerospace fire.

The cocoon glowed with cherry-red heat, flooding the inside of my *Crusader's* cockpit with ruddy light. My internal temperature was climbing now. I could feel the personal refrigeration unit behind my seat click on, pumping coolant through the vest encasing my torso. Outside, the cocoon was shredding away a little at a time. Each half-molten globbet carried its quota of heat away from me—and contributed to the cloud of radar-reflective debris surrounding my 'Mech.

Four minutes.

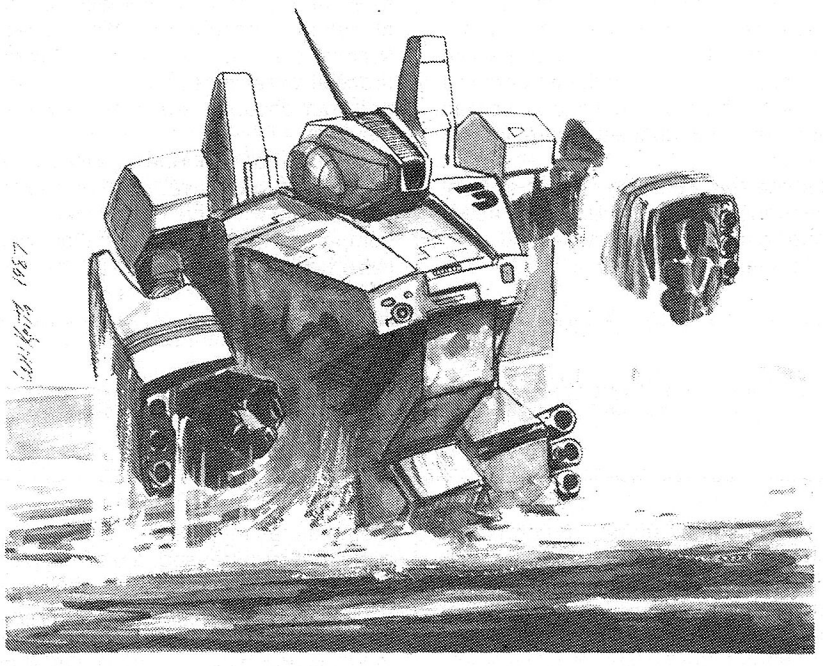
I touched a button on the console, and the aluminum framework which supported the cocoon exploded in a whirlwind of flaming debris. My *Crusader* fell free, trailing fire, and for the first time I could look out the cockpit's windshield and see my objective. Hell's horizon tilted up at me, a vast curve of cloud-smears and ocher. I was tumbling slightly. The landscape shifted, swept up past my face, was replaced by violet sky, then returned.

My 'Mech's radar had a clear path now. The return set my altitude at fifteen kilometers. It was time for the next phase of the drop.

I closed my eyes, concentrating on the input through my neurohelmet rather than what my eyes told me. Through the helmet network, I could sense the 'Mech's position and balance. I touched my attitude controls. This took a delicate touch. One wrong move and my gentle tumble would become a helpless, out-of-control, head-for-heels plummet which I would never be able to control.

Crusaders are not equipped with jumpjets. For drops from space or high altitude, *Crusaders, Marauders,* and other jetless 'Mechs must rely on strap-on thruster packs. Where things get touchy is in the fuel department. My *Crusader* carried only enough fuel for about 70 seconds of firing. Use too much, too soon, and there wouldn't be enough left of my *Crusader* to provide spare parts for a wind-up toy.

Feeling the attitude of my 'Mech through the neurohelmet, I gauged the proper moment, then let my thumb caress the jet controls. There was a cough from the thrusters mounted on either side of the 'Mech's backpack fusion plant, then an accelerating whine. I counted seconds... *two...three...four...*then cut the power. Gently, gently, I spread the *Crusader's* arms and legs, assuming the classic spread-eagle position of sky divers and HALO jumpers. My tumble slowed, steadied...then stopped. The ground below filled my faceplate. A landlocked sea,



edged by the reds and greens of local vegetation, spread itself across the desert directly below.

Now I felt more naked than ever. Theoretically I would be able to return fire if an enemy aerospace fighter made a pass at me, but in practice the attempt would most likely hurl me out of control. My main protection was the fact that the sky was still full of debris from my capsule and disintegrating cocoon—and the other 'Mechs in my unit—and that so far as ground fire control was concerned, I was just one target among many. When all you can see in front of you is clouds and ground and clear air, that is very thin consolation indeed.

I punched up the map of my target area stored in my computer and began trying to orient myself. That water below me ought to be the Thanatos Sea, but the shape of the coastline was wrong, and it seemed quite a lot bigger than it should have been. Was *that* twisting ribbon of plant growth through the desert the Styx? The Wolverine's assigned DZ was a labyrinth of buildings, installations, and a spaceport which had been codenamed the Cerberus Complex. Cerberus straddled the Styx River ten kilometers north of the Thanatos Sea.

I estimated ten kilometers up the river valley and saw barren desert, where the river carved its way through badlands down out of the mountains. Nothing matched what was on my map. *Nothing.* There was what looked like a small town close by the mouth of the river, glittering silver and white in the light from Hell's sun. Could *that* be Cerberus? So near the sea?

There were no other targets in sight at all. The other 'Mechs in the company were coming to the same realization. My radio spat static, then resolved into Captain Wiley's voice on the combat channel. *"Red Company, this is Red Leader."* Red Company was battlespeech for the Wolverines. Alpha, Beta, and Gamma were our three lances. *"Do any of you have a confirmed fix on our DZ?"*

A chorus of negatives came back over the open channel. *"Maybe the Condo put us down in the wrong spot,"* someone suggested.

As DropShip skippers go, Delacroix was the best. A BattleMech company has to rely on its DropShip pilot with an almost fanatical trust. But a planet is one hell of a big place, and a 'Mech DZ is vanishingly small. Could our approach and launch have been malfed up? And what could we do if they had?

"All Reds," Wiley continued. *"Target on the complex at the mouth of the river. We will assume that that is Cerberus."*

We acknowledged but with considerable misgivings. If that target was not the Cerberus complex, it might be days—even weeks—before we could be relieved, if ever. That was a long time for one company to hold off superior numbers deep behind enemy lines.

At five kilometers I tucked in my legs and

arms, rolled to an upright stance, and triggered my jets for a long, long twenty-second burst. The ground was sweeping up towards me now, and it was clear that I was well out over the sea. I needed to slow my descent enough to maneuver. I spread my arms and legs, riding the pressure of the uprushing air itself in ponderous and rapidly-descending flight.

Something flashed brighter than the white sun of Scheat, close above me and towards the left. I checked my monitors and saw the telltale contrail of an enemy aerospace fighter circling into position. My computer sorted through schematics in its file and snatched up one that matched. Lines of green light drew plan and profile views across a screen. It was an SL-17 *Shilone.*

That was bad. Its narrow, flying-wing shape narrowed further as it swung nose-on, lining up for another pass.

I waited, counting to myself, watching for what I thought would be the moment the *Shilone* would open fire. I was holding...holding...the flying wing swelling in my number two scanner screen...

Then I tucked in my arms and legs with a snap and let myself plummet. Sun's fire seared through the air above me, scorching the space where I had been an instant before. Something metallic rattled off my *Crusader's* back armor in a clattering rain of fragments, and then the air was filled by the screeching wail of the *Shilone* passing at high speed close by.

I shifted around, stabbing at the arming switch for my Magna Longbow missile racks, but the turbulence of the *Shilone's* passage had left me tumbling again. The target was gone before I could locate it.

I let myself fall for a long way before I extended my arms and brought my 'Mech under control again. The water was much closer now—four kilometers below—a muddy brown-green color close enough for me to make out the slowly moving march of wave swells across its surface. At this point, any thought of steering for Cerberus was lost. All I wanted to do was avoid hitting the water.

And *that* looked impossible.

I used my head scanners, checking wildly tilted views in all directions. There! I could make out the ocher blur of land, three kilometers to the north!

I kept my *Crusader* in its extended position, angled into a slightly heads-up attitude, and triggered my thrusters. The idea was both to slow my descent and to provide lateral thrust towards what should be the nearest land. Unfortunately, BattleMechs are not designed as flying machines. The attempt gulped down fuel at a prodigious rate, while performing neither maneuver well. I continued to fall. I called for a position fix on the combat frequency but could hear only bits and pieces of broken conversation heavily filtered by static. The other Wolverines would be busy with their own landing maneuvers right now, and it was possible that the enemy was jamming us. I tried not to think of the other possibility—that one of the *Shilone's* near misses had damaged my radio.

I kept firing the jets, my eye on the LED displays which marked firing time and fuel remaining. Forty seconds gone...fifty... fifty-five...I cut power to the jets again and let myself fall. The surface of the water surged up to meet me. No matter what I did, I was going to land in the water.

'Mechs can move under water, though not quickly, and not well. If I became completely submerged, it might take days or even weeks of painstaking movement to make my way to the nearest land. Days from now, I might emerge from the water to find the battle long since lost, my comrades dead or departed. Worse, I was carrying emergency rations aboard my *Crusader*, but those would last for no more than a week. I might rise from the waves three weeks from now—weak and sick from lack of food.

One kilometer.

The water looked funny from this altitude. In places, the surging procession of waves was broken, as though by something just under the surface.

Just under the surface...

Fresh beads of sweat broke out across my forehead. The approved method for landing a 'Mech in water is to use the thrusters to reduce speed to zero just above the surface, then drop freely, allowing the water to absorb the impact of landing. The approved technique for setting down on land is to slow to as close to zero speed as possible, but with enough fuel remaining to gently lower the 'Mech all the way to the ground and cushion the actual landing. The difference between the two approaches is subtle but critical: an uncushioned landing on solid ground can smash a 'Mech's legs, can at the least jar sensitive instrumentation and weapons out of alignment or render the pilot *hors de combat* without a shot being fired. Using all your fuel trying for a soft touchdown on water can leave you without any fuel at all to control your descent through deep water. You could end up a hundred meters down, head stuck in the mud, and no way to right yourself. With my fuel reserves already critical, I had been preparing for a water landing, trusting in the depth of the water to cushion the final impact but holding back enough fuel to control my descent to the bottom. Kilometers from land, the water *ought* to be quite deep... but...

I fired my jets in short, snapping bursts, my *Crusader* fully upright now, no longer positioned to reach the shore. My gut feeling was that the water below was deceptively shallow, perhaps no more than a few meters deep. I would use all my remaining fuel to cushion my landing. If I guessed wrong, I might wind up trapped on the bottom, beyond the help of friend or enemy.

With ten seconds of fuel remaining, at an altitude of fifty meters, I opened the throttles wide and rode twin jets of ravening flame down out of the sky. Steam rose in a boiling cloud which clung to my cockpit windscreen, blinding me again. The thrusters sputtered, cleared, then failed with a despairing moan. My 'Mech dropped, fuel exhausted. I felt the jar as my *Crusader's* feet hit the water, felt the far more profound jar as the feet touched bottom. The impact drove me hard into my seat, and metal rang and creaked ominously.

Then...silence.

Water streamed from my windscreen. My 'Mech was standing in five meters of water, with waves breaking at about the height of the *Crusader's* waist. I had been right! If I'd attempted a water landing, it could have been a disaster.

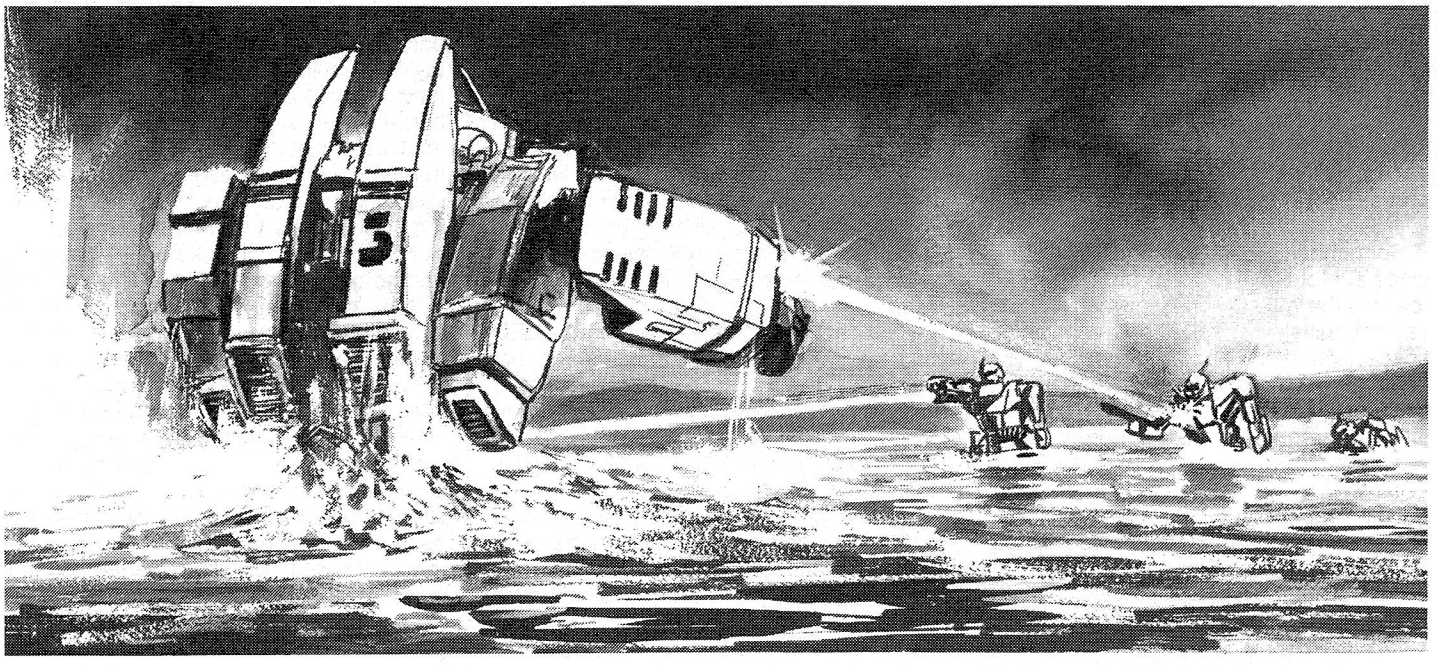
I checked my compass and searched the horizon. I could make out the blur of mountains, the raw edge of color marking land. There was a smudge of gray against the sky, smoke rising from multiple fires. The battle had begun without me. My tangle with the *Shilone* had separated me from the other Wolverines, of course. They must have set down quite close to the target city, while my brief but uncontrolled plummet had taken me too low too quickly for me to maneuver into a good approach for touch down. I gripped the *Crusader's* piloting controls and set its massive legs in motion. Leaving a wake of spray and roiling water, I moved towards the combat zone.

At least I didn't have to worry about overheating while travelling.

The reason our maps had not matched the terrain was obvious now. The Draco forces occupying Hell must have expected an attack, must have engineered a way of flooding the coastlands along the Thanatos Sea.

The static on the command channel cleared, the jamming lifted.

The company had landed in a hot DZ. The radio chatter on our combat frequency pre-



sented an unfolding tale of swift and shocking defeat.

"Red Alpha Three, this is Red Leader," I heard. *"Circle left! Wasps on your Six!"*

"Copy, Red Leader! Red Beta One down, requires assist!"

"Red Leader, this is Red Gamma One! Watch it! Watch it!"

"This is Beta Four. I'm on them..."

"Watch out, Four! Two Orions, on your five, coming from behind those buildings! Watch it...watch..."

"Alpha Four, this is Red Leader. Check Alpha Two. He's down hard and smoking..."

And so it went. By the time I neared the shore, four of the Wolverine's 'Mechs were out of the fight, not counting myself. That left six still in the fight, and they had been backed into a narrow semicircle near the water's edge, not far from the banks of the Styx.

My motion sensors detected movement not far ahead. I turned my 'Mech, crouching low in the water. Through the drifting tatters of smoke which masked the battlefield, I could make out four ghostly shapes lurching above frothing wakes. They were light 'Mechs, three *Stingers* and a 35-ton *Panther*, and they were heading directly across my line of sight.

Their strategy was obvious. While heavier forces kept the Wolverines pinned on the shore, these four were circling through the water to close on my comrades from behind. If the Wolverines attempted to retreat into the water, they would be caught by fire from these four, thrown into confusion, their formation broken. If they stayed where they were, they would be surrounded and forced to surrender or die in a hellish crossfire.

There was little in the way of cover here. The water was waist-deep on a 'Mech, the bottom muddy but firm. Here and there rocks or the remnants of trees protruded a meter or two above the surface, but there was no place for a ten-meter tall BattleMech to hide.

Or was there?

The sea covered what had been land. The Styx had once wound south across this otherwise nearly featureless plain on its way to where it had formerly entered the Thanatos Sea, ten kilometers behind me.

That river bed must still be here, somewhere, hidden by the water.

Taking a guess by following the line of what I could see of the river among the buildings to the north, I began moving towards what ought to be the river's old banks. Sixty meters to the west, the ground dropped sharply and I nearly stumbled. That was it! Taking another two steps brought the water nearly up to my 'Mech's neck. With only the head and parts of the shoulders showing above water, there was a good chance that those light 'Mechs—their attention fixed on targets ashore rather than out to sea—would miss me.

And miss me they did. The nearest *Stinger* passed within one hundred meters of my position before turning north, its Omicron 3000 laser held high and at the ready. With infinite care I shifted my *Crusader* back up the hidden river bank, feeling for a firm foothold. Once the ancient bank gave way in a swirl of mud, but then one foot found solid ground and I was rising from the sea like some vast, metal horror released from the depths, brown water streaming in torrents from my armor, both arms extended to bring my lasers and long-ranged missiles to bear.

My first salvo burst among my unsuspecting targets like a tornado, churning geysers of steam and water skyward or striking home in flashes of light and fragmenting armor. The right rear torso of one of the *Stingers* disintegrated in whirling, smouldering chunks, leaving gaping wounds and exposing great loops of torn wiring and myomar sheathing.

The others turned, seeking their attacker. I fired again while they were still turning, dividing my fire between another *Stinger* and the *Panther*.

Laser fire struck the water close beside me, sending a column of steam boiling past my windshield. Another salvo of LRMs lanced out from my arms, and I saw multiple flashes snap and sparkle along the *Panther's* left torso and arm.

"Red Company, this is Red Beta Three!" I yelled, continuing to trigger fire into those temptingly close-grouped targets. Another hit! And another! *"I'm six hundred meters south of you, engaging four light 'Mechs in the water."*

A moment's stunned silence, and then

Captain Wiley replied. *"Wha...MacCray? Where in hell did* you *come from?"*

"Never mind that!" I replied. *"See if you can redeploy to help me with these people!"*

One *Stinger* was down, now, only its head and shoulder visible above the water, and smoke was boiling from a crater in its torso right at water level. The *Panther* and two surviving *Stingers* were spreading out now to give me a more difficult target, and their return fire was beginning to fall home. My *Crusader* rang like a gong as an SRM smashed it square in the center torso. The *Panther* brought its right arm up and triggered a round from its PPC. The charge caught me in the left shoulder, staggering me back a step as blue lightning arced against the sky. My instruments went wild under the momentary havoc of the electrical overload within the *Crusader's* electronics. If that had been fresh water, the charge build up could have fried me, but it dissipated in seconds, leaving my 'Mech wreathed in oily smoke.

I was firing my LRMs again, targeting on the *Panther*, watching missile after missile dissolving in light and fragments of armor. Then the enemy 'Mech's head blossomed open and a spindly trail of smoke arched into the sky. An instant later the *Panther's* torso opened in a gout of flame. The water churned white for fifty meters in every direction under a hail of debris, and when the smoke cleared the *Panther* lay in two half-submerged segments. The *Panther's* pilot had punched out just before his engine had blown.

That ended the first phase of the Battle of the Cerberus Complex. The surviving *Stingers* turned and ran as Adamski's *Wasp* and LeClerc's *Phoenix Hawk* from the Wolverine's Recon Lance waded in from the north. By the time we rejoined the rest of the company on dry land, the 'Mechs which had had the Wolverines pinned against the shore had withdrawn. Perhaps they had interpreted my arrival and the loss of two of their 'Mechs as the approach of substantial reinforcements. On such minor misinterpretations and misperceptions turn the fate of battles...and of empires.

When our relief forces arrived two days later, we were down to four functioning 'Mechs. Wiley's *Warhammer* could barely stand, and its left arm PPC was off at the shoulder.

But we held.

Since that day, I've often wondered about the hand of fate in combat. If I had not had to drop out of the line of fire of that attacking *Shilone*, I would have dropped close by my unit, would have been able to stick close to Lieutenant Dunbar, as I'd been ordered to.

And I might well have died instead of her.

Had I not acted almost instinctively when I noticed that the water below looked "funny," I would have braced for a water landing and smashed both legs. I would have been helpless, doomed to capture or starvation, and my comrades ashore would have been surrounded and cut down, one by one.

And if I'd dropped dead on target into my DZ along with my unit, those enemy 'Mechs—they were all Fourth Proserpina Hussars, we later learned—would have had us surrounded and dead to rights. As I thought about it later, it occurred to me that the warrior who did the most to win the victory for us that day was that nameless Kurita *Shilone* pilot who had forced me to miss my DZ in the first place!

The Wolverines have another combat drop coming up soon—and by some black-humored twist of fate our target is Scheat V, yet again. Our invasion in 3026 it turned out, was short-lived, brought to a close by a Kurita thrust at Xhosa VII and the failure of our drive to block Homam and Proserpina. Now, just a year later, the raids and counter-raids have reached a fever pitch. Tensions are rising, and fleets are marshalling along the frontier in vast maneuvers designed to test and tempt the enemy. Wargames, they call them, but our orders from the Davion high command direct the Wolverines to test Kurita's resolve by raiding that bitter, desert-girded world of Scheat V once more. By the time this article sees print, the matter will have been resolved, one way or another.

But here, now, in the night watch of my barracks at Port Borea, the future yawns, and it is black and malevolent. I am waiting...waiting...and learning, once again, that it is the waiting which is hardest.

But tell me, is it empty chance which rules the battlefield, or some dark and bloody God of Battle? Before my first drop on Hell, I'd never given the matter much thought. But now I see our return as a challenge flung in the teeth of chance, a black and deliberate tempting of the Hand which governs a warrior's fate.

I dread the outcome.

I loathe the waiting.



PERSPECTIVE: A WARRIOR IN REVIEW

Captain Sinclair M. MacCray is currently unit commander of Company A, (The Wolverines), Second Battalion, Deneb Light Cavalry, in service with House Davion along the Davion-Kurita frontier.

He was born in 2999 at the Davion military garrison on Ridley IV. His father was Sergeant Randall MacCray of Company A's Fire Lance, his mother an astech attached to the unit's field repair company. A typical Mechbrat, MacCray grew up with the Wolverines. At age 10 he was formally inducted as an apprentice MechWarrior under the tutelage of the Wolverine's Weapons Master, Koru Yamashita. In 3017 he was temporarily reassigned to the Meistmorn Academy on Doneval II, where he served as a cadet under the redoubtable Major Sergei Vang.

By the time he was 20, he was participating in raids with the unit, piloting a *Stinger* in the Wolverines' Recon Lance, or serving with the company's mobile reserve and rear echelon security.

Randall MacCray was killed in 3021, during the Kurita raid on Dobson. His *Crusader*, fire-blackened, its head smashed open by autocannon fire, was recovered on the field where it had fallen, together with the wreckage of two Kurita *Vulcans*. The salvage crews reported that one of the *Vulcans* had been literally torn apart in 'Mech-to-'Mech combat. Young Sinclair MacCray inherited his father's *Crusader* and assumed the elder MacCray's number three position in the Wolverine's Fire Lance.

MacCray served with distinction with the Deneb Light Cavalry in numerous raids and defensive actions since 3021. His daring in close-unit actions won the notice of the regimental commander, and he was three times cited for meritorious conduct in unit dispatches. At Galtor III he attacked a damaged 80-ton *Charger* 'Mech-to-'Mech and destroyed it before it could destroy a Davion ammunition convoy. He was awarded the Federated Suns' Legion of the Phoenix, Second Class, for that action.

In 3026, after the action at the Cerberus Complex on Scheat V, he received a lieutenant's field commission and was placed in command of the Wolverines' Fire Lance. Less than a year later, the death of the Wolverines' commander, Captain John C. Wiley, resulted in the unit's reorganization. MacCray was promoted to captain and given command of the company. At the time this article went to press, MacCray had been officially credited with a total of 17 kills and over 30 assists.

The Wolverines are currently assigned to the Davion-Kurita border, where they have been participating in Galahad '27, the controversial series of maneuvers and wargames designed to test Davion military capabilities in the region.

FLC-4N FALCON

Overview:

In 2536, it became obvious to the military leaders of the old Star League that there would be a need in the future for a light 'Mech that could screen units from the probing and scouting of enemy recon lances largely composed of *Wasp*, *Stinger*, and *Locust* 'Mechs. What was needed was a 'Mech design that could chase them down and be more than a match for them in combat. Thus was born the "Bugkiller"—the FLC-4N Falcon.

The *Falcon* was used by most commanders to keep away the enemy scouts and, in so doing, keep their intentions secret for a longer period of time. Unfortunately, these 'Mechs were never produced in great numbers; at the present writing, barely 200 are known to be still operational.

Capabilities:

The *Falcon* uses its 30-ton mass to good advantage in the role for which it was designed. With a maximum speed of some 98.2 kph over open terrain, it can overtake both the *Wasp* and the *Stinger*, slowly but surely. The *Locust's* speed advantage, however, proved too great; *Falcon* operational doctrine provides that the *Locust* is always the first engaged, in the hope that a lucky hit might slow it down. The *Falcon* also possess PRS-60 jump jet units, which allow it to "get the jump" on the *Locust* from time to time. Even with the *Falcon's* heavy laser armament, heat buildup is rarely a problem with the installation of two additional heat sinks.

The *Falcon's* main advantage over all other light 'Mechs is the amount of armor that she carries—fully twice as much armor as either the *Wasp* or *Stinger* has. Only the *UrbanMech* and the *Valkyrie* among light 'Mechs carry as much armor; of these, one specializes in city fighting, while the other is limited to production by House Davion. The armor on the *Falcon* allows it to fight reasonably well against two-to-one odds or better. And rarely will any *Wasp* or *Stinger* pilot stay around for a drawn-out engagement with a *Falcon*.

The *Falcon* is armed with a Sunglow Type 1 Medium Laser along with two Omicron 1000 Light Lasers. All are arm mounted. A more unusual weapons placement is the two shoulder-mounted Reginald Mark VI machine guns facing the rear arc of the machine. This provides the capability for all round fire and is especially useful against bypassed infantry.

No major defects have come to light within the *Falcon* design as of this date. However, because of the small number of *Falcons* in the field, spare parts are becoming harder and harder to come by. Many battle-worn *Falcons* sport exotic "jury-rigs" that can and do impede their performance. Unless production is restarted on this design in the near future at some facility, the problem can only get worse.

Battle History:

During a raid on Korrion in early 3002, a defending lance of House Liao 'Mechs engaged the rearguard of the House Davion raiding force, now falling back to their DropShips. The Liao *Falcons* charged ahead at the retreating Davion lance, which unfortunately contained some *Valkyries*. The long-range missile fire by the Davion 'Mechs slowed the pursuing *Falcons* to such an extent that the raiding force was able to withdraw with little damage. The *Falcons* could not compete with the long-range fire of the *Valkyries*.

During an attack on Murcheson by bandit king raiders in 3010, the raiding force was cut off from its DropShip by reinforcing Kurita units. Running from the counterattack, the bandits tried to lose themselves in the hills and mountains of the area. The Kurita commander let loose his special *Falcon* tracking lance, which, after some ten days of pursuit, was able to run down five of the bandit light 'Mechs and force them to surrender or be destroyed. None of the four *Falcons* suffered major damage.

Variants:

Because of the dearth of spare parts, the variations on the *Falcon* increase everytime one has a major overhaul. Some of the more common variants include the elimination of the rear machine guns and the addition of another two tons of armor. Dropping the two light lasers in favor of increased jump capability has also been tried. This does cause some heat build-up problems however, and the greater jumping ability rarely proves essential. The most prevalent *Falcon* variant is now the hybrid. It is not unusual to see *Falcons* with the legs or arms of other 'Mechs. Most common are *Falcons* fitted with limbs from the "Ost" series of 'Mechs (*Ostscout*, *Ostsol*, *Ostroc*). These 'Mechs seem more adaptable to the *Falcon* structure.

Notable 'Mechs and MechWarriors

MechWarrior Marcus Bellisaurius

Bellisaurius is a noted *Falcon* pilot in the 12th Tau Ceti Rangers. He started his military career as an officer in an elite guards infantry regiment of House Liao. He earned his MechWarrior status by capturing his 'Mech during an attack against Hsien in late 3013. Armed with only a shoulder SRM unit, Bellisaurius sat on a crumbling edge of a 10-story building in the shattered city of Westmoreland, waiting for a target. When one walked past, he fired pointblank into the cockpit, killing the pilot. Now, his *Falcon* is fitted with a new head assembly from a disabled *Commando* 'Mech, and Bellisaurius is gaining quite a reputation as an unstoppable killing machine.

Lieutenant Jeremy "Bushwacker" McNee

Currently commanding the Tracking Lance of the 10th Sword of Light Regiment, "Bushwacker" McNee is renowned for never giving up a pursuit unless ordered to do so. In addition to his screening and scout-killing prowess, McNee has the instincts of a born hunter, tracking enemy 'Mechs through trackless ground, sniffing out ambushes before they can be sprung and setting his own traps with ease. Aboard his *Falcon* "Gutstomper II," McNee is a one-of-a-kind MechWarrior in the service of House Kurita—a Successor State that rarely rewards unique behavior.

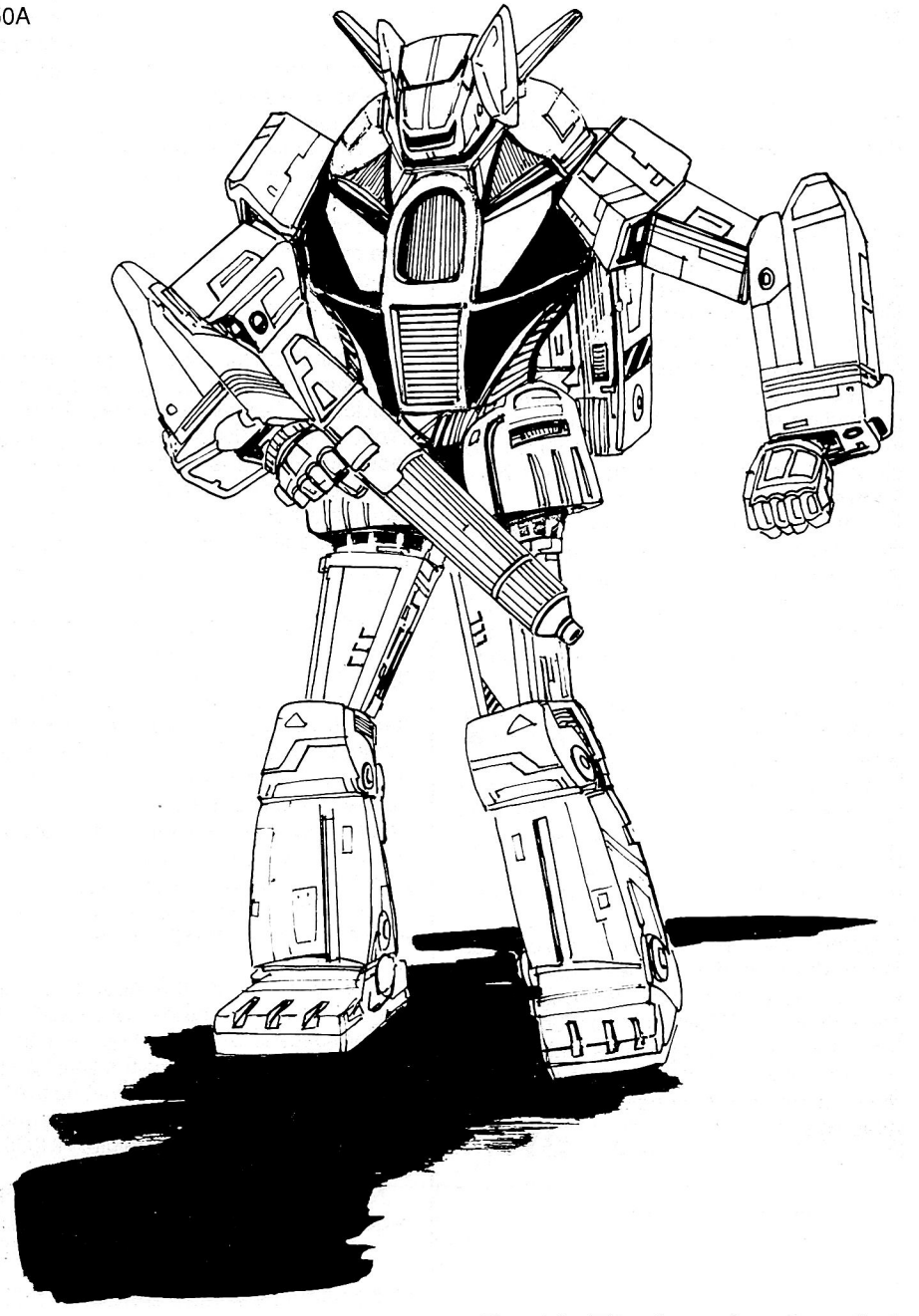
by Dale L. Kemper

Mass: 30 tons
Chassis: Duralyte 296
Power Plant: GM 180
Cruising Speed: 65.6 kph
Maximum Speed: 98.2 kph
Jump Jets: PRS-60
Jump Capacity: 180 m
Armor: Star Guard Type II
Armament:
1 SunGlow Type 1 Medium Laser
2 Omicron 1000 Light Lasers
2 Reginald Mark VI Machine Guns
Manufacturer: Stormvanger Assemblies, Light Division
Communications System: Garret T20C
Targeting and Tracking System: Dynatec 150A

Type: **FLC-4N Falcon**			*Tons*
Tonnage:	30 Tons		30
Internal Structure:			3
Engine:	GM 180		7
Walking MPs:	6		
Running MPs:	9		
Jumping MPs:	6		
Heat Sinks:	12		2
Gyro:			2
Cockpit:			3
Armor Factor:	96		6
	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*	
Head	3	9	
Center Torso:	10	14/3	
Rt./Lt. Torso:	7	12/2	
Rt./Lt. Arm:	5	8	
Rt./Lt. Leg:	7	13	

Weapons and Ammo:

Type	Loc.	Critical	
Medium Laser	RA	1	1
Light Laser	RA	1	.5
Light Laser	LA	1	.5
Machine Gun	RT (rear)	1	.5
Machine Gun	LT (rear)	1	.5
Ammo (MG) 200	CT	1	1
Jump Jets	RT	3	1.5
Jump Jets	LT	3	1.5



ENGINE SWAPS

MechWarriors today are as concerned about keeping their 'Mechs running as they are about winning battles. Indeed, most Warriors and Techs consider the struggle to keep their machines in operational condition one long, bloody battle in its own right.

This column, in this and future issues, will address the problems faced by MechWarriors and MechTechs in keeping their machines combat-ready.

ENGINE SWAPS

The engine of any BattleMech can truly be considered its heart. One of the potentially most hazardous critical hits to any 'Mech is a hit which pierces armor and core shielding and damages the engine itself. Such damage can result in increased heat production during combat, a critical shutdown, or even an explosion which will destroy the 'Mech and kill the pilot if he is unable to punch out in time.

In the field, engine hits are among the most difficult to repair. The Tech and his assistants must clear through superficial damage on the armor over the 'Mech's central torso and, depending on the type of 'Mech, access the engine block housing cover.

The engine access panel itself weighs as much as a ton. In the field, with repair platforms, derricks, or repair gantries unavailable, with other 'Mechs required at the front and unable to lend a (literally!) helping hand, often the only option is to maneuver the 'Mech onto the ground prone and rig a tripod hoist above the engine block section.

Sometimes, the best choice a Tech can make when faced with one or more critical engine hits is to replace the engine unit completely. The following section is provided for people using FASA's MechWarrior simulator. It is intended to supplement the rules given in the original MechWarrior rules book.

MECHWARRIOR: Optional Rules Variant 0101-A

While repairing damage on a BattleMech which has received one or more critical engine hits, the player may be able to speed things along by securing the intact engine of another BattleMech.

The following restrictions apply:

* The replacement engine must be of the same type as the engine which is being replaced. Both the *Assassin* and the *Archer* use the VOX 280. Thus, the engine from one could be replaced by the engine from the other.

* The replacement engine must be examined by a competent Warrior or Tech to ascertain that it is, in fact, undamaged. This is accomplished by rolling 2D6 against the individual's Technician Skill Roll Target +6. Whether or not the engine in question is in fact undamaged is up to the referee, depending on the situation. Generally, if the 'Mech has not taken any critical engine hits, the engine itself will be undamaged or will have relatively light damage which is easily repaired.

* Replacing an engine requires all of the equipment necessary for repairing an engine: tool kit, joining kit, fusion kit, and a repair platform. If no repair platform is available, the 'Mech can be laid on its back (either on its own power or with assistance from another 'Mech), and a derrick or a handed 'Mech can be used to maneuver the engine into position. Construction of a derrick takes 60 minutes, assuming one Tech and five laborers. The rules given under Time Factor in MechWarrior can be used to increase or decrease this time.

The basic time for the repair of a critical engine hit is 300 minutes, with a 2D6 roll of 7+ for success. A roll of 4—6 results in a partial success. Replacing the entire engine requires 200 minutes (not counting the time required to find and retrieve a 'Mech engine of the required size), and requires a 2D6 roll of 5+ for success.

Note that the 300-minute figure is the time required to repair one citical engine hit. Successfully replacing the entire engine would repair all engine critical hits at the same time. Failure in the 2D6 roll indicates that the engine has been replaced, but unforeseen problems make start-up impossible. A second 200 minutes and a second 5+ roll are required to complete the repairs.

USING 'MECHS FOR REPAIRS

Any experienced Tech worth his thorium is well aware of the one absolute, basic shortcut trick of battlefield repairs: 'Mechs can do double duty as derricks! Even handless 'Mechs such as *Locusts* or *Warhammers* can be used to provide power for jury-rigged block and tackle hoists. With a block and tackle arrangement, they can lift three times their own mass, allowing even very large disabled 'Mechs to be repositioned for repairs. 'Mechs with hands are capable of extraordinarily delicate operations—the entire engine block free of a destroyed 'Mech and gently set it in place in the 'Mech being repaired. As a general rule of thumb, one such 'Mech can lift and carry up to one tenth of its own weight—carried free, rather than dragged behind as is the usual case with battlefield salvage. Two handed 'Mechs working together could lift and transport up to one tenth of the weight of the two 'Mechs combined. Thus, a 55-ton *Wolverine* could pick up and transport any engine up to and including a 5.5 ton Nissan 155. Note, however, that the 'Mech performing the operation must possess two handed arms, and the internal structure of both arms must be intact.



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BATTLETECH SIMULATOR

FASA, an Earth-based publisher of combat simulations, has produced a wide variety of battle simulators designed to sharpen MechWarriors' tactics and combat skills, including BattleTech, MechWarrior, CityTech, AeroTech, and BattleForce. BattleTechnology Magazine will include a special section called BATTLETECH SIMULATOR in each issue. This section will allow the readers to take various situations, encounters, and battles discussed in that issue's columns and feature articles and recreate them as combat scenarios.

These scenarios—referred to as game modules—are presented in the same format as the modules in such popular FASA publications as *Tales of the Black Widow Company* and *Gray Death Legion.*

Also included, from time to time, will be new rules, or rules variants, to various FASA simulations, including BattleTech, MechWarrior, and the Mercenary's Handbook. These will be coded with the issue number (the first issue is 0101, the second 0102, and so on throughout the year), plus a letter which will identify that rule or variant in future magazine issues. In this issue, 0101-A (see: Repair Bay) is a rules variant for replacing BattleMech engines in combat which can be used with MechWarrior or BattleTech, while 0101-B (see: following pages) modifies the original character generation rules for MechWarrior.

In all cases, these new rules or variants are strictly optional, and game referees should keep in mind that some of these rules could upset the balance of play in BattleTech campaigns or other FASA games.

OPTIONAL RULES VARIANT 0101-B:

MECHWARRIOR: TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

by J. Andrew Keith

MechWarrior is FASA's role-playing simulation of man-to-man level actions and interactions in today's Successor States. It is highly recommended as a training aid to all Warriors who wish to test their skills in a wide variety of situations both on and off the battlefield.

The optional rules suggested below are intended to expand the utility of the MechWarrior character generation system. Among other things, they take into account some of the concepts mentioned in the feature article on MechWarrior training (MechWarrior: Mlind and Machine, beginning on page 26 of this issue). They also cover the generation of characters with greater experience and training than was allowed for in the original system right at the start of play, which allows easier introduction of more skilled, higher-ranking characters and NPCs into the simulation process.

The rules outlined here will modify the original character generation section of the MECHWARRIOR rules. They should be considered strictly optional, and can be used (either in whole or in part) as the Gamemaster permits.

TRAINING

Instead of receiving a basic budget of 150 CPs for each character, have the starting CP amounts generated somewhat at random. Roll 2D6-2 (for a number between 0 and 10, with 5 as the average); this is the **Training Level (TRN)** for the character being created. Each character starts with 125 CPs plus a bonus of 10 x TRN CPs. Average characters now receive 175 points for the purchase of attributes, skill, inborn abilities, and initial possessions. Actual amounts will run anywhere from 125 to 225 CPs, and give more variety to individual characters being created.

Characters purchase attributes and inborn abilities first, using the normal MECHWARRIOR procedures. Next, choose which of five Character Types to be created: MechWarrior, Tech, Aerospace Pilot, Scout, or Soldier (which takes in infantry, armored, and atmospheric aircraft troops). Continue the purchase process by paying the cost for any special benefits the character may wish to acquire ('Mechs, Vehicles, Connections, Fighters, etc.), again using the basic rules and/or the summary of such benefits included later in this section. The balance of available CPs can be used to acquire skills.

Initial Training: All characters receive initial training in basic skills appropriate to their chosen career. These are shown on the Character Training Chart under the heading of *Initial Training.* The skill levels acquired in this step are free (0 CPs). Once initial training has been determined, the character may move on to one of five different categories of Advanced Training. Each has different characteristics and different basic entrance requirements.

Standard Military Training: *The character has received the equivalent of Basic Training as a member of some House or Planetary military service.* This option is available to any character and is awarded as a default when a character cannot qualify for any of the other options. Standard military training allows the purchase of any MECHWARRIOR skill according to the standard costs outlined in the basic rules. No higher areas of training may be drawn from if Standard Training is the first (or default) package entered.

Apprenticeship Training: *The character has been apprenticed to some existing formation or family unit.* This is available to any character who can roll 2D6 less than or equal to his TRN score. Skills are purchased as above, but costs may be modified according to the exact TRN level held. See the Character Training Chart for details. No higher levels of training may be drawn from if Apprenticeship Training is the first package entered.

Martial Arts Training: *The character has studied under a Master of one of the various Martial Arts in vogue among the Warriors of the Successor States.* Techs may not take this type of training; for other character classes, a LRN score of 9+ and BODY and DEX scores of 8+ each are required, together with a successful 2D6 roll less than or equal to the TRN score. If accepted into Martial Arts training, the character may pay 50 CPs and receive a package of skill and attribute increases listed on the Character Training Chart. Though very economical in terms of cost, most of these skills will prove comparatively unnecessary to the ordinary flow of MECHWARRIOR campaigns, being mostly concerned with physical training. Characters who purchase this package may attempt to enter any other form of training (if they qualify for it and can afford it), either higher or lower on the list. They may NOT try to enter a second Martial Arts training program.

Academy Training: *The character has trained at one of the many military academies scattered throughout Human Space.* Scouts are not permitted to purchase this package, but any other character class can. Both LRN and TRN scores must be 6+, and a 2D6 roll less than or equal to TRN must be achieved. If accepted into an Academy, pay a price of 75 CP to receive the skill increases listed on the chart. Characters may also attempt to enter any other form of training they desire, provided they hold the right qualifications and have sufficient CPs to afford the costs involved. They may NOT enter another Academy training program, though they could attempt the NAIS package.

NAIS Training: *The character has been selected for training at the New Avalon Institute of Science.* This package is only available to characters from Davion or Steiner space, and Scouts are not permitted. Eligible characters must have LRN and TRN scores at 8+, and need to throw 2D6 for an 11+ to enter (reduce the target score by 1 for each attribute — including TRN — at 9+). If accepted into the NAIS, the character can pay 100 CP to receive all of the skill increases shown on the chart.

EXPERIENCE

Upon completing the Training process (or after creating a character according to the basic MECHWARRIOR rules, if Training is not being used), roll 4D6-4 for the character's Experience (EXP); the result is a number between 0 and 20. Each level of EXP represents about a year of active combat duty or further training in the field.

Multiply the EXP score by 100 to determine the CPs awarded to the character as a result of his or her post-training experience. Skills, attributes, connections, or titles are all available as per the basic game rules on Character Improvement (NOT Character Creation!). The character can also have unused CPs converted into XP; multiply the number of CPs to be converted by 10 to get this figure. The EXP score also places the character into one of the basic Experience Classes described in MECHWARRIOR, rather than having him automatically start off Green. The Character Experience Chart shows the relationship of classes to levels of EXP, plus the number of skill and attribute increases awarded IN ADDITION to all purchases when a character begins in a given class. REG characters receive the awards shown for their class only; VET characters receive the REG awards *and then* the VET awards listed.

Characters purchasing skill levels with EXP must have at least Level 1 in a number of skill categories equal to their LRN score. These purchases must be made before any points are spent to raise previously held skills to a higher level.

AGE

A character's starting age depends upon his training and experience. Training lengths (and the effect training has on age) will vary according to the training packages chosen.

Training	Duration
Initial:	+0 years
Standard Military:	15 + (TRN/2) years
Apprenticeship:	8 + (TRN x 2) years
Martial Arts:	+3 years
Academy:	+4 years
NAIS:	+6 years

Round fractions up; +# indicates that the figure is added to other appropriate age calculations. The minimum age for a character at the end of the training period is 16 years old; raise any lower figure to 16 before going on. After all training has been worked out, add the EXP score to the age already established for the character's age at the time the character actually enters play.

GENERAL NOTES

When introducing these optional rules, keep the following points in mind.

Points received in character creation are not automatically based on 150 CP. Use the TRN score to set starting CPs.

The MECHWARRIOR Academy and University skill packages are not used with these rules. Use the package presented here instead.

Do not permit the transfer of character points between characters.

Packages of skills purchased under this new system do not limit further skill purchases (except by taking up large numbers of points). Higher increases in skill levels are allowed even after a skill package has been bought.

The character may begin play with accumulated XP if he has received Experience and has not used it all on skill increases or other benefits.

The GM may feel free to introduce Training without allowing Experience, or Experience without Training, if he so desires. These options are designed to make the system more flexible, but they can be ignored if they don't increase the value of the simulation.



CLASS ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

MechWarrior	Soldier	Tech	Scout	Aerospace Pilot
DEX=5+	BODY=5+	DEX=4+	LRN=5+	DEX=6+
LRN=5+	DEX=5+	LRN=7+	CHA=6+	LRN=6+

Character Training Chart
INITIAL TRAINING
(Open to All Characters)

MechWarrior	Soldier	Aerospace Pilot
Gunnery/Mech-1	Brawling-1	Gunnery/Aerospace-1
Piloting/Mech-1	Rifle-1	Piloting/Aerospace-1

Tech	Scout
Technician-1	Rogue-1
and either	and either
Mechanical-1	Diplomacy-1
OR	OR
Engineering-1	Streetwise-1

STANDARD MILITARY TRAINING
(Open to All Characters)

All character classes spend CPs at normal MECHWARRIOR rates for any skills listed in the rules.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING
(Roll less than/equal to Training Score)

All character classes spend CPs at the rates shown below (according to the character TRN score) for any skills listed in the rules.

TRAINING SCORE	CP COSTS
0-3	Normal
4-6	x .9
7-8	x .75
9-10	x .5

MARTIAL ARTS TRAINING
(Tech Character Class Not Allowed)
(Requires LRN 9+, BODY 8+, DEX 8+)
(Roll less than/equal to TRN score)

If accepted, the character may pay 50 CP and receive the following skill and attribute increases:

MechWarrior	Soldier	Scout	Aerospace Pilot
Piloting/Mech+1	Acrobatics+1	Acrobatics+2	Piloting/Aerospace+1
Acrobatics+2	Running+2	Running+1	Running+1
Running+1	Brawling+2	Brawling+2	Acrobatics+2
Brawling+2	Hide in Cover+2	Hide in Cover+2	Hide in Cover+2
Hide in Cover+2	Stealth+2	Stealth+3	Brawling+1
Stealth+2	Survival+2	Survival+1	Stealth+1
Survival+1	Bow/Blade+2	Bow/Blade+1	Survival+2
Bow/Blade+1	BODY + 1	BODY + 1	Bow/Blade+1
BODY + 1	DEX + 1	DEX + 1	BODY + 1
DEX + 1			DEX + 1

ACADEMY TRAINING
(Scout Character Class Not Allowed)
(LRN 6+; TRN 6+)
(Roll less than/equal to TRN Score)

If accepted,the character may spend 75 CP to purchase the following skill increases:

MechWarrior	Soldier	Tech	Aerospace Pilot
Piloting/Mech+1	Rifle+1	Technician+2	Piloting/Aerospace+1
Gunnery/Mech+1	Gunnery/Artillery+1	Engineering+1	Gunnery/Aerospace+1
Technician+2	Driver+2	Mechanical+1	Engineering+2
Pistol+1	Pistol+1	Computer+2	Pistol+1
Leadership+1	Leadership+1	Driver+1	Leadership+1
Survival+1	Survival+1	Piloting/Mech+1	Survival+1

NAIS TRAINING
(Davion or Steiner Allegiance)
(Scout Character Class Not Allowed)
(LRN 8+; TRN 8+)
(Roll 11+; reduce target by 1
for each Attribute—including TRN —at 9+)

If accepted, pay 100 CP to purchase the following skill increases:

MechWarrior	Soldier	Tech	Aerospace Pilot
Piloting/Mech+2	Leadership+2	Technician+3	Piloting/Aerospace+2
Gunnery/Mech+2	Tactics+2	Engineering+2	Gunnery/Aerospace+2
Leadership+2	Stealth+2	Mechanical+2	Jumpship Pilot/Nav+1
Tactics+2	Gunnery/Artillery+2	Computer+2	Engineering+2
Driver+1	Driver+1	Piloting/Mech+1	Computer+2
Rifle+1	Rifle+1	Driver+2	Mechanical+1
Diplomacy+2	Diplomacy+2	Leadership+1	Tactics+2
Pistol+2	Pistol+2	Medical/1stAid+2	Leadership+2

EXPERIENCE CHART

Level	Class	Attributes	Skill Levels
0-3	GRN	—	—
4-15	REG	1/+1	2/+1 each
16+	VET	1/+1	2/+1 each

AVAILABLE MATERIAL BENEFITS

Scouts		Soldiers		Technicians	
Die Role	"Tonnage"	Die Roll	"Tonnage"	Die Roll	"Tonnage"
-4	5	-4	10	-4	4
-3	5	-3	10	-3	4
-2	10	-2	15	-2	6
-1	5	-1	10	-1	4
0	15	0	20	0	8
1	10	1	15	1	6
2	15	2	20	2	8
3	5	3	10	3	4
4	20	4	25	4	10
5	10	5	15	5	6
6	20	6	25	6	10
7	25	7	30	7	12
8	15	8	20	8	8
9	20	9	25	9	10
10	30	10	35	10	14
11	25	11	30	11	12
12	35	12	40	12	16
13	30	13	35	13	14
14	35	14	40	14	16
15	40	15	45	15	18
16	45	16	50	16	20
17	35	17	40	17	16
18	40	18	45	18	18
19	45	19	50	19	20
20	50	20	65	20	35

The material benefits gained from these tables are rolled up as given in the basic rules for 'Mech and AeroSpace Fighter assignments. Before rolling on the table, choose a modifier anywhere between -6 and +9 (zero is allowed). Plus modifiers cost 20 CP per point added, minus modifiers grant a bonus of 15 CP per point subtracted. Roll 2D6, apply the modifier, and read the Tonnage result on the appropriate table.

You may choose any Vehicle (not 'Mechs or AeroSpace Fighters) of the Tonnage shown. Alternatively, take the CP result times 500 for the number of C-Bills the character receives to start: ALL C-Bills earned this way must be spent on personal equipment prior to starting. Note that you can choose to take a smaller vehicle than the tonnage given and the balance in extra gear; this option should also be allowed for MechWarriors and AeroSpace Pilots as well.

BATTLE OF KILGOUR: BattleForce Campaign

SIMULATOR CAMPAIGN

This month's BattleTac column describes the Battle of Kilgour, in the Corellan system along the Davion-Liao border. MechWarriors desiring to sharpen their strategic and tactical skills may wish to use this engagement to generate training simulator combat modules.

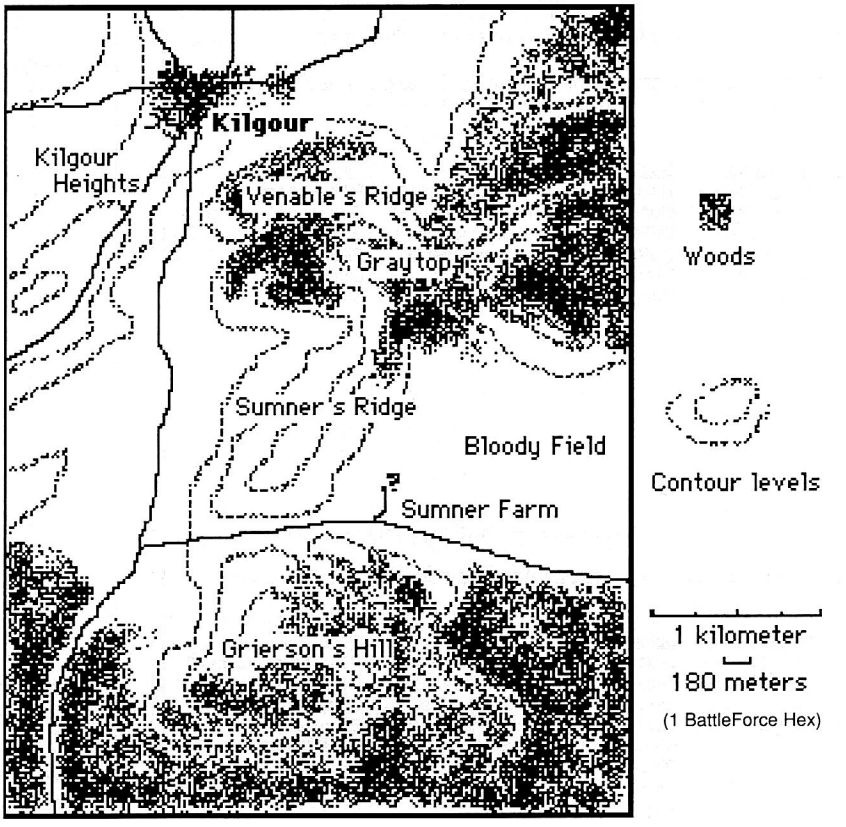
Those with access to FASA's new campaign simulator BattleForce may wish to use the information presented below for the 2nd Kearny Highlanders and the Scotian Highlanders to recreate the entire second day's battle at Kilgour. Several specific tactical incidents in that battle are then presented as standard BattleTech combat modules. These various modules may be set up independently of one another, or they can be combined into a grand tactical and strategic recreation of the battle.

Battle of Kilgour: BattleForce Campaign

TIMING THE PROPER MOMENT

Timing is all-important in the successful handling of a full-scale battle. At Kilgour, the Scotian Highlander plan required that one section of the defending force hold superior numbers at bay until the attackers had been drawn into a vulnerable position. If the Scotian commander waited too long, however, his center would be broken, his army divided, and his force defeated piecemeal. If he struck too soon, the surprise effect of having fresh 'Mechs strike the enemy rear and flanks would be minimized by the fact that the enemy still had large numbers of fresh 'Mechs in reserve.

This scenario allows opposing players to judge the proper timing of Kilgour's second day for themselves. The special rules outlined below are designed to balance play, allowing for the fact that, in the *real* battle, neither commander knew what the other commander was up to or how large his forces were.



SPECIAL RULES

Both commanders are operating under certain handicaps which determine the nature of this battle. The Scotian commander must carefully judge the best time to unleash his hidden reserves. The Kearny commander suspects a trap set by his opponent and must withhold sufficient forces to counter any unexpected attack by the enemy's reserves.

Training simulations of the Battle of Kilgour should use the following restrictions:

Scotian Commander:

At the beginning of the simulation, those units designated as "hidden units" have their positions secretly noted by the Scotian player. They are not placed on the board, and their locations are not revealed to the Kearny player. These hidden units are stationary and well-camouflaged in the woods north and south of the main battlefield. They may not move, and they may not engage in combat unless activated by an enemy unit.

Once a unit is activated, it is placed on the map at its designated location. It may then move and fight normally.

At any given point during the battle, the Scotian commander may choose to activate his reserves. At this time, all hidden units are placed on the board in their designated hexes. They may then move and fire normally.

Scotian Tactics:

The Scotian Commander can pursue any of several possible courses of action:

* He may wait as long as he dares in hope that the Kearny Commander will release some or all of his reserves against the center, trusting that his reserve forces will be large enough to trap the entire enemy force.

* He may choose to hold his line on Sumner's Ridge, hoping to inflict sufficient casualties on the enemy that the Kearny forces will be forced to retreat (see: Victory Conditions, below).

* He may activate his hidden units and use them as mobile reserves, threatening or attacking the enemy reserves or targets of opportunity (such as small numbers of Kearny 'Mechs moving up to the battlefield from the rear). If the battle has moved east of Sumner's Ridge and the enemy reserves are still at Kilgour Heights, this mobile reserve could interpose itself along Sumner's Ridge in order to interdict Kearny reinforcements.

Kearny Commander:

At the beginning of the action, the Kearny commander places his 3rd Battalion forward and holds his 2nd Battalion in reserve.

At any time, the Kearny Commander may release all or part of his reserves to join the battle. What he cannot do is blindly probe the woods on the Scotian Highlanders' flanks. Before entering the heavy woods to the north or south of the Scotian center, the Kearny forces must use infantry or light scout forces (such as the Scout Platoon of Norris's Rangers) to discover the enemy positions.

Each time a Kearny scout unit enters a hex adjacent to a heavily forested hex, the Scotian player secretly rolls 1D6. On a roll of 1, he must activate all units in any adjacent hexes. On a 2 - 4, he must activate any *one* unit in any adjacent hex. On a 5 - 6 (or if, in fact, he has no forces in that hex), he says nothing. The Scotian player always has the option of deliberately activating any of his units at any time, at which point they are placed on the board.

Activated units may engage in combat with the scouting forces, or they may move to an adjacent hex and "vanish." Their new position is recorded by the Scotian player, and they are deactivated. Units remain activated so long as they are engaged in movement or combat or as long as enemy scouts are in an adjacent hex.

Once the Kearny commander has exposed the positions of at least three different Scotian BattleMechs, he may, if he desires, attack the position normally. Scotian 'Mechs will remain hidden until a Kearny 'Mech enters an adjacent hex or until the Scotian player chooses to reveal them by moving or attacking.

Kearny Tactics:

The Kearny commander *knows* there are Scotian forces in the woods. He does not know how strong those forces are or precisely where they are located, and to charge in headlong with valuable 'Mechs is irresponsibly foolhardy. He must choose between several courses of action:

* He may hold his reserves in order to guard against a Scotian counterattack.

* He may scout the approaches to the Scotian flanks, then attack to engage the hidden Scotian reserves.

* He may ignore the flanks and concentrate on the Scotian center, hoping to break the enemy line before the Scotians can muster their reserves.

GAME SET-UP

The map on the opposite page represents the terrain south of the town of Kilgour, on Corella II. MechWarriors who do not have access to fully programmable holographic simulators may recreate the terrain of the battle by transferring the map below onto a blank hexgrid sheet, or they may use the map sheets provided in BattleForce, with the important terrain features (woods, ridges, hills) marked lightly in pencil or indicated using counters, transparent overlays, or cut-out sections of blank hex grid paper.

The Table of Organization for both the 2nd Kearny Highlanders and the Scotian Highlanders are provided on the following pages. Players should use BattleForce counters or make counters of their own. The initial set-up is determined by the players, within the following framework:

2nd Kearny Highlanders:

Both the 2nd and 3rd Battalions begin the battle on or west of Kilgour Heights.

Scotian Highlanders:

1st Battalion: On or behind Sumner's Ridge

2nd Battalion: Hidden in the woods on or southeast of Grierson's Hill

3rd Battalion: Hidden in the woods on or east of Venable's Ridge

All hidden units *must* be positioned within dense woods hexes.

During the night of July 5th, Colonel Graham redeployed approximately half of the strength of both his 2nd and 3rd Battalions to the center of his line.

The players should feel free to introduce their own variations to this initial deployment. In particular, the Scotian Highlander commander may wish to redeploy more or fewer of his forces, to adjust the balance of 'Mechs held in reserve.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

Players use the standard BattleForce victory conditions.

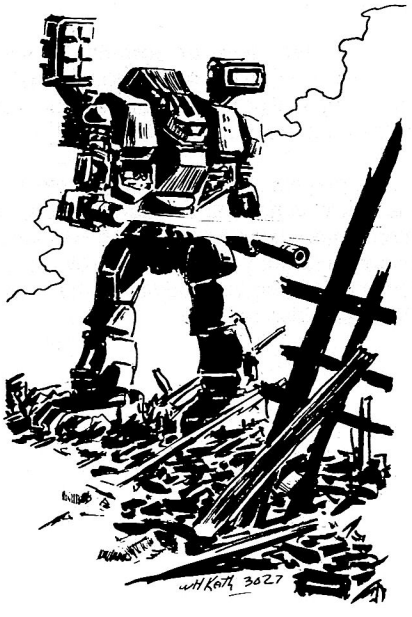
In addition, the Kearny commander must attempt to conserve his forces on planet. The total tonnage of the Kearny BattleMechs exceeds 3600 tons. Once the Kearny forces have lost BattleMechs totaling 2000 tons (over half their force, or an average of 8 to 12 'Mech lances), then further Kearny operations on the planet will be compromised, and the Kearny forces must retreat off the north or west side of the map area.

Such a retreat is considered to be a decisive victory for the Scotian Highlanders, whatever their own losses.

Once the Scotian Highlanders have lost BattleMechs totaling over 2000 tons, then the Davion forces on the planet are considered to be broken and will be of little further use in the campaign. If the Kearny Highlanders can inflict such casualties on their opponents without taking similar losses themselves, then the Kearny Highlanders are considered to have won a decisive victory. However, the Scotians will win even if they lose over 1000 tons worth of 'Mechs, provided they inflict similar losses on the enemy.

This fact may be an additional motive for the Kearny commander to hold half of his forces in reserve and to attempt to break the Scotian line with a single Battalion...

Just as it almost happened in the actual battle.



TABLES OF ORGANIZATION, BATTLE OF KILGOUR

The 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 2nd Kearny Highlanders began the second day's battle deployed west of the line of ridges south of Kilgour, along a gentle rise known locally as Kilgour Heights. As shown on the simulator maps, the 2nd Battalion was held in reserve on Kilgour Heights until too late to be of any use in the battle. MechWarriors engaged in their own simulations of the battle of Kilgour may deploy the Kearny forces along Kilgour Heights as they choose.

The Kearny T.O. appeared as follows:

TABLE OF ORGANIZATION

2nd Kearny Highlanders

2nd Battalion

Battalion Headquarters—11(16)/9-3 5 Vet
Major Martell Longheart; Elite *Atlas*
Brian Stewart; Veteran *Vindicator*
Jean McPherson; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Morton Johnston; Veteran *Commando*

Kernighan's Company

Command Lance—11(13)/8-3 4 Elite
Captain Robert Kernighan; Elite *Stalker*
Charles Douglas; Elite *Vindicator*
Ian Telford; Elite *Vindicator*
Pamela Kernighan; Veteran *Commando*

Fire Lance—9(12)/8-3 5 Regular
Lieutenant Stuart McDonald; Veteran *Archer*
McCauley Peterson; Regular *Shadow Hawk*
Quentin McFarland; Regular *Vindicator*
Charles Gunn; Green *Commando*

Recon Lance—8(10)/5-2 6 Regular
Lt. Angus MacLeod; Veteran *Warhammer*
Morton Kernighan; Regular *Commando*
Ruben Skeat; Regular *Stinger*
Patrick Mifune; Green *Locust*

Braxton's Company

Command Lance—11(13)/8-3 5 Veteran
Captain Fergus Braxton; Elite *Crusader*
Ian Fraser; Veteran *Rifleman*
Charles MacKinnon; Regular *Vindicator*
Everard McKenzie; Regular *Spider*

Fire Lance—9(13)/7-3 5 Regular
Lieutenant Ramsay Stuart; Veteran *Rifleman*
Gregory Kirk; Regular *Vindicator*
Angus Braxton; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
Marcus Ullman; Green *Commando*

Recon Lance—4(7)/6-2 7 Green
Lt. Gordon McNair; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Douglas MacLeod; Green *Spider*
Erland Talcott; Green *Wasp*
Kathleen McNair; Green *Locust*

Minoku's Company

Assault Lance—12(16)/8-2 4 Veteran
Captain Ohiro Minoku; Veteran *Charger*
Kathleen Stewart; Veteran *Marauder*
Dennis MacGregor; Veteran *Warhammer*
Gregory Freeman; Regular *Vindicator*

Attack Lance—9(13)/8-3 5 Regular
Lieutenant Marcia Horowitz; Veteran *Archer*
Jahled Hammadi; Regular *Shadow Hawk*
Douglas McClintock; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
Andrew O'Hara; Regular *Commando*

Recon Lance—5(8)/6-2 7 Green
Lt. Toshiro Redfield; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Siegfried Kirchner; Green *Spider*
David Ross; Green *Wasp*
Stewart MacCleod; Green *Locust*

3rd Battalion

Battalion Headquarters—13(16)/8-3 5 Vet
Major James D. Cochraine; Elite *Stalker*
Angus McDonnell; Veteran *Warhammer*
Jeremy Nourse; Veteran *Wolverine*
Gordon Cochraine; Veteran *Commando*

McFarlane's Company

Command Lance—7(13)/8-3 5 Elite
Captain Stewart McFarlane; Elite *Grasshopper*
Heinrich Nicholson; Elite *Hatchetman*
Ramsay MacLeod; Elite *Blackjack*
Manuel Gonzalez; Veteran *Ostscout*

Fire Lance—7(10/8-3 6 Regular
Lt. Robert MacDougall; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Megan McFarlane; Regular *Vindicator*
Adam Gomez; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
N'Gama M'botu; Green *Cicada*

Recon Lance—6(10)/6-2 7 Regular
Lt. Kathleen McDonnell; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Arthur Kent; Regular *Spider*
Kirk MacNab; Regular *Commando*
Francois DuPlessis; Green *Wasp*

MacDouglall's Company

Assault Lance—12(15)/9-3 4 Veteran
Captain Angus MacDougall; Elite *Marauder*
Niki Carter; Veteran *Archer*
Marshall Corrigan; Regular *Rifleman*
Ramsay James; Regular *Shadow Hawk*

Medium Lance—9(12)/8-3 5 Regular
Lieutenant James Corrigan; Veteran *Crusader*
Ian MacDougall; Regular *Shadow Hawk*
Pamela Edwards; Regular *Vindicator*
Giles Howard; Green *Spider*

Recon Lance—4(7)/6-2 7 Green
Lieutenant Morgan Li; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Michael Gunn; Green *Spider*
Kathleen MacDougall; Green *Wasp*
Douglas Cromartie; Green *Locust*

Prata's Company

Command Lance—11(15)/9-3 4 Regular
Captain Richard Prata; Veteran *Thunderbolt*
David Kingsley; Regular *Catapult*
Cameron MacCorrie; Regular *Rifleman*
Ivan Toruchev; Regular *Shadow Hawk*

Fire Lance—9(12)/8-3 5 Green
Lieutenant Cecil Wyndham; Regular *Ostroc*
Yashar Eisenstein; Green *Vindicator*
James MacRae; Green *Vindicator*
Kathleen Fraser; Green *Commando*

Recon Lance—5(8)/6-2 7 Green
Lieutenant Sharon Gray; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Tristan McFarland; Green *Spider*
Charles McDonald; Green *Stinger*
Stewart Kirk; Green *Locust*

At Kilgour, the Kearny Highlanders had numerous non-'Mech armored units attached to the 2nd and 3rd Battalions as scout or recon groups. It was one of these units (the Scout Platoon of Norris's Rangers) which made contact with hidden 'Mechs of Graham's right flank force. According to the best reports, these forces were held in reserve with the Kearny 2nd Battalion or deployed towards the enemy flanks in attempts to determine the Scotian Highlander's positions. MechWarriors using this information to set up training

simulations of Kilgour may deploy these light forces as desired.

Norris's Rangers
Command Platoon-8(7)/10-3 4t Green
Captain Charles Norris; Regular Rommel
James Kellogg; Green Patton
Karl Doenitz; Green Rommel
Jameth Black; Regular Patton
Fire Platoon-10(8)/7-3 4t Green
Lieutenant Ivar Tomlinson; Regular Manticore
Jeremy Wolf; Regular Manticore
Shari Cramiston; Green Manticore
Strepan Josslic; Green Manticore
Scout Platoon-5(5)/4-1 8h Regular
Lieutenant Kannic Franklin; Regular Pegasus
Brad Hadley; Regular Pegasus
Andrew MacDonald; Regular Skimmer
Morgan Bearclaw; Regular Skimmer

Unattached Scout Platoon-5(5)/4-1 8h Vet
Lieutenant Scot Kendall; Elite Pegasus
Americ Penric; Veteran Pegasus
Arturo Gonzales; Veteran Skimmer
Charles Smith; Regular Skimmer

Unattached Fire Platoon- 10(8)/7-3 4t Reg
Lieutenant Raymond Grissman; Veteran Manticore
Zelas Newton; Regular Manticore
Ian Fairfax; Regular Manticore
Kalis Burton; Regular Manticore

Unattached Light Platoon-4(3)/4-2 4t Regular
Lieutenant Jordan Helmuth; Veteran Galleon
Charles Grenville; Regular Galleon
Michelle Rochmont; Regular Galleon
Robert Durant; Regular Galleon

The Scotian Highlanders began the second day's action deployed along the line of hills and ridges south of Kilgour. Though a full three battalions are listed, the unit had entered the campaign understrengthed and had already suffered considerable losses during the intiial Liao invasion and during the first day's fight for the town. Graham placed the 1st Battalion in the center along Sumner's Ridge, as shown in the simulator maps of the action. The 2nd Battalion was hidden in the woods covering Greirson's Hill to the south, while the 3rd Battalion was positioned in the woods along Venable's Ridge and Graytop to the north. In both cases, approximately half of the flank battalions' strength was then drawn to the center to reinforce the 1st Battalion.

According to the best available information at this time, the Scotian combat T.O. appeared as follows:

TABLE OF ORGANIZATION

Scotian Highlanders

1st Battalion
Battalion Headquarters— 12(14)/7-2 3 Elite
Colonel Ramsay Graham; Elite *Stalker*
Gregory McPherson; Elite *Marauder*
Ross McDonnell; Elite *Rifleman*

Company A—Randall's Raiders
Command Lance—8(14)/8-2 5 Elite
Captain Stuart Randall; Elite *Victor*
Lieutenant Kara Stewart; Elite *Shadow Hawk*
Douglas Graham; Elite *Phoenix Hawk*
Larry Murdock; Veteran *Vulcan*
Fire Lance—5(8)/6-3 4 Veteran
Lieutenant Ryan Kelly; Elite *Shadow Hawk*
Randal McPherson; Veteran *Enforcer*
Ross Cromartie; Veteran *Valkyrie*
Recon Lance—4(6)/5-2 6 Veteran
Lieutenant Ian Douglas; Veteran *Panther*
Jean Fife; Veteran *Stinger*
Douglas Keith; Veteran *Wasp*
Kazuko Matsumi; Veteran *Locust*

Company B—Macarron's 'Mechs
Command Lance—9(13)/8-3 6 Elite
Captain Ian Macarron; Elite *Archer*
Lieutenant Andrew MacRae; Elite *Dragon*
Philip Thatcher; Elite *Phoenix Hawk*
Charles Gordon; Veteran *Spider*
Fire Lance—6(10)/7-3 5 Veteran
Lieutenant Angus Hawkins; Elite *Shadow Hawk*
Robert Keith; Veteran *Enforcer*
Donald Fife; Veteran *Valkyrie*
Megan Radcliff; Veteran *Commando*
Recon Lance—5(6)/4-2 5 Regular
Lieutenant Brian Graham; Veteran *Whitworth*
Russell Morton; Regular *Spider*
Ian McFarland; Regular *Locust*

Company C—The Black Douglas
Command Lance—14(17)/8-3 -4 Veteran
Captain Keith Douglas; Elite *Warhammer*
Lieutenant Heather Fife; Veteran *Archer*
Ramsay Douglas; Veteran *Rifleman*
Kirk McIlvain; Regular *Rifleman*
Fire Lance—5(9)/6-2 8 Regular
Lt. Angus Macarron; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Robert MacRae; Regular *Cicada*
Stuart MacLeod; Regular *Ostscout*
Toshiro Kogo; Regular *Spider*
Recon Lance—4(7)/5-2 7 Green
Lieutenant Gregory McKenzie; Veteran *Panther*
Douglas Fairfax; Green *Spider*
Charles Keith; Green *Wasp*
Roberta Douglas; Green *Locust*

2nd Battalion
Fraser's Company
Command Lance—6(10)/5-2 4 Elite
Major Laurie Carlisle; Elite *Charger*
Captain Kendric Fraser; Elite *Rifleman*
Eric Stewart; Veteran *Assassin*
Fire Lance—7(12)/8-3 6 Regular
Lieutenant Ian Keith; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Agnes McFarlane; Regular *Enforcer*
Gregory Fife; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
Robbie McNair; Green *Cicada*
Recon Lance—3(5)/3-1 Regular
Lieutenant Dan Raeburn; Veteran *Cicada*
Grayson Campbell; Regular *Spider*
Beth Ann Gregor; Regular *Locust*

McFarland's Company
Command Lance—11(15)/9-3 5 Veteran
Captain Angus McFarland; Elite *Archer*
Rodney Smith; Veteran *Rifleman*
Charlie Cromartie; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Lee Stuart; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Fire Lance—6(10)/7-2 4 Regular
Lieutenant Jeanette Ramsay; Veteran *Wolverine*
Victor Vlad; Regular *Enforcer*
Milton Coroleone; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
Recon Lance—3(6)/4-2 6 Green
Lieutenant Stuart McLean; Regular *Cicada*
Lewis McDonnell; Green *Ostscout*
William Sutherland; Green *Spider*

3rd Battalion
Keith's Company
Command Lance—7(11)/6-2 4 Veteran
Major Kirk Livingston; Elite *Victor*
Captain Heather Keith; Veteran *Dragon*
Brian McPherson; Veteran *Scorpion*
Fire Lance—4(7)/5-2 5 Veteran
Lt. Gregor MacRae; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Louise Crawson; Veteran *Assassin*
Milo Sorenson; Veteran *Ostscout*
Recon Lance—4(7)/5-2 8 Green
Lieutenant James Fraser; Veteran *Cicada*
Rhett Stewart; Green *Ostscout*
Russel Greene; Green *Spider*
Jess Mason; Green *Locust*

McKenzie's Company
Command Lance—8(10)/5-2 4 Regular
Captain Sam McKenzie; Veteran *Warhammer*
Lieutenant Russell Douglas; Regular *Quickdraw*
Douglas Ridley; Regular *Locust*
Fire Lance—4(7)/6-2 5 Green
Lieutenant Keith Fraser; Regular *Wolverine*
Jame Fairfax; Green *Shadow Hawk*
Doran Alberts; Green *Locust*
Recon Lance—2(4)/3-4 4 Regular
Lieutenant Bradley Carlisle; Regular *Assassin*
Henry McDonald; Regular *Spider*

At the Battle of Kilgour, the following armored units were attached to the Scotian Highlanders. Though normally fielded with specific companies, they were held in reserve on the Scotian Higlander's northern flank, against the possibility of a Kearny infantry attack or flanking move. The Scotian comander may field these units as he pleases in combat simulations.

Oppie's Raiders
Command Platoon 10(9)10-3 4t Green
Captain Hap Oppenheimer; Regular Patton
Ardan Griffith; Green VonLuckner
Valery Biggs; Green Patton
Vince Marcuso; Green Patton
Fire Platoon 9(8)9-2 4t Regular
Lieutenant Douglas Innes; Regular Rommel
Valery Chernenkov; Regular Rommel
Jarvis Haggsworthy; Regular Rommel
Roger Hammer; Regular Rommel
Light Platoon 4(3)5-2 4t
Lieutenant Grath Davias; Regular Galleon
Hatsuko Grady; Green Galleon
Silas Smith; Regular Scorpion
Paula Fraser; Regular Vedette

Unattached Scout Platoon - 4(3)4-2 4t Vet
Lieutenant Jason King; Elite Galleon
Ahmed Khaled; Veteran Galleon
Stanley Osserman; Veteran Galleon
Robert Langley; Veteran Galleon

Unattached Scout Platoon - 5(5)/4-1 8h Reg
Lieutenant Jamie Kendall; Regular Pegasus
Hans Leider; Regular Pegasus
Josef Waldheim; Regular Skimmer
Bradley Simmons; Regular Skimmer

Randall's Charge at Bloody Field

THE BATTLE OF KILGOUR

The battle had been seesawing back and forth across that one damned plot of ground all morning. "Bloody Field," we called it, and the name stuck. The place was littered with the smoking ruins of burned out 'Mechs and with arms and legs and nameless bits of junk, as well as the far grimmer debris of War.

Flesh and steel can take only so much. The Liao enemy was pressing us hard...too hard. Our forces were falling back, unable to hold what felt like unlimited numbers.

The Captain had pulled us back for a breather, and that's when we realized our forces were starting to drift to the rear. "We've lost," Murdock said, and for once, I was ready to agree with him.

"No!" The Captain's voice snapped across our taccom lines like autocannon fire, and then that I saw his *Victor* out in front of our company formation—what was left of it—facing the enemy lines all alone. "No, goddammit! The enemy is that way! Form up, and move!"

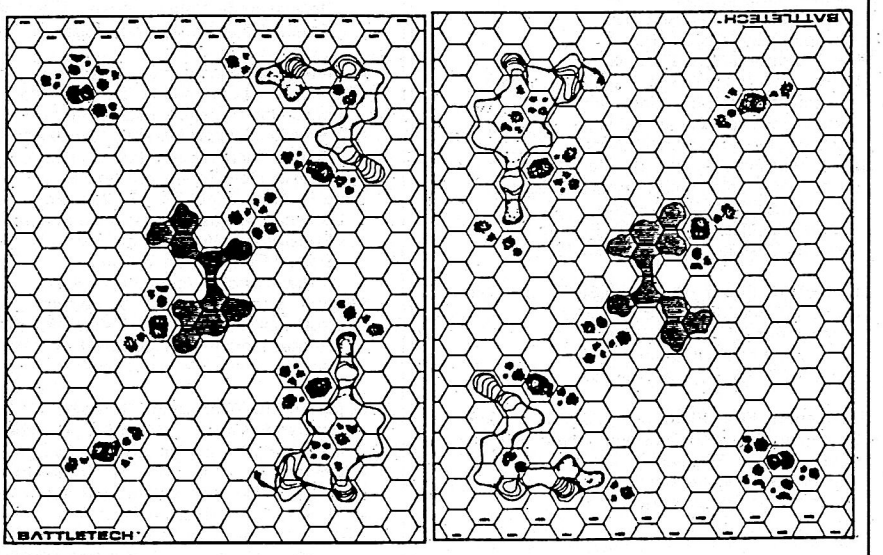
Did I say that flesh and steel can only take so much? Perhaps I was mistaken. We were certain—dead certain—that there was nothing more in us left to give.

But we urged our battered machines forward, into the teeth of hell.

Excerpted from *I was There: Stories of Warriors and Their War*
Edited by William H. Keith, Jr.
Exeter Press, Exeter



North



South

GAME SET-UP

Lay out the two BattleTech mapsheets as shown, or use a blank hexsheet. All terrain on the map area is considered to be flat, open ground.

Defender

The Defending forces consist of elements of Prata's Company and McFarlane's Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Kearny Highlanders:

Prata's Company
Command Lance
Captain Richard Prata; Veteran *Thunderbolt*
David Kingsley; Regular *Catapult*
Left torso medium laser gone
Cameron MacCorrie; Regular *Rifleman*
Fire Lance
James MacRae; Green *Vindicator*
Kathleen Fraser; Green *Commando*
Recon Lance
Lieutenant Sharon Gray; Veteran *Phoenix Hawk*
Charles McDonald; Green *Stinger*
Missing left arm, 1 point of armor left on right front torso
Stewart Kirk; Green *Locust*
2 points armor left in right leg

McFarlane's Fire Lance
Lt. Robert MacDougall; Veteran *Shadow Hawk*
Megan McFarlane; Regular *Vindicator*
Adam Gomez; Regular *Phoenix Hawk*
5 points of armor in front center torso, 6 points of armor in left arm
N'Gama M'botu; Green *Cicada*
Left arm and left arm Medium Laser gone

In addition to the damage listed above, the defending player should take 50 additional points of armor damage and distribute them among his forces. This distribution should not be revealed to the attacker.

Situation: Mid-day, July 6, 3027
Corella II

Attacker

The attackers are the remnants of Company A, Randall's Raiders, 1st Battalion, Scotian Highlanders.

Command Lance
Douglas Graham; Elite *Phoenix Hawk*
Larry Murdock; Veteran *Vulcan*
Fire Lance
Lieutenant Ryan Kelly; Elite *Shadow Hawk*
Recon Lance
Lieutenant Ian Douglas; Veteran *Panther*
Jean Fife; Veteran *Stinger*
Douglas Keith; Veteran *Wasp*

The attacking player should take 30 points of armor damage and divide them among the 'Mechs of his force. The distribution of this damage should not be revealed to the defender.

Victory Conditions

Randall's Raiders win a decisive victory if all Kearny forces are destroyed, and a major victory if the Kearny 'Mechs are forced to retreat off the map. Any other result is a major defeat.

The Kearny forces win a decisive victory if they can destroy all of the Scotian Highlander 'Mechs. It is possible (see: Special Rules, below) that orders will arrive directing the Kearny unit to withdraw. Once this order is received, the Kearny player's goal is not the destruction of enemy 'Mechs, but the withdrawal of as many of his surviving 'Mechs off the west end of the board as possible.

If all Kearny 'Mechs on the board at the time the order is received make it off the map, the Kearny player wins a major victory. If he loses one or two additional 'Mechs during the retreat, he wins a minor victory. If he loses three or more additional 'Mechs, he suffers a major defeat. If he loses all of his remaining 'Mechs (whatever the number), he suffers a major defeat.

Note that it is possible for both sides to claim a major victory at the same time.

Special Rules: Surprise

Randall's Raiders had one overwhelming advantage in their attack: surprise. The commander of the Kearny company could not believe that the ragged formation approaching his own was, in fact, a Scotian Highlander attack.

To represent the element of surprise on a smoke-thick and confused battlefield, the Kearny 'Mechs may not fire until the turn *following* the turn on which the Scotian 'Mechs open fire, or the turn *following* the turn in which at least one Scotian BattleMech comes to within 5 hexes of any Kearny 'Mech.

In addition, each time one of the Kearny 'Mechs is destroyed or disabled (unable to move or fire due to shutdown or other damage), the Kearny player must roll 2D6. On a roll of 9 or higher, orders from his headquarters direct him to withdraw from the field, keeping as much of his unit intact as possible. From that point on, the Kearny side may continue to engage in combat, but his goal changes. To win a victory, he must now successfully withdraw as many of his surviving 'Mechs off the west edge of the map as possible.

Second Day

During the height of the Battle of Kilgour, elements of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Kearny Highlanders, managed to secure a breakthrough of the Scotian Highlanders' lines. This breakthrough was of limited extent, and the Kearny field commander was not, at first, aware that any breakthrough had been made. The exhaustion of his own forces, as well as the heavy smoke which obscured much of the battlefield, slowed his reaction times and led to a fatal delay.

At the same time, Colonel Graham of the Scotian Highlanders, while he was not certain how bad the breach in his own lines was, did know that a breach had been made. If the enemy was able to exploit the hole it had made in his line, now stretched so thin as to be nearly nonexistent, the Scotian forces would be completely divided, with a powerful enemy force squarely between the two halves.

Graham needed time to reorganize his own collapsing center. Reinforcements were available but in the wrong part of the field, and it was still to early to deploy them against the Kearny rear and flanks.

Working quickly, he assembled the only strike team available, survivors of the company known as Randall's Raiders. Already severely handled, Randall's Raiders were on the point of complete disintegration.

But it was sacrifice the Raiders, or lose the battle.

Graham himself gave the orders to the exhausted Captain Randall: "Sweep the field!"



HOLDING THE LINE

COUNTING THE MINUTES

We had our orders: "Hold at all costs!" What do you do in the face of orders like that?

If you're a warrior, trained to fight, to obey orders, to die, if need be for cause and comrades—then you hold.

Or die trying.

By mid afternoon, we had MechWarriors dropping out because their 'Mechs were shutting down from heat overload, because the warriors themselves simply could not press their minds or bodies further in the numbing horror of 'Mech-to-'Mech combat. Colonel Graham had given the order at last: two red rockets in the north gave the signal. Our reserves were on the way!

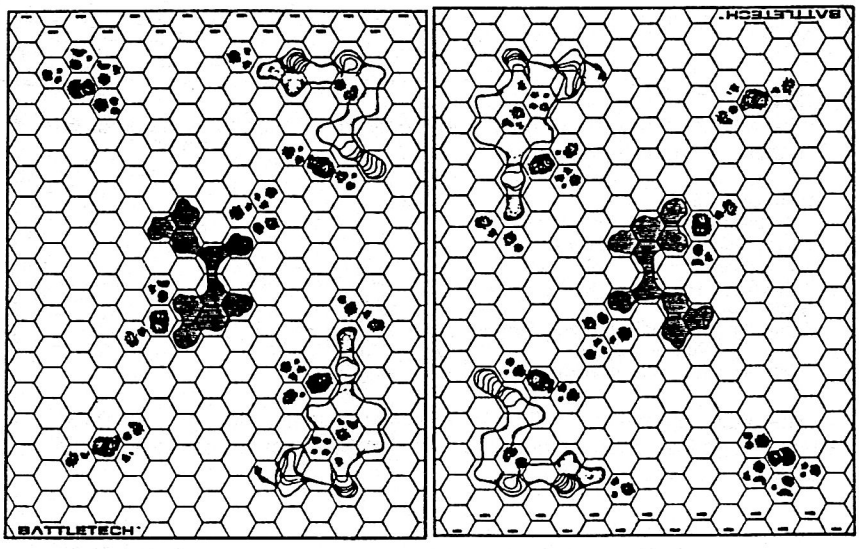
But how long would it take our reinforcements to get to the front? Reinforcements or not, we could still lose the battle if our center gave way, even at the last possible moment.

We *had* to hold, somehow...

from *Thin Red Line of Heroes*
by Donald Fife
New Avalon Press
3028



North



South

GAME SET-UP

Lay out the BattleTech map sheets as shown, or use a sheet of blank hex grid paper. All terrain on the battlefield is considered to be open, level ground, and special terrain features on the printed maps are ignored.

Defender

The defender is what is left of Macarron's 'Mechs, holding the center of the Davion line. His forces include the following:

Command Lance
Captain Ian Macarron; Elite *Archer* – ARCHER
Philip Thatcher; Elite *Phoenix Hawk* – PH
Fire Lance
Robert Keith; Veteran *Enforcer* – GREEN GRIFFITH
Donald Fife; Veteran *Valkyrie* – MG
Megan Radcliff; Veteran *Commando* SPIDER
Recon Lance
Lt. Brian Graham; Veteran *Whitworth* GRIFFIN

The defending player should distribute 40 points of armor damage among his 'Mechs. The distribution should not be revealed to the attacking player.

Attacker

The attacking forces include elements of MacFarlane's Company, plus the 3rd Battalion Headquarters Lance:

Battalion Headquarters
Major James D. Cochraine; Elite *Stalker*
20 points of damage, distributed randomly
Jeremy Nourse; Veteran *Wolverine*
Gordon Cochraine; Veteran *Commando*



McFarlane's Company
Command Lance—7(13)/8-3 5 Elite
Capt. Stewart McFarlane; Elite *Grasshopper*
Ramsay MacLeod; Elite *Blackjack*
Recon Lance—6(10)/6-2 7 Regular
Lt. Kathleen McDonnell; Vet *Phoenix Hawk*
Arthur Kent; Regular *Spider*
Francois DuPlessis; Green *Wasp*

In addition to the damage listed for Cochraine's 'Mech, an additional 60 points of armor damage are distributed among the other 'Mechs in the Kearny force. The distribution should not be revealed to the Scotian player.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The Kearny player wins a major victory if he can break the Scotian line and exit the east side of the map with at least four 'Mechs still able to move and fire. He wins a decisive victory if he can eliminate all of the Scotian 'Mechs and preserve four 'Mechs to exit the east side of the map.

The Scotian player wins a major victory if he can prevent this.

The Kearny player faces a time limit. He must achieve his goal and reach the east edge of the board with at least four 'Mechs before Game Turn 12. On Turn 12, word arrives that major Scotian forces have been sighted in the rear. If no breakthrough has been achieved, the order will be given for Kearny forces still engaged with the enemy to withdraw.

Should the order for Kearny forces to withdraw be given, the Kearny commander's victory goals change. He must now exit the west edge of the map with as many 'Mechs as possible. The Scotian commander may allow him to pass or he may attempt to inflict additional damage on the retreating enemy. If the Kearny player loses three additional 'Mechs after the order to retreat is given, the Scotian player wins a decisive victory. The Kearny player can still win a major victory at this point by completely eliminating the Scotian force.

Both players will have to balance the odds and chances to determine how much farther they want to press their men and machines.

Battle of Kilgour

Graham's battered mercenary command had reached the limits of its endurance. Though he'd hoped to draw a far larger portion of the enemy forces into his carefully-laid trap, Graham realized that he would have to commit his reserves *now*, or lose the battle. In one sense, at least, his opponent had won, simply by outlasting him with superior forces.

Graham himself gave the signal, firing two red flare rockets from his battle-scarred *Stalker*. Upon seeing that signal, reinforcements hidden in the woods to north and south would fall on the Kearny Highlanders' rear, trapping them, perhaps breaking their attack.

Even as he did so, he realized his center was caving in under continued pressure all along the front. B Company of his 1st battalion, Macarron's 'Mechs, held the line, but they had suffered fierce losses and were already wavering and falling back. If the line failed before his reinforcements could arrive on the field, the battle would be lost, fresh forces or not.

Had Graham waited too long?



DEEP TROUBLE

Encounter on Scheat V

There was a golden opportunity for us here. Ten 'Mechs of a space-launched Davion company had landed right in our laps. For an hour, the four lances which had been lying in wait for them at the old Tai Ch'ien factory complex had caught the enemy in a grueling cross-fire, and now the survivors had been backed into a narrow circle at the edge of the flooded Lin Pao Plains.

They were trapped, and the outcome had never been in any doubt. Three Davion 'Mechs had been destroyed or disabled in short order moments after they'd grounded, and now the survivors could neither retreat nor advance in the face of our strongly-held positions. They could retreat into the water, of course, but it was quickly obvious that the Davion warriors were unable or unwilling to retreat—possibly because they expected to meet reinforcements at that point later on.

Well, Colonel Hochstadter was determined to deny the enemy even the chance of retreat. "We have them now!" he exulted. "We will close the lid on their cage and crush them!"

My recon lance was the lid to the trap. Our orders were to head south across the flooded plain, then turn west and travel as rapidly as possible parallel to the coastline, about six hundred to a thousand meters out. At that range, it was expected that battle smoke and the covering fire laid down by our comrades ashore would mask our movement. Once we were directly south of the enemy's position, we would turn north, advancing on his rear in a surprise attack which would leave the Davion invaders surrounded and helpless.

The first part of the maneuver went smoothly enough. There was no sign that we had been spotted from the shore. It wasn't until we had turned north and begun to close with the enemy that we realized that things were not going to plan...

Testimony delivered by Lieutenant Andre Manurhin at the court martial of Colonel Vidmer R. Hochstadter on September 11, 3026 (TC), following Hochstadter's defeat at the Tai Ch'ien industrial complex on Scheat V.

GAME SET-UP

Deep Trouble can be played using two BattleTech game maps laid side by side. North, South, East, and West edges of the combat area are determined. One of the map sections is designated as the East Map Area, the other as the West.

A blank hex map (such as the reverse side of the AeroTech game map) can be used instead of the basic BattleTech maps. In this case, the West Map Area is considered to be west of the center line of the game map, 27 hexes from the eastern edge.

The terrain in this simulation is flat and covered by water to a depth of five meters. All terrain features printed on the map sheet are ignored.

In this simulation, Sergeant MacCray in his lone *Crusader* is the Attacker. Four light Kurita 'Mechs are the Defenders.

Attacker

Sergeant Sinclair MacCray's *Crusader*
Skills:
Piloting: 4
Gunnery: 3
(The *Crusader* is in perfect condition.)

Deployment

The attacker secretly selects the hex in which his 'Mech will appear, and records it. This hex may be anywhere on the West Map Area within 20 hexes of the west edge of the map. If the players are using an unnumbered hex sheet, the hex should be identified in some mutually acceptable way, i.e. "fifteen hex rows from the west edge of the map sheet, twelve hexes from the south edge." This hex represents one section of the submerged bank of a flooded river which runs north and south. The exact location of the river bank may be determined during the course of the battle by using die rolls detailed in the Special Rules section for this scenario.

The attacker does not place his 'Mech on the board (thereby revealing his position) until the moment of his choosing.

Defender

Lieutenant Andre Manurhin's *Panther*
Piloting: 4
Gunnery: 3
The *Panther* has already taken battle damage. It has 10 armor points remaining on its front center torso and 5 armor points remaining on its left arm.

Stinger #1
Piloting: 4
Gunnery: 3
This *Stinger* is in perfect condition.

Stinger #2
Piloting: 3
Gunnery: 3
This *Stinger* has already taken battle damage. It has 2 points of armor remaining on its right arm and 1 point of armor remaining on its right torso.

Stinger #3
Piloting: 3
Gunnery: 2
This *Stinger* is in perfect condition.

Situation: 1317 hours, August 22, 3026
Scheat V

LOCATION: One kilometer south of Tai Ch'ien, Scheat V

In an effort to confuse Davion raiders and DropShip pilots, large areas of coastland along the shores of Scheat V's southern seas had been flooded. This created some confusion within the battalion slated to spearhead the Davion invasion of the planet, but in most cases the attacking forces correctly identified their targets or were able to accurately determine their positions within an hour or two of landing.

At the Tai Ch'ien factory center on the River Styx, known to the Davion forces as the Cerberus Complex, one Davion company had the bad fortune of landing directly alongside its proper target—occupied at the time by elements from two companies of the Kurita Fourth Proserpina Hussars. The fight was savage but brief. The invaders were pinned down, unable to advance or retreat in the face of overwhelmingly superior firepower.

The Hussar's regimental commander was on hand and was determined to eradicate the Davion unit which had so propitiously fallen into his lap. By sealing off the enemy's single path out of the trap, he would ensure their surrender—or their complete destruction.

What Colonel Hochstadter had not counted on was the presence of a single Davion *Crusader* which had landed outside his trap. That lone 'Mech, separated from the others in its drop pattern by an aerospace fighter attack during the descent, had landed on the flood plain several kilometers to the south, well outside the combat area. As that *Crusader* waded north through waist-deep water to rejoin its companions, its pilot spotted the four-'Mech lid to Hochstadter's trap and recognized it for what it was.

What followed was a classic engagement pitting one heavy against four light 'Mechs.

The water, and the presence of an unseen river bed, added to the combatants' problems.

Deployment

On turn 1, the Defender enters the combat area anywhere on the east edge of the map within a corridor which extends between 5 and 15 hexes from the north edge. The defending 'Mechs may assume any desired formation. Their goal is to travel west across the map within this corridor (at least 5 and no more than 15 hexes below the north edge of the map) until they reach the western half of the map. If the players are using the blank hex sheet provided with AeroTech for this simulation, the Defender must travel at least 26 hexes from the east edge of the map.

Once the defending 'Mechs have reached the middle of the combat area (i.e., they have crossed onto the west half of the map) they may turn north, with the goal of moving off the north edge of the West Map Area.

These deployment restrictions represent the Defender's operational orders. The lance has been directed to enter the water at a point to the east of the combat area, travel west to a point which will position them south of a small group of trapped enemy BattleMechs, then turn north to attack the enemy from the rear.

As soon as the Attacker in this scenario makes his presence known, all restrictions are lifted, and the Defender may move freely and at his own discretion.

Special Rules

Deep Trouble is an unusual combat situation in that the entire battle takes place with the combatant 'Mechs waist deep or deeper in water. All hexes (with the exception of the river, see below) are considered to be Depth 1. All movement in these hexes requires 2 MP.

Water along the banks of the river is at Depth 2. Movement through a river bank hex requires 4 MPs.

'Mechs may walk (not run!) along the river bottom (Depth 3) at the rate of one hex per turn.

In addition, the following rules and restrictions apply:

Jump Jets: The Defender's 'Mechs are equipped with JumpJets. However, the exhaust venturis on all four 'Mechs are submerged. Each time the Defender attempts to use his JumpJets, he should roll 2D6. On a roll of 7 or less, he may execute the jump as planned. On an 8 or 9, his JumpJets will misfire, forcing him to abort his jump. On a roll of 10+, his jet nozzles will be so fouled with mud and weeds that there will be danger of explosion. He must immediately roll 2D6 and subtract his Pilot Skill. On a modified roll of 6 or more, the 'Mech's JumpJets explode, causing 2D6 x 3 points of damage to the 'Mech. Divide the damage points evenly between the left rear, right rear, and center rear torso. If the roll to avoid an explosion is successful (modified roll of 5 or less) the pilot successfully throttles down his jets and avoids an explosion. The jump, however, is still aborted.

The Submerged River: The position of the submerged banks of the Styx River is only approximately known by both sides. The river bank is lower than surrounding terrain and is considered to be at Depth 2, or about chin-deep on a 'Mech. The river bottom itself is now quite deep and is considered to be Depth 3—deep enough to submerge a 'Mech completely. At the start of the scenario, the Attacker is hiding in a river bank hex and has not yet been sighted by the enemy.

The Attacker chooses one hex of the river's east bank when he determines the position at which his BattleMech will appear during the battle. This hex is

used to determine the location of the other river bank hexes.

The north-south hex row chosen by the Attacker is the eastern bank of the river. All of these hexes are at a depth of 2.

The Attacker informs the Defender when his 'Mechs enter depth 2 water. Obviously, this information will give the Defender some idea of where the Attacker is hiding. However, the Defender has a specific mission to accomplish, and a specific course to follow in order to accomplish that mission. Any diversion from that course in order to locate the Attacker's hidden 'Mech before the Attacker chooses to reveal himself is not permitted.

The hexes west of the river bank are river bottom and are considered to be at depth 3. The river bottom is 5 hexes wide at all points. Thus, the west bank of the river will always be 6 hexes west of the east river bank. The west bank is at Depth 2. All hexes west of the west bank are Depth 1.

If a referee is running the scenario, a more realistic simulation of the terrain may be empoyed. The referee prepares a map which charts the location of the river, with the secret hex chosen by the Attacker positioned along the eastern bank. In this case, the river can wind back and forth, rather than having it laid out in a straight line. The referee then informs both sides when their 'Mechs enter a river bank hex.

Combat

Beginning Combat: Combat begins at any time of the Attacker's choosing. The Attacker may move from Depth 2 water to Depth 1 water, then fire once without receiving simultaneous return fire from the Defender. Once the Attacker's first attack has been delivered and resolved, subsequent combat proceeds normally, with all movement and fire being considered simultaneous.

***Crusader* Leg-Mounted Weaponry:** The *Crusader* mounts a pair of Harpoon-6 SRM racks on its legs which, at Depth 1, lie just about at water level. During any given turn in which the Attacker wants to fire SRMs, he must roll 1D6. If the result is even, the SRM tubes are above the water's surface and may be fired normally. If the result is odd, the SRMs are below the water's surface and may not be fired.

The players do not need to keep track of individual hexes from which SRMs are fired, since the depth changes involved are very slight. Even if the *Crusader* remains stationary from one turn to the next, rolling 1D6 may allow the *Crusader* to fire its SRMs one turn, but not on the next. Each roll determines the ability of both *Crusader* SRM racks to fire.

All of the Defender's weapons may be fired at any time from water of Depth 1 or less.

No weapons may be fired by 'Mechs at depths of 2 or greater.

VICTORY CONDITIONS

The defender in this scenario is attempting to surround an enemy 'Mech force several hundred meters to the north of this encounter area. He wins a major victory if he can exit all four 'Mechs off the north edge of the western portion of the map. He wins a minor victory if he can exit three 'Mechs off the north edge of the western portion of the map.

Since the success of the Defender's maneuver depends on his ability to engage in combat with 'Mechs to the north, all Defender 'Mechs must retain all of their weapons (excepting machine guns) for them to be counted for victory conditions. Thus, for example, a *Stinger* which has lost its right arm cannot be counted towards the Defender's victory conditions, since the loss of its right arm results in the loss of its medium laser.

In addition, if the Defender can exit three or four 'Mechs off the north edge of the west map portion *and* destroy his opponent's *Crusader*, he wins a decisive victory.

The Attacker wins a major victory if he can prevent the Defender from winning a major victory. He wins a decisive victory if he can prevent the Defender from moving more than two fully-armed 'Mechs off the north edge of the west portion of the map. He wins a spectacular victory if he can completely destroy (not simply disarm) any three of the enemy 'Mechs.

All other results (the *Crusader* is destroyed, but three or more of the Defender's 'Mechs have lost weapons in the battle, for example) are considered to be a draw.

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More Than Warriors

Life is cheap, but BattleMechs are not.

And yet, in a culture torn by war and blind destruction, there is something—the human quality—which sets Man apart from the machines. Any inspection of the warfare which kills men would be incomplete without careful examination of that which makes Man what he is.

This column, in this and future issues of BattleTechnology, will present glimpses into that humanity, the spirit and soul of those who are warriors...but who are also men and women.

They are more than warriors. They are Human.

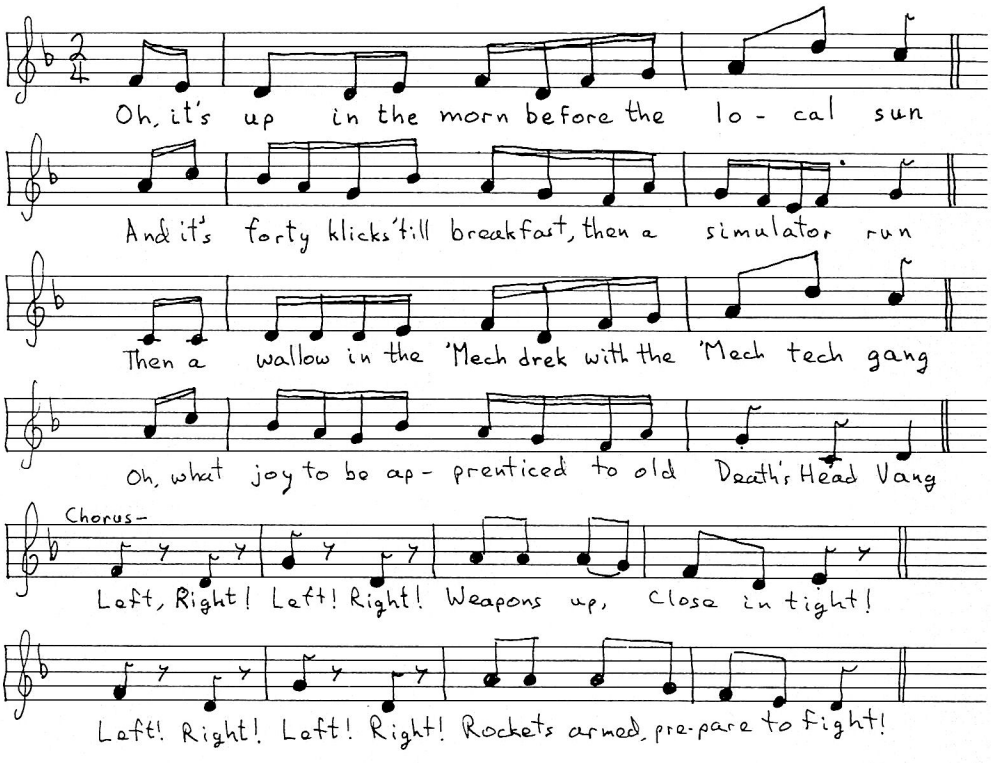
Throughout the history of Mankind, Warriors have created their own art: writing, songs, poetry, paintings, means of communicating with others that which they could not share in any other way.

Music—whether epic ballad or camp ditty—has long been one way in which a warrior could express his feelings about those things which mattered to him: fear, honor, duty, bravery, victory, grief, loneliness, comraderie, boredom, anger, humor...the list is as long as any list of human emotion.

In the feature article—MechWarrior: Mind and Machine—which discussed aspects of modern MechWarrior training, mention was made of the practice of apprenticing young Warriors-to-be to an experienced Warrior, one who could literally remold the raw material of raw recruits into the image of...a Warrior. There has always been need for such an individual, from the Centurions of Rome to the Marine D.I.s of the 20th Century to the Weapons Masters of today's Mercenary BattleMech companies.

The following song—one of numerous extant versions—has no original author or version; it is simply one of those camp songs which arose within the fellowship of men who had served as apprentices under a particular training master. Only a few of the many extant verses—those suitable for a family publication—are recorded here. Its object, Major Sergei Vang, also known as "Death's Head" because of his hairless, battle-scarred appearance, is Senior Weapons Master at the Meistmorn Academy on Doneval II. Hundreds of MechWarriors in service today are graduates of his techniques for turning civilians into warriors—techniques which have changed little since the days of Ceaser's legions.

The Apprentice's Lament



When you've traced that faulty circuit and you think you might be through,
Then it's muster for inspection with full kits and weapons, too!
Then you wish that you were dead; you say you'd really rather hang
Than to be a 'Mech apprentice to old Death's Head Vang!

Left! Right! Left! Right!
Weapons up! Close in tight!
Left! Right! Left! Right!
Rockets armed! Prepare to fight!

Oh, in Death's Head's unit, boy, you'd better learn to shoot
'Cause if you miss the target, you'll connect with Death's Head's boot.
Then it's back to simulators and ten hours going bang
Just because you are apprenticed to old Death's Head Vang!

Left! Right! Left! Right!
Weapons up! Close in tight!
Left! Right! Left! Right!
Rockets armed! Prepare to fight!

With a horrid grinning skull's face that could make a grown 'Mech cry
A reactor for a heart and a scanner for an eye,
If he calls you up to chew you out, you'll say you'd rather hang
But you'll take it, you're apprenticed to old Death's Head Vang!

Left! Right! Left! Right!
Welcome, boy, you're in the gang!
Left! Right! Left! Right!
Warrior now for Death's Head Vang!

Untitled Poem

As tomorrow's sun rises
I must go and become one
With a mountain of steel
And barely controlled fire.
I will ride out
Like the samurai of old
To fight
And to die.

Too long has been my ride.
Too many men have fallen
Before the fire at my command.
Too long has been my ride.

Were I a farmer
I would till my fields.
Were I a fisherman
I would tend my nets.
But I am a warrior
And the way of the Warrior
Is all I know.

As tomorrow's sun rises
I must go and become one
With a mountain of steel
And barely controlled fire.
I will ride out
Like the samurai of old
To fight
And to die.

This untitled poem was written by an unknown Kurita 'MechWarrior before his death in the battle for Lasken's World. It was found, along with his katana, by Morgan Curry, an independent correspondent currently attached to Lindon's Company.

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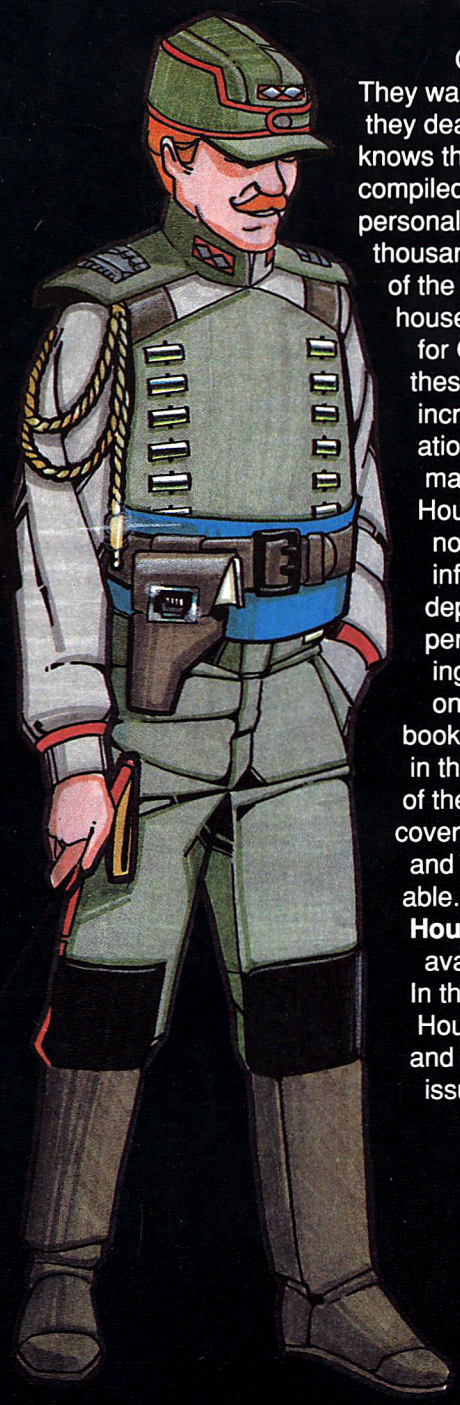

ComStar is not in the business of fiction. They want facts. And in their own documents, they deal with the facts as only ComStar knows them. Here for the first time are the compiled histories, military organization, personalities, social structures, and thousands of FACTS about each of the five Successor houses. Originally intended for ComStar personnel ONLY, these works show the incredible amount of information that ComStar has managed to get on every House (but, unfortunately not how they got the information). From in-depth unit listings to personality profiles containing knowledge Known only to a few, these books are amazing in their depth.The first of the these books covers **House Steiner**, and is already available.The next will cover **House Kurita** and be available soon. In the following months, Houses **Liao**, **Marik**, and **Davion** will be issued.



Colonel Steven Zaks, commander of the 12th Donegal Guards, is shown wearing the typical senior officer field uniform. Campaign bars adorn the front of flack jacket. Colonel Zaks' blue sash shows that he is graduated from the prestigious Nagelring Academy on Tharkad. As so few officers carry a riding crop, it indicates that this colonel is either young, vain, or both - a potentially disastrous combination.

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Pictured above are adepts of the Order of the Five Pillars. This semi-religious monastic order is devoted to preserving and enforcing, the Combine's religion, ideology, and social codes which are contained in the work called the Dictum Honorium. The Order, also known as the Pillar of Ivory also controls the very important ivory trade in Kurita space. This power block is used to fund the inquisitorial mission of the Order.

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fact that my prowess with security-weight 'Mechs had been gained while riding with the Chesterton Reserves, a well-known CAF unit, never entered into the conversation.

With the assignment came unrestricted base privileges, so I made a trip to the 'Mech bays on the pretense of checking on the condition of my Wolverine. The man I found completing the task of replacing the hip actuator received me politely at first, then stared open-mouthed while I quickly signed for him to get control of himself. Promo Kitlan was a Fujita Tech we had been unable to take with us when we fled Tao City for the relative safety of the forest. He and I carried on a conversation using seemingly innocuous phrases which served to tell him the tragic tale of the Empress Ting and conveyed my wish for him to contact the dozen or so other Fujita Techs laboring in the Fox's den. In his turn, Kitlan told me how he and the other Techs came to be there.

The Davion infantry had overwhelmed the reserve units left after the last Fujita trooper had been hunted down and slain. The Federat 'Mechs had then entered the industrial city in force, leaving my battalion no choice but to evacuate with as many men as we could carry. The Techs and assistant Techs had been ordered to fight to the last, but when an attempt by a Capellan militia unit to destroy the MechWorks was thwarted by elite jump troops, the Techs' morale broke and they immediately surrendered.

With the departure of the bulk of the invasion force, the Hussars were left short of Techs who could refit the machines captured from Capellan units. Enemy Techs were usually put to work in such endeavors, at least until they have been fully indoctrinated by their captors. Thereafter, all technical personnel, whose knowledge is too rare and valuable to dispose of lightly, are considered legitimate war spoils to be integrated into the enemy's technical group. The 'Suns Techs who would normally have worked on the Wolverine were currently endeavoring to repair the minor damage inflicted on the MechWorks, leaving only the closely-guarded Capellan Techs to deal with all new repair jobs.

As it turned out, many of the Techs remembered me from visits to House Fujita's 'Mech bay, and my personal Tech got himself reassigned to the same lance that I had temporarily joined. Though the fortunes of Techs in modern warfare are rarely threatening to life and limb, promise of rescue from service to the Fox convinced those who were still loyal to the Chancellor to join my cause. Those few who Kitlan suspected might see profit in exposing a Capellan MechWarrior simply did not show up for work the next day, and thereafter were sought as fugitives. The 'Suns commander needed another wild goose chase like a hole in the head.

It was widely known that three warriors of House Fujita had been made captive on the day the Heavy Guards drove my unit out of Dirbar Forest. I could not discover their whereabouts without endangering my recently-established connections. The cowards of the 4th Confederation Reserve Cavalry, who had surrendered their 'Mechs to the Avalon Hussars after blundering into a textbook ambush, were allowed to walk about secure areas of Tao City as free men. If the opportunity presented itself, they would be taught the folly of betraying the Chancellor before I departed Styk.

My new lance was an airfield security unit, thrown together from medium 'Mechs typical of Davion units. In addition to my Wolverine the lance included two Blackjacks and a Vulcan antipersonnel 'Mech. The Blackjack was generally considered an inferior 'Mech design among CAF and AFFS warriors, though many served in guard units such as this. Their Whirlwind-L light autocannons and four Medium Lasers were an effective deterrent to air attack, though they lacked the Garret D2j tracking system and heavier weaponry of the Rifleman, the BattleMech of choice for air defense. I thought it likely the Maskirovka would find the Fox's use for Blackjacks interesting, if I escaped to make such a report.

... they would be taught the folly of betraying the Chancellor ...

Patriotic elements, or terrorists as the Hussar commander referred to them, periodically made bold attacks against Davion troops, and the clubs and restaurants which catered to them. Though secretly I applauded demonstrations of Capellan resistance, ostensibly I was assigned to prevent such uprisings from damaging the valuable DropShips and fighters under my protection. A coincidence that I hoped would go unnoticed was that no attacks on the airfield had occurred since I took temporary command of the security lance. A word to the revolutionary elements, contacted through the Tech Conspiracy, as I then thought of it, was enough to keep them from attacking on my watch.

Those wondering how a junior officer could have organized such widespread elements must remember that House Fujita was an elite unit, specializing in guerilla warfare. Each of its members were trained by the Maskirovka in the ways of fostering insurgency on planets whose loyalty Davion had thought beyond question. In addition, members

of House Fujita would periodically receive even more specialized training, disappearing from our roster for months at a time, while they visited the Death Commando training center on Grand Base. Those who were not accepted for permanent assignment with the Death Commandos, and there was, incidentally, no disgrace associated with not being chosen, transferred what they had learned to the less-experienced members of House Fujita. As a unit, we had more skill in the silent arts than any MIIO director could imagine. Recall also that House Fujita had been stationed on Styk since the Fox's raid on Tao MechWorks back in 3025. Our military planners had had ample time to establish personal contacts and to familiarize each Fujita warrior with a defense plan similar to the one I was now attempting to carry out.

By early November, the situation was becoming precarious. I had been interviewed by operatives of MI5, the Counter-Insurgency branch of the Department of Military Intelligence. I was questioned about my identity in intricate detail. I felt free to be creative up to the point were something I said could be verified without much difficulty. I pretended to be from a back-water planet on the border with the Outworlds Alliance, hundreds of unquestionable light years away. I had graduated from a large academy with at least three hundred others and I had joined the Heavy Guards RCT barely in time for Operation Galahad '28. I was not surprised that records of my transfer were difficult to locate. Four hours later they returned me to duty.

At long last, the information that had been eluding me for a month practically fell at my feet. I was told that a lance from my urban security company would provide escort for a prisoner transfer, beginning at the Hussar HQ and ending at a Mule-Class civilian DropShip. Though I was not told the identity of the prisoner, it was inferred that their safe delivery had top priority, demanding the presence of a 'Mech lance. I was gambling that these were the House Fujita warriors whom I'd been seeking. A plan formed quickly as I requested increased resistance activity for the day of the transfer. I had little actual control over the resistance, which managed only a passable imitation of military discipline, but I had hoped they would understand the need and deliver their services.

Time; 0300 Hours, Tao City Local Time, November 6th, 3028

The small convoy made its way quickly through the streets of Tao City, characteristically deserted in the early morning. Three hours from now, the city's million or so inhabitants would begin the daily work ritual which not even the occupying forces of Hanse Davion could disrupt. But before the city showed even a hint of awakening, the transport hovercraft and its escort of four BattleMechs intended to have deposited their charges on board the Mule-Class DropShip waiting at the Tao Spaceport.

Simultaneous bombings, late on the evening of November 5th, had shattered two drinking establishments frequented by off-duty Davion troops. Garrison troops were on a high state of alert in the city, with reinforcements brought in from guard duty at the airfield. Likewise, only a skeleton crew of BattleMechs were left to defend the Tao Spaceport. The recent lull in terrorist activity in and about the area gave the Hussar commander reason to undercut its defense in the face of a tangible threat. The escort leader must have breathed a sigh of relief when the convoy passed beyond the city limits and began marching toward the port along the barricaded highway.

The spaceport tower, nexus for both security and air traffic control, challenged the convoy and waited with its weapons trained until the night's password was given in response. The hovercraft proceeded immediately to the launch pad reserved for the Mule-Class DropShip, followed by two of its escorts, a Griffin and a Javelin. The other two escorts, a Stinger and an Ostscout, moved off to resume their regular duties of guarding the spaceport.

When the hovercraft appeared on my MAD scanner, rounding the curve of the DropShip to enter the open cargo door, I gave the order for the doors of the hangar to open. Within the revealed interior of the cavernous hardened structure stood the thirteen surrendered BattleMechs of the 4th Confederation Reserve Cavalry. Though the vehicles had stood abandoned in this shelter for nearly a month, awaiting transport to a procurement outpost, their engines now glowed a cheery red on the scanners of the confused Davion 'Mechs.

My Thunderbolt, still bearing the insignia of the Capellan Armed Forces, stepped out of the hangar and scored a hit with its large laser on the hovercraft's air skirts, immobilizing it before it could reach the safety of the DropShip. As one, the other twelve Cavalry 'Mechs opened fire on the Federats, who had fired their jump jets to escape the deadly ambush. The Javelin's leg disintegrated under the combined autocannon fire of a pair of Centurions, while the PPCs, LRMs and lasers of three Vindicators ruptured the Griffin's torso, scattering flaming engine parts across the tarmac. With the immediate threat thus eliminated, the Thunderbolt advanced until it stood before the grounded hovercraft. Elevating my 'Mech's left arm to aim at the transport's cockpit, I fired and the machine guns mounted there pounded the thin armor until the bubble collapsed. It was then a simple matter for a Vindicator to pick up the crippled machine and carry it away.

I had chosen the ambush point to keep us in the shadow of the huge DropShip, preventing the tower from turning its weapons on my company of inexperienced Techs. In the face of the tower's full weapon's array, I feared that the men

and women who had received only rudimentary 'Mech training with House Fujita would succumb to the terror of combat. With the objective achieved so quickly, I ordered those 'Mechs equipped with jump-jets to leap the hangar behind us and make for the rendezvous.

With the safety of most of my green troops now assured, I had only to get the grounded 'Mechs past the rows of hangars and out of the spaceport across a nearby runway. The easiest way was to crash through the hangar at our backs, but that might damage the legs of the Locusts that had been forced to remain with me and the Centurions. There was no time to transfer the Locust pilots, and I could not afford to leave even one man behind to implicate the Techs in this encounter.

The Locusts broke from the cover of the DropShip running at top speed. LRM and PPC fire tore up the tarmac behind them, though stray missiles took their toll on the light 'Mechs' leg armor. Then the heavier 'Mechs charged out behind them, not stopping to respond aimed fire on the tower. The first Centurion took a PPC hit in the leg which sent it skidding into a hangar door. His partner and my Thunderbolt stood exposed, firing volley after volley of precious ammunition at the tower, while the downed Centurion struggled to right itself.

Eventually we were all up and running again, having taken extensive surface damage in the exchange. The Locusts had quickly reached a runway exit and were out of range of the tower's weapons, allowing them to concentrate on us. When we reached the exit, the Centurions had to slow to avoid skidding on the turn. Though skilled enough to have made the turn without risk, I had to guard my companions while they stood exposed. The tower now concentrated all fire on my 65-ton vehicle as I backed away from it, trying to outdistance the tower gunner's range. My LRMs had been exhausted, but the enemy had what seemed an endless supply. I was down to myomer cable and actuators when the missiles finally ceased to pound the Thunderbolt. I turned and hurried after the Centurions who awaited me at the end of the runway.

Standing amidst the fallen forms of the light Davion lance which had been on security duty was a newly blooded but triumphant company of Capellan BattleMechs. Two of my own light 'Mechs had been crippled in the fight and their pilots now rode in the grasp of two Vindicators. We moved out at the best speed we could manage, and in a matter of minutes reached the depression where our own transport hovercraft were. We left the 'Mechs running and clambered down the cockpit ladders to the waiting vehicles. As soon as all were aboard, including the three House Fujita warriors we had liberated, we disappeared into the night as quickly as we had come.

That morning, around 5 AM, every surviving member of the 4th Confederation Reserve Cavalry was rounded up by the garrison troops and brought in for intensive interrogation. They were the most logical suspects; they had both opportunity and motive. The entire group had been absent from their barracks during the hours preceding and following the attack, thanks to a little diversion I had planned for them with the aid of an old friend. The owner of a restaurant, which was in a part of town off-limits to Federat troops, had sent an invitation to the former Reservists for a banquet. The traitors had been entertained from dusk til dawn. When they finally returned to Hussar HQ, they were sobered up by the MI5 interrogators and asked their whereabouts of the evening in question. Slowly realizing the danger they faced, they gave specific directions to the restaurant and a description of its employees. What the investigators found was a building that appeared to have been vacant for some time, with no evidence of the alleged proprietor in sight. They were interrogated for a week, without result, before a military court found them guilty of espionage and attacking a military installation. The 4th Confederation Reserve Cavalry cowards were executed as an example to the people of Styk of the price of resisting the Federated Suns.

My LRMS had been exhausted!

The day after the execution, a DropShip was scheduled to depart Styk, heading for New Aragon. I was told to board my 'Mech in preparation for rejoining the Davion Heavy Guards in time for Operation Ambush. As a happy coincidence, most of the BattleMechs which had been abandoned on the night of the raid would be accompanying me aboard the Union-Class DropShip. This thought was a prudent move, considering use they had recently been put to. This left me less than twenty-four hours to plan my last operation on Styk.

November 14th, I walked the Wolverine to the spaceport in the company of my security lance, whose pilots were there to see me off. I noted the cratered tarmac and the tower whose walls had yet to be repaired and stifled a chuckle of satisfaction. I trudged the Wolverine up the loading ramp, turned and waved farewell to the Federats with my 'Mech's arm. I was about to enter the DropShip and bid a hasty adieu to this world, once and for all, when sirens erupted throughout the complex.

I surmise that the absence of the Techs from their barracks in Tao City had at last been noticed. The Federats had been justifiably delayed in discovering this fact, for the

Astechs had volunteered to remain behind and present the illusion that the senior Techs were with them. In actuality, the Techs had been secreted aboard the recovered 4th Cavalry 'Mechs, temporarily stored at Hussar HQ, and had subdued the Techs who would otherwise have delivered them from within the cockpits. Those Techs who could not appropriate a 'Mech had hidden in supply transports heading in the same direction. All, including the subdued Federat Techs and the liberated Fujita MechWarriors, were now aboard and in control of the DropShip.

Hoping to buy my comrades time, I launched the Wolverine from the surface of the loading ramp and soared high on jets of super-heated mercury to land beside the control tower. Relieved of its burden, the DropShip's cargo door began grinding shut, but the Vulcan pilot now moved to prevent the ship's escape. Enabling my weapons, I fired a salvo of SRMs matched by autocannon and chin-turreted laser into the wraith-like Vulcan. The thinly-armored 'Mech was struck severely in the torso, causing it to topple forward, directly atop the cargo door.

Knowing that I would have to free that ramp if the DropShip was to have a chance to depart, I hurled the Wolverine into a charge, bringing it within reach of the Vulcan. Autocannon and laser fire from the Blackjacks sent gouts of armor spilling from my 'Mech's legs and abdomen, and even the stricken Vulcan doused my legs with its flamer. But I reached the enemy 'Mech and applied my massive battlefist to its arm, shoving it away from the door which then resumed its closure.

For an eternity of seconds, I stood with my back to the portal, exchanging fire and permitting none of the three Federat 'Mechs to impede the ship's departure. The tower had not fired its weapons, probably for fear of damaging the vessel. I then heard the rumble of the ship's fusion drive and knew that I had accomplished my goal. I launched skyward and was quickly followed by the jump-capable Davion 'Mechs. I entertained notions of dying a hero's death as my out-matched machine struggled to give its all for the Chancellor. I stood with my back against the tower, the heat build-up preventing any final evasive maneuvers I might devise. The enemy closed in.

Blue flame highlighted the backs of the Blackjacks and a familiar 'Mech appeared behind the Vulcan. The spindly 'Mech was thrust into the tower a few meters to my left. Seriously off-balanced, it crashed through the wall and collapsed, while the fatally damaged structure began to creak and sway. I shuffled away as quickly as possible, just before the ten-story structure crashed down atop the helpless 'Mech. Three Vindicators pounded mercilessly upon the Blackjacks from all directions, until the Davion 'Mechs were forced to retreat from the doomed situation.

Enraged, I reprimanded the Techs who I thought to be piloting the Vindicators for endangering the ship and received a sharp rebuke in return. A familiar voice sternly reminded me that I was not the senior commanding officer. Captain McCready, one of the warriors rescued the previous week, had led the other warriors through the door on the opposite side of the DropShip, to which we now returned. Once, aboard with the door sealed for the last time, we shut down the 'Mechs and prepared for an emergency departure.

Thirty-one hours later, we were on final approach to dock with a Capellan JumpShip. We had not been expecting to make it all the way to a standard jump-point undetected, of course. The captains of the JumpShips stationed there would have been notified of our identity and hostile intentions by microwave transmission long before we could approach them. A Merchant-Class JumpShip had been hidden at a pirate jump point since the invasion began. All military JumpShips in the Capellan Navy had standing orders to remain in undisclosed jump-points, awaiting escaping DropShips, for as long as supplies and circumstances allowed, which could be as long as three months.

We docked without incident and prepared to jump. In a matter of hours, the ship would be safely within travel-distance of Sarna. As a final salute to the men and women of House Fujita who had died attempting what I had accomplished through good fortune, I sent a carefully-worded message to the Avalon Hussars.

I laughingly explained my identity as a sleeper, a double-agent lying submerged in the AFFS for over a decade. I thought this simple lie would give the MIIO director ulcer trouble for at least a month while they tried to discover what other sabotage I had been responsible for. The message included scornful criticisms from the other Fujita warriors regarding the laxness of Federat security. I thanked them for their generous donation of a DropShip and a company of BattleMechs to the Capellan cause. I assured them that their equipment would aid the Chancellor to turn the tide of the war and that loyal Capellans would not be long in returning to reclaim Styk.

Twenty years later, that promise has yet to be kept. But my philosophy is that there is no such thing as a former Capellan; the patriots who are captive behind Davion's iron curtain will always know House Liao to be their rightful ruler. The Star League disintegrated from within because the individual citizens could not disown the loyalty they owed to the ruling Houses. The Federated Commonwealth, in its own time, will become decadent and careless of its borders. There will always be a Liao to reunite lost worlds and reclaim the glory that was the Capellan Confederation.

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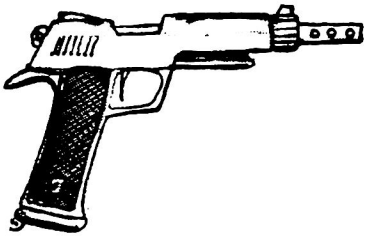

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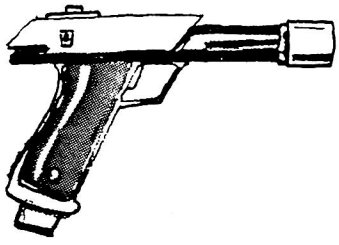

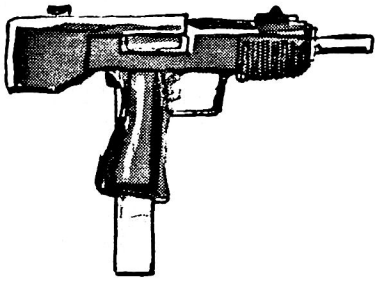

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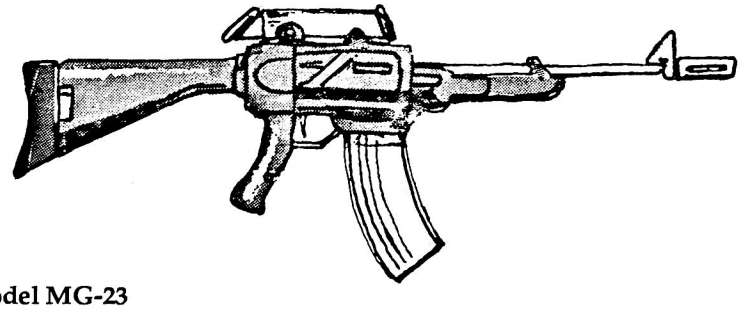

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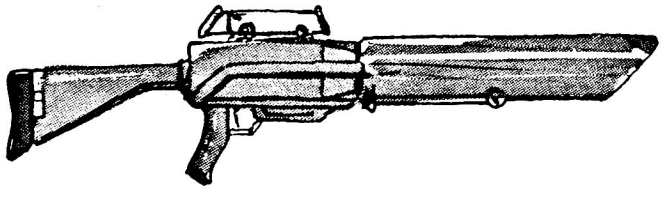

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MechTac

NAIS Midterm Exam

In our February 3038 issue, we thought we'd give the readers a taste of the misery of cadet examinations. One of our sources retrieved a copy of the 3037 NAIS senior Tactics Midterm. We didn't pay much attention to the warning at the end of the exam; after all, this was an old exam, useful only to those studying for the current one. What we didn't see was the desperate undercurrents of the Federated Commonwealth's and the Draconis Combine's intelligence services as they readied for a war neither would publicly admit to. Although we printed this one in Marik space, on Atreus, somehow pages 25-31 of that issue were blank.

Instructions: This exam consists of eighteen battle simulator scenarios. Seventeen of the scenarios contains a glaring error that would not occur in actual combat. You are to identify the error in each scenario in clear, exact terms. Note that one scenario is a "red herring" that contains no errors. You are to identify this scenario as well. Each scenario is worth five points, and you must finish within thirty minutes. Good luck.

Note: When studying a simulator scenario it is often helpful to break it into small, easily manageable segments. Keep the following conversions in mind:

1 simulator turn = 10 seconds
1 simulator hexagon = 30 meters

1) Kyle Peterson of the 2nd Drakons glanced at his HUD and bit back a sharp curse. Jill Logan's Archer and Frank Wright's Longbow had been surprised on the far side of the stream by a pair of Ronin Quickdraws and a Rifleman. Worse, Kyle picked up a ponderous Stalker closing to within LRM range. Jack Rathman's Thunderbolt was still waist deep in the sludge that passed for a stream, so for the moment the Ronin 'Mechs had a staggering short range firepower advantage. Kyle knew that his lancemates desperately needed his Ostsol's firepower and superior mobility to even the odds. He gritted his teeth and gunned the Neon Wraith up to 86.4 kph, his maximum speed. He passed Rathman's Thunderbolt, which was belching LRMs as fast as its reloader could cycle, and emerged on the far bank, already triggering the Wraith's Tronel large lasers.

2) Kyle smiled wolfishly as one of his large lasers carved huge chunks of armor from the Rifleman's right arm. The Rifleman quickly spun to bring his left side to face this new threat since its injured right arm's armor could not withstand another blast from a large laser. This is exactly what Peterson had in mind, however, so he used the Wraith's speed to position himself directly in front of the renegade Rifleman. Just as he was about to trigger another burst of his large lasers, the rear lock on siren screamed shrilly. One of the Quickdraws had managed to maneuver directly behind the Neon Wraith. Kyle sensed that he did not have time to evade both threats, but the Wraith was not without rear defenses. Knowing that he would pay the price in heat, he triggered the large lasers at the Rifleman, and the rear firing Tronel medium lasers at the Quickdraw. He watched the Rifleman's right arm fall limply to its side even as wave upon wave of heat flooded his cockpit.

3) "Tracy, dive left! You've got a Marauder at 4 o'clock!" Tracy Brandt instantly threw her Wasp, the Lady's Choice, to the left in a controlled dive. Huge divots of freshly uprotted earth and grass showered down upon the length of the prone Wasp as Tracy watched autocannon shells chew up the grass where the Lady's Choice had been just seconds earlier. She was already targeting her medium laser as she tried to stand, but she attempted the delicate maneuver too quickly. The Lady spun back to the ground. A quick glance at her telltale board showed no external damage. Rebuking herself harshly for her carelessness, she gently levered the

20 ton scout 'Mech to its feet and moved over the newly tilled field to support her lancemates.

4) Mike Fitzpatrick grudgingly increased his respect for the pilot of the enemy Grand Dragon. Despite the fact that Fitzpatrick's Crusader, the Lionheart, both outweighed and outgunned the faster Kuritan 'Mech, the Dragon was giving as good as it got. Fitzpatrick scuttled for cover behind a ridge as the Dragon spun to its left and launched a barrage of LRMs. The LRMs exploded harmlessly against the rocky outcropping that covered the Lionheart's lower half. Now it was Fitzpatrick's turn. He centered his sights and triggered both of his SRM-6 racks. Missiles blossomed from the Lionheart's legs toward the lighter Kuritan Mech. He was elated to see ten of the twelve missiles pepper the hapless Dragon mercilessly about the head and shoulders. The Dragon listed crazily to one side, then crashed heavily to the ground.

5) "Mike, Ann's down! Finish that Dragon off, and get over here!" Fitzpatrick began to sprint for the downed Dragon when he noticed that it wasn't moving at all. "Those two SRMs that hit his head must have knocked him cold," Fitzpatrick thought. He brought the Lionheart to a dead stop and carefully aimed both SRM-6s at the still motionless Dragon's head. The missiles shot out and found their target. When the smoke trail cleared the Dragon was laying in the same position, but a thin, oily black smoke ascended from the gaping cavity where the Grand Dragon's head had been.

6) Fitzpatrick mouthed a silent prayer for the mechwarrior he'd just killed as he wheeled the Lionheart around to succor Ann Randd's Jagermech, the Egotist. The Egotist had apparently found itself a heap of trouble, but the form of that trouble was nowhere to be seen. The lightly armored Jagermech was laying in a crumpled pile with sparking circuitry exposed along the length of its torso. Fitzpatrick's stomach turned and bile rose to this throat when he saw the Egotist's cockpit. What wasn't blackened and charred was still molten. Coolant gas mixed with combustible fuels roiled noisomely to the cockpit's surface. Only prolonged exposure to a high intensity flamer left that kind of ruin.

"Who?—and where?" raged through Fitzpatrick's thought. There were 'Mechs everywhere, and every one of them could have perpetrated this atrocity. Suddenly one of the Lionheart's motion sensors screamed warning. A Liao Warhammer had skirted the edge of the forest to Fitzpatrick's right and emerged with both PPCs raised. Realization struck him even as the twin azure beams rained down and staggered the Lionheart. A very few Liao Warhammers mounted twin flamers instead of the traditional Sperry-Browning machine guns! Fitzpatrick twisted the Lionheart's torso hard to the right and kept twisting until the Warhammer came into range. When his Garret A-6 battle computer signaled a positive lock he triggered twin barrages of LRMs and SRMs even as hot tears of liquified armor dribbled down the Lionheart's devastated right side.

7) Singh Ghandi backed his Archer, the Vishnu, slowly out of the woods while scanning his monitors looking for the Marik Spider. "Where did that malfing little bug go?", he thought frantically as he continued backing away. Singh was not actually concerned that the Spider might damage his beloved Vishnu, but he had been the only one close enough to the marauding scout 'Mech to stop it, so he had been ordered to hunt the pest down and kill it. Suddenly his motion sensor screamed to life as the Spider broke from the woods and charged directly at the startled Lyran pilot.

Singh turned the heavy 'Mech at its best speed, but by the time he could bring his LRMs to bear the Spider had covered 300 meters from the edge of the woods and was now only 90 meters away. Still backpeddling Singh gritted his teeth and triggered both of his Doombud LRM racks at the still closing Spider. He smiled grimly as 28 of the 40 missiles literally blasted the Marik 'Mech to the ground. The Spider jerked twice, then suddenly froze, the hallmark of a wrecked gyroscope.

8) Rick Chan thought less than charitable thoughts about madame Chancellor Romano Liao. He remembered well how loudly she had boasted of the might of the newly produced Cataphracts. She had assured her troops that the Cataphract would have no trouble standing up to assault 'Mechs such as the Zeus. Chan had been given his Cataphract by the acting Chancellor herself in compensation for sacrificing the Awesome, that had been in his family for more decades than he had years, to save his unit from the Davion aggressors.

The Davion Zeus that Rick eyed from his cockpit at a distance of about 30 meters seemed somewhat less than terrified of the advancing Cataphract. The Zeus had seemed even less terrified 30 seconds ago, when its StarFire LRMs had breached the Confederation's Pride's right leg armor and locked its hip. Somehow Rick had managed to limp the Confederation's Pride within minimum distance of those thrice-damned LRMs, and had even managed to severely weaken the Zeus' Center torso armor with blasts from his PPC and autocannon. He triggered his autocannon again, seconds before the Zeus advanced into physical attack range. "If that's the way he wants it, fine" thought Rick. Just as the Zeus entered optimum range Rick lashed out with the Pride's left leg. The blow caught the Zeus' left leg and staggered the larger Davion machine. The Zeus' pilot's desperate attempt to maintain control failed, and the Zeus thundered heavily to the ground.

9) Bart Stevens admired the pilot of the Thunderbolt he was about to destroy. Bart's Marauder, the Winds of Fate, had sent blast after blast of PPC fire into the heavy Stiener 'Mech, but it had stubbornly refused to die. The Fate was not exactly pristine, either. Bart's left PPC blasts were erratic thanks to two damaged myomer bundles, and his torso mounted autocannon simply wasn't there anymore. Still, Bart knew that the last PPC shot had decided the battle. The Thunderbolt's mangled right leg simply could not withstand the fury of the particle projection cannon and had gone spinning off into the dusk. Bart immediately advanced, but was stunned to see the Thunderbolt actually pull itself upright. Not every MechWarrior had that kind of piloting skill. Bart positioned himself on the Thunderbolt's damaged right side, but the heavy 'Mech successfully twisted its torso without spinning to the ground. Now it was Bart's turn to lose a limb as the Thunderbolts trio of medium lasers sent his battered left arm sailing into the gloom. The Fate's right leg swung forth with a volition of its own in a perfectly executed kick that struck the beleaguered Thunderbolt's left leg. The Lyran Mech crashed heavily to the ground, even as its head split open and its command chair rocketed out.

10) Sean O'Riley winced as the Kuritan Cicada scurried into the dense tangle of woods. Sean pulled up his Enforcer, the Elliot Ness, and scanned his sensor suite. No luck. "OK, you little malfer, you asked for it", Sean thought, "I'll burn you out." He deliberately triggered his torso mounted small laser again and again. Soon a merry blaze was licking at the tangle that the Cicada had vanished into. "It won't be long now," he smugly thought as he carefully backed away from the soon-to-be raging inferno.

11) Sean had to stifle a smug smirk as the Cicada hotfooted it out of the woods almost directly in front of him. "Hey Snake, where's the fire?," he crowed into his comlink as he triggered his Federated autocannon and his ChisComp large laser. His patience paid off as laser fire burned away all of the Cicada's right torso armor and penetrated into the Kuritan 'Mech's delicate internal structure. Milliseconds later autocannon shells finished what the lasers had started. The Cicada's right torso was now completely destroyed, thus rendering its right arm and leg useless. The Cicada flailed briefly, but to no avail as it plummeted to the ground. Sean jumped his 'Mech in closer for the coup-de-grace.

12) Jake "Looney Toot" McGraw paused just long enough to relay the Atlas' coordinates to Susan Fox's Catapult two blocks away. Then he simultaneously triggering every weapon on his 45-ton Phoenix Hawk, the Cat O'Nine Tales, at the looming monstrosity less than 32 meters away. McGraw had been patiently hiding at one of two major intersections in what the locals insisted on calling a city. He'd heard 'Mechs approaching, but was afraid that a detailed scan would blow his cover, so he had waited in ignorance. At point blank range McGraw couldn't miss. His large laser, twin medium lasers, and dual M-100 machine guns had all connected. He watched with morbid fascination as the Atlas literally shrugged off every single hit. Jake was badly outclassed and he knew it, but he wasn't called "Looney Toot" for nothing. He hesitated just long enough to make a lewd gesture with the Cat's left arm before triggering his jump jets. He smirked as autocannon shells from the enraged Atlas passed beneath his 'Mech. "Oh baby," he thought, "If we get out of this you'll be the Cat of TEN Tales for sure."

13) Kate Stengall was in dire straights, and she knew it. Her Assassin, the Hellspawn, had been caught on a scouting mission behind enemy lines by an enemy scout lance. Now she was simultaneously engaging two Wasps, a Panther, and a Phoenix Hawk in a desperate running battle back towards friendly lines. Kate had radioed for help, and it should arrive at any time now. Unfortunately, the enemy lance showed superb tactical coordination, and the Hellspawn had several rents in his armor. Even now the Wasps were drawing beads on Kate. "Think Stengall, think," she admonished herself. "What do they think I'll do next?" She grinned as she contemplated her favorite ploy. The Wasps probably figured she'd jump 210 meters (her maximum) toward friendly lines. The Panther would add its firepower to their efforts. The Phoenix Hawk would trail behind, in case she jumped back toward enemy lines. Well, she would jump 210 meters, but not toward friendly lines or enemy lines.

She opened her jump jets wide, but she did not hit her steering thrusters. The Hellspawn leapt 210 meters straight up. The flabbergasted enemy 'Mechs were caught completely off guard. Kate's up-but-not-away maneuver made her just as hard to hit as if she had steered, and it had the added benefit of completely throwing off the enemy coordination. Now, if she could just hold off a little longer...

14) Maximillian Von Stuben grinned in anticipation. It wasn't often that he participated in physical combat with his Ostscout, the Jim Bowie. Usually Von Stuben spent the entire battle running around relaying data about enemy positions to HQ and occasionally spotting for indirect fire. This time was different, however. The battle that raged below was as desperate as it was bloody. No one paid any attention to a lightly armed scout 'Mech that hopped to and fro. Maximillian had jumped onto a small hill and had been scurrying along a twelve meter ridge looking for a place to hide when he had seen a Battlemaster about 100 meters away punch an Atlas squarely in the cranium.

The Atlas had backed away 90 meters until it was literally at the Bowie's feet. The Atlas was busy crippling the Battlemaster with yet another well placed shot to its center torso from the huge Pontiac autocannon. Maybe the Atlas hadn't seen the Bowie, or maybe he figured he'd trash it after taking care of the Battlemaster. But the result was an Atlas five meters away from where the Bowie stood. Max screamed wildly as he brought the Bowie forward and sent his right leg hurtling outward in a perfect snap kick. The Bowie's foot struck the Atlas in the back of the head and kept going. Even seasoned warriors stared upward in raw amazement as an Atlas' head sailed serenely over the battlefield.

15) Lisa Harris advanced her Grasshopper, the Yiminy Cricket, to within five meters of the Steiner Orion. They had exchanged weapons fire about three seconds ago, and now it was time for the down and dirty. The Orion probably didin't care to risk a kick with its damaged actuators, but Lisa was under no such stricture. She lashed out with her left leg and felt a satisfying crunch as her left foot impacted the Orion's left leg. She also flailed out with both fists for good measure. Only the left one found its mark, but any damage was good damge as far as Lisa was concerned.

16) Stewart Payne was not amused. His Warhammer, the Great White, was in the midst of Darwinian battle with a Stiener Marauder. Only the strongest would survive this one. Payne had been the strongest so far; his superior short range weaponry had compensated for his lighter armor. The mind numbing heat of salvo after salvo of PPC fire had drawn the combatants closer and closer until they were within physical combat range. The two leviathans now slugged it out less than ten meters apart. Payne braced himself and triggered both medium lasers, both smalls, the Holly SRM-6 rack, and his twin Sperry-Browning machine guns for good measure. The heat in his cockpit actually dropped wihtout the waste heat of his PPCs, but this was ignored when the Marauder crashed to the ground at his feet. Payne had already started the Great White's kick, and it had too much momentum to stop now. The prone Marauder was a smaller target, and thus was more difficult to hit. The Great White's foot hurtled through the air where the erect Marauder would have been, but where the prone Marauder was most definitely not. Overbalanced, the Great White fell, nearly striking the still thrashing Marauder.

17) Sven Fjordson couldn't believe his good fortune as he nudge the steering thrusters in mid-jump. Sven's Wolverine, Hop 'n Chop, was in the middle of a "death-from-above" attack on a Ronin Awesome when supporting fire from a friendly Victor had sent the Awesome plunging to the ground. The Hop 'n Chop landed solidly on the Awesome, but not in the manner Sven was expecting. The "death-from-above" tactic was so devastating because it concentrated the attacking 'Mech's weight on the enemy's upper half. A lucky attacker could hope to have one of his feet land on the enemy's cockpit. But, because the Awesome was prone, the Hop 'n Chop had landed on its legs! The Ronin 'Mech took the majority of this damage to its already breached left leg, which snapped off at the knee. Sven, meanwhile had miraculously kept the Hop 'n Chop from joining the Awesome on terra firma.

18) Stacy Keel raged at her impending death. She had come so close! Her scout lance had been surprised by a pair of heavy enemy 'Mechs approximately 90 seconds ago. Now, almost an eternity later, her Vindicator, the Mandarin's Dream, was the only member of her lance still functioning. She had rejoiced when the Marik Archer had gone off after Ulfsonn, leaving only a Marauder between herself and freedom. She had immediately sprinted toward the safety of a nearby ridge. But just before she'd reached it one of the Marauder's PPCs had hit her left leg; although it had not penetrated the armor, it sent her sprawling to the ground. The 12 meter ridge beckoned enticingly from only 90 meters away, but it couldn't be reached without running. And, unfortunately for her, it took more than 10 seconds to stand up and accelerate to running speed. If only she could stand and run she would have made it. She could imagine the sickening smirk on the Marauder pilot's face as he stopped at optimal PPC range and raised both arms.

Think you know all the answers?

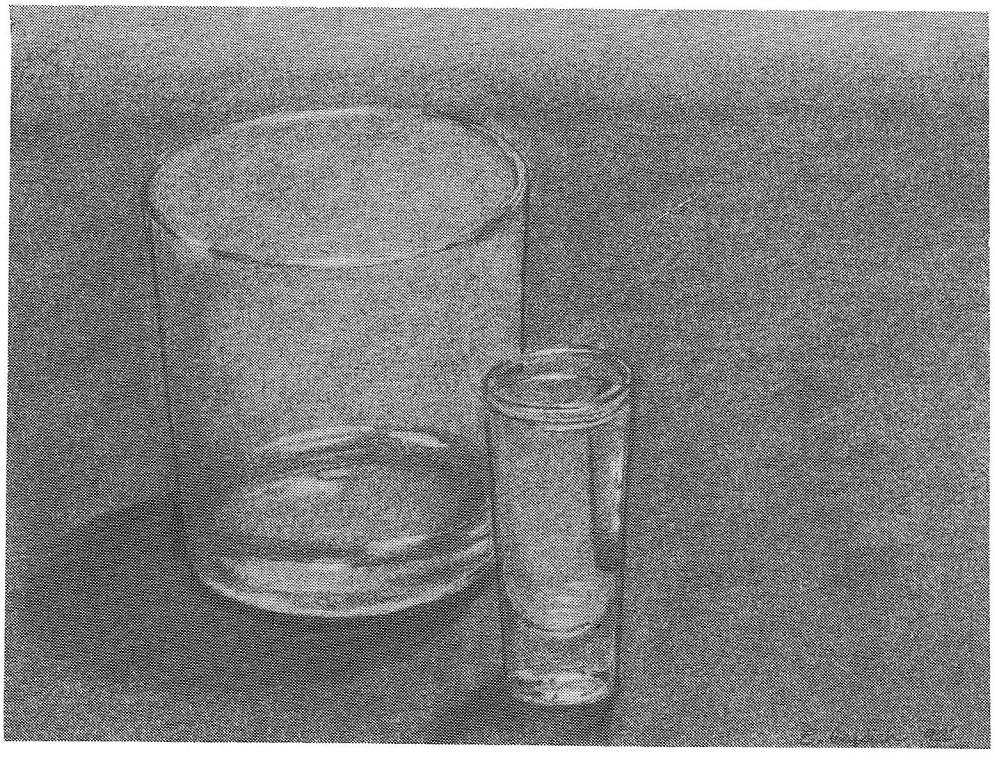
If you and your buddies have finished arguing over the solutions to these questions, get somebody to write them down so you won't fight later. (As Sherlock Holmes should have said, "The answer is always more obvious in hindsight." Or as PT Barnum may very well have said, "It doesn't matter what a sucker bets on, it only matters what he earnestly believes he has bet on.")

Okay, ready?

Turn to page 55 for the answer key

Steady Hands

Tales of the Cobalt Coil # 6



It was a melancholy night at the Coil; it always is after we say goodbye forever to one of our own. Wakes are like that. There are bursts of levity, but the weight of death always returns, reminding us that we are all mortal and a friend is gone. Somehow, I can't find those sort of thoughts conducive to maintaining a light atmosphere. It keeps making you think.

Today, Shadak went into the municipal fusion reactor, his body reduced to pure energy.

Ever since that night years ago when Shadak first opened up and told his first story, he'd become, if not exactly gregarious, a regular contributor to our informal storytelling sessions. For those of you unfamiliar with the Cobalt Coil, we specialize in two things: good strong drinks, notably that set of concoctions known as Particle Projection Cannons (PPC's for short); and providing a comfortable atmosphere conducive to storytelling. The Coil's a haven for those who know the place and are willing to obey the few rules we have. It's a place to come, to relax among your peers, and, perhaps, to unburden yourself of old ghosts and memories that you've carried for too many years. Shadak was one of us.

Shadak never told us his full life story. Few people ever do that. I don't know how he landed on the GameWorld. I think of Solaris as sort of the Trojan Point of the Inner Sphere. Things sort of drift here and become trapped in a never-ending cycle of destruction. Things come here to die — men, 'Mechs, and sometimes dreams. There are a lot of people like Shadak scattered across space. You find them everywhere. Worn out warriors who survived too long. Many of them wind up in backwaters like Solaris, eking out their existence until they finally punch out of this war-torn life. Solaris is full of them.

Shadak was a little better than most of that forgotten legion, our retired warriors. He made a living by doing odd jobs like scut work for freelance Technicians or cleaning some of the smaller 'Mech arenas. And he had us; we watch out for our own. Shadak could always find a place to spend the night when the sulfur-tainted winds blew or the acid rain fell. Like I said, the regulars at the Coil take care of each other. We haven't got anyone else. But Shadak wouldn't need our help ever again.

He was stabbed in an alley not ten blocks from the Cobalt Coil, robbed for the small wad of C-bills that was a week's wages. He'd been unloading ammo from DropShips and was on his way to the Coil to spend some cash socializing with his friends. Some gutter scum killed him. A man who wore a Davion Home Guard jacket and had warrior's eyes had his cockpit punched by a hood with a homemade blade. I wonder how many wars Shadak fought through to die in an ally on Solaris. In the end, what's it all for?

Shadak died a pauper, and none of us had the cash to bury him. Graves cost money, even in a pit like Solaris. So he went into the city fusion core with some of us watching. We cleaned the mud and blood off that battered jacket he was so proud of, combed his hair, and cut the stubble from his scarred face before saying goodbye. A slight gesture, but it mattered to us. We watched as he was placed on the edge of the magnetic bottle that contained the fusion reaction and the Techs adjusted the fields. Shadak went into the heart of a man-made star — and for an instant, shone as bright as any nova. When I go, I hope I burn as bright.

When it was done, we came back to the Coil to raise a few glasses to Shadak and all the friends we've ever lost. Blake's Blood, but it's a lot! Someone brought out an old guitar, and songs from across the Inner Sphere filled the Coil that night. Between tunes, we talked. And in the Coil, talk always turns to storytelling.

I suppose the subject of the night was the only logical one, rituals. Nothing in man's history is so cloaked in ritual as death. The ending of life is a mysterious, frightening thing. To cope, mankind has always masked it in elaborate ceremony. We started talking of funerals we'd attended, but the subject branched out to encompass any odd story of superstition or habit. I'd never really considered how much of our lives are ruled by such rituals. I learned a lot of them that night as Lenth and I poured for the bar. Of course I marked the PPC's to half price — can't have a storytelling night without them flowing. Every round started with a toast to one or another of the fallen. A lot of tales were told, but as usual, one stood out beyond the rest. That tale was Varen's.

Varen had been coming in regularly for about six months. I don't think he'd been on planet much longer than that. You can always tell people who have lived long on Solaris; they have developed a sort of invisible armor that blunts them to the squalor and pain that fill this place. We all get it, though in the Coil we can set it aside.

In a lot of respects, Varen was a lot like Shadak before Shadak told his first story. Varen had the look of a retired warrior. It was in his eyes and in the way he moved. I had him pegged as a fighter-jock. The left side of his face was webbed with the crimson traces of ruptured blood vessels. That happens sometimes to Aerospace pilots that pull a high-G turn but don't get the chance to have the damage fixed quickly. Some even think of it as a badge of honor. He was quiet, paid his bills, and didn't bother anyone. He made it a point to attend the regular Friday Half-Price Nights and somehow managed to make it to most of the informal story sessions. Varen never told a story; he just listened. Some people are like that; they find their peace in the joys and trials of others. I knew Varen had something buried in his soul, but he hid it so well that only a bartender would know.

Varen always ordered the same thing. A shot of laser-light and a glass of seltzer water with a twist. Laser-light's slang for pure grain alcohol, same as what makes up half of any PPC. Varen would drink the water, look at the shot, and then

order another seltzer. He'd keep that up all night, the shot untouched on the bar in front of him. Occasionally, he'd lift his hand, hold it flat out in front of him, and stare at it like the answers to all the questions ever asked were locked inside his flesh. When he left, the shot glass would still be on the bar, as full as when I poured it. I never asked him why, and I'm proud to say that no one else ever did either. In the Coil, you can keep your secrets if you're so inclined.

After Shadak's funeral, I saw Varen drink his shot. I didn't ask then, but I knew something was up. He drank four more over the next few hours, and I didn't see any change in his behavior. I suspected the changes were going on inside. Then he did it. He stood up, lifted his shot glass, and said, "To Cynthia Woo, struck down in combat — an ending fit for a warrior."

He gave a bitter laugh, tossed down the Laser-light without batting an eye, then threw the glass against the far wall. It shattered with a sharp crash. We all were silent, listening for what might come next. He rinsed the burn of the alcohol from his mouth with seltzer, then started to speak.

"I served with the First Chisholm's Raiders Regimental Combat Team during the war between Davion and Kurita a few years back. You remember, the one the Fox lost? We were part of the initial wave that punched into Dragon territory, and for a while we all thought we were going to roll them up like we had the Capellans in the Fourth Succession War. A few months into the invasion, the Raiders ran into some stiff resistance and got mauled. Not destroyed, but hit bad enough so command decided to rotate us back for a refit. We were sent to New Aberdeen. We made it just in time for the Kurita counteroffensive.

"I'd been with the Raiders for two years. I flew a Corsair Aerospace fighter which had been in the family for generations. For those of you unfamiliar with that particular fighter, the Corsair is a fifty-ton craft built mainly for intra-atmospheric work. A lot of Davion Corsairs have the small and medium lasers stripped off and a Short Range Missile system installed. Mine was of the original configuration, just lasers for weapons. It was named the Ruptured Duck. I was assigned to a recon lance as high cover during initial planetary assaults. That's where I met Cynthia.

She commanded the recon lance. Tall, willowy, with the most remarkable green eyes, that was Cynthia. I suppose all the unattached males lusted after her, and most of the attached ones as well. What she saw in me I'll never know. Besides being a heart-stoppingly beautiful woman, Cynthia was also a top notch MechWarrior; her lance was always winning more than its share of commendations. Cynthia's old salvaged Hermes II looked like something that crawled from a scrap heap. That was just camouflage; inside it was in nearly mint condition. Hers was one of the top flight recon lances. That's why they rated a fighter escort. So much for their luck.

"Let me digress for a moment and tell you something about my family. The Dolittles have been supporters of House Davion for centuries. We have a stable of two BattleMechs and three fighters, of which the Corsair is the most prestigious. We've served the Federated Suns since the First Succession War, and done so with distinction. Tradition runs deep in our family. One tradition is drinking. Dad always said, 'Son, if you're going to fight hard, play hard.' About as soon as I was weaned off milk, Dad started me on rye whiskey. By the time I made it to the Raiders, I had a well deserved reputation as one of the biggest party animals in Known Space. But it was more than that. You see, I actually fought better with a few slugs under my coolant vest. At least, I knew I did.

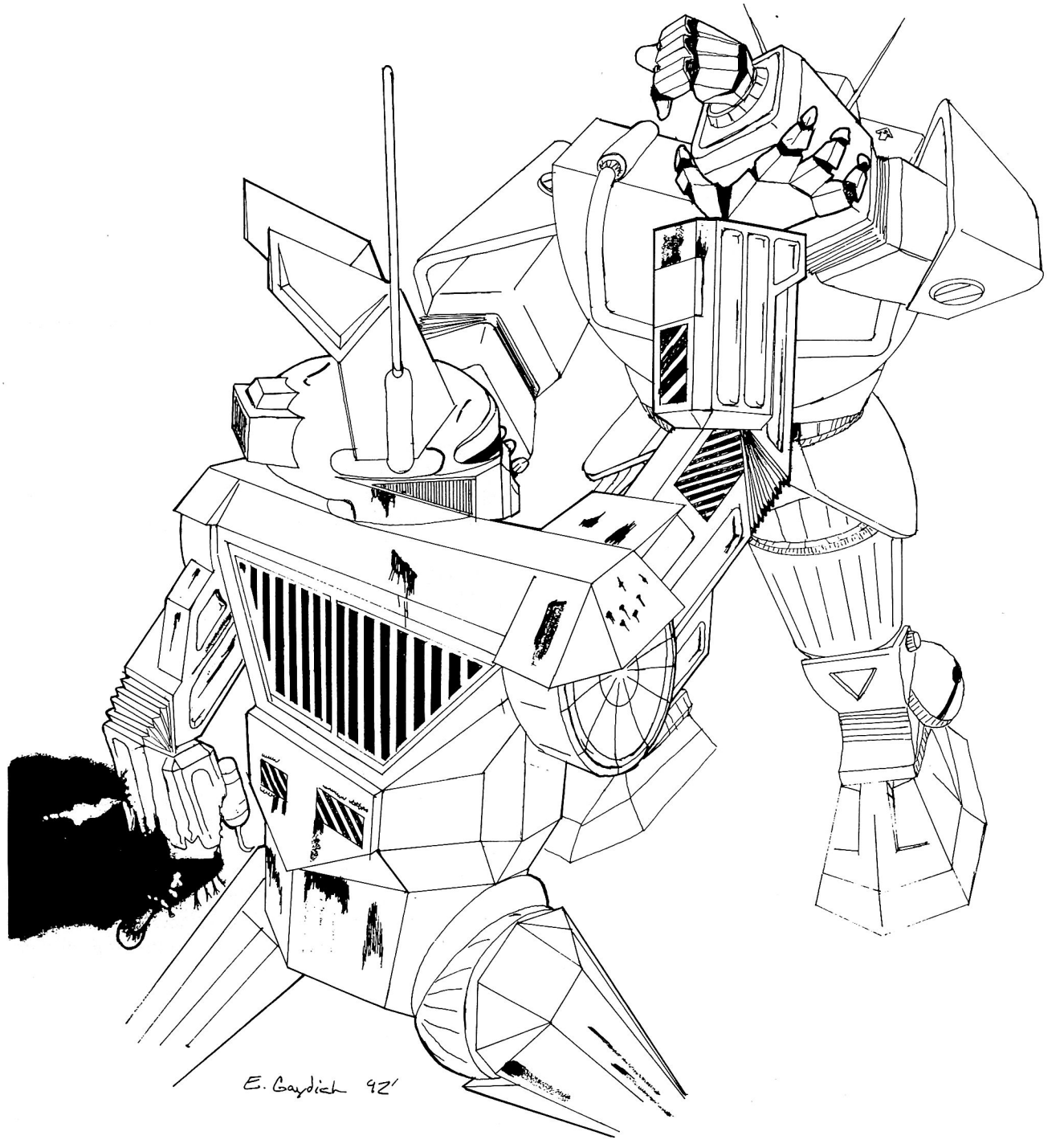
"It wasn't enough just to boost a few shots before a mission. It got so I could feel the effects wearing off, and without the alcohol running through my system, I felt myself get edgy. That cool confidence was gone. So I had a Tech rig my auto-doc; you know, that system that monitors your blood chemistry and pumps you full of painkillers if you get hit, or stimulants if you black out from a high-G turn. Mine did double duty. It kept up a drip of blood-stabilized alcohol into my system. That meant I was set for a whole mission. I always flew with 'combat juice' to keep me going.

"Back to Cynthia. I guess it was a case of opposites attracting. She liked quiet evenings, either at the theater or reading a book tape. I liked drinking, card playing, and lacrosse. Still we hit it off, enough so that we'd decided that when the war was over we'd marry. Funny how things work out.

"The war started and I pitched in with a vengeance. I figured if I racked up enough kills and decorations, I could retire with Cynthia to the family estates. And for a while, it looked like it was working. The Dragons were reeling back on all fronts and the 'juice' kept me going. All I had to do was feel the fire in my veins and I knew I could do no wrong. No maneuver was too tough or foe unbeatable to the Ruptured Duck. Then the unit got shot up, and we were rotated back. That was okay by me. My supply of alcohol for the cockpit dispenser was getting low, and that isn't something most supply officers keep much of handy. We were on New Aberdeen for all of twenty hours before the Kuritans landed.

"To this day, I still don't know what went wrong with that war. I figure the Dragons learned a few lessons from what Hanse Davion did to Liao in the Fourth Succession War, and anticipated what was coming enough to somehow turn the tables. In any case the Dragons came in with blood in their eyes; soon the entire planet was in flames and we were fighting for survival.

"The Raiders fought back with all the tenacity of an experienced line unit. The problem was that we were caught with our shorts down. Not only were we in a supposedly 'secure' area, but we'd just come off-line without having


E. Gaydich 92'

time for a full overhaul, much less a refit. There wasn't a lot of choice, so we fought back. We did a damned good job considering what we were up against.

"I stayed linked with Cynthia's unit. It took a lot of string-pulling, but my family has big enough political connections so my request for that assignment was taken seriously. The fighting was incredibly bitter. The snakes were striking back with all their pent-up anger, and we were the targets. As the days wore on, things got worse. And for me, the hardest part was my dwindling supply of 'juice'. To conserve it, I started cutting back on how much I'd load into the cockpit at any one time. I figured it would last longer that way.

"You have to understand, I'd never considered the possibility I was an alcoholic. That just doesn't happen to warriors, does it? No, I could end the 'juice' any time I wanted, I thought. I just didn't want to. It helped me fight by making me calm. What could be wrong with that? We all have our own little rituals and talismans, don't we?"

Throughout his speech, Varen's voice had slowly risen in volume and passion. He stopped suddenly and looked around, as if hunting for someone who'd argue his point. None of us did; we'd all known too many people who were slaves to their own rituals. In my day, I've known Techs that only touched their wrenches in a certain order, warriors who wouldn't eat anything but meat before combat, and civilians from past battles, thinking it somehow protected them from future wars. In the end, I think we aren't much different from our primitive ancestors who cut out hearts to appease the sun. Superstition coils its way throughout human history. I suspect we'll never outgrow it.

"The fighting got tougher," Varen continued. "As the days flashed by, ammo and other critical supplies dwindled. Then the day came. I got in from a high cover mission guarding the DropShips and found out that Cynthia's lance went out on a mission forty minutes before. I took off after them once the Techs topped off the reaction mass in my tanks. I was halfway to their patrol zone before I realized I was out of 'juice'.

"That gave me the shakes and I almost turned back. I didn't; I thought Cynthia might need me. As I flew on, the shakes got worse and I noticed the first shaking in my hands. It wasn't till later I heard about DTs, detox tremors. I kept flying, mopping the sweat from my face and jumping at cloud-shadows. My body was crying out for alcohol, and there wasn't any to be had.

"At last I found Cynthia's lance. They were in trouble.

"Cynthia had been scouting for signs of a Kurita advance and she'd found it. Her lance was engaging a fire lance. Due to a trick of the terrain, they couldn't seem to disengage. I arrived only moments after the two lances started fighting; already one of the scouts was down. I entered the fray.

"I came in low over a line of rugged hills into the battleground. A Raider Valkyrie was about to get shredded by a Kurita Dragon. I flew straight in over the Valkyrie. My lasers peppered the Dragon, staggering the sixty-ton 'Mech. That gave the Valkyrie time to unleash a flight of long range missiles into the Dragon and to leap clear. I bore in, deeper into the valley. Stunted trees and piles of rocks flashed by below me. I hedge-hopped over a dense patch of trees, my body bathed in perspiration, and then I saw Cynthia's 'Mech.

She was struggling up from the rocky ground. A Kurita Wolverine was right beside her. It was a Wolverine-A, heavier armored than the standard Star League unit, and equipped with a battery of lasers rather than the Whirlwind autocannon. As Cynthia's Hermes II stood up, the Wolverine shot her with the heavy and medium lasers, scoring two hits on her left arm. Drops of molten armor flew from the damaged arm and it slumped useless at her side. The Wolverine closed to finish her off in hand-to-hand combat. I screamed over the com-link for her to jump, then remembered that the Hermes doesn't have jets. The Wolverine punched and the Hermes staggered.

"I felt as if each blow struck me. The two 'Mechs grappled with each other, Cynthia hampered by her dangling left arm. They surged back and forth like wrestlers; the ground ripped and churned beneath their metal feet. I knew I had to do something. So I did.

"I flew right in, coming up from the south. My targeting computer couldn't separate the two BattleMechs; they were too close together. I switched off and concentrated on the struggling giants in front of me. They seesawed back and forth as the Wolverine sought a grip that would let it throw the Hermes to the ground. If that happened, the Wolverine would simply kick the lighter 'Mech into rubble. My guts churned and my palms were slick with DT sweat as I watched the wrestling match. Then the moment came. I was less than forty meters away, coming in on half thrust, with the two 'Mechs side-on to me. I fired and cut west, planning to sweep around behind Cynthia and lead her out. All my forward firing lasers seared the air, and they all hit — but not where I'd wanted.

"I'm not sure why it happened. I want to believe it was the other 'Mech, that somehow the Wolverine turned Cynthia's Hermes into my shots. But inside, I know it was me. My hands were shaking so bad I fired late. Six lasers sliced into the right side of Cynthia's 'Mech. From that range, it's not surprising all the beams struck. Those crimson spears of light burned through the armor plating, through the engine compartment, and out the other side. The ripping explosion of her unfired autocannon rounds detonating drowned out my scream.

"I don't know how I made it back to base. Everything from the moment of that horrible blast up until four weeks after is a vague haze filled with distorted, nightmare images. The MedTechs pulled me through the rest of my DTs even

though they couldn't fix the damage to my spirit. I refused to fly. A battery of army psychiatrists went at me but I knew what they wanted and simply played their game. I was too afraid to fly again. They signed my discharge papers with the cause listed as 'Battle Fatigue' and sent me home. My father never forgave me when I tried to explain what happened. He thought my refusal to fight was simple cowardice. Perhaps he's right. He disinherited me. The Ruptured Duck passed to my sister. Last I knew, she was still flying it."

Varen stopped speaking and the silence was deafening. No one knew what to say, so we said nothing. Varen stared at his drink. Slowly, he lifted the glass of grain alcohol to his lips. Every pair of eyes in the Cobalt Coil watched as his hand fluttered. We heard the staccato ringing as the edge of the glass struck his teeth. Then, mercifully, he drained it. The thud of the empty glass on the bar seemed to echo for ever. Varen turned and walked out. Silently, people got out of his way. It was a while before conversation returned to the Coil. And longer still before anyone ordered another drink.

WHO CENSORED THIS ONE? I CAN HEAR YOU ASK. ONE OF OUR BIGGEST ADVERTISERS IN THE LATE 3040S WAS A LIQUOR COMPANY. THEY THREATEND TO PULL OUT ALL THEIR ADVERTISING, AND PUBLISHER THORKILLSON KILLED THE STORY.

THE COMPANY WAS HEAQUARTERED ON TRELLWAN, WHICH WAS TAKEN BY THE JADE FALCON CLAN LAST YEAR. SINCE WE'VE LOST THE CONTRACT FOR THEIR ADVERTISING ANYWAY, YOU MIGHT AS WELL READ STEADY HANDS.

Answer Key to NAIS Midterm

1) 'Mechs cannot run through water of depth 1 or deeper. [BattleTech Compendium, p15]

2) All of a 'Mech's targets must fall in the 'Mech's front arc. [BattleTech Compendium, p24]

3) If a prone 'Mech attempts to stand and falls, it will take 1 level of falling damage. [BattleTech Compendium, p17]

4) A 'Mech with leg-mounted weapons may not fire through a ridge that provides it with partial cover. [BattleTech Compendium, p23]

5) Missile launchers may not aim shots at shut down 'Mechs. [BattleTech Compendium, p30]

6) The firing arcs of leg mounted weapons are always aligned with the feet, and the Lionheart has torso twisted, so only the LRMs can fire. [BattleTech Compendium, p23]

7) The Archer's LRMs could not have hit the Spider. The Archer was walking ("still backpeddling") +1, the Spider had moved 10 hexes (300 meters) +4, the Spider is at 3 hexes (90 meters) which yields a minimum range penalty of +4, and the base to hit number is 4 (short range). The total is 13, making this an impossible shot.

8) Both of a 'Mech's hips must be undamaged in order for it to kick. [BattleTech Compendium, p32]

9) Bart kicked from the right side, thus his kick should strike the Thunderbolt's right leg (kick hit location table), which is missing. Damage should then be transferred to the Thunderbolt's right torso [ROW, p22] NOT the left leg. In this case (only) a 'Mech may kick another 'Mech in a location besides the legs. [BattleTech Compendium, p27]

10) Small lasers may not be used to start fires. [BattleTech Compendium, p54]

11) If a 'Mech's right or left torso is destroyed, the 'Mech does NOT lose the use of the corresponding leg, only the corresponding arm. [BattleTech Compendium, p27]

12) A unit that makes a point-blank shot may perform NO other actions during a turn, including spotting for indirect fire. [BattleTech Compendium, p57]

13) Jump capable 'Mechs may not "pogo"; i.e, a jump capable 'Mech may not jump straight up into the air and claim its full jump movement for to-hit purposes. [BattleTech Compendium, p16]

14) Since the Jim Bowie is on a 12-meter ridge, it is 2 levels higher than the Atlas, hence it has NO physical attacks at all. This attack would have been possible if the ridge had been 6 meters (I level higher). [BattleTech Compendium, p34]

15) A 'Mech may not punch AND kick in the same physical combat phase. [BattleTech Compendium, p30]

16) A 'Mech in an adjacent hex to a prone 'Mech gets a -2 bonus for kicking, not a penalty. [BattleTech Compendium, p25]

17) This is the "red herring". There is nothing wrong with this scenario. If an attacking 'Mech successfully performs a "death from above" attack on a prone enemy Mech the damage is resolved on the full body chart. [BattleTech Compendium, p25]

18) A prone 'Mech that successfully stands may walk OR run, not just walk. [BattleTech Compendium, p17]

Note: It is a Federated Commonwealth felony to distribute this information to nonauthorized personnel including cadets. Access is strictly forbidden.

BattleTech Simulator

House Rules Department:
McBride's Mechbusters

FROM TIME TO TIME WE GET LETTERS FROM ACTUAL WARRIOR UNITS WHO MENTION 'UNIT RULES' OR 'HOUSE RULES', SMALL MODIFICATIONS WHICH MAKE THE BATTLETECH SIMULATOR GAME MORE REALISTIC FOR THEIR PLAY. ALMOST EVERY LONG-TERM CAMPAIGN GROUP DEVELOPS SHORTCUTS AND WAYS THAT SUIT THEIR STYLE OF PLAY.

THE BATTLETECH GROUP THAT PLAYS AROUND THIS MAGAZINE AFTER HOURS WAS PARTICULARLY TAKEN BY THIS SET OF OPTIONAL RULES MODIFICATIONS SENT IN BY MCBRIDE'S MECHBUSTERS. DURING THE SECOND YEAR OF THE FOURTH SUCCESSSION WAR, WE THOUGHT WE'D PUBLISH THEM FOR OUR READERS TO ENJOY. IN OUR INNOCENCE, WE ASKED COMSTAR FOR A REPORT ON THE MECHBUSTERS. ONCE WE HAD THE ARTICLE SET UP IN PRINT, COMSTAR REFUSED US PERMISSION TO REPRINT THAT REPORT. A NEW ADMINISTRATION IN COMSTAR NOW PERMITS US TO PRINT THIS UNIT'S 'HOUSE RULES', AND THE UNIT HISTORY SKETCH WITH COMSTAR'S REPORT.

WE FURTHER THANK THE UNITS WHO HAVE SHARED HOUSE RULES WITH US OVER THE HISTORY OF OUR MAGAZINE.

EVASION
Pushes, Charges, and Death-From-Aboves

Acquisition of Attacker —

To use the modifiers below, the Defender must acquire the Attacker.

Use the Following rolls:

Fw. 60° arc	automatic
Rt./Lt. Ft. 60°	2+ on d6
Rt./Lt. Rr. 60°	4+ on d6
Rr. 60° arc	not seen

Evasion of Attacker —

For each level of the Defender's Piloting below 4, the Attacker adds 1 to his Base To-Hit Roll.

This is also modified by the Defending 'Mech's tonnage classification:

Under 50 tons	modifier plus 1
Under 20 tons	modifier plus 2

If the attack fails, the Defender has evaded the action, and the Defender moves one hex in any direction.

POP-UPS
Jumping Mechs, VTOL and Hover Craft

A 'Mech, VTOL or Hover craft may loft itself above intervening terrain to hit a target on the far side.

Mechs pop 3 Elevations, VTOL pop no more than their thrust allows, and Hover craft pop 1 Elevation.

Any pop-up Attacker must have a Forward Observer.

The Base modifier to the Attacker's To-Hit roll is +3.

The pop-up Attacker may also be acquired with the following Modifiers:

Pop-up in Fwd. 60° arc	+3 on d6
Pop-up in Rt./Lt. Fwd. 60° arc	+5 on d6

Pop-up fire is executed during the Opportunity Fire Phas

Only one pop-up is allowed per pilot/vehicle per turn.

MODIFIED TURNING ALLOWANCE
All moving equipment

If a stationery 'Mech, or Vehicle wishes to spin on the spot, there is no apparent cost.

Walking / Cruising — the vehicle must move 1 hex forward for each level of speed moved.

Speed Levels:		
	One	0 to 3 hexes
	Two	4 to 6 hexes
	Three	7 to 9 hexes
	Four	10 to 12 hexes
	and so on.	

No Piloting Rolls are required if the above conditions apply.

There is a +1 modifier:

- per hexside turned in excess of the allowance (no forward movement).
- per hex not moved forward relative to the turn allowance.
- per movement level above one that the vehicle changes.

Hover Turns — any Hover Vehicles

Any hover craft may elect to pay for its hexes not moved forward / hexsides turned in excess in movement points and avoid the appropriate modifiers to its Piloting Roll.

If the Pilot fails the roll, the craft will move an equal number of hexes in the original direction, but has still executed the wanted facing change.

Damage taken from collisions of this type are considered to be Charges, with damage calculated by the following formula:

[Hexes to be moved for failed turn] - [Hexes that had been moved before collision] = [Hexes Charged].

Tracked/Wheeled Vehicle Turns
any T/W vehicles

If a tracked vehicle fails its Piloting Roll, it will slide I hex in the same direction/line as before the failed roll, and will make a rollover avoidance check at:

3+ for Cruising Speed.
5+ for Flank Speed.

If a wheeled vehicle fails its Piloting Roll, it will slide 2 hexes in the same direction/line as before the failed roll, and will make a rollover avoidance check at:

4+ for Cruising Speed.
7+ for Flank Speed.

OPPORTUNITY FIRE — Special Cases

Opportunity fire may be executed against any 'Mech or vehicle at the mid-point of its movement, from the Attacker's movement mid-point, if the following conditions apply:

The Attacker MUST have had the target in view for the full first half of the target's movement.

The Attacker cannot fire PPCs or Large Lasers, due to the longer capacitor recharge time, unless they were not fired in the previous fire phase.

AC may fire in both phases, with qualifiers and modifiers.

There is a +1 modifier in addition to the regular To Hit modifiers.

McBrides Mechbusters

In 3020, Lt. D.J. Campbell and Lt. Tanino Testa joined Jameson McBride in forming the Mechbusters, a battalion-sized mercenary unit.

The Mechbusters worked for both House Davion and House Steiner for various time-periods, and fulfilled all contracts to House satisfaction.

In 3025, McBride, Campbell, and Testa agreed to expand the Mechbusters to a full regiment. Major McBridge commanded the first battalion, McBride's Mechbusters, Major D.J. Campbell the second battalion, Campbells' Companions, and Major Tanino Testa the third battalion, Testa's Terminators.

Since the expansion, the regiment has been under long-term contract to House Davion, serving in various capacities inside and outside the Federated Commonwealth.

COMSTAR FILE:
McBRIDE'S MECHBUSTERS

Not much is known about the Mechbusters or any of its personnel, except that it is formed from warriors with an extreme hatred for the other houses, Kurita, Liao, and Marik.

No R.O.M. agent has been able to penetrate the intense security checks that all potential Mechbusters undergo, which is reported to be more in-depth than even the NAIS security checks.

All that is known is that when on New Avalon, Majors Campbell and Testa frequent a bar called the Pink Panther, a local dance location just outside the NAIS facility.

Rumors also have it that the Mechbusters are working with Team Banzai on a new weapon design: Unsubstantiated.

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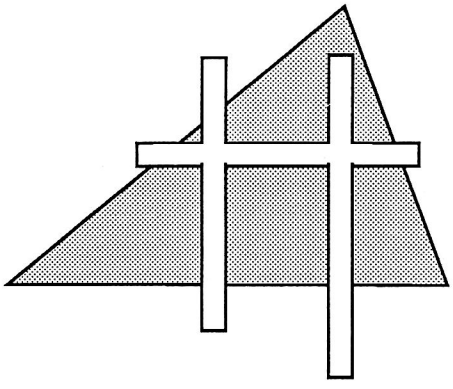
Note: D.J. Campbell - House Davion Contract

Possible family connection through First Prince Hanse's mother — maiden name Campbell: Unsubstantiated.

MediQuick



Services

For fast and cost-effective medical service, supplies, and personnel: contact a MediQuick representative at

Drop 10273,
Denver, Terra

When You Need the Very Best

House Rules Continued

(Ed Note: The results of these tables are more useful in a campaign than in a single scenario, because of the times involved.)

BattleTech Weapon Malfunction Rules

Roll 1D6 +1, add any modifier, then consult the following table:

Die Roll	Lasers/PPC	Autocannon/MG	Missiles
0	Shutdown	Shutdown	Shutdown
1	Shutdown	Shutdown	Shutdown
2	Shutdown	Shutdown	Shutdown
3	Misaligned	Misaligned	Misaligned/Tracking
4	Misaligned	Misaligned	Misaligned/Tracking
5	Heat Transfer	Loading Jam	Loading Jam
6	Heat Transfer	Loading Jam	Loading Jam
7	Heat Transfer	Loading Jam	Loading Jam

Effects:

Heat Transfer
Small/Medium Laser = +1 heat/shot
Large Laser/PPC = +2 heat/shot

Shutdown/Loading Jam
To clear, Roll 1D6
1 = permanently disabled
2-5 = no effect
6 = repaired/unjammed

Misalignment
-1 to hit

Explanations:

Shutdown: Unexplained problems with the 'Mech's automatic shutdown system. Computer has disabled the weapon.

Misalignment: Stimulus has caused failure in the computer controlled or mechanical aiming/guidance systems. All shots with the weapon will have a -1 penalty to hit until the weapon can be relaigned (requires the services of a Tech). This result is not cumulative (you cannot further misalign a weapon). If this result occurs again for the same weapon, roll again on the malfunction table.

Heat Transfer: Malfunction in heat absorbtion/transfer/generation device is causing weapon to generate excessive amounts of heat. Excess heat is generated as indicated every time this weapon is fired (including current turn). The repairs must be effected by a Tech.

Jam: The loading system for the weapon is no longer functioning. The system may be repaired by various means, resulting in a repair table.

BattleTech Hand-to Hand Malfunction Rules

Die Roll	With Weapons	Without Weapons
0	Actuator	Actuator
1	Actuator	Actuator
2	Actuator	Actuator
3	Self Damage	Self Damage
4	Self Damage	Self Damage
5	Balance	Balance
6	Balance	Balance
7	Weapon	Balance
8	Weapon	-
9	Weapon	-

Results:

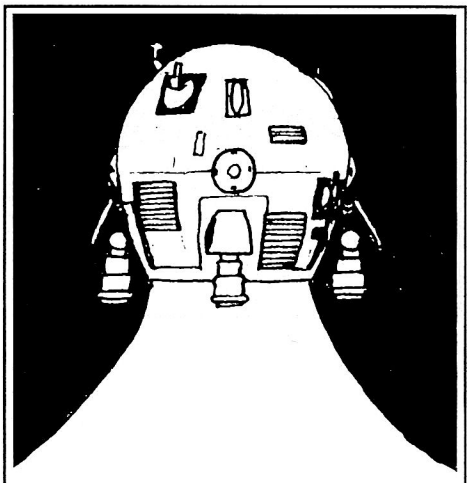
Weapon: Roll on weapon table for randomly selected weapon in that arm or leg.

Self Damage: 'Mech takes damage equal to 1/2 (rounded up) of the damage it would have inflicted with a hit. Damage is applied to the appendage used in the attack.

Balance: For each move after this result, 'Mech pilot must make a piloting skill check with the following penalty: -3 for a kick, -2 for a punch. If the roll is failed, 'Mech falls, taking normal falling damage. (Ed note: we added a piloting roll at no modifier for each turn run or jumped.)

Actuator: Roll (1D6) on the actuator damaged table for the appendage in question. Consider that actuator destroyed, with normal penalties.

Die Roll	Leg	Arm
1-2	Foot	Hand
3-4	Lower Leg	Lower Arm
5	Upper Leg	Upper Arm
6	Hip	Shoulder



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Text of NAIS Lecture: March 14, 3049

Targeting and Tracking Systems: Strengths and Weaknesses

The auditorium grew quiet as the next speaker stepped up to the podium. When his hands touched the podium, the wall behind the speaker began to glow.

"Ladies and gentlemen, students of this fine technical institute." The speaker nodded his head to the seated crowd.

"Faculty and family members." The speaker nodded to the seated teachers.

"Honored guests." He inclined his head towards the darkened viewing windows of the nobility balconies high overhead.

"Today's class is about Targeting and Tracking Systems. I will discuss in detail standard packages, expansion modules, system problems, system replacements, system compatibilities, and, of course, the Best of the Best."

The speaker paused and smiled. "I hope you brought your sack lunches."

The students groaned and chuckled.

A schematic of a Thunderbolt appeared on the wall behind the man. The head grew in size until the cockpit was the only item on the wall. The man walked over to the wall. Without looking at the schematic, he touched the tracking console.

"This is an RCA Instatrac Mark X. It has no special target acquisition features, can isolate one enemy target, and hold up to three other targets at a secondary priority. It has no built-in target identifier: therefore, it cannot inform the pilot of any non-visible damage. Nor can it warn its pilot of an incoming missile attack. This system comes standard with 45° forward scan. It will detect heat sources and motion only. The maximum scanning range is 930 meters. It can be upgraded with its 5 expansion ports. This system is not overly sensitive to heat build up, maintains a decent data/time delay ratio, is fairly easy to repair, and contains no reset switch. However, this system does contain an override device."

The hall was filled with clicking noises as the students tried to follow along, taking notes on their laptops.

"Most of you are saying, 'This RCA sounds pretty low-tech.' Well, ladies and gentlemen, this is a better than average tracking system and it comes standard with this 'Mech. If you will refer to your read outs, 2750 and 3025, you can see that each 'Mech has its own type of system. Due to the width of the former Star League, the practice of standardization was almost unheard of. And now, if you will open your manuals to page one, we will go over each system."

The students groaned.

The instructor grinned.

The schematic changed to a different tracking system.

Standard Package Features

#1 Target Acquisition Modifier: (TAM) The modification the pilot gains or losses to his hit roll.

#2 Multi-Targeting System: First number #/ is the amount of primary targets allowed by system. The second number /# is number of secondary targets acquired by system. EXAMPLE: The TRSS.2L3 tracking device allows one primary and four secondary targets; while the BlazeFire Tracking System allows 2 primary and 3 secondary targets. Primary targets have no modifier on the to-hit roll. Secondary targets have a +1 modifier.

#3 Target ID: Tells pilot, with 90% accuracy, type of unit being targetted.

#4 Damage ID: Scans target and displays image on screen of all damage to opposing 'Mech.

#5 Lock-On Indicator: Warns pilot of impending incoming missile strike.

#6 Scanning Arc: 45° 90° 180° 360°.

#7 Type of Scanning System:

1. IR only
2. EL only
3. Motion Only
4. IR & EL
5. EL & Motion
6. IR & Motion
7. IR, EL & Motion

IR = Infra Red (Heat Sources)
EL = Electromagnetic (Power Sources)

#8 Lock-On Range: Generally this is the maximum range (in 30-meter hexes) of the farthest reaching weapon plus 300 meters. EXAMPLE: an LRM 5 has a maximum long range of 630 meters (21 hexes); lock-on range for most tracking systems is 930 meters (31 hexes)

#9 Expansion Ports: The number of spaces available to upgrade or add on to the tracking system.

Standard Package Features

STANDARD PACKAGES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
ALEXIS PHOTON TARGET ACQUISITION SYSTEM	-	1/2	y	n	n	180°	7	19	4
ALLET-T11	-	1/1	y	n	n	45°	6	31	4
ANGST CLEAR VIEW 2A	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	7	28	4
APPLE CHURCHILL 2000	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	7	19	5
ARMY COMP TYPE 29K	-	4/1	y	n	n	180°	7	31	7
BK-309	-	1/3	n	n	y	180°	7	19	3
BLAZEFIRE SIGHTLOCK	-	2/3	y	y	y	45°	7	28	5
C-APPLE CHURCHILL	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	6	31	4
CATSEYES FIVE	-	1/2	n	n	n	90°	4	19	4
COREAN B-TECH	-	1/1	n	n	y	180°	6	31	5
COREAN CALCMASTER	-	1/2	y	n	n	90°	7	19	3
CYCLOPS BSP	-	1/2	y	n	y	90°	7	19	5
CYCLOPS MULTI-TASKER 10	-	1/3	y	y	y	360°	7	19	5
DALBAN AQ	-	1/1	y	n	y	90°	7	34	7
DALBAN HiRez	-	1/2	y	n	y	180°	7	28	7
DALBAN HiRez-B	-	1/2	y	n	y	360°	7	28	7
DALBAN HiRez-II	-	1/1	y	y	n	90°	6	31	4
DALBAN URBAN	-	1/2	n	n	n	90°	6	25	3
DIGITAL SCANLOCK 347	-	1/2	n	n	n	90°	7	28	5
DLK TYPE PHASED ARRAY SENSOR	-1	1/4	y	y	y	360°	7	30	4
DYNATEC 128C	-	1/1	n	n	n	45°	5	19	4
DYNATEC 150A	-	1/2	y	n	n	90°	6	19	4
DYNATEC 990	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	5	19	3
DYNATEC 1122	-	1/2	y	n	n	90°	7	28	4
DYNATEC 2180	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	6	31	5
DYNATEC 2780	-	1/1	n	n	y	360°	7	28	2
EAGLE EYE SY10-10	-	1/1	n	n	n	45°	6	31	4
EAGLE EYE 400 XXX	-	1/2	y	n	n	90°	7	31	5
FAUST/SHINJI AT/TS	+2 †	1/1	y	n	n	45°	7	5	3
FEDERATED HUNTER	-	1/2	y	n	n	180°	6	25	5
FEDERATED HUNTER MK II	-	1/3	y	n	y	180°	6	31	5
FERDINAND-A	-	1/1	n	n	n	45°	3	25	4
GARRET A6	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	5	31	5
GARRET D2j	-	1/2	y	n	n	90°	5	31	5
GARRET GRNDTRK 9	-1	1/1	y	n	y	180°	7	38*	3
GARRET GRNDTRK 15	-	1/2	n	n	n	180°	7	31	7
GARRET T11B	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	5	28	5
GARRET 500S	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	5	31	5
HARTFORD TA10	-	1/2	n	n	n	180°	6	34	5
HARTFORD S1000	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	7	19	6
HARTFORD CO XKZ-1	-	2/2	y	n	y	180°	7	28	3
KBC STARSIGHT	-	5/0	n	n	y	90°	7	28	6
MaLANDRY 34	-	1/1	n	n	y	90°	6	19	3
MATABUSHI SENTINEL	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	6	19	5
MERCURY IV	-	1/2	n	n	n	90°	7	28	6
OCTAGON TARTRAC SYS C	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	6	31	6
OMICRON TRACKERKEEPER	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	7	28	5
O/P 911	-	1/1	n	n	n	45°	6	19	3

Continues Next Page

Standard Package Features *continued*

STANDARD PACKAGES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
O/P 1078	-	1/1	n	n	n	45°	7	31	5
O/P TA 1240	-	1/1	n	n	n	45°	7	19	3
O/P 1500 ARB	-	1/1	n	n	y	90°	7	28	5
O/P 2000A	-	1/2	n	n	n	90°	6	31	6
ORION 80	-	1/1	y	n	y	180°	6	31	5
PULSAR TRI-X	-	1/1	y	n	n	45°	6	25	5
RADCOM TXX	-	1/2	y	n	y	180°	7	19	4
RANDER PINPOINT-HY	-	1/2	y	n	y	90°	7	28	5
RANGER LAF-2A	-1	1/3	y	n	y	180°	7	25	5
RCA INSTATRAC MARK X	-	1/3	n	n	n	45°	6	31	5
RCA INSTATRAC MARK XII	-	1/3	y	n	n	90°	7	31	5
SCOPE 30 RNDST	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	7	28	4
SCRAMBLER 7 SENSOR	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	6	31	6
SKYHUNTER IV	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	6	19	5
SLOANE 220 LOCKOVER	-2	2/6	y	y	y	360°	7	48	12
SPAR 3C TIGHTBAND	-1	2/2	y	y	y	180°	7	31	5
STANDUS 20 ††	-	1/3	y	n	y	90°	6	19	5
STARBEAM 3000	-	1/1	n	n	y	180°	6	31	5
STARLIGHT LX-1	-	1/1	y	n	n	90°	7	31	6
SYNC TRACKER(39-42071)	**+1	1/1	n	n	n	45°	4	21	2
TACTICON TRACER 280	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	6	19	5
TANSECH C30-97	-	1/1	y	n	n	45°	6	19	4
TARGO 7/VID CAM 17	-	1/2	y	n	n	90°	6	35*	4
TEK TRU TRAK	-2	1/1	n	n	n	45°	7	25	14
TharHes ARES-5	-	1/2	y	n	n	90°	7	28	6
TharHes ARES-7	-	1/1	y	n	n	180°	6	31	4
TharHes ARES-8a	-	1/4	n	n	y	360°	7	25	5
TharHes ARES-80	-	2/4	y	n	y	360°	7	25	5
TharHes STAR SHARK	-	3/5	y	n	y	360°	7	29	5
TRSS EAGLE EYE	-	1/1	y	y	n	360°	7	25	4
TRSS.2L3	-	1/4	n	n	n	360°	7	600 !	2
WASAT AGGRESSOR	-	1/1	n	n	n	90°	6	28	3
WASAT AGGRESSOR TYPE 5	-	1/1	y	n	n	360°	7	31	6
WASAT AGGRESSOR TYPE 8	-	1/2	y	n	n	360°	7	28	5
WASAT WATCHDOG W100	-	1/1	y	n	y	180°	7	28	4
650 RND	-	1/1	y	n	y	90°	7	28	7

Notes:

The range in hexes as noted is the lock-on range of the named tracking system. All tracking systems have a movement detection range of triple the stated range (in hexes), a +4 to the learn roll to correctly identifiy the detected object as either 'Mech, Vehicle or Aircraft, and a +6 to ID the type of vehicle.

* These tracking systems increase the standard range of the weapons on the 'Mechs by 150 meters (5 hexes)

EXAMPLE:

PPC	1-6	7-12	13-23
SRM	1-3	4-6	7-14

The small laser has a change in all ranges

Small Laser	1-2	3-4	5-8

** Many MechWarriors choose to replace this system with a LOS (Line of Sight) range finder.

Line of Sight Range Finder

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
-	1/1	n	n	n	45°	-	as weapon	0

† The +2 to Target Acquisition is for the energy weapons only.

! Scanning range of this system is several kilometers.

†† The Standus has a non-correctable problem of projecting non-existant targets, ID, and Incoming Missile warnings at random (4+ chance each turn).

System Differences

Heat: This listed number is the System's sensitivity to heat. When heat in combat reaches that level or higher, the system could suffer a breakdown. EXAMPLE: the ALLET-T11 could break down at heat increments 8, 16, 24, 30 (moot point at thirty) while the Sync Tracker suffers heat at 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30.

Repair: This is the modifier to the tech skill roll to repair a damaged tracking system. The higher the number, the more complex the system. (Also note, a Tech cannot repair an item without the proper parts or tools.)

Reset: This switch allows the 'Mech pilot to attempt to overcome the heat shut down of his targeting system. (Generates a reroll on the heat sensitivity roll, for the tracking system only.) If the reset works, the pilot can fire at a minus 3 to his reaction time and only at targets in his 45° weapon arc. At an appropriate modifier to hit. (Of course, this is a last-ditch effort.)

Override: This switch will prevent the firing of weapons, or will fire them if the Battle Computer denies the target. EXAMPLE: if the target that the 'Mech pilot was going to fire at is suddenly destroyed, he can override and switch to a secondary target, with the necessary modifiers.

SYSTEM DIFFERENCES, FAILSAFES AND PROBLEM NOTES

	HEAT	REPAIR	RESET	OVERRIDE
ALEXIS PHOTON TARGET ACQUISITION SYSTEM	8	-	n	n
ALLET-T11	8	-	n	n
ANGST CLEAR VIEW 2A	8	-	y	n
APPLE CHURCHILL 2000	9	-	n	n
ARMY COMP TYPE 29K	6	+3	n	n
BK-309	8	-	y	n
BLAZEFIRE SIGHTLOCK	10	-	n	n
C-APPLE CHURCHILL	9	-	n	n
CATSEYES FIVE	8	-	y	y
COREAN B-TECH	8	+1	n	n
COREAN CALCMASTER	10	+1	y	y
CYCLOPS BSP	9	-	y	n
CYCLOPS MULTI-TASKER 10	9	-	n	n
DALBAN AQ	9	-	n	y
DALBAN HiRez	9	-	n	y
DALBAN HiRez-B	9	+1	y	y
DALBAN HiRez-II	10	+2	y	y
DALBAN URBAN	8	-	n	n
DIGATEL SCANLOCK 347	8	-	n	n
DLK TYPE PHASED ARRAY SENSOR	9	+2	n	n
DYNATEC 128C	8	+1	y	y
DYNATEC 150A	8	+1	y	y
DYNATEC 990	8	+1	y	y
DYNATEC 1122	8	+2	y	y
DYNATEC 2180	9	+2	y	y
DYNATEC 2780	9	+1	y	y
EAGLE EYE SY10-10	8	-	n	n
EAGLE EYE 400 XXX	8	+1	n	y
FAUST/SHINJI AT/TS	14	+1	y	y
FEDERATED HUNTER	8	-	n	n
FEDERATED HUNTER MK II	9	-	n	n
FERDINAND-A	12	-	y	y
GARRET A6	8	-	y	n
GARRET D2j	8	-	y	n
GARRET GRNDTRK 9	8	-	y	n
GARRET GRNDTRK 15	8	+1	y	y
GARRET T11B	8	-	y	n
GARRET 500S	8	+1	y	n
HARTFORD TA10	9	+2	n	n
HARTFORD S1000	9	-	n	n
HARTFORD CO XKZ-1	9	-	n	n
KBC STARSIGHT	8	-	y	n
MaLANDRY 34	9	+1	n	n
MATABUSHI SENTINEL	12	-	y	n
MERCURY IV	8	-	y	y
OCTAGON TARTRAC SYS C	8	-	n	n
OMICRON TRACKERKEEPER	9	-	n	n
O/P 911	8	-	y	n

Continues Next Page

SYSTEM DIFFERENCES, FAILSAFES, AND PROBLEM NOTES
continued

	HEAT	REPAIR	RESET	OVERRIDE
O/P 1078	8	-	y	y
O/P TA 1240	8	-	y	n
O/P 1500 ARB	8	-	n	y
O/P 2000A	8	+1	y	y
ORION 80	8	-	n	n
PULSAR TRI-X	9	-	y	n
RADCOM TXX	9	-	n	n
RANDER PINPOINT-HY	10	+1	n	n
RANGER LAF-2A	8	-	n	n
RCA INSTATRAC MARK X	8	-	n	y
RCA INSTATRAC MARK XII	10	+1	y	y
SCOPE 30 RNDST	10	-	y	n
SCRAMBLER 7 SENSOR	11	-	y	n
SKYHUNTER IV	8	+1	n	n
SLOANE 220 LOCKOVER	20	+9	y	y
SPAR 3C TIGHTBAND	15	+7	y	n
STANDUS 20	9	+10	n	n
STARBEAM 3000	10	-	n	n
STARLIGHT LX-1	8	-	y	y
SYNC TRACKER (39-42071)	5	+4	n	n
TACTICON TRACER 280	8	-	n	n
TANSECH C30-97	8	-	y	n
TARGO 7/VID CAM 17	12	+2	n	n
TEK TRU TRAK	9	+9	y	y
TharHes ARES-5	7	-	y	n
TharHes ARES-7	7	-	y	n
TharHes ARES-8a	7	-	y	n
TharHes ARES-80	7	+1	y	n
TharHes STAR SHARK	8	+1	n	n
TRSS EAGLE EYE	8	-	y	y
TRSS.2L3	8	+2	y	y
WASAT AGGRESSOR	8	+1	n	y
WASAT AGGRESSOR Type 5	8	-	y	n
WASAT AGGRESSOR Type 8	8	1	y	y
WASAT WATCHDOG W100	8	-	y	n
650 RND	8	-	n	n
Line of Sight Range Finder	25	-3	n	n

Expansion Module Descriptions

AeroSpace Targeting
'Mech unit is allowed to utilize its weapon systems in anti-air mode, provided aero space target is in range. No reaction time loss for pilot.

Anti-Missile
Allows automatic targeting of incoming missiles by interfacing with special anti-missile volley system. This adds a -1 to the pilot's reaction time.

Artemis IV FCS
Links the Tracking System with the specialized scanning system.

Auto Fire
When tied into the fire control panel will automatically fire one, some, or all weapons, under certain conditions. *EXAMPLE: MechWarrior Bob Pool toggles his Auto Fire Module to react upon the identification of a Marauder by firing his LRM 15. He ties into the Target Identifier Module to help him in identifying the 'Mech. This accomplished Bob can now enjoy the country side while on patrol. The Auto Fire Module's chances to strike targets in its scanning arc (45° only) are Short 6, Medium 8, Long N/A.*

Auto Mapping
Allows a recon 'Mech to generate satellite-quality topographical maps of the area within its scanning range. 'Mech is required to have 360° scanning, IR, EL, and Motion sensors. This system enhances the spectographic capabilities inherent in all scanning systems. The pilot receives a -3 to his reaction time while this module is active.

Battle Computer
Analyzes data input from the following modules: Target Identifier, Target Damage Identifier, Lock-On Indicator, and Scanning System. It utilizes the Target Prioritizing Module to inform the pilot of the best possible target and response. In combat situations, the BC can give the MechWarrior a combat edge of plus 33% (generates -4 to hit) and can tie into Auto Fire Module.

(HOWEVER, EACH TIME THE BC IS USED, THE PILOT MUST ROLL A NON-ADJUSTABLE 6+. OTHERWISE, THE BC MADE A FAULTY COMPUTATION AND THE PILOT RECEIVES A +5 to HIT AND IS ONE HEX FACING OFF TARGET.) The BC may be authorized to control the firing of the weapon systems. (Note, the BC's programming will not allow it [BC] to fire beyond medium range. The BC's targeting chances are short range 1, medium range 2, long range N/A.) The reaction time delay is 2.

Beagle Active Probe

In addition to enhanced scanning at the 120 meter radius, the Beagle adds another 300 meters to the standard scanning range.

Fire Support (Indirect Artillery)

Allows the pilot to use polar plotting to call for fire from any indirect artillery/missile unit. The pilot must have gunnery/artillery observer skills to interpret data. Gives a -2 to the pilot's reaction time.

Garret Mole (442X, TAG come in this module)

Requires 1 ton of of space, and four expansion ports. Provides pilot with TAG, Fire Support (Ind), and Multi-Targeting with a delay time of 1 to the pilot's reaction time.

Lock-On Indicator

Warns of incoming missile strike.

Multi-Targeting

Allows the targeting system to accept additional possible targets with secondary target acquisition penalty. In the scanning arc of the targeting system (180° or less), reaction time loss is -1 per target.360° systems have a minimum scanning delay of 1.

NARC Support

Ties the NARC missile beacon signal to the NARC missile support system. There is no reaction time loss with this module.

Override

Adds override capability to the system.

Reset

Allows pilot to attempt to overcome heat shut down of the targeting system. Successful reset gives the 'Mech pilot a -3 to reaction.

TAG (Target Acquisition Gear)

Allows Arrow IV missile targeting. There is no loss in reaction time. This is a redundant module if you have the C-3 computer system.

Target Acquisition Modifier

Provides for fine tuning the targeting system. Gives the 'Mech pilot a -1 to hit, but a -3 to his reaction time per module.

Target Damage Display

Allows the 'Mech pilot to identify all damaged locations on target. He receives a -1 to his reaction time.

System Expansion Modules

Nomenclature	*Required Ports*	*On/Off Toggle*	*Time Delay*
AeroSpace Targeting	2	y	
Anti-Missile	1	y	1
Artemis IV FCS	2	y	1
Auto Fire	1	y	
Auto Mapping	1	y	3
Battle Computer/Analysis	3	y	2
Beagle Active Probe	2	y	1
Fire Support (Ind)	2	y	2
Garret Mole Target AQ Sys	4	y	1
Lock-On Indicator	1	n	1
Multi-Targeting	2	n	1 per target
NARC Support	2	y	
Override	1	n	per situation
Reset	1	n	3
TAG	1	y	
Target Acquisition Modifier	1ea	n	3 per plus mod
Target Damage Display	1	y	1
Target Identifier	3	y	2
Target Lock-On Indicator	1	y	1
Target Prioritizing	2	y	
Turbo	1	y	-2
Visual Modes:	1		
Motion		n	1
Infrared		y	1
Electromagnetic		y	1
All three together generate a data delay of 2; two visual modes will only generate a delay of 1			
Visual Scanner Width Enhancement			
45° Scan (replacement)	1	n	
90° Scanner	1	y	
180° Scanner	1	y	
360° Scanner	2	y	1
Volley Fire	1	y	1
442X Target AQ sys	2	y	1

Target Identifier

Silhouette identifier scans its mini data bank to match the target with all known information. 90% accurate on Inner Sphere 'Mechs. Pilot receives a -2 to his reaction time.

Target Lock-On Indicator

Prevents weapon fire unless target has been 'splashed' by a modified TAG that assures a perfect (or near-perfect) strike.

Target Prioritizing

Only functions when tied into Target Identifier, Target Damage Indicator, and Lock-On Indicator. This module (as part of the Battle Computer) informs the pilot as to the best target likely to be a hazard to the 'Mech pilot.

Time Delay

This is the time lost to the pilot's reaction time due to Tracking analysis and Data interpretation. EXAMPLE: if a Pilot has 360° scan, Target Id, Target Damage Id, Full Spectrum Scan and Fire Support Modules, his modifiers to his reaction roll with the Ranger LAF-2A would be 1+1+2+1+2+2=9 divided by 3 (LAF-2A is -1 for each three data Sub-systems) = 3 (round up)= -3 (to reaction). Note: A delay that causes a reaction roll to be modified to 0 or less means the system suffers an overload and refuses to function for that turn. The MechWarrior's reaction roll resets to its former value allowing movement but no weapons exchange.

Turbo

This experimental module causes the tracking and targeting system to speed up by a factor of -2. However, the turbo will randomly remove a function from the system each time the system is activated. Roll a random Malfunction and treat as 'Does not function.' Roll each time Turbo is activated to see which system is affected. Turbo must be 'switched o" to function. It does not damage the systems affected.

EXAMPLE: MechWarrior Poole activates Turbo . He doesn't realize that the Turbo has deactivated the Anti-Missile function of his 'Mech. Later, after MechWarrior Poole survives his nasty surprise, he decides to use his Turbo again and discovers that he has lost his TAG system just when he needed it.

SENSOR HIT DAMAGE EXAMPLE

(See lower columns of next page)

Each time a 'Mech suffers a Sensor Hit, pilot must determine what system or subsystem was damaged.

We will use the RANGER LAF-2A:

	1	TAM
	2	MULTI-TARGET
	3	TARGET IDENTIFIER
1-2	4	LOCK-ON INDICATOR
	5	SCAN WIDTH Electromagnetic
	6	SCAN WIDTH Infrared
	1	ELECTROMAGNETIC
	2	INFRARED
	3	MOTION
3-4	4	EXPANSION PORT NARC SUPPORT
	5	EXPANSION PORT NARC SUPPORT
	6	EXPANSION PORT ANTI-MISSILE
	1	EXPANSION PORT OVERRIDE
	2	EXPANSION PORT TURBO
	3	SCAN WIDTH MOTION
5-6	4	ROLL AGAIN
	5	ROLL AGAIN
	6	ROLL AGAIN

EXAMPLE: During combat MechWarrior Poole receives a hit to his sensors, he rolls a D6 and gets a 2, showing the hit location is the main Target System itself. The second die roll is a 1, telling Bob he no longer has his TAM. This module has been permanently destroyed and his targeting suffers the stated modifies from the BattleTech Compendium *in addition to losing his TAM bonus.*

Visual Modes

Motion = Self explanatory
IR = Detecting heat sources
EL = Detecting electrical signals

Visual Scanner Width Enhancement

Allows the pilot to add 90°, 180°, or 360° scanning capabilities to his mech. Each package comes with the appropriate external hardware. The 360° scan gives the pilot -1 to his reaction time.

Volley Fire

This module allows all weapons to be fired in one salvo at a +2 to the "to hit" roll. This gives the pilot -1 to his reaction time.

Possible Malfunction Table

AeroSpace Targeting
1-3 No lock-on
4-6 Major penalties to hit

Anti-Missile
1-2 No fire
3-4 Half effect
5-6 Fire each turn until ammo is expended

Artemis, Auto-Mapping, BC, Visual Modes
1 Fails to function

Auto Fire
1-3 Weapons fire each round
4-6 No fire

Fire Support
1-6 Incorrect data

Garret Mole
1-6 Roll for each function. If any don't work, all of it fails as the systems are linked.

Lock-On Indicator
1-3 False warning
3-6 No warning

Multi-Targeting
1-3 Locks onto terrain features
4-6 Fails to function

NARC Support
1-2 Reverse homing beacon effects
3-4 Reverse homing beacon location
5-6 Fails to function

Override
1-2 Fires suddenly
3-4 Fails to function
5-6 Overrides entire system

Reset
1-3 Continuous reset each turn
4-6 Fails to function

TAG
1-2 Locks on random target
3-4 Fails to lock-on
5-6 Gives observer's location as target

Target Acquisition Modifier
1-3 No benefit
4-6 Penalties

Target Damage Display
1-3 Fails to function
4-6 False locations

Target Identifier
1-3 Fails to function
4-6 False ID

Target Lock-On Indicator
1-3 Fires with out lock-on
4-6 Fails to fire

Target Prioritizing
1-3 False priority
4-6 Fails to function

Turbo
1-3 Slows data to -1 instead of -2
4-6 Does not function, still removes a system

Visual Scanner Width Enhancement
1-6 Reduces scan from 360° to 180°; 180° to 90°; 90° to 45°.

NOTE: If Scan width is at 45° then pilot's only option is 15° view port: no TAM allowed, no Lock-Ons, +2 to Short range, +4 to Medium Range, and Long range attacks not possible

Volley Fire
1-3 Continuous fire
4-6 Fails to function

For each array of Targeting / Tracking Systems, construct a table with 18 slots as per the example on the previous page. Allow one slot per system or feature. Allow slots for the same number of ports as Item 9 on the Standard Package Features table. Allow one scan width slot for each sensor or tracking system. If there are leftover slots, mark them 'roll again'. It is possible with some systems that the last 6 spaces w'lll be 'roll again'.

Each hit on scan width slots changes width by 45°, the scanning system moves to the next narrowest scan arc still available in increments of - 45°. Loss of the last 45° freezes the scanner in one position.)

Damage to a port is rolled on Possible Malfunction Table under the original system (for example, AeroSpace expansion port damage is rolled under 'AeroSpace Targeting'.)

In a campaign, it matters to know that an expansion port is much easier to replace, and costs only 1/10 of what the new system would cost. In a battle simulation, once any part of the system is gone, the entire system suffers the results rolled on the Possible Malfunction Table.

Compatibility Determination

(Old 'Mech's Weapons systems [count all weapons in single units] + delay modifiers [all])+(New 'Mech's Weapon systems + delay modifiers [all]) = Number of days of work to modify T and T system to fit new 'Mech. After the elapsed time, roll, using the Replacement Success Determination Formula to determine the skill roll target.

Replacement Success Determination Formula

(larger tonnage/10 [round up] - (small tonnage/10 [round down]) = modification to tech skill roll. For each # the roll is missed by, a system of the tracking set is permanently destroyed (ref's choice).

BEST OF THE BEST

SYSTEM NAME	INHERENT MODULE/SUBSYSTEM
ALLET - T11	Anti-Missile Module
COREAN CALCMASTER	AeroSpace Targeting
DLK TYPE PHASED ARRAY SENSORS	Anti-Missile Module
	1 x TAM
DYNATEC 150A	Anti-Missile Module
DALBAN HiRez - II	Anti-Missile Module
FAUST/SHINJI AT/TS	2 x TAM
	(Modified for energy weapons only.)
GARRET D2j	AeroSpace Targeting
	1 x TAM (Modified for AeroSpace Module only)
GARRET GRNDTRK 9	1 x TAM
KBC STARSIGHT	Lock-On Indicator
	Modified Target Prioritizing
	BC not required
RADCOM TXX	Anti-Missile Module
RANGER LAF-2A	1 x TAM
SYNC TRACKER (39-42071)	Anti-Missile
SLOANE 220 LOCKOVER SYSTEM	Complete Battle Computer
	AeroSpace Targeting
	2 x TAM
	Fire Support
	Volley Fire
	One Complete Set of Extra Backup Modules
SPAR 3C TIGHTBAND	Complete Battle Computer
	1 x TAM
SKYHUNTER IV	Beagle Active Probe
TharHes STAR SHARK	Special Multi-Targeting
	Allows 3 targets to be accepted at standard TAM of one target
TharHes ARES-80	AeroSpace Targeting
	Anti-Missile
WASAT AGGRESSOR TYPE 5	AeroSpace Targeting
	Specialized Battle Computer
	(Modified to function only in the role of anti-air)

THE WALL DISPLAY DIMMED, THE INSTRUCTOR LEANED AGAINST THE PODIUM.

"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED DURING THE LAST FEW HOURS WILL HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER TECHWARRIOR. I NAME YOU TECHWARRIORS: YOU DO NOT JUMP INTO THE FRAY WITH LASERS BLAZING LIKE THE 'MECH PILOT BENT ON DESTROYING THE OPPOSING WARRIORS. YOU, MY STUDENTS, FIGHT THE TECH BATTLE. YOU FIGHT TO KEEP THE 'MECH OPERATING. AND, YOU FIGHT TO KEEP SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FROM FALLING INTO IGNORANCE.

"FINALLY, MANY OF YOU NOTICED I HAVE NOT COVERED — IN ANY WAY — THE COST OF THESE TARGETING AND TRACKING SYSTEMS. 85% OF THE DEVICES WE HAVE COVERED ARE SO RARE THAT CURRENCY CAN NOT BUY THEM. I KNOW OF A CERTAIN MECHWARRIOR WHO TRADED FIVE CAPTURED 'MECHS FOR A SPAR 3C TIGHTBAND. AND HE GOT THE BETTER PART OF THE DEAL.

"THE DAYS OF DARKNESS ARE BEFORE YOU. STUDY HARD! THE GENERATIONS OF TOMORROW ARE DEPENDING UPON YOU."

THE SPEAKER STOOD BACK FROM THE PODIUM.

"TECHWARRIORS," HE SURVEYED THE CROWD, "IF YOU EVER ACQUIRE A SLOANE LOCKOVER, I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT ONE OF THEM IS WORTH A BARONY. TECHWARRIORS," THE MAN PAUSED AGAIN. "GOOD LUCK."

FROM THE NOTECOMP OF
LANCE COMMANDER KREN SAMERKUNDOLI,
LEGION OF THE RISING SUN

The 'Mechs That NEVER WERE

The success story of of the century is Abraxis "Mo" Murasaki,, who has built BattleTechnic Miltary Salvage from a 2-acre junkyard on Exeter to a Federated Commonwealth-wide phenomenon with shipyards in every March and Operations Area. If you need those 'hard to find Goliath parts', or if your unit finds itself with a captured half of a Charger to dispose of to profit company funds, there is no better-known salvage facility.

Our publisher, Arvid Thorkillson, continues the family hobby of collecting one-of a kind 'Mechs that never were', 'Mechs which had a total production run of less than twenty five. Some of these 'Mechs deserved the limits of their existence; others would grace any lance. Thorkillson's family museum takes up 8 acres on Exeter's southern continent, an hour's hovercar trip out of Sand City.

The two men belong to a Wednesday night poker and creative lying session on their homeworld of Exeter . Finding that Muraski made a hobby of remaking 'Mechs, Publisher Thorkillson had to see them. We are bringing these 'Mechs to you at the insistence of our publisher. Please don't tell him that we'd have been delighted to publish these beauties anyway —once we'd stopped howling with laughter!

Mo Murasaki describes his creations in his own inimitable style.

Mo Murasaki here, with some ideas for you. In case you haven't noticed, the new tech is here and a lot of 'Mechs are being revamped to take advantage of it. Meanwhile, as our old SRM 2's and AC 10's are being traded for Streaks and LB's, it just becomes more and more impossible to afford the escalating arms race (not to mention the war against the Clans!). Often the replaced parts are sold to salvage companies like mine in order to cushion the otherwise-prohibitive cost of their replacements. Therefore, I now have got a heap of everything from Star Slab Armor to Whirlwind AutoCannon to Amana Heat Sinks. Using these, and with the aid of some engineers I have hired at my own expense, I have come up with several inexpensive modifications of existing BattleMechs, as well a few new ones built entirely from battlefield salvage.

BATTLETECHNIC
MILITARY
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We got it!

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Drop 524: Exeter

First I have come up with a new version of the old fire-support medium 'Mech, the Gladiator. Replacing the old LRM-10's (see below for where they went) with LRM-15's adds needed firepower. The LRM-15's were **not** salvaged, but a weapons manufacturer friend of mine had a lot lying around, because so few 'Mechs use them. For anti-infantry I also stuck on, er, attached a pair of the SperryBrowning Machine Guns which are removed in the new tech conversions of the Locust and Phoenix Hawk. Add two more medium lasers and voila! You now have a decent fire-support 'Mech closer to an Archer than a Gladiator.

New Gladiator

Mass: 50 tons
Chassis: MW240
Power Plant: 200 GM
Cruising Speed: 43.2 kph
Maximum Speed: 64.8 kph
Jump Jets: None
Armor: Kemplar 5000
Armament:
2 Shigunga Long Range Missile 15-racks
4 Magna Medium Lasers
2 SperryBrowning Machine Guns
Manufacturer: Mo Murasaki
Comm System: Fujika Multiband
Targeting/Tracking System: General Systems AV-12

Type: **New Gladiator**

Equipment			**Mass**
Internal Structure:			5.0
Engine:	200		8.5
Walking MPs:	4		
Running MPs:	6		
Jumping MPs:	0		
Heat Sinks :	12		2.0
Gyro:			2.0
Cockpit:			3.0
Armor Factor:	128		8.0
	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*	
Head	3	6	
Center Torso:	16	16/6	
Rt/Lt Torso:	12	15/5	
Rt/Lt Arm:	8	15	
Rt/Lt Leg:	12	15	

Weapons and Ammo:	**Location**	**Critical**	
LRM-15	RT	2	7.0
Ammo (LRM) 8	RT	1	1.0
LRM-15	LT	2	7.0
Ammo (LRM) 8	LT	1	1.0
Medium Laser	RA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	RA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Machine Gun	RA	1	0.5
Machine Gun	LA	1	0.5
Ammo (MG) 100	LT	1	0.5

Trooper

Mass: 55 tons
Chassis: Crucis A
Power Plant: Nissan 275
Cruising Speed: 54 kph
Maximum Speed: 86.4 kph
Jump Jets: Rawlings 45
Jump Capacity: 150 meters
Armor: StarGuard III
Armament:
1 Whirlwind AC/5
3 Ceres Arms Medium Lasers
1 Totschlagen SRM Launcher
Manufacturer: Mo Murasaki
Comm System: Garret T12E
Targeting/Tracking System: RCA Instatrac Mark X

Type: **Trooper**

Equipment			**Mass**
Internal Structure:			5.5
Engine:	275		15.5
Walking MPs:	5		
Running MPs:	8		
Jumping MPs:	5		
Heat Sinks :	10		0.0
Gyro:			3.0
Cockpit:			3.0
Armor Factor:	168		10.5
	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*	
Head	3	9	
Center Torso:	18	24/7	
Rt/Lt Torso:	13	20/6	
Rt/Lt Arm:	9	18	
Rt/Lt Leg:	13	20	

Weapons and Ammo:	**Location**	**Critical**	
AC/5	RA	4	8.0
Ammo (AC) 20	RT	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LA	1	1.0
Medium Laser	CT(R)	1	1.0
SRM 4	CT	1	2.0
Ammo (SRM) 25	LT	1	1.0

Let us have a gander at this little beauty, built completely from scrap. I call it the Trooper (no relation to the Flea), suggesting its potential role as a grunt trooper, cheap and efficient. We start with a 55 ton chassis. This is a pretty exemplary model, taken from an old Wolverine. Note that the chassis of any of the three standard 55 ton 'Mechs (Shadow Hawk, Griffon, and Wolverine) can be used. Next put in a standard 275 engine (this one was a Griffon's), giving us average speed. Now we pile on the armor, more than adequate even by today's standards. The AC is one of those distinctive Whirlwind AC/5's from the Wolverine. The lasers are a little newer, scavenged off Kurita Crabs in the Smoke Jaguar zone. The SRM is from a Rasalhagian Ostroc.

We have our jump capability and our armor. We have our long range weapon, our medium range weapons, and our short range weapon. What is wrong with this 'Mech? Nothing, as long as you watch your heat, something warriors today don't seem to understand. The new tech is breeding a sort of laziness that is resulting in war college graduates cooking themselves in an old Awesome (you know, no freezers) when they fire everything they have while on the run. That's just stupid and wasteful. But I digress.

Cobra
Mass: 20 tons
Chassis: Corean II
Power Plant: Magna 170
Cruising Speed: 75.6 kph
Maximum Speed: 118.8 kph
Jump Jets: None
Armor:: Durallex Medium
Armament:
2 Victory 23R Medium Lasers
4 Magna Small Lasers
Manufacturer: Mo Murasaki
Comm System: Neil 2000
Targ/Track Sys: Dalban Hi-Rez

Type: **Cobra**

Equipment			**Mass**
Internal Structure:			2.0
Engine:	140		5.0
Walking MPs:	7		
Running MPs:	11		
Heat Sinks :	10		0.0
Gyro:			2.0
Cockpit:			3.0
Armor Factor:	64		4.0
Location:	*Internal Structure*	*Armor Value*	
Head	3	6	
Center Torso:	6	7/ 5	
Rt/Lt Torso:	5	6/ 5	
Rt/Lt Arm:	3	5	
Rt/Lt Leg:	4	7	

Weapons and Ammo:	**Location**	**Critical**	
Medium Laser	CT	1	1.0
Medium Laser	CT	1	1.0
Small Laser	RA	1	0.5
Small Laser	RA	1	0.5
Small Laser	LA	1	0.5
Small Laser	LA	1	0.5

This was originally meant to be sort of a Locust-hunter, (back before the Locust started getting armed) and it is made out of an old Locust. It took a bit of work to get the Medium Lasers to fit into the space where only one had been before. The small lasers were easier to fit into the arms. I made the engine smaller so that the extra medium laser would fit, but I doubt anyone would miss the extra 10.8 kph. Despite its lack of new tech, this 'Mech can outgun any 'Mech in its weight class or lower, as well as run circles around almost anything else. The armor is also very good for the 'Mech's size. Again, heat can be a problem for the incautious pilot.

Lumberer

Mass: 80 tons
Chassis: Not Really
Power Plant: 240 Pitban
Cruising Speed: 32 kph
Maximum Speed: 54 kph
Jump Jets: Lexington Ltd Lifters
Jump Capacity: 90 Meters
Armor: Star Slab III
Armament:
2 DLC-10 Long Range Missile 10-Racks
1 Lord's Light PPC
1 Magna Mk III Large Laser
4 Magna Mark II Medium Lasers
Manufacturer: Mo Murasaki
Comm System: Garret 500 A
Targeting/Tracking System: Federated Hunter

Type: **Lumberer**

Equipment			**Mass**
Internal Structure:			8.0
Engine:	240		11.5
Walking MPs:	3		
Running MPs:	5		
Jumping MPs:	3		
Heat Sinks :	15		5.0
Gyro:			3.0
Cockpit:			3.0
Armor Factor:	248		15.5
	Internal Structure	*Armor Value*	
Head	3	9	
Center Torso:	25	30/21	
Rt/Lt Torso:	17	22/16	
Rt/Lt Arm:	13	26	
Rt/Lt Leg:	17	30	

Weapons and Ammo:	**Location**	**Critical**	
LRM 10	RT	2	5.0
Ammo (LRM) 12	RT	1	1.0
LRM 10	LT	2	5.0
Ammo (LRM) 12	LT	1	1.0
PPC	RA	3	7.0
Large Laser	LA	2	5.0
Medium Laser	RT (R)	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LT (R)	1	1.0
Medium Laser	CT	1	1.0
Medium Laser	LT	1	1.0

I did this 'Mech mostly to show that you can make a 'Mech out of scrap. The internal structure is composed of those from at least three 'Mechs, and the armor was made out of sheets of castaway outside an armor foundry. The LRMs are from a Gladiator, The Large Laser a Rifleman, The Medium Lasers a Stalker, the PPC a Panther. Don't even ask how I got those Jump Jets off the Victor. And the Communications and Targ/Track systems? Let's just say you'll trust them more if you don't scrutinize them too closely. But it moves fine, and when it jumps you never saw such a sight in your life (trust me). The jump jets, though ridiculously prone to breakdown (I don't know how they even lift that eighty tons of drek into the air!), work okay, and the weapons work fine. See, even I can put together an assault 'Mech, given two years, some help, and a knack for scrounging.

TEXT OF NAIS LECTURE: MARCH 12, 3051

BattleMech Design:
The Best Came First

BY
PROFESSOR ALAN DELTHAINE
PROFESSOR OF MILITARY TECHNOLOGY, NAIS

Ever since the late 2400's, BattleMechs have been produced in an ever-increasing variety of models. There seems to be no limit to the number of variations on a them that 'Mech designers can come up with, and yet the basic types of BattleMechs, the basic models needed to perform all the missions of the battlefield, are really quite few in number. Most, if not all, of the battlefield's varied missions have had excellent BattleMechs designed to handle them quite early in the 'Mech Era, and yet new designs are still being cranked out. It is my considered opinion that most, though by no means all, of this design work has been a waste of time, and that the resources spent developing new 'Mechs would have been better spent in building more facilities to build the 'Mechs already in service. I will further contend that even had it not been for the Amaris Takeover and the war which followed, the Star League would have lost its technological edge over the five House militaries within another century at most.

'MECH DESIGNS OF OLD

We are all familiar with the initial quartet of BattleMechs which the old Terran Hegemony came up with at the very start of the BattleMech Era, and which have not been produced for centuries: the Chameleon training 'Mech, the heavy Mackie, first of them all, and the Emperor and Striker assault 'Mechs. These all represent obsolete technology, and those 'Mechs of this type still in existence have almost invariably been relegated to militia or training units. What I am concerned with here are the

This article is a reprint of a controversial lecture given as one of NAIS's Public Information Series of this year. It is unique in BattleTechnology's history as the only article which was almost censored by our own staff! It aroused as much controversy here as it did when it was given that Tuesday evening during Open House Week.

"Take out what he says about the Crab! Don't you dare touch what he says about the Trebuchet! He doesn't appreciate the capabilities of the Spider, why in 3029 alone..." People were glaring at each other in the halls. The DropShip room assignments for the next move were changing hourly. A wedding between families which owned a Stinger 2-E and a Javelin came close to being broken off. And then there was the staff meeting that caused Robinson's Rainbow to ban us permanently.

Every so often you just have to say, "I'm the editor and what I say goes." They always look surprised when I do, for some reason. My reasoning? Very few of you will agree with everything that Professor Delaine says about each 'Mech design and type. On that level, the controversy aroused should (a) keep you from being bored on garrison duty and (b) make you think about why and how you really can justify a certain 'Mech design.

But on a more important level, the point that the Professor was trying to get across, that the Star League would not have been able to maintain its superiority by superior technology alone, is an fascinating takeoff point for speculation. I myself don't altogether agree with him, but it makes me think...

BattleMechs which were designed and first built within roughly the first two centuries of the BattleMech Era, and which are still in use today in frontline combat units.

Consider: During the Age of War (2398-2556) alone, the following 'Mech designs were put into service: the Locust, Wasp, Stinger, Commando, UrbanMech, Firestarter, Flea, Falcon, Thorn, Clint, Phoenix Hawk, Dervish, Griffin, Shadow Hawk, Wolverine, Ostroc, Rifleman, Crusader, Guillotine, Jaeger Mech, Thunderbolt, Archer, Warhammer, Excalibur, Victor, and Banshee. This is virtually the full spectrum of 'Mech types required: light reconnaissance jobs, medium workhorses for both direct combat and fire support, the same for heavy 'Mechs (including two specialized for anti-aircraft work), and assault 'Mechs. The last category is rather scanty, but remember that in the early years, truly large assault 'Mechs were so rare that the heavy Thunderbolt and Guillotine were used as assault 'Mechs, while the medium Griffin saw service as a heavy.

Between the end of the Age of War and the start of the Reunification War in 2577, three new heavy 'Mechs and one medium 'Mech appeared: the Catapult, an Archer-style fire support 'Mech, the Orion, the Thug, and the Hunchback. The Orion was another one of those heavily-armed heavy 'Mechs that would have been regarded as assault 'Mechs in an earlier time. The Thug was a successor to the Warhammer, meant solely for Royal Star League units. This is as good a time as any to point out the fact that BattleMech design had already covered virtually all the spectrum, so that now all that essentially remained was to refine the existing weapons with superior technology. After all, what is a Thug but a Warhammer with advanced technology? The weapons, armor, and heat sinks are better, but the basic design is essentially unchanged. Indeed, in one way, it is worse: the Thug lacks the Warhammer's machine guns and lasers, making it almost helpless in close-in combat when the SRMs run out.

During the Reunification War (2577-2597), the following 'Mech designs appeared: the Ostscout, Kintaro, Lancelot, Black Knight, Highlander, and Stalker. In addition, the Champion and the Marauder appeared so soon after the end of this period that is is virtually a certainty that their initial design work began during the War. Thus, early into the 2600's, we have ten light 'Mech models, eight of mediums, an astonishing sixteen of heavy 'Mechs, and four assault 'Mechs. And all this in only slightly over two hundred years into the BattleMech Era! Every other 'Mech design that we know of, that has not been built during the Succession Wars period, was built during the glory years and period of decline for the Star League, and the bulk of them were designed by the Star League itself.

NEW VS OLD:

In this lecture, we shall discuss the newer Star League 'Mechs, and a few of the older models, to discover how few of them were really an advancement over what already existed or would soon be built by the House Militaries.

LIGHT 'MECHS

As you know, the House Lords began trying to circumvent the military superiority of the Star League no later than the time when General Kerensky became Richard Cameron's regent. Even during the Age of War, the Houses had begun to design their own BattleMechs: the Commando and Flea light 'Mechs were Steiner and Marik designs respectively. All houses continued to work on developing their own 'Mech designs, independently of the Star League.

It is interesting to note that House Steiner successfully resisted, for several hundred years, all attempts to incorporate the Commando into the Star League regular army. With its SRM batteries, it was clearly a superior design, armament-wise, to the Locust/Stinger/Wasp triad that most Star League forces still depended on. So even from the start, the League's military superiority as regards 'Mech design was not total, and such superiority as there was depended more on more advanced versions of standard 'Mech weapons, rather than any innate design superiority of the 'Mechs themselves.

Starting with light 'Mechs, one may wonder whether the Spider and Javelin are really that superior to what came before them, and for that matter, what the Houses themselves eventually put into production. The Spider's twin medium lasers are no more potent than those of the Stinger-2 and Locust 1E (the latter also mounts two small lasers). The Javelin's twin SRM-6 launchers give it a potent close-in attack capability, but only slightly more than the missile capability of the Steiner Commando. In addition, the Javelin has no energy weapons as backup, so it is all but helpless in close-in combat. By contrast, the Commando has one medium laser, and in addition, its two SRM launchers are on different parts of its body, so one bad hit will not totally ruin its missile capability. Given its inability to fight at close range without missiles, the Javelin would have been better off had its missile load been LRMs, enabling it to bombard the enemy at a distance in relative safety. About the only advantage the Javelin has over the Commando is its jump jets. All in all, both light 'Mechs discussed here would have poor parity at best with the light 'Mechs the Houses themselves have constructed: the Commando, Flea, Panther, Jenner, Raven, Wolfhound, Hornet, and Valkyrie.

Still on the subject of light 'Mechs, we find that the more special and less common 'Mechs — the Falcon, Firefly, Mercury, Mongoose, Thorn, Hermes, and Hussar—are

almost helpless in long-range firefights. Some have good close-in firepower (the Firefly, Mongoose, and Hussar in particular), but none have PPCs. For that matter, no common light 'Mechs have PPCs either, except for House Kurita's Panther. Only the Thorn has an LRM launcher: an LRM-5 which gives it only half the missile capacity of the Davion Valkyrie. As for general suitability, the Star League itself dropped the Hermes in frontline units after only 19 years. In the main, though, the point I am trying to make is not that these 'Mechs were bad 'Mechs, but that their design was no better than that of the older 'Mechs, and those built by House armies. SLDF superiority was due to more advanced versions of the weapons carried. Given equally advanced technology, House 'Mechs would be able to face their League counterparts on equal terms. Therefore, the new designs of 'Mechs (as opposed to weapons systems, armor, electronics, etc.) seems to have been largely a waste of time.

I keep harping on this theme because of its historical significance. Historians in general have bemoaned the Civil War, which ruined the Star League. They seem to think that the SLDF would have maintained its superiority over the House armies indefinitely. I submit that this belief is incorrect. Later Star League designs were no better than the old ones, or the new ones put out by the Houses.

There are many examples from history, particularly during the Reunification War and the Periphery rebellion just before the Civil War, as well as that war itself, which show that good training and tactics can easily handle whatever slight advantage the League 'Mechs had. We saw this again recently, when ComStar-supplied League 'Mechs appeared in the ranks of House Kurita during the 3039 War. Surprise helped win many victories, initially, at least, but later on, the forces of the Federated Commonwealth managed to hold their own. After all, if the League designs were so superior, why did not the DCMS take over the Commonwealth in an early version of the Clans' blitzkrieg? It has been reported that most, if not all, of the ComStar 'Mechs had had their sophisticated League weaponry replaced with standard models. This reinforces my point: the designs of the Star League 'Mechs were no better than those of the Houses, or of the older-generation 'Mechs. Given weapons of the same technological level, the 'Mechs fought on equal terms.

One exception should be noted here: the modular design of the Mercury's weapons systems. This is obviously the ancestor of the Clans' OmniMechs, and was a far greater innovation in 'Mech design than mere extended-range weaponry. However, even here, the House armies would have eventually caught up. Given a long enough period of peacetime and 'Mech development, the first modular 'Mechs would have been handed down to the House armies as per the law. After that, given the record with ordinary 'Mechs, it seems likely that in a surviving Star League, the House armies would have achieved rough parity in OmniMechs with the SLDF.

MEDIUM 'MECHS

Now on to medium 'Mechs. The Kintaro is an advanced design, with plenty of high-tech equipment, but would its design make it any better than a House 'Mech with the same technology, or a retrofitted older 'Mech? Both the Dervish and the post-League Trebuchet have far more LRM firepower, though at the cost of most or all of the SRMS (the Trebuchet has an extra medium laser to compensate). The Dervish and the TBT-5J variant of the Trebuchet also have jump jets, which the Kintaro lacks. If a more advanced fire-support medium 'Mech was needed, it would seem that retrofitting the Dervish with the newer technology would be a better bet than designing a whole new 'Mech. Certainly the 'Mechs recently retrofitted with Star League technology from the Gray Death memory core seem in no way inferior to their League counterparts in the ranks of House Kurita and the ComGuards. This applies to all classes of 'Mechs.

The Vulcan seems to be nothing more than a modified Firestarter. Since it was designed to fight against infantry rather than 'Mechs, one wonders why the SLDF even bothered with it, as the Firestarter is far deadlier against infantry. Similarly, the Assassin does not seem to be much better than the average Light 'Mech, except for a bit more armor. Its close-in firepower is no better than that of the Wasp, and inferior to the House-built Flea, Commando, Raven, Jenner, and Wolfhound. In long-range battle, it suffers in comparison with the Valkyrie and Panther, the one having twice as much LRM firepower, and the latter having (in its PPC) a long-range weapon that does not run out of ammunition.

Next we come to another overweight light 'Mech masquerading as a medium: the Cicada. This is basically an up-armored Locust, and in fact has slightly less firepower than the previously-mentioned Locust-1E. Given the fact that reconnaissance 'Mechs are supposed to rely on speed rather than armor or firepower, this 'Mech is of questionable utility. As a medium 'Mech, it is something like an under armored Phoenix Hawk lacking arms, jump jets, machine guns, and a large laser. Even the SLDF had second thoughts about this one, as it never underwent more than limited production.

The Whitworth is another one of those Dervish substitutes, like the Kintaro, which does not really seem to have been worth the trouble. It has precisely the same LRM capability as the Dervish, but may be slightly interior in close combat. Lacking the SRMs, it has a third medium laser in compensation, but what really hurts it in close combat is the lack of any real arms. Even the paddle-blades of the Dervish, lacking hands as they do, are far better weapons

in close combat than the medium laser barrels of the Whitworth. Whenever a Whitworth moved in for close combat, the result has invariably been a wrecked Whitworth. The current variant, using recovered Star League technology, has only one medium laser to discourage any thoughts the MechWarrior may have of closing—a wise decision. This 'Mech is not now produced by anyone, and between the Dervish and the new Trebuchet, it is doubtful that many will miss it.

Now we come to one of the better 'Mechs of the Star League glory days: the Blackjack. Originally intended as an anti-infantry medium 'Mech, the Blackjack was not saddled with the deficiencies of the Vulcan, its armament being a major improvement on any light 'Mech. Given the fact that it was a relatively light model for a Medium 'Mech, its firepower was also respectable in 'Mech combat. It is ironic that the false rumors of its supposed deficiencies led to this fine 'Mech being taken out of service, while relatively worthless models like the Assassin and the Vulcan were put into production.

The Scorpion is another medium 'Mech of the Star League era that seems to have been an exception proving the rule. With a PPC as its main armament, it was meant for long-range sniping, and its unique four-legged design enabled it to take better advantage of cover than any bipedal 'Mech could. If forced to fight at close range, it was equipped with an SRM-6 launcher. The main bad thing you can say about this 'Mech is the fact that the four-legged design required special controls and equipment that took up so much room that little was left over for weaponry. Thus, the 55-ton Scorpion has scarcely more firepower than the 35-ton Panther, also lacking that 'Mech's jump jets and arms, although it is faster. Probably inferior to that 'Mech in urban combat or the like, its speed and ability to "hunker down:" make it better in open-field combat. A noble experiment, if nothing else.

The Wyvern has the same lone quality as an advantage and disadvantage: a dedicated urban-warfare 'Mech, it is almost useless for any other purpose. Since it has so much trouble with its LRM system, this should have been dropped in favor of more SRMs, abandoning all pretense that this 'Mech can be used in anything other than the close quarters of urban combat. A good 'Mech, provided it is used as its designers intended.

The Sentinel was originally a Steiner design. Historically, medium 'Mechs have never been a Lyran specialty, and the Sentinel is a prime reason why. Although its autocannon and SRM launcher have plenty of ammunition, they would both run out eventually, leaving the 'Mech with only a small laser for protection. The ammunition capacity is just enough to tempt the pilot into thinking he can take part in a prolonged raiding operation away from his side's supply lines, running out about the time the raiders are cornered and forced to fight for their lives. The lack of jump jets does not help, either. Once the projectile ammunition runs out, the hapless Sentinel could be almost leisurely picked to pieces by a lowly Locust, Stinger, or Wasp. As to what the Steiners themselves thought of this 'Mech, it is highly revealing that, unlike the Commando, they allowed this 'Mech to be produced by the Star League, and even by Davion and Marik forces. Since Marik forces were allowed to use it, it is surprising that Kuritan forces were not equally privileged. Perhaps the Dragon's purchasing officers had better sense than their Marik counterparts.

The Crab is a good idea with a few bad flaws. Given the fact that raiding was its intended use, it is surprising that is has no long-range weaponry. A Panther with its lone PPC could give the Crab pilot fits, particularly in a built-up area. In the open, the fight would be more even, with the Crab's speed partially offsetting the Panther's PPC and jump jets, but it is still scandalous that a medium 'Mech should find itself so evenly matched by a single light (assuming equal skill for both pilots). One wonders why a PPC was not put in instead of the light and medium lasers, or possibly one of the large lasers. Speaking of the large lasers, the Crab's final weakness is that they are easily knocked out of alignment in hand-to-hand fighting. Sure, as Crab fans point out, the pilot himself can repair the damage in several minutes, but if the enemy's so close that you can exchange punches with him, several minutes might as well be forever.

The final medium 'Mech we shall discuss is the Hoplite. While this machine has good firepower, it is unfortunately all taken up by projectile weapons, without so much as a small laser as energy-weapon backup. When the autocannon rounds and LRMs go, so does the Hoplite. Like the Cicada, another bad medium 'Mech design, the Hoplite has neither arms nor jump jets, severely crippling it in close-in combat. Nowadays, only Wolf's Dragoons still operate this 'Mech. They have my sympathy.

HEAVY 'MECHS

The first heavy 'Mech we'll look at is the Champion. Basically, this machine is a medium 'Mech playing at being a heavy 'Mech. Aside from the auto cannon, all its weaponry is short-range, leaving it at a severe disadvantage in a prolonged long-range firefight. Indeed, if not for the SRM launcher, the Champion would have no more firepower than the Locust-1E variant. Take the autocannon out of the equation due to either close range or ammunition exhaustion, and you have a heavy 'Mech with roughly the firepower of a Phoenix Hawk, but without jump jets or arms. A Shadow Hawk would be a rough match for it, and House Kurita's Shadow Hawk-2K variant would have the edge in a long-range firefight (its PPC won't run out of ammunition). Definitely not worth the trouble of designing and building.

The Bombardier design is that of an underarmed Archer, lacking the latter's medium lasers for close-in protection (the SRMs would eventually run out). It is noted for its advanced missiles, which could just as easily be fired by a new model of the Archer. The Bombardier's major failing is its extreme specialization of missile ammo. Its tubes could only fire the specialized missiles the Star League factories made for it, NOT ordinary LRMs. If it could fire ordinary missiles, it still wouldn't be much better than a modernized Archer, but at least the design would not have been abandoned as the Succession Wars ground on. Its inability to fire captured missiles kept it out of anything like a deep penetration raid, where its heavy firepower would have been appreciated.

The Ostsol is basically an Ostroc with two rearward-firing medium lasers instead of the SRM launcher. Given that there already exist a few Ostroc variants with an extra large laser (which could be mounted to fire backwards), one wonders why Ostmann bothered designing a whole new 'Mech.

The Quickdraw was intended to be a replacement for the venerable Rifleman, despite the fact that the JagerMech already existed as a supplement to it. Why the SLDF thought it was a suitable replacement, I have no idea. Since two of its medium lasers fire to the rear, the Quickdraw comes nowhere near having the head-on firepower of the Rifleman, and unless one wanted some LRMs lobbed in an indirect barrage, I fail to see what the Quickdraw can do that the Rifleman or JagerMech cannot do as well or better. It even lacks the special radars the two older 'Mechs have for antiaircraft work. The Quickdraw is a bit more like the Crusader than any other 'Mech, and even here, it generally fares poorly in a comparison with the older 'Mech. It can use jump jets in a Death From Above attack, and that's about it.

The Excalibur is another one of those 'Mechs that make you wonder why anyone bothered designing it. With a Gauss Rifle and LRM launcher, it is uncompromisingly suited for long-range fire only. At close quarters, all it has is a small pulse laser that is only good for sniping at infantry. Shaping the Gauss Rifle like a sword blade was a major mistake, as it encouraged many MechWarriors who did not know better to use it as one at close quarters. It is puzzling why the SLDF did not have the gun's edges coated with a high-density alloy, so it could be used at close quarters a la the Hatchetman. Both Kurita and Steiner showed more foresight by providing an armored sleeve or extending core to protect the projectile weapon, whether autocannon or LRM launcher, from damage during hand-to-hand combat on their Dragon and Zeus 'Mechs respectively. As it is, the Excalibur is easy prey for any medium 'Mech equipped for close-in combat, such as the Hunchback, Centurion, or the Kurita and Marik variants of the Wolverine. Even in long-range combat, it suffers by being doomed to eventually run out of ammunition.

The Grasshopper is one of the few good new heavy 'Mech designs. It seems to be a poor man's Highlander or Victor, with an arsenal based almost solely on energy weapons to make it virtually independent of supply lines. It is made mainly for close-in fighting, with lasers, arms, and a jump jet-backed Death From Above attack. As with the Crab, the main flaw with the Grasshopper as a deep raider is that it has no long-range weapon that is independent of supply lines. The LRM launcher has plenty of reloads, but they cannot last forever. It would have been wiser to mount a PPC instead of the large laser. If a 'Mech is to be used in hit-and-run attacks behind enemy lines, it should have at least one long-distance weapon that does not need ammunition. Perhaps the LRM launcher could have been replaced by a PPC, shoulder-mounted as with the Shadow Hawk-2K variant. Leaving out this long-range weakness, the Grasshopper is a fine 'Mech.

The Lancelot is another energy weapon-equipped rear area raider that falls down from a shortage of long-range weaponry. Here, the problem could have been partially remedied by choosing a more reliable PPC model. Still, if the Lancelot was supposed to make hit-and-run attacks, surely it would have been wiser to give it two PPCs and only one large laser for close-in emergencies. It is fast for a heavy 'Mech, and its strange silhouette makes it a difficult target, both good qualities for a guerrilla fighter.

The Exterminator is a specialized heavy 'Mech good at sneaking up on and destroying headquarters and command 'Mechs like the Cyclops, but not much good in a stand-up fight. Lacking SRMs, it has slightly less total firepower than the Quickdraw, but the fact that all four medium lasers are up front compensates for that. Like the Quickdraw, it also has jump jets, and also has high speed for a heavy 'Mech. Its main weakness is its extreme specialization. Although it is sneaky, once the enemy finds it, it is in serious trouble. The reflective anti-laser covering only works when clean, making it worthless in dusty or sandy terrain. Without stealth on its side, it would be on the losing end of a stand-up fight against the Cyclops (a frequent target), and once the armies of the Successor States started keeping a lance of medium-to-heavy 'Mechs near the command 'Mech specifically to wait for it, the Exterminator was doomed.

The Flashman is a good design for close-in work, but again, like many another "pure energy weapons" 'Mech, it would have been better if at least one large laser had been replaced with a PPC. The Flashman was supposed to give energy weapon fire support to its lancemates; with a PPC, it would have been able to do so even at the most extreme ranges. As is, it is an excellent heavy 'Mech for urban warfare and the close ranges it involves.

Unlike most of the other 'Mechs that rely solely on energy weapons, the Black Knight does mount a PPC along with the lasers. It was also used as a command 'Mech, and was a frequent prey of the Exterminator. As far as firepower goes, it is slightly inferior to House Liao's Marauder-L variant at long range, though superior at closer quarters. Appearing during the Reunification War, it is one of the better old Star League designs.

ASSAULT 'MECHS

Just to start off in the "A" category, the first assault 'Mech I'll describe is the Awesome. This is one of the better assault 'Mechs of the Star League era, always assuming it was used properly. Its function on the battlefield was as a PPC battery, with three of those weapons to provide long-range fire support. Close-in, it had nothing but its battle fist and a small laser for anti-infantry work. At close and medium ranges (laser, SRM, AC/10, and AC/20 ranges), its only hope was that its armor could preserve it long enough to either open the range or get in close enough to crush the foe under its weight. Its slow speed made both possibilities somewhat unlikely in th open, however.

The Atlas is another assault 'Mech: one that seems to be a favorite among many MechWarriors. However, its slowness is exacerbated by the fact that it has only two long-range weapons, both with limited ammunition. With no energy weapons larger than medium lasers, it would be hard pressed in a prolonged battle against heavy or even medium 'Mechs with long-range firepower, such as the Vindicator, Trebuchet, Rifleman, Warhammer, or Archer. Against a mobile enemy, the Atlas has problems, as Lyran forces discovered all too often in battle against their Marik and Kurita opponents.

The Charger is a 'Mech design that borders on the ridiculous. A fast reconnaissance assault 'Mech with heavy armor and almost no firepower—the staff of Wells Technologies should all have been imprisoned for this boondoggle. Even a fair number of light 'Mechs have greater firepower than this hunk of junk, and all have longer range. The Charger is good in hand-to-hand combat, particularly against lighter 'Mechs, and potent against light vehicles and infantry if these cannot retreat, but otherwise it is useless. Oddly, the SLDF never tried to fix up the Charger, leaving that job for other houses. House Liao's Charger-L is a definite improvement, though it still leaves us with an assault 'Mech bearing the firepower of a Phoenix Hawk. The surprise Charger-2 variant of House Kurita is even better, and it is hard to say why the SLDF did not think of this version first.

The Banshee has a similar problem, though not so bad as the Charger's. Since this was one of the earliest 'Mechs, from the Age of War, it is puzzling why the SLDF did not do the obvious to fix it up; i.e., install a more compact engine to free up room for more weaponry. House Steiner's Banshee-S is a shining example of what could have been done, particularly with Star League technology. Anyone who thinks the SLDF could have maintained technical supremacy forever has to explain why, with the Banshee and Charger, it could not or did not make simple but effective changes that "mere" House armies were able to bring about.

The Goliath is another experimental four-legged design like the Scorpion. Unlike that medium 'Mech, however, the Goliath is relatively slow. This is a major handicap, unlike the Scorpion, it is uncompromisingly a long-range combat 'Mech, with no close-in weaponry that would be effective against another 'Mech. This is something that Major Fiona Cochrane and her entire battalion found out to their cost on St. Andre at the very start of the Fourth Succession War. Immobilized if even one of its four legs is damaged, the Goliath can be, and frequently has been, beaten in combat by smaller and more mobile 'Mechs.

The BattleMaster is an assault 'Mech almost totally made for close-in work, with only a single PPC providing long-range fire. If that is knocked out, the 'Mech is almost helpless against more mobile machines with long-range weaponry. It is at its best in urban warfare, where long range fire is not often a factor.

The Spartan is more like a speeded-up BattleMaster than anything else. Although it has the same lone PPC for long-range firepower, and even fewer weapons for the close-in work, its high speed means that it will often be able to decide the range at which it will fight.

The Crockett is an improvement over the old Victor: one of the few cases where a later Star League design was actually a real advance. Its extended-range large lasers, though not as long-ranged as their PPC counterparts, did provided some long-range fire, while it had plenty of close-in weaponry as well. Its jump jets are an important addition, enabling it to catch normally faster 'Mechs in close terrain. The older Highlander is also good, and the inspired design of its legs (greatly increased armor) made it virtually the only 'Mech that could make repeated Death From Above attacks without crippling its own mobility.

The Shogun is yet another jump-jet equipped assault 'Mech. This one is meant as a jumping missile-carrier, on the order of a scaled-up Crusader-L. For close-in work when the SRMs run out, it can punch as well as make Death From Above attacks, as the missile launchers it has in place of hands are protected by an extended central core like that on the Zeus. Its worst flaw is only one energy weapon: a PPC, which is less versatile in combat than it might be because it is built into one side of the torso.

The Cyclops is a command 'Mech, its sheer size giving it greater versatility in this role than the smaller (and older) Black Knight. As such, it is not expected to get into the thick

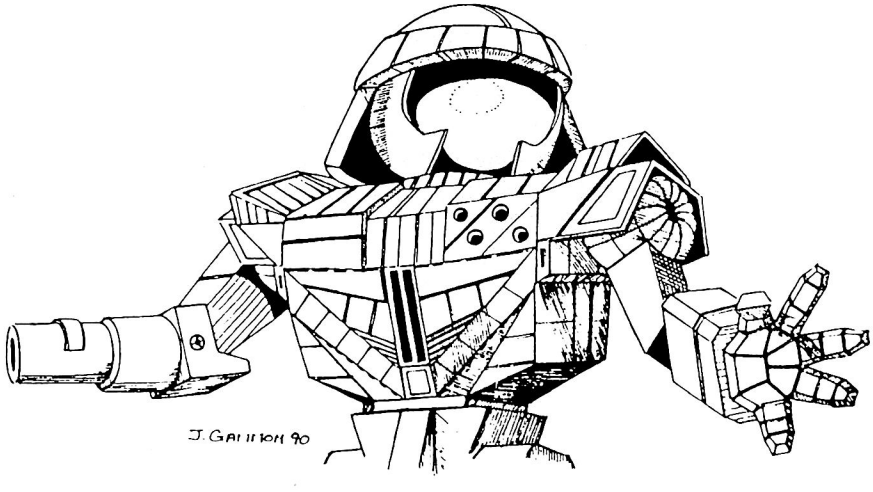
of the fighting. This is reflected by its relatively weak armament, which is mostly projectile weapons with little ammunition. Once it is out of ammo, all the Cyclops has for defense are two medium lasers and its arms. Most Exterminator kills of this 'Mech came after previous attacks had been fought off, leaving the Cyclops with little or no ammunition for its main weapons.

Finally, we have the King Crab, an assault 'Mech almost awesomely ludicrous. For main armament, it has two AC/20s with only five rounds apiece, plus an LRM launcher with only enough missiles for eight shots. For energy weapon-backup, it only has a lone large laser: a potent weapon, but pitifully inadequate for a 100-ton assault 'Mech. If the battle lasts for even a moderate length of time, the King Crab will be almost defenseless, and can be leisurely shot to pieces by a reasonably mobile opponent. As an assault 'Mech, it is tied with the original Charger in my book for the biggest waste of design time.

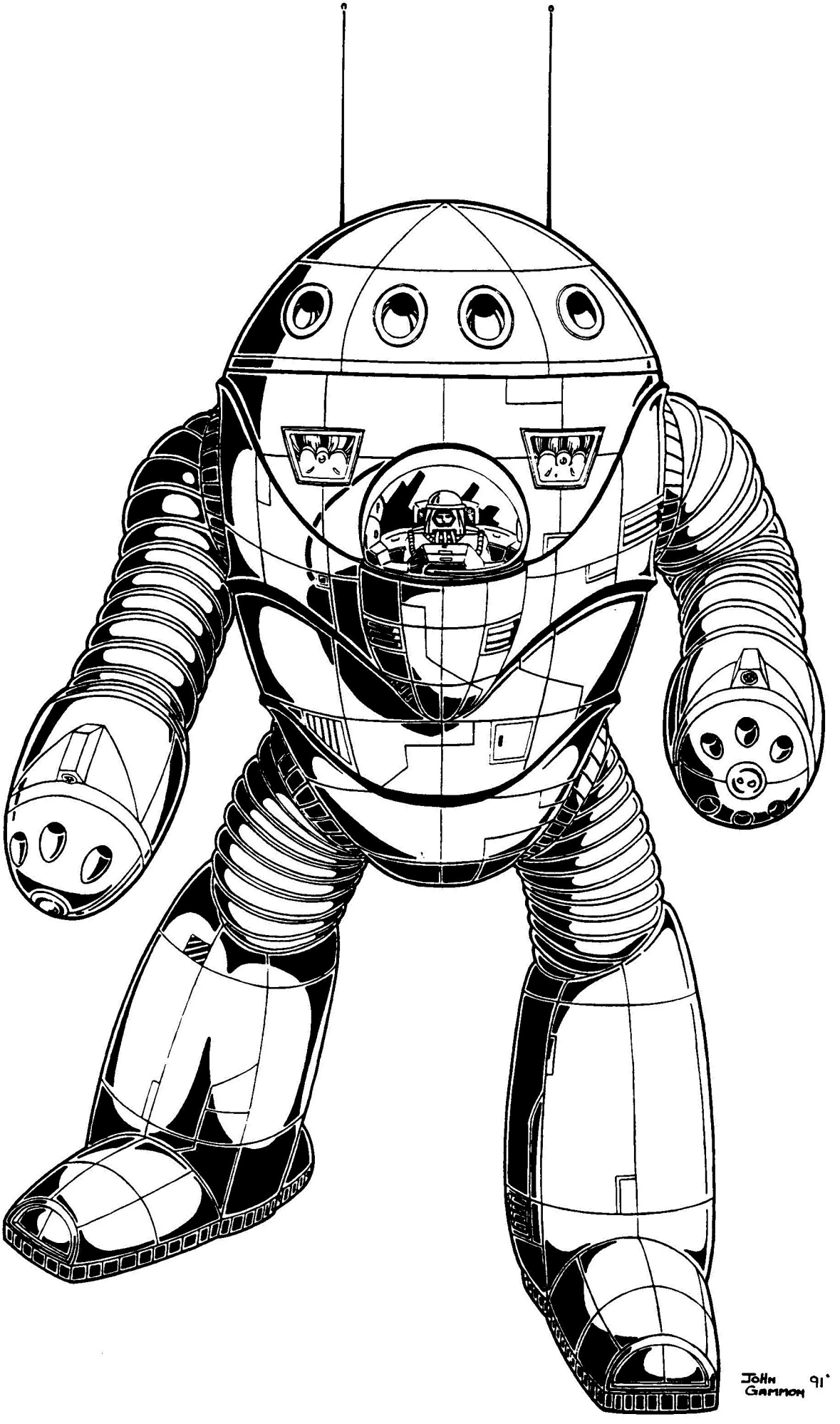
Well, there you have it. Although there were some good designs in the later years of the Star League, for the most part the BattleMechs designed were an utter waste of time, their superiority in battle due not to innate design superiority, but to more modern weapons and other accessories. Given equal weapons technology, they had no real superiority to the older designs, or to those created by 'Mech designers of the House militaries. Thus, any hopes that the Star League would have been able to keep the five Houses in line indefinitely were doomed to failure, even without the Civil War and its aftermath.

About the Author:

Alan Delthaine was born on the Davion world of Altoona in 3010. He belonged to a middle-class family of Techs who worked on civilian machinery. Young Alan was more fascinated by the machines of war, even joining the local militia when he was old enough. Although never seeing action, he intently studied all the battle reports, blueprints, and documents he could get his hands on, and never turned down an opportunity for simulator combat. He joined the NAIS staff in 3030, assisting in the decoding of the Gray Death memory core. His current whereabout on New Avalon are a mystery, and will remain so until most of the MechWarriors who were present go offplanet to fight the Clans.



After Professor Delthaine gave his speech, there was supposed to be a question-and-answer period. However, a surprisingly large percentage of his audience consisted of MechWarriors, many of whom took violent exception to his choice of bad 'Mechs. After a BattleMaster jock threw at the Professor a rotten tomato he had brought along on the off chance it might be useful, a full-scale riot developed. A slung chair lightly grazed him, and more serious damage would have developed if the MechWarriors nearest to the podium had not gotten into a civil war of their own, arguing the relative merits of the Dervish and the Trebuchet. As the MechWarriors fought among themselves, Professor Delthaine slunk offstage with blood from a slight cut on the forehead trickling down his face, while campus security forces flung themselves into the fray. Professor Delthaine had had tentative plans for similar lectures on ground vehicles and aerospace fighters, but canceled them for an indefinite period of time.


JOHN
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Joe, You'd better be kidding!
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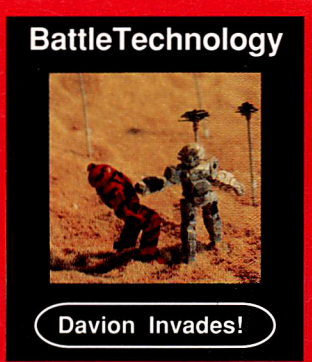

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