

IMPERIAL ARMOUR

DREADCLAW ASSAULT PODS

**Experimental rules by Warwick Kinrade,
Pete Haines and Andy Hoare**

Prior to the Horus Heresy the Dreadclaw was the most advanced assault boat in service. It was equipped with an advanced Machine Spirit similar to that of the Land Raider tank and was capable of landing on a designated target without any intervention from the passengers and then acting in general support totally autonomously. The construction was flawed however. When interfaced with the array of navigational augurs and logic engines the Machine Spirit began to develop a dangerous level of self-awareness, bordering on the psychic. The launch bays and maintenance decks of Dreadclaw-equipped vessels suffered a high level of fatal accidents which, despite the reassurances of the Techpriests, created superstitious rumours that the Machine Spirits were in some way tainted. A detailed investigation into the construction of the Dreadclaw was prevented only by the outbreak of hostilities.

During the Heresy itself the number of incidents involving the Dreadclaw multiplied exponentially on ships loyal to the Emperor. The Imperial Navy was prevented from ordering their immediate withdrawal because of opposition from the Adeptus Mechanicus. However, unofficially many Captains simply jettisoned their Dreadclaws in the warp. After an incident aboard the *Legate Peracles* in the battle for Terra the Dreadclaw was only evident in the Traitor Fleets where its talon-like profile earned it the nickname 'Touch of Death' amongst opposing captains.



DREADCLAW ASSAULT POD

	Points	Front Armour	Side Armour	Rear Armour	BS
Dreadclaw	25	12	12	12	-

Type: Flyer, Orbital Lander

Crew: None

Weapons: None. The Dreadclaw is unarmed.

Options: None.

Fast Attack: The Dreadclaw is a Fast Attack selection on the force organisation chart.

SPECIAL RULES

(See Flyers rules in the Imperial Armour book and Imperial Armour book II)

Infernal Device:

The malevolent spirit controlling the Dreadclaw is housed within a protective core, rendering it far less susceptible to enemy fire than a conventional crew would be. If the vehicle is stunned then the Possessing Spirit will still be able to control the vehicle where a normal crewman would need time to recover. If stunned, the Dreadclaw may be moved directly ahead in a straight line up to its maximum move.

Transport:

The Dreadclaw can carry a single squad of up to 10 Chaos Space Marines (these can be a Chaos Lord and his retinue, Veterans, Khorne Berserkers, Plague Marines, Thousand Sons, Possessed, Chaos Space Marines, Havocs, Noise Marines or Obliterators) or 5 Chaos Terminators or 1 Chaos Dreadnought.

Difficult Ground:

Dreadclaws can be immobilised by landing in difficult terrain as normal.

Deploying the Dreadclaw:

The Dreadclaw and any unit assigned to be transported by it will always begin the game in reserve even if the mission does not normally use the reserves special rule. When the Dreadclaw becomes available from reserve it is deployed using the orbital lander rules (see Chapter Approved page 95 for Orbital Lander rules).

There are no fire points and the one access point is beneath the hull. In practice passengers can disembark at ground level within 2" of the hull.

USING THE DREADCLAW

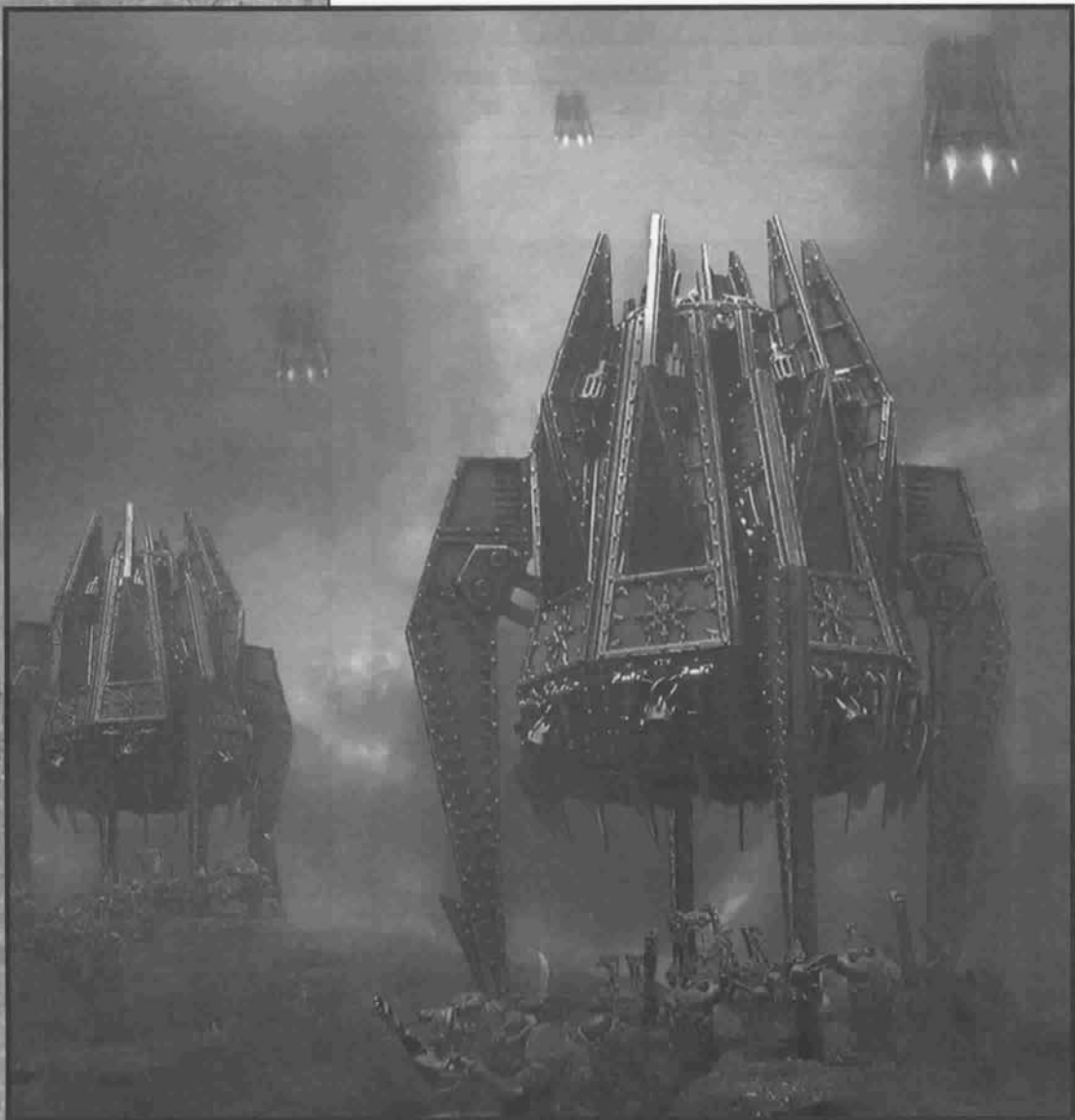
The Dreadclaw is a special case, as its only real use is to deploy a squad from reserve anywhere on the table. It does not have any weapons. Putting a points value on this is difficult as it can't really affect the opposition, but if it delivers five Terminators onto the table, late in a battle to secure the objective, and thereby wins the game, how many points is that worth?

Really, a Dreadclaw is more akin to a piece of terrain, to make your battlefield look great rather than win you the game. In fact there is nothing to stop you deploying the Dreadclaw on the tabletop for any battle involving Chaos forces, and just using it as cover and to block lines of sight like a building. It would represent a damaged pod that has crash landed.

Dreadclaw Operations

The Dreadclaw is still used in two types of operation by Chaos forces. Planetary landings and for ship-to-ship boarding actions as an assault boat.

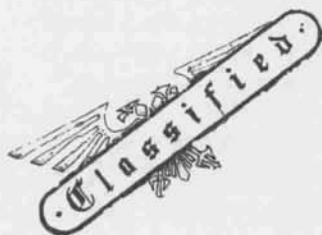
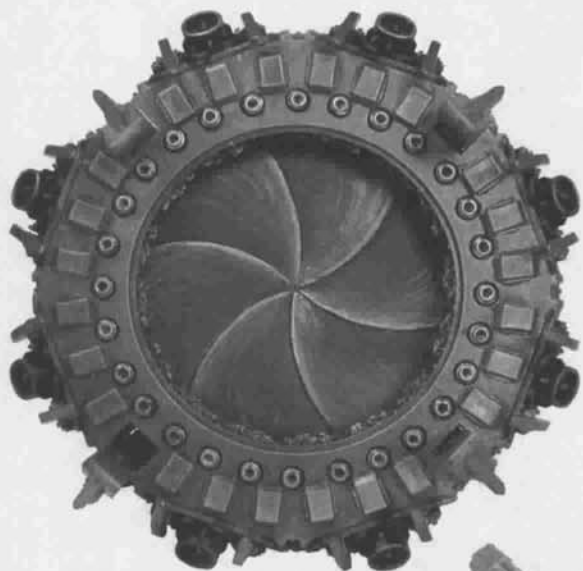
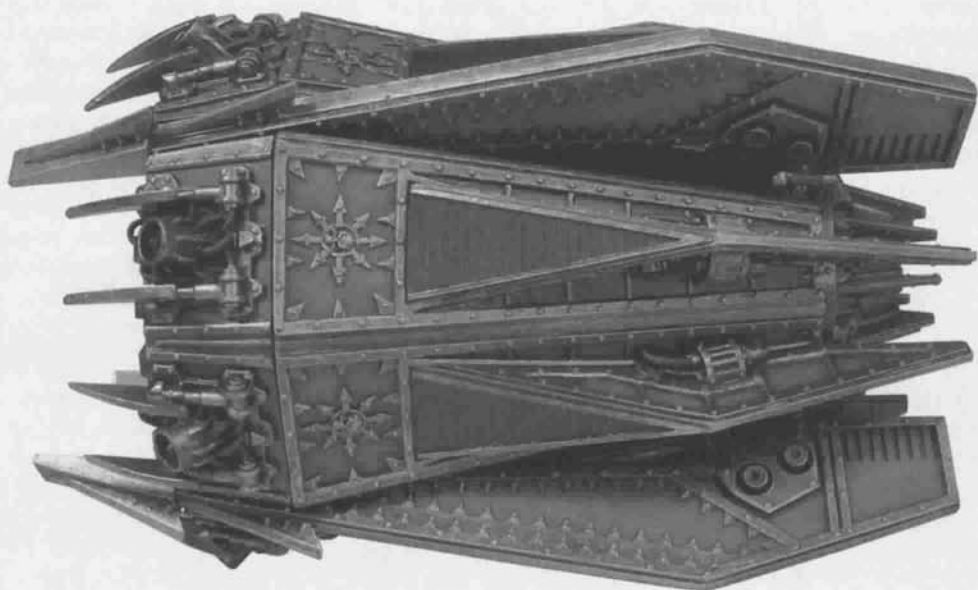
For boarding actions the Dreadclaw's main thruster drives it towards the target ship. As it closes the four main claws extend, whilst manoeuvring thruster adjust the final approach before it accelerates into the hull. The impact punches the main claws



through the hull, and smaller secondary claws clamp the pod securely to the surface, creating a tight seal. A ring of melt-cutters in the pod's base then begin to burn through the hull, creating a circular breach large enough for the troops inside the pod to access the interior. Once the cutting operation is complete, (which only takes a couple of minutes) the iris hatch rotates open and the troops inside can disgorge into the ships.

The Dreadclaw is also used as a more conventional drop pod. Operating much like its Imperial counterpart, when landing on a planet's surface it does not extend its main claws until it has landed. Once on the ground the iris hatch opens and the squad (or Dreadnought) step onto the surface. The four claws then extend, driving the pod's body upwards and revealing its contents, who can then race off towards their targets.

Unlike Imperial drop pods which are one use vessels, the Dreadclaw is also an assault boat. It is capable of lifting off again, and so can be used to extract troops from a planet's surface as well as insert them.



LENGTH: 12.60m

HEIGHT: 3.40m

WINGSPAN: 14.75m

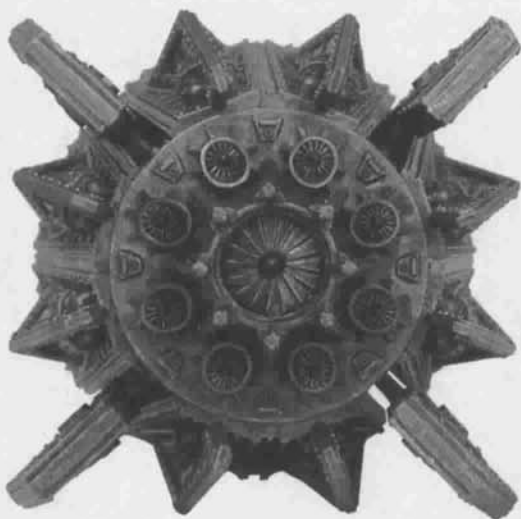
ESTIMATED WEIGHT: 6 tonnes

ARMOUR: 10-40mm

CREW: Remote control

ARMAMENT: None

CAPACITY: 10 passengers



The shriek of the Dreadclaw's steel hull reverberated through the black interior. The roar of the main thruster was a dull thunder in his helmet as Tarlson waited in darkness, secured in his restraining harness, chainsword clasped in his gauntleted fist. He caressed the razor sharp fangs along its length in anticipation. Although nobody inside the Dreadclaw could see it, the grievously damaged cruiser, *Star of Centuari*, was forlornly conducting evasive manoeuvres to avoid the swarm of assault pods racing across the void of space towards it.

Already the cruiser's crew knew they were doomed. With crippled engines they stood no hope of avoiding their attackers. To Tarlson it mattered little, soon the iris hatch would open, and the servants of the false emperor would again know death. As their souls departed they would become aware of the true nature of the universe, as he was, that Mankind, like the *Star of Centuari*, was doomed to destruction. They had placed their faith in a lifeless carcass, and as such it seemed fitting that a lifeless carcass would be their reward. Tarlson felt the blood lust of ten thousand years of battle rising again, and silently praised to his master.

Ancient motors growled as the four long claws extended from the pod, seemingly reaching with sharp talons for the cruiser's hull. Tarlson felt the jolts as thrusters corrected the assault pod's direction, the engine note rose to a shrill whine. He felt a surge of power as the pod accelerated into its final approach. All inside braced themselves for the impact.

Violently the pod hit, driving four claws deep into the stricken cruiser's hull like

the talons of a hawk claspng its prey. Retro-burners surged suddenly into life, slowing the impact by just enough to prevent the death of the cargo. Inside the pod all were thrown forwards, restraining belts holding each in place, barely, as the pod decelerated at speeds which would have crushed any mortal like an insect. The twisting and shrieking of tortured metal filled the pod, as the Dreadclaw took hold, driving more talons into the complaining hull. Briefly the pod settled into an eerie quiet.

Then, melta-cutter sparked into life as the assault cycle continued. Roaring with the heat of a small sun the burners sliced into the cruiser's hull, carving a circular hole in a shower of sparks and molten metal. A gaseous cloud boiled out to fill the corridor beyond. Inside Tarlson watched the iris hatch as he unclasped the restraining belts. Teeth gritted beneath his helmet, he levelled his bolt pistol and chainsword, ready to spring forwards. The others gathered behind him amidst the din, powered armour clattering and whirring into life.

They waited. Brief minutes seemed like hours.

The burners began to die down. Beyond the hatch a circular section of hull collapsed inwards with a resounding clang on the corridor floor. The iris hatch hissed and began to swivel open. Tarlson stepped forwards and ducked through the widening hole.

"Lord, bring us blood!" he roared and leapt into the smoke of the still smouldering steel and sparking, severed wires, and into the corridor beyond. The *Star of Centuari* was doomed...



DREADCLAW

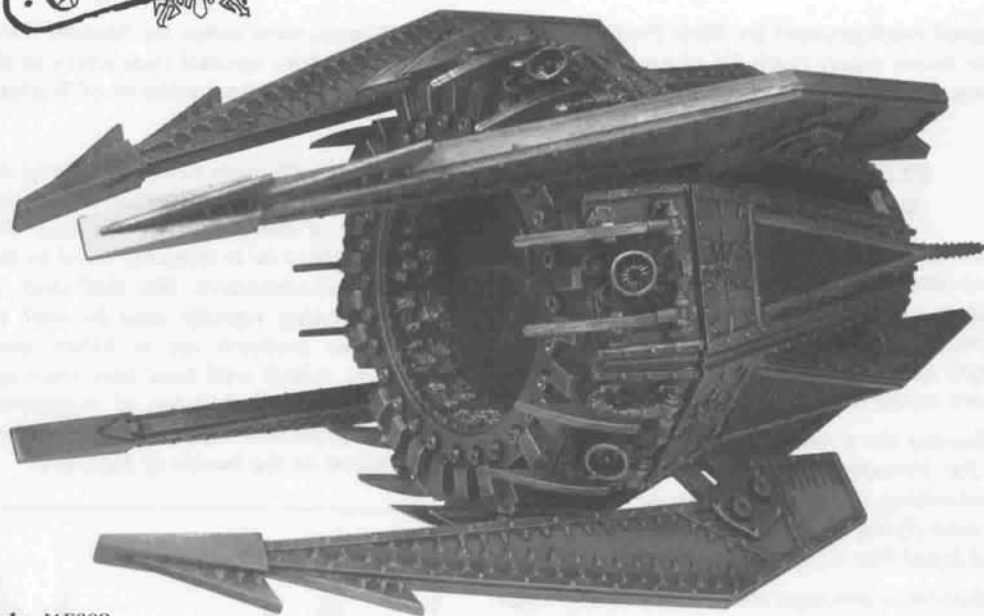
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